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RICE UNIVERSITY

DEATH AND THE WISDOM OF SOLALJOD

by

KURT MATTHEW SAGER

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

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April, 1998
An introductory note by Joseph Wilson:

Kurt Sager, the author of this dissertation, died suddenly in January, 1998, of an unsuspected heart problem. He was forty-four years old and had worked practically full time on the dissertation for the previous six years, traveling extensively to the major libraries of Europe in order to track down and study manuscripts of Sólarljóð. In November, 1997, the 'defense of dissertation' had been successfully held, based on a draft which was over 650 pages long but still not quite finished, in the way that he wanted to finish it. Happy that his many years of work for the doctorate were soon to be successfully concluded, he returned to his home in Finland and continued his work of revising and completing the dissertation.

When I and the other members of the dissertation committee received the shocking news of his death, we immediately agreed that we would seek to have the doctoral degree awarded posthumously, so that Kurt and his widow (Riitta Seppälä) and parents (Stanley and Shirley Sager) would receive the honor which he had worked for so diligently and which he so greatly deserved, and so that his dissertation would take its place in the academic world and his years of research would be accessible to other scholars. We are grateful to various administrative officials of Rice University, especially Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies Jordan Konisky and President Malcolm Gillis, for agreeing to and cooperating in this endeavor, and to Kurt's widow and parents for their help with many details and for traveling to the Rice graduation ceremony in order to receive Kurt's degree.

As the director of the dissertation, I naturally took it upon myself to get the work into the final form for submission to the university. However, it should be stressed that the entire plan and execution of the dissertation were totally Kurt's work, and my direction was minimal. Because of the specialized nature of the dissertation and the various languages involved, it was not possible to delegate the completion of the final form to an assistant. Kurt had made extensive revisions and additions beyond the form we had used for the defense, and I naturally have tried to put the dissertation into the latest form that he made. Riitta, in Finland, and Kurt's good friends Joyce and Don Shoemake, in Crosby, Texas, found and furnished to me several
different sets of Kurt's computer files of the dissertation, besides the set Kurt had already given me. I converted the numerous (DOS) files they found into the format of my (Macintosh) computers; then I compared the several different versions of the dissertation that they represented in order to choose the files which gave the latest form of the various chapters. I also had a number of working papers of Kurt's, which gave some helpful bits of information. No major re-typing was necessary; however, the re-formatting of the files and the correction of the many minor but repetitive and vexing formatting problems which arose proved to be a lengthy task; I am especially grateful to Vice Provost Konisky for allowing me to work long past the normal deadline for submitting the dissertation, and for not delaying the awarding of Kurt's degree because of the lateness of that submission.

A few unimportant type errors which caught my eye have been corrected, but I did not do a thorough search for such; 'th' has been substituted for the Icelandic 'thorn'-character in the many instances where Kurt had not yet added it; the multitudinous footnotes have been left in their full and often repetitious form, rather than changing them to 'op. cit.' or the like. In a few cases, especially in the footnotes, Kurt had not yet given the complete citation information, such as the exact page referred to, and he marked those places, and a few other places where he evidently wanted to do further checking, with '*' or '?' in some instances I was able to add the missing information, but in others I was not, and in the latter cases I left the notation '***'. In a few instances, where no information was patently lacking, I felt that I could safely delete such notations. In chapter 6, at section 6.2, where Kurt begins his stanza-by-stanza interpretation of the poem, I added a note (clearly marked, but in the text, so as not to disrupt Kurt's footnotes) to explain the source of the three forms of each stanza of the poem which are given (unnormalized Old Icelandic, normalized Old Icelandic, and English); even this required a considerable amount of detective work, since Kurt throughout the dissertation and in his working papers discussed many different forms, but neglected at this point in the dissertation to identify the ones used as the basis for his interpretation. The English version given is evidently Kurt's own semi-poetical (semi-alliterating) rendition, which is in itself a major contribution to the literature on the poem; it is most unfortunate that he was not able to finish his translation of the last few
stanzas. I also added three other brief notes at the discussion of stanzas 78, 80, and 83, where the incompleteness becomes apparent. Obviously, throughout the dissertation as now submitted, many details will lack the polish that Kurt would have given them.

It was a privilege for me to have known and worked with Kurt. I am very pleased that I have been able to put the dissertation into something like final form for him; it was a very minor service on my part for a very dear friend.
ABSTRACT

Death and the Wisdom of Sólarljóð

by

Kurt Matthew Sager

Sólarljóð is an Old Icelandic poem in which a deceased father advises his son from beyond the grave. The poem consists of a series of parables and proverbs, a moving description of dying, and accounts of both heaven and hell. Sólarljóð is concerned with eschatological mystery, and this mystery is reinforced by the poet through the use of obscure imagery and enigmatic presentation.

This study begins with an introduction to the general form, content and composition of Sólarljóð. There then follows a description of the manuscripts in which Sólarljóð has been preserved, adding several new records to the list recently begun by Njórdur P. Njarðvík. The manuscripts are cross referenced to the editions which have been based upon them.

Previous research has traditionally resulted in new readings of Sólarljóð which have been embodied in new editions or rewritings of the poem. This has produced a confusing proliferation of different poems claiming to be Sólarljóð. No "improved" edition is offered here. Instead, the editorial tradition is broken and previous editions are compared on their merits. The versions in Sophus Bugge's Norræn Fornkvæði and Finnur Jónsson's Den norsk-islandske skjaldeiditning are supported as standards to be used pending a more accessible and legible version of Njórdur Njarðvík's Solsångur. The literature is otherwise examined with the aim of clarifying bibliographical contradictions and providing a critical evaluation of the sources regularly cited in connection with Sólarljóð.

Finally, Sólarljóð is examined within the context of gnomic poetry, particularly the Disticha Catonis, Hugsvinnsmál, and Hávamál. Sólarljóð is stylistically related to these works less in terms of direct influence than in an
attempt by Sólarljóð's poet to appropriate the authority of the genre in order to reinforce his or her own didactic message. This message is one simply of *memento mori*, comprehensible on a strong emotional level even today, despite or, indeed, because of a great deal of ambiguity in the poem's symbolism and imagery. This reading of Sólarljóð breaks away from the philological hermeneutics of previous studies to take a broader view of Sólarljóð as literary art, seen as a living work with a voice that can still be understood.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following libraries for allowing me the use of their collections, and particularly their manuscript collections:

*Kungliga Bibliotek* in Stockholm,

*Landbókasafn Íslands–Háskólabókasafn* in Reykjavík,

*Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin,*

*Stofnun Arna Magnússonar* in Reykjavík,

*Uppsala Universitetsbiblioteket (Carolina Rediviva).*

I want to express my gratitude also to *Helsingin yliopiston kirjasto* and *Helsingin yliopiston historiallis-kielitieteellinen kirjasto,* where most of the research for this project was actually done. Above all, I thank the many individual librarians and library staff who took the time to answer my questions. Among these I especially want to mention Olof Benediktsdottir of *Stofnun Arna Magnússonar* and Olive Geddes of the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh, both of whom anticipated many of my questions and answered them in lengthy correspondence.
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PREFACE

I first encountered Sólarljóð by accident, while researching medieval views of the end of the world. I was moved by the emotive power of the central "Sól ek sá" section of the poem, and tried to find out more about the work. Unfortunately, the more material I unearthed, the more obscure Sólarljóð became. Each edition or translation I found seemed to present a different poem. Bibliographical references didn't quite coincide with each other, and even personal names were frequently altered to accord with the various languages of the texts involved. It was clear that an introduction to Sólarljóð was needed—an introduction that would establish the text of the poem based solely on actual manuscripts, while also providing a detailed guide to secondary research. More important, Sólarljóð needed to be analyzed as an actual work of poetic art. For over two centuries Sólarljóð has been viewed primarily as a puzzle to be solved. It has been treated as a damaged philological artifact in need of restoration or as a series of religious symbols in need of allegoresis, but never as a poem capable of speaking to an audience.

Eventually I was able to locate a copy of Bjarne Fidjestøl's Sólarljóð. Tyding og tolkingsgrunnlag. That book includes a very brief history of Sólarljóð research, which, complemented by a biographical register and bibliography, much facilitates any examination of the poem. When Njörður P. Njarðvík's Sólarljóð reached library shelves at about that time, it appeared that the necessary introduction to Sólarljóð had been written. To be sure, not all manuscripts were included in Njarðvík's listing, and research from before the current century was mostly ignored, but between Njarðvík and Fidjestøl, it seemed the foundations of Sólarljóð research were complete, and there would be little more to contribute.

It was Prof. John Weinstock who encouraged me to continue, with the observation that "Sólarljóð is a beautiful poem, and we can always use

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another interpretation.” Sólarljóð has still not been viewed in the literature as a poem, as an intentionally designed work of art. Fidjestøl attempted to lay the hermeneutic groundwork for such an interpretation, while Njarðvík tried to “interpret the text in a way that will make it comprehensible—not only the meanings of words but also its ideas in their cultural-historical context.”³ Sólarljóð has indeed been made generally comprehensible, though it must nevertheless always remain in many ways ambiguous. My task has been to build upon these foundations that explain what the words of Sólarljóð mean, to speculate further about why the poem was written using those particular words.

It is mostly clear what Sólarljóð says, and what happens within the poem’s narrative. Yet there has been no answer to the question so often posed to me by Prof. Joe Wilson: What is Sólarljóð about? My thesis is that Sólarljóð is simply about death. Sólarljóð is a memento mori stressing the unimportance of earthly values in view of their ephemerality, the inevitability of death, and the critical eternal reward to follow. While Sólarljóð may not fit perfectly into any common genre of Icelandic poetry, it has been constructed in such a way as to convincingly argue its point. Sólarljóð presents itself as gnomic poetry to gain authority for its didactic message. It speaks as a source of wisdom, both patriarchal and supernatural. Its message is that life cannot be trusted, but death with its eternal rewards is absolutely sure.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sólarljóð is a mysterious Old Icelandic poem in which a deceased father returns to warn his son about what he has encountered beyond the grave. The narrator imparts earthly wisdom through parables and proverbs, speaking in a highly enigmatic manner which includes Christian allegory based on pagan Norse deities. Sólarljóð is said to have been composed by Sæmund the Wise on the third day after his death. Although having been lying dead on his bier for three entire days, Sæmund reportedly sat up suddenly and sang the verses known as Sólarljóð. The poem remains puzzling to this day, and it is not very surprising that its composition might have been attributed to medieval Iceland’s most famous magician.

Aside from the supernatural attribution to Sæmund the Wise, there have been few claims of authorship for Sólarljóð. F. G. Bergmann accepted the living Sæmund as author, in the absence of any convincing evidence to the contrary. Fredrik Paasche suggested that the author might have shared certain characteristics with one Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, though he did not suggest that Hrafn was actually author. Hjalmar Falk believed the author to have been a monk. There has been little further speculation, and the author remains unknown.

Since Sólarljóð was written in Icelandic, it may fairly be assumed that it was written in Iceland as well, yet there has been no narrowing of provenance to any particular location within Iceland. Even the date of composition is unclear, with suggested times ranging from the official adoption of

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4 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Kl. 1914 No. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 58.
Christianity in Iceland in the year 1000, to sometime in the late thirteenth century.

The only things known for certain about Sólarið are those that can be read in the preserved texts. Yet what has been preserved probably varies considerably from what was originally written. Some have insisted that two or more independent poems have been improperly combined. Even if the preserved text is correct in all respects, there remain parts of the poem which no one has ever claimed to understand fully. Sólarið is enigmatic by nature, since it deals with the divine mysteries of the afterlife. If that much mystery can be accepted, the poem can be perceived as a coherent if still puzzling whole.

Based on the textual record, Sólarið is a medieval Icelandic poem of eighty-two or three stanzas of six lines each. It presents religious ideas in a dramatic artistic form of unquestioned beauty. The poem seems to be Christian, yet it includes the names of pagan gods and it recites unknown names that may also possibly have belonged to heathen mythology. It has frequently been included in the poetic Edda, that collection of Icelandic verse so often taken as a holy book of pre-Christian Germanic religion and culture. Sólarið has been seen as recalling a pagan deification of the sun. It is quite often thought to be an example of Christian and pagan syncretism in medieval Iceland at the time of conversion. However, the poem is more likely a product of much later medieval Christian mysticism, albeit with a particularly Icelandic twist. In any event, Sólarið is a mysterious mixture of Christianity and Germanic pagan traditions, perhaps justifying its inclusion among what might be termed the Eddic apocrypha.

1.1. Manuscripts

Since the circumstances surrounding the composition of Sólarið are unknown, the preserved manuscripts gain special importance as the only

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5 Eg., Guðmundur Vigfússon and Finnur Jónsson

available evidence. Unfortunately, only recent copies—none older than the seventeenth century—have survived. The first printed edition of the poem attempted to combine all existing manuscripts of Sólarið in a day when there were thought to be only some half-dozen copies. Researchers soon pointed out the existence of others, and by the second half of the nineteenth century Sophus Bugge had demonstrated that there were many such manuscripts—too many to enumerate fully. But Bugge also recommended one in particular, AM 166b 8to, as the best copy he had encountered. After Bugge all interest in collecting manuscripts seems to have ceased. Not until 1990 was a complete record of Sólarið manuscripts attempted by Njórdur Njarðvík. In fact, that record still contains certain gaps, but its very existence has given the unlisted manuscripts an added significance that will surely result in their being made known. To the forty-four manuscripts listed by Njarðvík, several others are added here. Several of these additions had been known to previous scholarship, but others are new. The list is probably still not complete, but since 1990 there has at least been a list to be completed. It seems unlikely that there would be many manuscripts remaining unrecorded, and it is highly improbable that any such would be of exceptional value.

With most of the manuscripts now known, it is possible to take steps toward the formation of a manuscript stemma. Pending the discovery of yet unknown manuscripts, it is also seems possible to confirm Bugge’s suggestion that AM 166b 8to is indeed the best manuscript copy.

1.2. Editions

The secrets of Sólarið are not so many as they might seem, but they have been multiplied through the construction of a secondary maze of rewriting. Anyone who now approaches Sólarið for the first time is confronted with a bewildering array of different works claiming to be the poem Sólarið. This has surely discouraged original contributions to scholarship.

As scholars have discovered Sólarið, their first reaction has often been one of delight which they have wished to share with others by making the poem more generally available. Hence, these scholars each produce a new edition
or translation, perhaps hoping to enlist new minds in the struggle for an adequate interpretation. This has resulted particularly in a proliferation of translations. Unfortunately, the translations are often based rather uncritically on dubious printed editions. English translations in particular have been suspect, due to the influence of Guðmundur Vigfússon, who divided Sólarrljóð into two separate poems and added some stanzas from Hávamál.

The printed editions have often been flawed because the underlying manuscripts upon which they were based are less than authoritative. Most editions of Sólarrljóð have been part of Edda editions, with Sólarrljóð added as an afterthought, with no mention of base manuscripts or editorial principles. Whatever editorial principles applied to the poem may be obviously different from those used for the primary Eddic poems in a given collection. The editions which do clearly devote some attention to Sólarrljóð particularly are usually attempts to restore the poem to a hypothetically ideal original. The poem is altered to agree with a particular interpretation, or it is reorganized to exclude material thought to have been interpolated. The reasons for change are not always adequately stated, and subsequent scholars dealing with the material have generally found it necessary to restore the poem to its earlier state, before then making their own alterations to the text for yet other new edition.

1.3. Previous Research

The desire to make Sólarrljóð accessible to a wider audience has produced a great deal of material written about the poem, although mostly in connection with some new edition or translation. Most of the information is superficial and repetitive, but little of it is widely circulated. Lack of a non-controversial standard edition has surely hampered research. Confusing bibliographical materials, aimed more at the Edda than at Sólarrljóð specifically may have also hindered progress. To a surprisingly large extent, Sólarrljóð research has been centered in Copenhagen and Oslo, with information passing from professor to student, sometimes without ever being published in printed form. The works which have been printed have not generally found a large international circulation, and so remain themselves rather mysterious.
Most of the short and simple answers to questions raised by Sólarljóð were given over two hundred years ago, yet this secondary research into Sólarljóð has often been neglected or unavailable to later researchers. Njörður Njarðvík has effectively covered the work done during this century, from the point of view of the old debate over Sólarljóð's unity. One must turn to Fidjestøl's broader yet sketchier review to extend one's view to earlier times. Previous scholarship is examined again here from a more bibliographical point of view, designed to facilitate the work of future scholars.

14. Poetry and Wisdom

Sólarljóð has generally been viewed simply as a sort of monument to the past. The fact that it was a poem written by someone for a presumed audience has generally been overlooked. It is Sólarljóð's poetic means of expression that most merits examination, yet this is the point most often overlooked by students of the poem. Sólarljóð still speaks on an emotional level with a strong voice of its own, as can be seen by the many attempts to translate that voice into other languages. The poem still communicates a message to people today. Sólarljóð needs to be examined not as mythology or theology, but as literature.

Sólarljóð has not been placed precisely into any genre of Icelandic poetry. It is too Christian to belong to the supposedly pagan Edda. It does not follow the formalistic rules of scaldic poetry. In form it most closely resembles the Hávamál, and has often been called a Christian response to it and Völuspá. Yet Sólarljóð has an even greater affinity to Hugsvinnsmál, with which not only verse form and tone but even language is shared. What all these poems have in common is the imparting of important jewels of wisdom by a wise person to one in need of such wisdom. Sólarljóð is a poem in which a wise father, having finally learned wisdom through his death and visit to the afterlife, gives needed knowledge to the son who was left behind. Most of the poem is epic in content, telling stories of events on earth, or describing things seen after death. Yet the form and tone of gnomic poetry are retained. They

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are surely retained because they add an authoritative tone to the poet’s message. The deceased narrator is making pronouncements from a position of patriarchal authority. He is making pronouncements also from a position of supernatural authority, speaking from beyond the grave. Most important, he is speaking with the authority of experience. He has seen life on earth and life after death, and though details must remain a mystery to the living, his advice is given cosmic weight.

The poet of Sólarljóð could have written a sermon, and presented his material backed solely by his own authority. Instead, however, he composed a poem, and gave his message the authority and immortality of art. By choosing ljóðaháttr, the poet gave the poem the authority of wisdom literature, putting it on the same basis as Hávamál, the Disticha Catonis, or even the biblical books of Proverbs or Wisdom.

1.5. Death and Memento Mori

Sólarljóð is a complex aggregate of narrative and gnomic advice, but it has a unitary purpose. It speaks about death as something unavoidable, but as something which is also a transitional point and not the end of all consciousness. There is a reward to be gained after death, a reward too wonderful or too terrible to be fully known by the living. Njarðvík has said that “Diktens djupare symbolik är så komplicerad att man inte kan förstå dikten i sin helhet endast genom att gå fram linjärt och tolka de olika delar som följer på varandra.” But no method of approaching the words of the poem line by line has so far adequately illuminated all the deeper symbolism of the poem. On the other hand, no one really misunderstands what the poem is about as a whole, provided the poem is only looked at as a whole. The usual concentration on individual images tends to obfuscate the central message, giving false prominence to individual images of the afterlife and the more allegorical stanzas involving pagan images.

Taken as a whole, Sólarljóð shows through its exempla how life’s comforts cannot be trusted, and how death is unavoidable. It gives in its anaphoric

8 Njörður P. Njarðvík. Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs U., 1993) 123.
central segment a powerful emotional example of the irresistible power of
dearth. The final descriptions of heaven and hell show how life is but a trial
leading to the eternal rewards of an afterlife. Sólarljóð speaks most
powerfully through its more general narrative—through the simple thread
that holds the poem together and most strongly affects the emotions. That
one can also examine individual images and chew over the finer theological
implications of allegorical imagery makes the poem yet greater, but it also
introduces the risk of missing the forest for the trees.

Sólarljóð is a poem about death. It is a memento mori, reminding us that life
is untrustworthy and brief. Death is certain, and with it an evaluation of our
lives as Christians and our eternal reward. Therefore, we should follow the
advice given in the poem and learn from its exempla and allegories how to
live on this earth in anticipation of death.

1.6. Conclusion

Sólarljóð is a mysterious religious poem, difficult to interpret, but a very
beautiful and interesting puzzle. Many questions remain unanswered, but
this allows Sólarljóð to continue to survive as a source of intellectual
curiosity. The meaning of individual passages will certainly always be
debated since Sólarljóð is above all a poem, and poetry always remains open
to interpretation. Sólarljóð has been examined by theologians as a record of
beliefs during the early Christian era in Iceland. It has been examined by
philologists as a corrupt text in need of reconstruction. It is here viewed as a
complete text, a medieval work of art, for the first time to be analyzed as
poetry. Sólarljóð has one consistent theme, that of memento mori, and with
that in mind, its disparate images can be better comprehended.
2. GENERAL BACKGROUND

Sólarljóð is an Old Icelandic poem preserved in many paper manuscripts from the seventeenth century and later. There are no historical references to the poem aside from a single seventeenth-century mention of it being old.\(^1\) While there is a folk legend about Sólarljóð having been composed by the twelfth-century cleric Sæmund the Wise on his bier, the legend is not thought to be older than the seventeenth century either.\(^2\) The ultimate source of information about Sólarljóð is the poem itself. While Sólarljóð may give few clues about its origins, the purpose, message and style of the poem are far less mysterious than one might be led to believe.

Sólarljóð is a Catholic religious poem having a single unifying theme of *memento mori*. The poem is primarily a reminder that life on earth is brief and unreliable, but will be rewarded, for good or for bad, in an eternal afterlife. This message is conveyed through a complex poetic combination of parable, proverb, invocation and visionary imagination. In external appearance, Sólarljóð consists of eighty-two stanzas written in a verse form known as *ljóðaháttr*, with an eighty-third stanza added sometime after the original composition. The date and place of composition remain uncertain, but the provenance for Sólarljóð is generally set in thirteenth-century Iceland. Its author is unknown.

2.1. Content

Sólarljóð begins with a story about two men, a highwayman and a traveler. These were given the names Greppr and Gestr by Björn Ólsen,\(^3\) who first

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2 [Björn Ólsen,] Sólarljóð gefin út med skíringum og athugasemdu af Birni M. Ólsen, Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenskra bókmenta að fornu og nýju 5,1 (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 73.

treated those descriptive nouns (roughly meaning warrior and guest respectively) as proper names. While I do not believe the author intended to coin actual names here, Greppr and Gestr are certainly useful labels serving to describe the precise initial functions of the two characters and allowing them to be kept straight. The first seven stanzas tell the story of how Greppr lived alone, preying on travelers, and never sharing hospitality with anyone. One day Gestr, the weary and weak stranger, came down the road and Greppr had a change of heart. He invited the stranger in and gave him food and drink. However, as Greppr slept, Gestr struck him a mortal blow. Greppr awoke, called on God’s aid, and so his sins were taken from him and his soul was transported into heaven by holy angels. The story of the greppr and the gestr is not as clear as it might be, particularly since the two personages are referred to almost entirely by pronouns, but there seems to be a general consensus that this is the basic plot of the first narrative.

The eighth stanza consists strictly of proverbs, translated by Thorpe as “Riches and health no one may command, though all go smoothly with him. To many that befalls which they least expect. No one may command his tranquility.”⁴ This stanza is generally grouped with the narrative stanza following it, which tells how the once fortunate Unnarr and Sævaldi became naked and ran as wolves into the woods. Certainly the narrative seems to exemplify the proverbial warning preceding it.

Stanza ten is a proverbial warning against the dangers of women, followed by the illustrative narrative of Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn in stanzas eleven through fourteen. These two friends were inseparable until they became consumed with desire for the same woman. Ultimately the two men fight over her and kill each other.

The fourth narrative is again preceded by a proverbial stanza, number fifteen, in which the narrator of the poem appears in the first person to warn against arrogance. Ráðny and Véboði were (or became) rich and selfish, and trusted

only in themselves. In the end God left them turning their sores to the fire, and repaid them so that they must walk between frost and fire.

The story of Sörli and Vígúlfr makes up the fifth narrative, continuing through stanza twenty-four. Stanza nineteen is another proverbial admonition, this time not to trust enemies, but to be warned instead by the injuries others have suffered. In the narrative which follows, Sörli forgives Vígúlfr and the other murderers of his brother. They ride together and Sörli is killed, dismembered, and thrown into a well by these murderers he has trusted. God sees all, and so takes the innocent soul into heaven, and the narrator speculates that the perpetrators of the crime will not be soon released from their torture.

These five narratives are followed by the seven counsels of stanzas twenty-five through thirty-two. Stanza thirty-two states that seven friendly counsels have been imparted, and the seven preceding stanzas contain advice, but there has been no complete agreement in restating that advice as precisely seven distinct principles. I suspect that the author of Sólarljóð was more interested in incorporating the mystical number seven per se than he was in making any sort of mathematical enumeration. Of course, there are precisely seven stanzas of advice involved, but each stanza contains at least two clauses that may or may not repeat the same idea, while there seems further to be some repetition of ideas among different stanzas.

The first of these counselling stanzas, stanza twenty-five, says to petition dísir (generally interpreted as holy virgins) in expectation of receiving what is desired. Stanza twenty-six warns against adding ill to a deed done in anger, recommending reconciliation instead. Twenty-seven recommends turning to God for good things, pointing out that he who is late in finding God misses out on much. The twenty-eighth stanza says to ask for what is lacking, since the silent person receives nothing.

The twenty-ninth stanza seems to repeat the idea of stanzas twenty-seven and twenty-eight from the perspective of personal experience. The narrator says that he came late to the door of the wielder of judgement. He desires entry, for he was told that he who so desires will receive delicacies. The stanza
which follows retains the first-person perspective, but enlarges it to the plural. Sin is the reason we fear death; no one who is blameless need fear. Finally, in stanza thirty-one, the unsteady in faith are compared to wolves, and promised a path of glowing coals. The concluding stanza thirty-two says that seven counsels have been given and admonishes the addressee to learn them.

The seven counsels are more ambiguous than the narrative action of the introductory exempla, and there is more disagreement among scholars concerning their meanings. These counsels do tend to be more personal than the proverbial advice which introduced four of the five narratives. The earlier proverbs speak mostly of broad categories in the third person, such as what "no one" can count on. The counsels are given mostly as imperatives to a definite second-person thú, by a first-person ek who speaks from experience and who forms his own opinions about what has been observed.

After the seven counsels, a third segment begins with the words "Frá thví er at segja" (stanza 33, line 1). The change is rather abrupt, but the poet no doubt chose this common transitional phrase in an attempt to link shifts in ideas within the poem in much the same way that digressions are often marked with the same phrase in the sagas. The theme of the central part of the poem is outlined in stanza thirty-three. According to most interpretations, at least, the speaker there tells how happy he was to be in the world and about how reluctantly people face death.

Stanzas thirty-four through thirty-eight of Sólarljóð form a section which continues with the stanzas beginning "sól ek sá." After the preface of stanza thirty-three, there is an introductory proverb in thirty-four stating that pleasure, pride, and greed deceive, and that riches lead to sorrow or madness. The narrator then claims to have himself been joyous in the earthly delights of the Lord's creation, because he did not look ahead. He says that he wavered for a long time, desiring life, but the powerful one prevailed—the paths of one condemned to die lead onwards. The narrator describes being held against his will in the bonds of Hel, how his pains increased, and how the maids of Hel bade him to their home. With stanza thirty-nine, the narrator begins telling how he saw the sun setting while he also heard the creaking of
the gates of hel. The sun is bloody, increased in power, and it seems as if the narrator is looking at God, so he bows down his last time in the realm of the living. The sun sinks and the narrator likewise sinks into torpor, paralysis and death.

By stanza forty-five, the narrator has seen the sun for the last time ever. The star of expectation flies from his breast, and in one long night lying stiff, he learns that man is the same as mould. The story of dying now complete, the narrator reflects upon the process in stanzas forty-eight through fifty: God knows how lonely death is, no matter how many kindred remain. One’s wealth after death consists of good works, not earthly goods. The desires of the flesh seduce many, and the narrator avoided the water that might have cleansed him.

We are told that after nine days in the seat of the Norns, the narrator was mounted on the back of a horse and saw the sun of the giantess gleam grimly through dripping clouds. "Utan ok innan," the narrator seems to traverse the seven realms, up and down, always seeking an easier way.

Stanza fifty-three begins with another "frá thví er at segja," and is so generally thought to mark the beginning of a new segment. Here begins the account of the sights observed on the tour taken after death. The first things seen in the realm of punishment are souls flying like scorched birds. From the west dragons fly, from the south the sun's hart is led, and from the north the seven sons of Niði ride and drink pure mead from the spring of Baugreginn. In stanza fifty-seven, perhaps denoting a change of scene, we are told the wind is silent and the waters stilled. Women, their gory hearts hanging from their breasts, grind their men dirt for food. Mutilated men walk on glowing coals. Men who died without holy services have heathen stars above their heads, while the envious have runes carved into their breasts. Those who are attracted by the world's vices walk wild ways in unhappiness. Those coveting wealth bear burdens of lead, while murderers and robbers have their breasts pierced by serpents. People who ignore the Sabbath have their hands nailed to hot stones. The proud are clothed in fire. Finally, Hel's ravens peck out the eyes of liars.
This series of stanzas, most beginning with "menn są ek thé," ends with the disclaimer that we won’t learn all the horrors of hell, but we may be sure that all the pleasures of this world are bitterly repaid in the next (stanza sixty-eight). Much is left to the imagination, and what is described retains enough ambiguity to feed a great deal of controversy. Clearly the punishments suffered by various classes of sinners are described, and it seems that the punishments more or less fit the crimes. However, it is not always so evident exactly what sin is being punished or how the punishment relates to a particular sin.

Without any further establishment of a framework, the narrator turns to those who led Christian lives, continuing with the same "Menn są ek thé" formula as before for four of the six next stanzas. Those who gave to the church are rewarded with burning candles. Angels read holy books over those who helped the poor, and they bow down before ascetics. Those who feed their mothers receive rest on the rays of heaven, while flagellants are purged of sin by holy virgins. Those murdered in innocence are transported to God in chariots.

Stanza seventy-five is an invocation of the trinity, a prayer to the creator for release or absolution. It is followed by the most mysterious and controversial verses of the poem, which I give here in Benjamin Thorpe’s translation:

76. Biugvor and Listvor sit at Herdir’s doors, on resounding seat; iron gore falls from their nostrils, which kindles hate among men.

77. Odin’s wife rows in earth’s ship, eager after pleasures; her sails are reefed late, which on the ropes of desire are hung.

78. Son! I thy father and Solkatla’s sors have alone obtained for thee that horn of hart, which from the grave-mound bore the wise Vigdvalin.

79. Here are runes which have engraven Niord’s daughters nine, Radvor the eldest, and the youngest Kreppvor, and their seven sisters.
80. How much violence have they perpetrated, Svafr and Svaflogi!
Bloodshed they have excited, and wounds have sucked, after an evil custom.5

The poem closes with an admonition of the listener to sing Sólarljóð before
the living (thus naming the poem) and with a prayer that speaker and auditor
will meet again on the day of joy. Let the dead be granted peace and the living
comfort. This is followed by an eighty-third stanza which is now universally
considered to be a later addition to Sólarljóð. It explains that the poem was
sung to its recipient in a dream.

2.2. Formal Structure

2.2.1. Verse Form

Sólarljóð is a ljóð or song, perhaps better thought of as a collection of verses,
not only because old alliterative verse of this type is considered by some to be
utterly unsingable,6 but because of the historical independence of individual
stanzas. Sólarljóð is in the common verse form known as ljóðaháttr, which
Lee Hollander has translated as "chant meter."7 It is a traditional form of
great antiquity, associated etymologically with magical charms, though it lacks
any special connection with magic in preserved texts.8 The best-known
example of a poem composed in ljóðaháttr is Hávamál, but ljóðaháttr is the
meter of much of the verse in the Edda. It is also the verse form used in
Hugsvinnsmál, the Icelandic translation of the Disticha Catonis. It is distinct
from the skaldic dróttkvæði commonly used in panegyric poems to lords both
temporal and divine. Ljóðaháttr consists of two half-stanzas, each called a


6 Hallvard Lie, Norsk Verslære ([Oslo]: Universitetsforlaget, 1967) 32.

7 Lee M. Hollander, ed. and trans., Old Norse Poems. The Most Important
Non-Scaldic Verse Not Included in the Poetic Edda (New York: Columbia
UP, 1936) 101.

8 Hallvard Lie, "Ljóðaháttr," Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för nordisk medeltid
helmingr or helming. A helming consists of one Germanic long line followed by what Sievers named a Vollzeile or full line. The Germanic long line is a single metrical period, but it consists of two so-called short lines. Vigfusson and Powell have printed a regularized version of Sólarljóð in the manner traditional for old Germanic verse generally. The second stanza of Sólarljóð (which they print as stanza three of their poem “The Christian’s Wisdom”) is shown here with the caesura between the two short lines which constitute the long line marked with my double vertical lines:

[First helming:]
[long line:] Einn hann át  ||  opt harðla;
[full line:] aldri baūð hann manni til matar;

[Second helming:]
[long line:] áðr an móðr  ||  ok megin-lítill
[full line:] gestr af gavto kom.  

Since the Germanic long line is always recorded in Icelandic poetry as its two constituent separate short lines, a stanza of ljóðaháttr appears written as six lines in those manuscripts where lines are differentiated at all. Compare the same second stanza of Sólaljóð from Hjalmar Falk’s edition (where it is printed as stanza three):

[initial short line:] Einn hann át
[final short line:] opt harðla,
[full line:] aldri baūð hann manni til matar,
[initial short line:] áðr en móðr

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9 Eduard Sievers, Althervische Metrik, Sammlung kurzer Grammatiken germanischer Dialekte, Ergänzungsreihe 2. (Halle: Niemeyer, 1893) 80.

10 Andreas Heusler, Deutsche Versgeschichte mit Einschluss des altenglischen und altnordischen Stabreinverses, Grundriss der germanischen Philologie 8. 3 Vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1925) 1: 100.

According to Hallvard Lie, *ljóðaháttr* is the most problematic Old Norse verse form, with controversy still raging over its metrical or rhythmic structure. Lie describes each short line as containing two syllables with primary stress. However, there is great freedom in the number of unstressed or lesser-stressed syllables allowed in any line. There may be many unstressed syllables or none at all. Hence, a short line consisting of a single two-syllable word may not be impossible, if one can imagine both syllables taking equal stress. The final line of each helming, the full-line, is even more difficult to define. “Det gamle og fremdeles aktuelle stridsspørsål er om full-linjen skal leses med 3 el. 2 hevninger.” Even within a single poem like *Sólarljóð*, or within a single stanza of it, one full-line may seem to require three stresses while another full-line seems more rhythmic with two. This is common to the verse form, and thus not necessarily indicative of defective transmission.

Vigfusson and Powell thought it significant that *Sólarljóð* has preserved an ancient meter. But although the origins of *ljóðaháttr* may be prehistoric, the verse is hardly rare in recorded texts, and would not be difficult for any later skald to duplicate. While it is true that the *Sólarljóð* manuscripts do all retain the *ljóðaháttr* quite consistently, they are able to do it with a fair amount of variation in the actual words used in the poem. The manuscripts consistently maintain the rhythm of *ljóðaháttr* even though they vary widely even in the points at which they divide the lines of the poem. The freedom

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allowed within ljóðaháttr makes it an easy meter to follow. Furthermore, if
one thinks of recorded folk performances of songs believed to have their
roots in medieval poetry (such as Faeroese ballad dances or Finnish
runonlaulua), it is easy to perceive how rhythm might be determined far
more by the performer’s own rhythmic interpretation (the “melody” or
cadence) than by the precise structure of the poem performed. In this
ljóðaháttr does contrast with other Old Norse verse forms which are generally
much stricter. While skaldic verse probably more resembles something like
Meistergesang in terms of formal artistic composition than it does any folk
poetry, ljóðaháttr may have had a more popular basis. Skaldic verse was
rarely written in ljóðaháttr, just as ljóðaháttr rarely contains the complicated
kennings common to skaldic verse. Because ljóðaháttr is a relatively free
form less used by the skalds expert in prosody, it is difficult to formulate
precise rules for it. Nonetheless, simply because metrical emphasis (marked
also by alliteration) in Sólarljóð falls so often on function words rather than
central concepts, one is inclined to agree with Fidjestøl when he says “det
metriske er ikkje Sólarljóðs sterkaste side....”

2.2.2. Alliteration

In general, ljóðaháttr follows the usual rules of old Germanic alliteration in
its long lines, except that each helming has only one long line rather than the
two of most old Germanic verse. The full line contains an internal
alliteration of two consonants. Despite the general similarity of ljóðaháttr to
(other) early Germanic verse, however, it exhibits more freedom in terms of
exactly where alliteration is allowed. In the case of Sólarljóð specifically, the
basic requirements of the ljóðaháttr verse form seem to have been a mere
starting point for the poet in his or her search for the proper artistic medium
through which to convey the religious message in Sólarljóð.

Andreas Heusler listed the characteristics of Germanic alliteration in his
Deutsche Versgeschichte. He wrote that

17 Hallvard Lie, “Ljóðaháttr,” Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för nordisk
medeltid 10: 649.

1. Er ruht auf sprachlich starktonigen Wurzelsilben.

2. Er verlangt eine Hebung im Verse.

3. Er fließt nur selten aus Wortwiederholung oder gar Wortspiel (Paronomasia, Adnominatio).

4. Die höhere Dichtung führt ihn lückenlos durch.

5. Man zielt nicht auf Häufung der Stabsilben; man befolgt eine durchsichtige Stellungsregel, die dem einzelnen Verstypus wenig freie Wahl läßt.

6. Der Stabreim greift über die kürzeste, zweigliedrige Periode nie planmäßig hinaus.

7. Von dem Stabreim hängt der Rhythmus ab; der Stabreim prägt den gemeingermanischen Versstil...

Sólariljód may be remarkable for the degree to which these proposed rules are violated. Since each short line in ljóðaháttr contains two syllables with primary stress, there is an opportunity for two alliterating sounds in each. Should alliterating sounds appear elsewhere, they are simply to be ignored under the rule that “ein Stab braucht einen Iktus.”**20** The alliteration promotes the syllable where it occurs metrically, but it can occur only in the syllable which is already stressed grammatically and capable of being stressed in the meter. As Hallvard Lie says, alliteration

skal falle på de naturlig trykksterkeste ord i verset; s[tavrimet] skal tjene til å fremheve ytterligere de ord som i den logiske setningssammenheng har et berettiget krav på sterk betoning, m. a. o.:

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**19** Andreas Heusler, *Deutsche Versgeschichte*, Grundriss der germanischen Philologie 8 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1925) I: 92, emphasis in original.

In this Sólarljóð does not seem especially reliable, even when each line has the proper number of syllables alliterated. But it is through the alliteration that a poet’s intended emphasis is to be read.

Heusler uses the letter a to represent alliterated syllables and x to represent stressed syllables without alliteration to show the possibilities for alliteration within the panGermanic long line. For the initial short line the possibilities are aa, ax, and xa. For the final short line, however, there is the possibility only of ax. But while this may be true for Old English and older dialects of German, Heusler is forced to admit that xa is used in the final short line in some Eddic verse, and that aa is also possible there. In some respects Nordic verse, especially Eddic verse like ljóðaháttr, allows more freedom than its counterparts to the south. Lie refers to the pattern aa in one short line as constituting double stuðlar or supports for the alliteration defined in the other short line. This doubly supported alliteration (as in the “É fé ok fjórvi” of the opening line of Sólarljóð) is never required in ljóðaháttr, although it is rather common. It is enough that the two short lines be connected to each other through a single alliterating sound in each. The pattern aa || aa, in fact, is impossible, because there may be no more than three alliterations in a long line.

Heusler uses the term “double alliteration” (zwiefacher Stabreim) to refer to cases where the primary alliteration is augmented by a second set of alliterating sounds. The usually non-alliterative stressed syllables x are replaced by sounds which alliterate with each other, but not with a. This second set of alliterating sounds may be marked b. Thus, there can be crossed

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22 Andreas Heusler, Deutsche Versgeschichte, Grundriss der germanischen Philologie 8 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1925) I: 100–3.

double rhyme of a pattern \( ab \parallel ab \) or an enclosed double alliteration like \( ba \parallel ab \).\(^{24}\) \( Sölarljóð \) uses both these forms of double alliteration. Crossed alliteration is relatively frequent, and exemplified in the short lines

\[
\text{A gud skaltu hëita}
\text{til godra h}l_{u}ta—(27.1–2).
\]

Enclosed alliteration is unusual in the poem, but evident in

\[
\text{heidnar st}iornr
\text{st}odu jfir hofdi theim—(60.4–5).
\]

\( Sölarljóð \) is for the most part accurate and regular in its use of alliteration, but a closer look reveals some peculiarities. The alliteration in \( Sölarljóð \) can be illustrated by the first stanza of the poem as it appears (like the two examples immediately above) in Finnur Jónsson’s transcription of the poem from manuscript \( AM 166b, 8^o \). The text is marked here to note alliteration rather than Jónsson’s editorial expansions.

\[
\text{Fie og fiorvi}
\text{rænti f}irda kind
\text{sa hinn grimmi grepr}
\text{yfir tha götu}
\text{er hann vardadi}
\text{matti eingin q}uïdr kómaž.—(1.1–6)\(^{25}\)
\]

The first helming, lines 1–3, poses no problems. The two short lines (1 and 2) are combined through the alliteration of \( f \). The two alliterating syllables in the initial short line form a double support for the alliterating \( f \) in the final short line. Such doubling is quite frequent in \( Sölarljóð \), but it is more common for the short lines to be connected by only a single stressed


alliteration in each. The full line alliterates on g, but the poet appears to have made an effort to link entire clusters, such as this gr, wherever convenient in the poem. However, in Sólarljóð as in old Germanic verse generally, the only inseparable consonant clusters are sp, st, and sk, where the entire cluster and not only the initial letter must always be the same. Sometimes the full line in Ljóðaháttir is also connected to the short lines through alliteration.26 That would be the case if the third line of this example had alliterated with an f instead of with g. Sólarljóð makes such an alliterative connection of the full line with the long line in at least seven percent of its helmings. The figure exceeds ten percent if cases of questionable alliteration are included.

In the second helming of the first stanza of Sólarljóð there are some difficulties with the alliteration. First, it is interesting that the alliterating g of line three appears again in line four in the stressed syllable of gotu. There is no necessary linkage between the two helmings of ljóðaháttir, since each helming is considered to be an entirely independent and separate unit. In fact, because of this independence, a line in one helming cannot “officially” alliterate with a line in another helming. Nonetheless, extra alliterative connections seem to be made fairly frequently in Sólarljóð, often using word-internal consonants or unstressed syllables not supposedly capable of carrying alliteration at all. Sound takes priority over formal rules.

The improperly alliterative gotu has caused controversy. Sophus Bugge27 altered “thá gotu” to its synonymous “thann veg” (crediting Bergmann28) in order to (re)establish alliteration with varðadi within the long line of the second helming. Almost every later editor of Sólarljóð has accepted this emendation. The change would certainly be an improvement, but as Bugge himself admitted29 and Njarðvík recently confirmed30 there is no support for


27 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 357.

28 F. G. Bergmann, Les Chants de Sól (Strasbourg: Treuttel, 1858) 39.

29 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 357.

this reading in the manuscripts. It would appear that all the manuscript copyists (at least since the seventeenth century) were able to accept götu despite the rather obvious alternative of vegu. The word götu does share an alliterative sound with the line from the preceding helming, and it could be that this "accidental" alliteration has taken priority over a "correct" alliteration with varðadi.

Despite the apparent lack of a word to alliterate with varðadi, the long line of the second helming is not totally without alliteration. Bergmann believed the alliteration connecting the short lines four and five is to be sought at the beginning of the lines in yfir and er. Since all vowels alliterate with each other, this is a plausible solution. The difficulty lies in giving logical stress to these words, but they are not wholly incapable of taking intonational stress. Furthermore, throughout the various stanzas of Sólaljóð, the usual pattern of alliteration in the short lines of the second helmings is ax || ax, with the alliterating syllables tending to be as near the beginning of the lines as possible. At some point during the composition or transmission of the poem, someone felt it more important to tie line four to line three through gratuitous alliteration than it was to tie line four to line five according to proper rules of prosody. Alliteration and rhythm are maintained with yfir and er, and Sólaljóð is not the only poem ever to have given exaggerated stress to prepositions and conjunctions. There are other locations in Sólaljóð where the alliterated words are not those one would have expected to have been given stress normally.

The final full-line of this example presents no special problems, aside from this particular manuscript sometimes spelling kv as qu. The underlying sounds, of course, remain the same. This final full-line, however,

matti eingin quidr komaz—(1.6)

should be compared rhythmically with the full-line of the last helming of stanza five,

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31 F. G. Bergmann, Les Chants de Sól (Strasbourg: Treuttel, 1858) 53.
The variation illustrates how there can still be debate over how a full line in *ljóðaháttr* is to be read. Stress certainly accompanies the alliterated syllables, but while the second example (5.6) seems to indicate two such stresses, the first (1.6) appears to require a third stress before the two stressed alliterated syllables.\(^{32}\)

Peculiarities of meter within *Sólarljóð* have attracted little interest, given the relative freedom with which meter may be treated. *AM 166b, 8°* was written without any line breaks, as any much earlier manuscript must have been. In most existing manuscripts, variations in the interpretation of rhythm are reflected in differing line divisions or in the insertion, deletion, or transposition of particles. But while rhythm has been treated rather summarily, the peculiarities of alliteration within *Sólarljóð* have been considered particularly significant.

Any irregularity in alliteration within *Sólarljóð* has traditionally been thought to indicate that our received text has departed significantly from the supposed perfect alliteration of the original. Particularly the absence of alliteration has been viewed by the philologist as an opportunity for rewriting the offending passage not only to restore alliteration but to give a clearer meaning as well. Unfortunately, the resulting meanings have not always been substantially more satisfying than the originals.

Defective alliteration has been noted by Njarðvík in lines 1.4–5; 2.6; 7.5–6; 17.1–2; 26.1–2; 57.6; 62.3; 70.4–5; 75.4–6; 76.1–2 and 4–5; and 80.1–2 and 6.\(^{33}\) This is obviously a very small proportion of a poem with nearly five hundred lines. It would seem that the poet understood the rules of *ljóðaháttr* well, so that these few lapses may quite well have been due to errors introduced in later transmission. On the other hand, the text demonstrates such a surfeit of alliteration in places where it doesn’t belong, that the poet appears to me to


have been following his own ear for language more than any set rules of
poetics. Of the lines listed above as containing defective alliteration, all those
not given as pairs are defective because they contain too many alliterating
syllables. Hence the following full-lines are improper:

\begin{align*}
gestr & \text{ gangdi af gotu kom}-(2.6) \\
moludu & \text{ molld til matar}-(57.6) \\
their & \text{ voru villir vega}--(62.3) \\
undir & \text{ jllum ei uana}--(80.6).
\end{align*}

Of these lines only the first (2.6) appears to be defective in anything other than
containing an inessential alliteration. Yet even the awkward rhythm of that
line resulted in only one manuscript, JS 84, deleting the offending gangandi,
despite many manuscript variants of other words within the same line.\textsuperscript{34} An
extra alliteration must not have been too disturbing at least to copyists in the
modern era.

Superfluous alliteration is frequent in Sólarljóð, though it has not attracted
any special attention. Only the alliteration of stressed syllables normally
counts as alliteration, and unstressed syllables are generally ignored. Excess
alliteration occurs in Sólarljóð mostly in unstressed syllables where
alliteration is not significant under the traditional rules of Germanic verse.
Since the number of consonants is finite, some will naturally have to be
repeated, and in the case of vowels, extraneous alliteration may be hard to
avoid. Hence, much of this sort of alliteration may have been entirely
accidental. The superfluous alliteration in Sólarljóð is quite frequently
carried by pronouns and articles, and these do constitute an especially limited
field of choice. Yet whether intentional or accidental, excess alliteration is to
be avoided in ljóðaháttr.

Every rule has its exceptions, and Andreas Heusler concedes that

\begin{quote}
Auch dem Norden, selbst den Fürstendichtern, fehlen überschüssige
Anlaute nicht ganz....Ein wenig häufiger sind sie in den Vollzeilen des
\end{quote}

Spruchtons, denn die haben mehr Silben...Snorri als Gesetzgeber
duldet nur überschüssigen Vokalanlaut in schwachen Formwörtchen
('erlaubt, nicht formgerecht').

In Sölarljóð, however, excess alliteration seems to be used for ornamentation independent of the requirements of the basic Germanic alliterative verse form. In the fifth stanza, for example, the proper alliteration is as marked here:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Vpp} & \ hinn \ stod \\
\text{jllt} & \ hann \ hugdi \\
eigi & \ var \ \text{tharfsamliga thegit} \\
gind & \ hans \ guall \\
gofandi & \ mirdti \\
frodann & \ fiölvaran.
\end{align*}
\]

Yet this is not the only alliteration, and there appear to be other artistic devices at work in the stanza as well. Looking to syllables which cannot carry stress, the first long line also alliterates on \( h \):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Vpp} & \ hinn \ stod \\
\text{jllt} & \ hann \ hugdi.
\end{align*}
\]

Assuming a rather bad poet, “hinn” and “hann” could be accidental alliterations. But “hugdi” carries the \( h \) sound too far, given available synonyms. The full line also seems to have an extra alliteration binding it to the full line:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Vpp} & \ hinn \ stod \\
\text{jllt} & \ hann \ hugdi \\
eigi & \ var \ \text{tharfsamliga thegit}.
\end{align*}
\]

The alliteration of the diphthong \( ei \) with the vowels \( u \) and \( i \) may again not have been carefully planned, but it does contribute to the beauty of the poem.

Alliteration is not the only sonic device used in Sólarljóð by any means, although it is probably the only one for which even hypothetical rules may be enunciated. It may be too much to see internal end-rhyme in the final "froðann fjélvaran" of stanza five, for example, since the grammar leaves little choice. Yet if one looks at nasals throughout the stanza, it can be seen that they are enough to color the passage sonically:

Vpp hinn stod
jilt hann hugdi
eigi var tharfsamliga thegit
sind hans suall
sofandi mirdti
froðann fjélvaran.

This nasal undertone to the stanza could, perhaps, represent the snoring of the highwayman who is here struck in his sleep. The breathiness is amplified by frequent fricatives, shown here in Njarðvík’s standardized spelling:

Upp hinn stóð
illt hann hugði
eigi var tharfsamliga thegit;
sýnd hans svall
sofanda myrði
fróðan, fjölvaran.36

This overall breathy tone contrasts with the alliterating vowels and hs that mark with plosive force the abrupt, active movements of Gestr the stranger.

Throughout Sólarljóð it is clear that care has been given to overall acoustic harmony over and above the metric and alliterative requirements of ljóðaháttr. Sólarljóð is, after all, a beautiful poem and a work of art. To attempt now to find relationships between the sounds of the poem and its internal plot actions is admittedly risky, but authorial or editorial attention has obviously been given to the way the poem sounds. The author of

Sólarljóð probably did not violate Heusler’s rules for Germanic verse simply because he or she was a bad poet. The poem was obviously written to convey a religious message more than to justify any author’s position as skald. Additional ornamentation may break the rules, but it hardly detracts from the overall effect.

Missing alliteration is more disturbing than an occasional extra alliterating stress or any number of alliterating unstressed syllables. It is rare enough that it stands out as something not likely to have been a failing of the original author. Hence, it is tempting to assume the passages in question have been corrupted in transmission and to emend them so they alliterate properly. In the case of stanza seventy-six (about Bingvör and Listvör), where both long lines fail to alliterate and where the manuscripts show a great deal of variation even in the names of the characters involved, error seems quite likely. Yet in other instances strictly ornamental features may have replaced structural alliteration, either in the original composition, or as compensation for errors made in transmission.

Lines of Sólarljóð which have been viewed as problematic in terms of alliteration seem usually to be bound together by some other sonic device. The missing alliteration Njarðvík pointed out in 1.4–5 is present, if not quite conventional, in yfir and er, as discussed above. Likewise, in 17.1–2 (“A sic thau trudu / ok thottust ein vera”), there could be a similar alliteration on the function word á, as Bugge suggested, though Njarðvík most recently doubts it. Yet regardless of alliteration, the repetitive dental sounds within these two short lines give them an audible sense of unity.

The second helming of stanza seven has been viewed as defective ever since Bugge refused to accept that line six (“med almattkum gudi”) could alliterate on m. His reasoning seems to be that almáttkum is a single word that can only be alliterated on its initial a, as illustrated by the alliteration of the same

37 Sophus Bugge, Norraen Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 360.
word on its initial a in 17.6.39 Bugge emended the stanza by moving the word æ from line five ("hun skal æ lifa") to make it the initial word of line six. Unfortunately, to my modern ear at least, line six sounds better with the alliteration on m. The difficulty is in giving more stress to a preposition (með) than to God (guði), but the poet of Sólarljóð seems to have made little effort to avoid alliterating prepositions. Surely it is too much to expect any poet to have insisted on treating one word (almáttkum) the same way in all contexts. As for line five, it seems to have a crossed alliteration with line four: "i hreiniu lyfi / hun skal æ lifa." For lifa in line five to take full advantage of alliteration and ad nominatio with lifi in line four, it should be scanned as having resolved stress, with its two short syllables counting as one long one. For this the extra preceding syllable æ seems to help by slowing the progress of the line.

The first two short lines of stanza twenty-six (Reidi verk / thau thu unnit hefr) were found as early as the 1787 edition to be without alliteration. There unnit was emended to vunnit.40 Bugge, on the other hand, following an alternate suggestion from that earlier edition, writes that Reidíverk must be pronounced Vreiðíverk. He felt that the poem was too old for an initial vu combination to have been possible in Icelandic.41 Björn Ólsen later took a reverse position and instead emended unnit to runnit.42 As Njarðvík says, the stanza makes the best sense when left as it appears in the primary manuscript.43 Bugge noted the possibility in old heathen poetry of v alliterating with vowels,44 which would allow the alliteration "Reidi verk / thau thu unnit hefr." The ability of the semivowel v to alliterate with

39 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 356.
41 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 361.
42 Björn Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands 5,1 (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 37.
44 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 361.
vowels has long been a point of controversy in Norse poetry, but it would support the Sólarljóð poet's apparent technique.

Stanza twenty-six is the only one where an alliteration of $v$ with a vowel seems to be necessary to achieve primary alliteration. However, line 80.6 ("undir jillum ei uana") is more meaningful if vana (and not undir or ei) carries the stress of alliteration with illum. If $v$ does alliterate with vowels, there are many more of the excess alliterations for which the poet seems to strive. For example, the full line in stanza twenty-six (bæt thu ei jillu yfir) is then also linked to the two short lines. The examples of this sort of possibility are many throughout the poem, but since initial vowels and initial $v$ are common in any case, it would be difficult to find definite proof. Moreover, $v$ most commonly alliterates with another $v$ in Sólarljóð, indicating that it was not considered to be the same as a vowel. At best we are reminded that the audible harmony of the poem may once have been greater than it appears to be to the modern reader.

In the second helming of stanza 70, the text appears to be corrupted with various manuscript attempts to heal the lack of alliteration. The manuscript AM 166b, 8° reads

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lasu einglar} \\
\text{helgar bækr} \\
\text{ok himna skript yfir hófdi theim.}
\end{align*}
\]

It appears rhythmically that an additional short line could have been added (there are no line divisions in the manuscript), yet a three-stress full line is possible here. The lack of alliteration in the short lines cannot be repaired by any reasonable stretch of the imagination. Yet even here the poem is not without sonic ornamentation. The final assonance of einglar, helgar and bækr could provide an end rhyme compensatory for the lacking head rhyme. Likewise, there may be an attempt here to alliterate the $l$ of lasu with the internal $ls$ of einglar and helgar.

The remaining places where there is missing alliteration are 75.4–6 and 80.1–2. In the former instance there is a reasonably common alternate reading in
the manuscripts which replaces leïsa with an alliterating skilja. This may have been an emendation first made by Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík, since his manuscript AM 427 fol. appears to be the oldest to contain skilja. In stanza eighty Sofus Bugge added the word bólví to “Huoriu their bellt hafa / suæfr ok suæfrlogie,” so that the first short line reads “Hverju [bölvi]” in his edition. This emendation has been almost universally accepted since, usually without any notice of the fact that it was an emendation. Although the word hverju does constitute an adequate line of ljóðaháttr, it would be the only single-word line of the poem. It is also difficult to accept hafa as alliterating with it, though the writers have adjusted some of their manuscripts to try to facilitate such a reading. Bugge’s solution seems best.

That Sólarljóð has reached the present day in a corrupt state cannot be questioned. The presence of stanza eighty-three is proof of that, as is the existence of the other variations between existing manuscripts. On the other hand, there is no reason to assume the original to have been absolutely perfect. Sólarljóð appears to be mostly intact, but with a good deal of extraneous alliteration not consistent with the rules of Germanic prosody as stated by modern philologists. The author of Sólarljóð seems to have been a poet interested in the overall effect of his or her poem. Ornamentation of various types was used wherever it would contribute, and this seems to have been appreciated by the copyists who have made fewer alterations than one might expect. Aside from attempts to decode kennings and allegories used in the poem, the poetic techniques used in Sólarljóð have never been examined. Imagery has been handled only from a hermeneutic attempt to make sense of the poem. Prosody has been noted only insofar as Bergmann marked alliterations, Hollander examined full lines, and Fidjestøl touched on

46 Sophus Bugge, Norraen Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 370.
47 F. G. Bergmann, Les Chants de Söl (Strasbourg: Treuttel, 1858).
various structural techniques. There have been attempts by most scholars examining the poem to reconstruct missing alliteration. The most important of these are probably those by Bugge and Björn Ólsen.

### 2.2.3. Stanzaic Structure

The individual stanzas of *ljóðaháttr* are combined in *Sólarljóð* into a complete poem, at times as loosely as through the framework of a list (not unlike *Hávamál*), and at other times through the tight narrative linkage of continued plot action. *Sólarljóð* contains eighty-three stanzas in all, but the last stanza is surely a later addition to the poem. It is not included in all of the manuscripts. This last stanza introduces the idea that the poem’s speaker has appeared to the listener in a dream. Otherwise, it is not clear exactly how the dead man comes to address his son. He could have returned bodily, as a ghost, or in a vision. Perhaps this mystery provided the motive for a later copiest to have added the stanza. Indeed, the manuscripts which contain stanza eighty-three also tend to be those which include a reference in the poem’s title to the poem having been composed by Sæmund’s corpse on its bier, demonstrating a definite concern with how the poem was communicated. Unfortunately, the two stories are contradictory, unless viewed as a frame within a frame: a dead Sæmund sings a poem about his own dead father (Sigfús) who appears in the son’s post-mortem dream. *Sólarljóð* seems a more rounded whole without stanza eighty-three, and it is certainly more ambiguous without it, in keeping with the rest of the work.

Omitting the eighty-third stanza leaves the reference to the name of the poem (81.4) in the penultimate stanza, which seems to accord with a medieval Icelandic convention for naming poems. The name *Harmsól*, for example,

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50 Sophus Bugge, *Norren Fornkvædi* (Christiania: Malling, 1867)


is found in the sixty-fourth of the sixty-five stanzas of that poem.\textsuperscript{53} However, the strongest reason for believing stanza eighty-three to be a late addition is linguistic. The word Sólarljóð is treated as singular in the questionable stanza, while it is plural in stanza eighty-one. This was first noted by Sophus Bugge, who did not, however, consider it adequate grounds for omitting the stanza.\textsuperscript{54} The plural form is the older, treating ljóð as verses rather than as a poem made up of verses. Finnur Jónsson was of a different opinion than Bugge, and thought the entire stanza to be an interpolation from the sixteenth or seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{55} He considered the reference to "Sólarljóð saga" to also be suspicious.\textsuperscript{56} Jónsson gave no reason for his suspicion, but it was probably the balladesque nature of the phrase and the shift from poem to tale.

Despite agreeing that the final stanza is a late addition, I am opposed to omitting it from consideration as part of the poem, particularly as concerns making editions of Sólarljóð. It belongs to the poem we have received, regardless of what the original author intended. Furthermore, it stands as a reminder that the Sólarljóð we have is defective vis-à-vis that original composition. If the last stanza was added to the original Sólarljóð, others could have been interpolated as well. There seems an equal or greater chance that stanzas may have been omitted from the poem. The inclusion of stanza eighty-three should stand as a caveat against relying too heavily on the preserved text as a record of authorial intent, and it should especially limit numerological assumptions based on the number of lines or stanzas.

\textsuperscript{53} Finnur Jónsson, Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning (København: Gyldendal, 1912) A, 1: 571.

\textsuperscript{54} Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 370n.

\textsuperscript{55} Finnur Jónsson, Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie, vol. 2,1 (København: Gad, 1898) 129.

\textsuperscript{56} Finnur Jónsson, Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie, vol. 2,1 (København: Gad, 1898) 129n2.
2.2.4 Larger Units

Sólarljóð has been divided into various parts based on thematic content at least as early as B. C. Sandvig’s translation in 1783, before even the first edition of the poem appeared publicly in Icelandic.\footnote{B. C. Sandvig, \textit{Forsøg til en Oversættelse af Sæmunds Edda}, vol. 1 (København: Horrebow, 1783).} Sandvig divided \textit{Sólarljóð} into thirteen parts, each of which is given its own heading. Rask’s edition of 1818\footnote{[Rask, Rasmus, ed.], \textit{Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða ...ex recensione Erasmi Christiani Rask curavit Arv. Aug. Afzelius} (Holmiae: Elemianis, 1818).} was the first to print the Icelandic poem with divisions marked. Rask separated the exempla from each other with lines, but made no explanation of the divisions. Vigfusson and Powell went so far as to divide \textit{Sólarljóð} into two entirely different poems, with approximately the first thirty-two stanzas attributed to a separate work they named “The Christian’s Wisdom.” Eugen Mogk also maintained the position that \textit{Sólarljóð} was a combination of a true \textit{Sólarljóð} with a large amount of extraneous material added.\footnote{Eugen Mogk, \textit{Geschichte der norwegisch-isländischen Literatur}, 2d. ed. (Strassburg: Trübner, 1904) 713.} Finnur Jónsson last argued this position against Paasche, Ólsen, and Falk in 1916.\footnote{Finnur Jónsson, “Sólarljóð,” \textit{Edda} 5 (1916): 143.} For the most part, however, \textit{Sólarljóð} has been viewed as a single poem, and there has not been any great controversy as to where thematic or narrative shifts take place. It is the late Bjarne Fidjestøl who has made the most thorough analysis of the structure within \textit{Sólarljóð}.

In his \textit{Sólarljóð. Tyding og folkingsgrunnlag}, Fidjestøl divides \textit{Sólarljóð} into three main parts, before the repeated line “Frá thvi er at segja” beginning stanzas thirty-three and fifty-three.\footnote{Bjarne Fidjestøl, \textit{Sólarljóð} (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 19.} The three parts deal respectively with life, death and the time after death. Fidjestøl finds the three parts to be symmetrical and of equal weight, though the central section is only twenty stanzas long, compared to thirty-two and thirty for the first and third parts respectively (omitting stanza eighty-three from consideration). The central
section is also divisible into three, with the anaphoric “Sól ek sá” stanzas surrounded by two other subparts, those dealing with illness and death, and the later separation of the soul from the body. The seven central stanzas mark the poetic climax of the poem, the departure from life. Hence, they are stressed through rhetoric, imagery and their central location.\textsuperscript{62}

Fidjestøl shows that the first main part is divisible into two subparts, the exempla of stanzas one through twenty-four, and the next eight stanzas dealing with the seven counsels. This structure has, of course, been noted since the beginning of modern interest in \textit{Sólarljóð}, but Fidjestøl has made the further observation that the five narratives alternate between (three) examples showing death and (two) showing a change in condition. Narratives one, three and five contrast with two and four. This same pattern of alternation between units of three and two can be seen also within the first narrative, where the greppr is discussed in three units (stanzas 1–2, 4, and 6–7), while the gestr is told about in stanza three, and later in stanza five. The central plot element, the greppr’s conversion in stanza four, is again in the central unit within the narrative.\textsuperscript{63}

The climax, or most important element religiously, is always at the center of the poem’s structure. It is surrounded by an alternating progression of events. Fidjestøl refers to this pattern of alternation as consisting of “symmetriske oddetalsgrupper,” suggesting that there might be numerological principles involved.\textsuperscript{64} An alternation based simply on medieval dialectic seems more likely, however, since the alternations are always between conceptual units of unequal stanzaic length. While the numbers seven and nine are important to the poem, there seems to be little actual counting involved.


\textsuperscript{63} Bjarne Fidjestøl, \textit{Sólarljóð} (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 20–2.

\textsuperscript{64} Bjarne Fidjestøl, \textit{Sólarljóð} (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 22.
Another principle of construction discussed by Fidjestøl is the “tretal med attervekt.” As in a fairytale, things tend to happen in threes, with the most important or serious occurrence being last of the three. This was Paasche’s discovery, a clear example being the increasing punishments meted to the sinners in the opening narratives: banishment (stanza 9), death (stanza 14), and hell (stanza 18). The narrator’s life, death, and afterlife would be another such trinity.

There are definite parallels between the narratives at the beginning of Sólarljóð and the elements of advice, and then later the actions seen in heaven and hell. Fidjestøl explores these with the purpose of demonstrating once and for all that Sólarljóð is a single poem with overall unity. While these parallels do contribute to his demonstration of unity, they do not provide an obvious structural pattern as is evident in the larger segments of the poem. Nonetheless, one may safely say that Sólarljóð has basically a tripartite system of construction, but within this an alternating and symmetrical progression through contrasting units.

2.3. Date

There have thus far been no particularly satisfying grounds for assigning any date for the original composition of Sólarljóð. The author of Sólarljóð has been recognized as a Christian since at least the time of Jón Ólafrsson of Grunnavík (1705–1779), so the poem has never been assigned dates earlier than the presence of Christianity in Scandinavia. The traditional view was that Sólarljóð reflects a mixture of Christianity and heathen Ásatru that must correspond to a hypothetical period during conversion when people were confusing the two religions with one another. As scholarship has continued, however, the date of composition for Sólarljóð has continually been moved ever closer to our own time.

65 Bjarne Fidjestøl, Sólarljóð (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 22.
2.3.1. Before 1000

The earliest date which has been given for the composition of Sólarljóð is "den første kristelige Tid i Norden, det 9de eller 10de Aarhundrede," which was suggested by M. B. Landstad.\(^68\) Landstad believed Sólarljóð to have been closely related to the Norwegian poem "Draumekvædi," with both poems based on an actual dream by a Scandinavian missionary. This missionary, the apostle of the North, was one Father Ansgarius (Aasgardson in "Draumekvædi"), who lived from 801 to 865.\(^69\) The subject of Sólarljóð would thus be no older than AD 806, since Ansgarius is supposed to have had his first visionary dream at the age of five.\(^70\) The vision was versified perhaps later by both Icelandic and Norwegian skalds. Landstad was not able to shed much light on the alleged links between Ansgarius, Sólarljóð, and "Draumekvædi."

2.3.2. Between 1000 and 1100

Most of the early datings of Sólarljóð are concentrated in the period after AD 1000, when Iceland officially adopted Christianity as its national religion. In fact, the year 1000 often seems to be treated as though it were a terminus ante quem for the presence of Christianity in Iceland. Hence, a date soon after AD 1000 was often set for the composition of Sólarljóð. Rudolf Keyser in particular is often cited as giving Sólarljóð such an early date,\(^71\) although he mentions no year specifically. He puts the poem on the border between heathendom and Christianity because it blends heathen and Christian concepts. Keyser doesn’t define this border as the precise chronological point of AD 1000, but he does say that it lies before Sæmund’s day in the second half

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\(^{68}\) M. B. Landstad, Norske Folkeviser (Christiania: Tønsberg, 1853) 90.

\(^{69}\) M. B. Landstad, Norske Folkeviser (Christiania: Tønsberg, 1853) 90.

\(^{70}\) M. B. Landstad, Norske Folkeviser (Christiania: Tønsberg, 1853) 90–1.

of the eleventh century. Keyser repeats Jón Ólafsson's claim of the author being Christian because of his invocation of the trinity, but continues:

Men paa den anden Side minde Udtrykkene idelig om Asatroen og det paa en saadan Maade, at den maa antages at have staaet høist levende for Digterens Bevidsthed. Han har ikke betragtet den som en blot Lærdomsskat fra Fortiden, hvilken han som Skald kunde benytte i Kunstens Tjeneste; han maa have levet sig ind i den, have været gjennemtrængt af dens Aand og have betragtet den med en vis ærefrygt, skjønt han ej længer var dens Tilhænger. Man maa ved at læse Digset uvilkaarlig hensætte sig i en Tid, da Christendommen endnu var ny blandt Nordmændene, da de vel bekjendte sig til dens Hovedlærdomme, men dog i mange Maader hængte ved den gamle Tro og ikke kunde ganske løsrive sig fra dens Anskuelser eller ubetinget fordømme den i dens Heelhed,—da man endnu tillagde Asatroen en vis Kraft ved Siden af Christendommen og overhovedet betragtede denne med halv hedenske øyne,—da man i Jomfru Maria, de christne Helgener, Helgeninder og Engle saa en christelig Aabenbaring af Hedendommens Diser og Følgeaander, og da man tænkte sig Døden som en Virkning af den mørke Hels Kraft, om ogsaa Sjælen for hen til et christeligt Paradiis eller Helvede. Man tvinges næsten til i Digteren at tænke sig en til Christendommen omvendt Asadyrker, der vel er sin nye Tro af Hjertet hengiven og dybt føler dens Forrin for den ældre, men dog ikke formaa at udrive af sin Aand den tidligere Alders hellige Minder eller forhindre dem i at blande sig med hans christelige Følelser. Denne Omstændighed giver Digset en ganske


særegen Interesse, der forøges ved den fromme christelige Aand, som
vaar gjennem det Hele, og dets mange digteriske Skjønheder.74

There can be no denying that this unusual mixture of Christianity and Ásatrú
has been a great source of the interest in Sólarljóð over the years. Yet despite
Keyser’s eloquent argument, such a mixture does not necessarily require any
personal ambivalence on the part of the author. The author, in his capacity as
skald, could quite well have been using heathen imagery simply in the
service of his art. That is, after all, precisely what the Christian Snorri
Sturluson seems to urge in his Edda, so the idea is hardly inconceivable.
Likewise, Icelandic writers may still use heathen imagery today, a thousand
years after the conversion, though such writers probably do so more often for
reasons of tradition than because of any former personal heathenism or
because of any influence of current Icelandic Ásatrú. The idea that Sólarljóð
represents a mixture of Christian and heathen beliefs has been a persistent
one, though it has lost favor as a basis for dating the poem.

A. C. Bang cited Sólarljóð as evidence of an upswing in religious belief during
the eleventh century, saying “At Solarljóð maa være affattet et godt stykke
nede i det 11 aahr., synes at fremgaa af vers 74, hvor talen er om martyrer, og
som vistnok forudsætter, at dyrkelsen af disse er bleven almindelig i Norge
og paa Island....”75 The difficulty with this argument is that whether or not
martyrs may have been regularly venerated on Iceland before the eleventh
century, they were certainly important to Continental Christianity since the
earliest times. Christian traditions from abroad could have been reflected in
the work of any Icelandic poet. The Catholic Church was indeed universal.

A more precise theological dating might come from the treatment of victims
as reflected in the narrative of the greppr and the gastr. There the sins of one
killed innocently seem to be taken over by his murderer (stanza 6). Not only

Videnskabelighed og Literatur i Middelalderen (Christiania: Malling, 1866)
260–1.

75 A[nton] Chr[istian] Bang, Udsigt over den norske Kirkes Historie under
Katholicismen (Kristiania: Cammermeyer, 1887) 82, n. 1.
is a murdered man granted the same purgation through blood which was
generally reserved for those martyred specifically on account of their
Christian faith, but his sins are thereafter attributed to the murderer instead,
at least if one reads the passage as implying a literal transference. This would
be a much rarer theological claim that might pinpoint a time far more
accurately, should such a belief have had any currency beyond this particular
poem. However, theological beliefs do not seem likely to supply very precise
limits for establishing chronology. Too many people have shared the same
ideas during entirely different eras. The chariots rising to heaven in stanza
74, for example, recall 2 Kings 2:11.

Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell also date Sólarljóð (or the poems
“Sun-Song,” and “Christian’s Wisdom” which they believed to constitute it)
to the eleventh century. They say, “that our poems are old (eleventh
century?) there can be no doubt; they are in an old metre, and preserve the
quantity accurately.”76 They felt Sólarljóð to be connected with Völuspá, the
author of Sólarljóð perhaps having known the Eddic poem. Sólarljóð is a
Christian poem which mixes in heathen elements in a manner much as that
in which the heathen poem blends in Christian elements. The motive for
Vigfusson and Powell assigning the eleventh-century date was that “the
subject of the Sun-Song was a favourite one in the tenth and eleventh
centuries, and we have a number of mediæval visions, foregangers of the
great Comedy which has obscured them all.”77 Furthermore, Sólarljóð was
felt by Vigfusson to have been a product of the early Irish church.

The Vision is quite consonant to the early Irish Saints’ Lives, and the
whole poem bears the imprint of a time when heathendom was yet a
power in the land. The morals too, drawn from stories hinted at as

76 Guðbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, Corpus Poeticum Boreale

77 Guðbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, Corpus Poeticum Boreale
well known, do not refer to Icelandic personages or history. We should place this lay in the latter part of the eleventh century.78

2.3.3. Between 1100 and 1200

The next latest date to have been proposed for Sólarljóð is the one which was actually ascribed earliest. The legend about Sólarljóð having been written by Sæmund79 would place the poem in the first half of the twelfth century, since Sæmund fróði Sigfússon died in 1133. A large number of manuscripts repeat the attribution to Sæmund in their rubric to Sólarljóð, and it is most likely due to a belief in Sæmund’s authorship that the poem has so often been included in the so-called Edda of Sæmund. The folk belief must have been quite pervasive, even if it originated only in the seventeenth century, as was suggested by Vigfusson and Powell.80

F. G. Bergmann accepted this traditional attribution of Sólarljóð to Sæmund,81 although he presumably credits the then-living Sæmund rather than the corpse who was to have recited the poem three days after death.82 No additional arguments are given, and Bergmann seems to credit Sæmund simply to maintain the status quo, inasmuch as any contrary evidence was thought inadequate.83 The burden of proof for overturning Sæmund’s authorship not having been met, Bergmann reads the poem in the light of that authorship. He goes so far as to speculate that Sæmund may actually

81 F. G. Bergmann, Les Chants de Sôl (Strasbourg: Treuttel, 1858) 17.
82 Jón Árnason: Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintyri (2 vols, Leipzig 1862–4) 1: 490.
83 F. G. Bergmann, Les Chants de Sôl (Strasbourg: Treuttel, 1858) 24.
have been visited in his dreams by the ghost of his father Sigfús.\textsuperscript{84} Finn Magnusen had also supported Sæmund’s authorship.\textsuperscript{85}

James Beresford, incidentally, associated the plot of the opening narrative of Sólarljóð with a rise in cruelty by rich Icelanders taking place just after the death of Sæmund (in 1133).\textsuperscript{86} However, he continued to refer to Sólarljóð as a poem of the eleventh century in the title of his book. This is perhaps another example of the poem’s great prophetic power.

Finnur Jónsson dates Sólarljóð a half-century later than the lifetime of Sæmund, positively to the second half of the twelfth century, perhaps as late as 1200.

\begin{quote}
Intet i sprog, versform eller fremstilling giver noget holdepunkt for antagelsen af en senere oprindelse. Med hensyn til versform er det digtet i korrekt ljóðahátr og hører for så vidt til den efterklassiske, lærende Eddakvadsdigtning, med den forskel, at her er indholdet kristeligt.\textsuperscript{87}
\end{quote}

Jónsson thought the author of Sólarljóð to have known Hávamál in written form, and he lists other works which may have been influential.\textsuperscript{88}

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\textsuperscript{84} F. G. Bergmann, Les Chants de Sôl (Strasbourg: Treuttel, 1858) 45.

\textsuperscript{85} Finn Magnusen, trans., Den Ældre Edda, 4 vols. (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal 1821–3) 1: xxv.

\textsuperscript{86} James Beresford, The Song of the Sun. A Poem of the eleventh century; from the more ancient Icelandic Collection called The Edda (London: J. Johnson, 1805) 49, n. 1.

\textsuperscript{87} Finnur Jónsson, Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie, vol. 2,1 (København: Gad, 1898) 132.

\textsuperscript{88} Finnur Jónsson, Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie, vol 2,1 (København: Gad, 1898) 132–3.
2.3.4. Between 1200 and 1300

Eugen Mogk makes Sólarljóð yet another half-century younger, dating it to the first half of the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{89} He gives no internal reason for attaching such a date, except that the source for the poem must have been a legend about a soul wandering through heaven, hell and purgatory, "wie sie im 13. Jahrh. ziemlich verbreitet und wie sie nach Island von Irland und England aus gekommen waren."\textsuperscript{90} This popularity of similar vision literature is the same reason that Vigfusson and Powell had thought Sólarljóð to have come from the eleventh century (and not the thirteenth).\textsuperscript{91}

Fredrik Paasche also dates Sólarljóð to the first half of the thirteenth century. He argues that the poem could not have been composed before the end of the twelfth century because Sólarljóð presupposes certain developments that took place during that century. By 1200, however, the stage had been set.\textsuperscript{92} Paasche feels that Sólarljóð has been influenced by vision literature, even though he admits that vision literature has been around at least as long as Gregory's \textit{Dialogues}, and that Sólarljóð itself, taken as a whole, is not vision literature. Perhaps homilitic literature was more important than vision. Christian images and modes of speech seem to have been absorbed by the author from both genres, as well as from the Bible itself, although no single work can be identified as a significant direct influence.

For Paasche the most important influence on Sólarljóð was the Icelandic dream poetry which arose around 1200 during the tribulations of the


\textsuperscript{90} Eugen Mogk, \textit{Geschichte der norwegisch-isländischen Literatur}, 2d. ed. (Strassburg: Trübner, 1904) 159.


\textsuperscript{92} Fredrik Paasche, \textit{Hedenskap og Kristendom} (Oslo: Aschæhug, 1948) 205–6.
Sturlung era. Although, again, no direct influence is suggested, Paasche mentions *Hrafn Sveinbjørnssons saga*, with its dream of Eyjólf Snorrason, as containing elements slightly reminiscent of *Sólarljóð*. The two works also share the name Vígolf. Yet it is the mere fact that *Sólarljóð* uses the frame of a dream that makes Paasche attach the poem to thirteenth-century dream literature.

The combined influence of religious literature and dream literature are seen by Paasche to have acted on a poem which was written in order to teach Christian principles. The third and perhaps more obvious influence is the same old Icelandic heathen tradition used by others to assign *Sólarljóð* an early date. Paasche believed this heathen mythology to have been incorporated for artistic purposes. He says,

Selv søker Sólarljóð å gi sig utseende av høi elde. Dets rytme, dets stil er gamle dagers. Dets fortellinger minner om sagatid (Svafaør og Skardeiinn, som gikk på holm—Skalde-Ravn og Gunnlaug ormstunga). Men nettop ved år 1200 står vi inne i den lærde tid da det gamle stoff og og den gamle stil var kommet til verdighet i åndslivet."

*Sólarljóð*, then, was specifically intended to look old, and to use ancient techniques, and this was something that didn’t occur in Christian religious writing until 1200. *Sólarljóð* is not partly heathen because of any incomplete conversion. It instead represents a much later renaissance of preChristian literary techniques. Finally, Paasche finds the thirteenth-century political power struggles in Iceland to be a possible motive for the composition of *Sólarljóð*.

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Hjalmar Falk pushes the earliest possible date for Sólarljóð forward another fifty years to 1250. He discusses stanza fifty-nine (his sixty), in which men’s faces are marked with blood. He believes this illustrates a punishment for sorcery. Because, he claims, persecution of heretics and witch trials began only around the year 1250, “vilde denne opfatning rykke avfattelsen av vort digt ned i anden halvdel av 13de aahrundrede,—en kronologi som ogsaa andre betragtninger gjør høist sandsynlig.” As part of his argument, however, Falk mentions the punishment of sorcerers and sorcereresses in St. Peter’s Apocalypse, where they are punished on wheels of fire. Since St. Peter’s Apocalypse dates to around 150 AD, there is clearly precedence for the punishment of witches long before the date of 1250 set by Falk. In any event, the punishments in Sólarljóð take place in hel, not in temporal Iceland. The Bible itself also condemns sorcery (Exod. 22:18, Deut. 18:10), so any Christian could be expected to write in opposition to it at any time. Most damaging to Falk’s case, however, is the obscurity of any direct connection between Sólarljóð and witchcraft.

The persecution of sorcerers was only one of Falk’s bases for dating Sólarljóð, but it was the one producing the latest and most precise date. Falk also takes up Paasche’s arguments placing Sólarljóð during the thirteenth-century Icelandic renaissance. The archaic style and heathen mythic content of Sólarljóð have their parallel in Svipsdagsmál:

I begge tilfælde foreligger en bevidst kunstretning, et forsøk paa at digte i oldtidsformer og derved forlønne visdomsordene og det mytiske inhold med et skjæv av ærverdig ælde. Dette er et særkende for det 13de aahrhundreds landskne renaissance,—for 1200 er en slik efterdigtning utænkelig, den peker hen paa en tid da de gamle traditioner ikke længer var fuldt levende, men maatte søkes i bøker. Alene paa Island var denne gamle digtning kjendt, her maa altsaa

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To this may be added the other arguments Paasche had made. *Sólarljóð* takes the form of a dream poem as was popular during the Sturlung era in Iceland and elsewhere in Europe. At this time there was a strengthening of the external power of Christendom at the same time there was an explosion of sin and violence, and these factors could have motivated the writing of a poem such as *Sólarljóð*. Falk admits that there are no allusions in the poem to any events taking place during the time of its writing, but he feels the Sturlung era is nonetheless reflected there. There may also be signs of the religious reforms which took place under Arne thорláksson, who became bishop of Skálholt in 1269.\(^\text{100}\)

Another interesting basis Falk proposes for dating *Sólarljóð* is the fact that Snorri Sturluson, who died in 1241, seems not to have known it. *Sólarljóð* is not cited in Snorri’s Edda, “men at et slikt kvad som Sólarljóð kan ha været digitet i Snorres levetid, uten at han fik kunskap derom, er litet rimelig.”\(^\text{101}\) It does seem that *Sólarljóð* might be the sort of poem in which Snorri would take an interest. It uses the old gods as Snorri recommended, but in somewhat new ways. As mentioned above, *Sólarljóð* also violates his rules on extraneous alliteration. If *Sólarljóð* had existed during Snorri’s lifetime, it might have provided an excellent bad example for him to discuss. On the other hand, Snorri’s writing about the heathen gods could well have provided the inspiration for using them in a Christian poem. Unfortunately, not much can be proven through this *argumentum ex silentio*. Even of the poems of the elder Edda Snorri mentioned only six,\(^\text{102}\) and he cited only the

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\(^{102}\) F. G. Bergmann, *Les Chants de Sôl* (Strasbourg: Treuttel, 1858) 19.
chief skalds of the past, not contemporary bad examples. The author of Sölarljóð was probably significant neither as a political figure nor as a skald, and so would have been unlikely to have attracted Snorri’s attention had they indeed been contemporaries.

The strongest argument Falk makes for dating Sölarljóð is that it has borrowed from Hugsvinnsmál. Falk cites fourteen parallel passages, some of which may be questionable individually, but which together make a strong case for a relationship between Sölarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál. Falk concludes that Hugsvinnsmál must have been fresh in the mind of the author who composed Sölarljóð. Since Hugsvinnsmál had been dated by Finnur Jónsson to the thirteenth century, and probably the latter half (he at one point says “ikke ældre end fra 14. årh.”), Falk concludes that Sölarljóð must have been written more recently than 1250. The difficulty with this approach is that Sölarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál have been used to date each other in circular arguments failing to pinpoint a date for either. Furthermore, as Njarðvík has pointed out, Hugsvinnsmál could just as well have borrowed from Sölarljóð as the other way around. (The relationship of these two poems will be discussed further in chapter five.)

Björn Ólsen took up Falk’s method of comparing Sölarljóð to other poems in an attempt to establish a date. He believed the similarity of Sölarljóð to Hávamál to indicate that the author of Sölarljóð knew the Eddic poem, so that Sölarljóð must be younger than Hávamál. This relative age had usually been assumed from the Edda’s supposed ancient, pre-Christian origins, although Vigfusson had been convinced that three stanzas from Sölarljóð (or

103 Hjalmar Falk, Sölarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter II. Hist.-filos. Klasse, 1914. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 57.

104 Hjalmar Falk, Sölarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter II. Hist.-filos. Klasse, 1914. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 58.


107 Björn Ólsen, Sölarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands 5,1 (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 58.
“Christian’s Wisdom”) had somehow been included in Hávamál.Ólfr Another eddic work known by the Sólarljóð poet must have been Svipdagsmál, including both Fjölsvinsmál, and Grógaldr.Ólfr Ölsen agreed with Falk that there was borrowing also from Hugsvinsmál. However, he went further to conclude on the basis of stylistic similarity that both Sólarljóð and Hugsvinsmál had been written by the same person.Ólfr Sólarljóð was considered a little younger. Ölsen dated both works to the end of the thirteenth century.Ólfr That Sólarljóð could not be older than the end of the thirteenth century was concluded by similarities in content to works of known date. Ölsen believed the poet to have known Alexanders saga from 1262 and Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu from the last years of the 13th century. He does admit, however, that an older Alexander could have been known in Latin, and Gunnlaug from some earlier oral form.Ólfr Unfortunately, the connection of Sólarljóð to these sources is tenuous at best. To imagine two men killing each other over a woman, for example, one hardly needs to have read Gunnlaugs saga.

Ölsen’s final argument for setting a late date for Sólarljóð is linguistic. The form munadar (10.1) is not recorded before the late thirteenth century.Ólfr The use of svikit (6.6) for the older svikvit dates only to the second quarter of the thirteenth century. Útan (44.6) for older útan is not older than the second

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109 Björn Ólfrn, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands 5,1 (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 71.
110 Björn Ólfrn, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands 5,1 (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 68.
111 Björn Ólfrn, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands 5,1 (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 72.
112 Björn Ólfrn, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands 5,1 (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 72.
113 Björn Ólfrn, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands 5,1 (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 29.
half of the thirteenth century, and gá (25.6) for ganga is met only after 1300.114 The difficulty with such linguistic dating is, as Njarðvík has mentioned, that the manuscripts are all from the seventeenth century or later. They all bear features of more recent times.115 Furthermore, in the case of ganga, it fits the meter of 25.6 better than does the actual gá, and the vowel length of utan is also debatable in the context of Sólarljóð metrics. It is not clear what stood in the original. In any event, no linguistic proofs of age have yet seemed convincing.

2.3.5. After 1300

The most recent date assigned to Sólarljóð has been the fourteenth century. George S. Tate states that "an argument can be made for a fourteenth-century date,"116 but he nowhere explains what such an argument might be.

2.3.6. Current Arguments

The trend for assigning more and more recent dates to Sólarljóð seems to have reversed with the most recent full analysis. Njórdur Njarðvík has moved the assigned date of Sólarljóð back to the first half of the thirteenth century, namely to 1210–1250. Sólarljóð’s similarities to Swipdagsmál have lead Njarðvík to the assumption that Swipdagsmál, thought to have been composed around 1200 (but with one admitted assignation to the late thirteenth century), has been an influence on the composition of Sólarljóð. Other works which may have exerted an influence—Leiðarvísan, Hármsól, the Skipspredikun in AM 673a 4°, Eyrjól Snorramson’s dream, and Sverri’s saga—are all from before 1210. The Icelandic translation of Duggals Leiza (Thurkill’s Vision) could be as late as 1263, but Sólarljóð’s author could have known it in an earlier Latin version.117

114 Björn Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Saðn til sögu Íslands 5,1 (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 72–3.
116 Tate, George S. “Sólarljóð” Dictionary of the Middle Ages. 358.
Njarðvík assumes that Hugsvinnsmál is the borrower rather than the lender of what it has in common with Sólarljóð. He cites Hugo Gering as saying Hugsvinnsmál cannot be younger than the thirteenth century on the basis of its verse technique and its use of the negating suffixes -a and -att which vanish from poetry during the course of that century. Furthermore, the translator treated v as a semi-vowel, something which also precludes any date more recent than the thirteenth century.

Njarðvík seeks works which may have been based on Sólarljóð to establish a terminus post quem for the poem, but has found only a similar line from Líknarbraut in addition to Hugsvinnsmál. Instead he bases his cut-off point of 1250 on the religious revival taking place after 1200 under the leadership of bishop Thorlákr Thórhallsson. He gives examples of other religious literature from that period, and suggests that Paasche may have been right in seeing an influence from the troubles of the Sturlung era.

Njarðvík sees Sólarljóð as representing a gathering point for Icelandic literary traditions. Older genres come together in this poem and form an inspiration for later works. Sólarljóð is related to the Edda through its lyrical form. It can be taken as a given, he says, that Hávamál was the model, unlike the usual Christian panegyric poetry using dróttkvætt verse.

Man skulle kunna säga att Sólarljóð utgör ett slags slutfas i eddatraditionen inom poesin. Med dem får eddaklibrenchens form

underordna sig den kristna världsbilden. Man kan därför anta att Sólaryljóð har dragit viss fördel av asatron gamla kväden, att dikten därifrån har erhållit en enkel elegans i framställning och form, en tankens renhet och en anspråkslös, lugn behärskning.¹²³

Together with the form of the Edda and the point of view of Christian panegyric, Njarðvík believes Sólaryljóð to have combined also the purpose of thydingar helgar, or the translation and interpretation of Christian writings.¹²⁴ These three genres from the twelfth century join in Sólaryljóð, but only the religious poetry survives Sólaryljóð, and in a much inferior form until its renewal in Lilja.

As Njörður Njarðvik has pointed out, the reasonable timespan within which Sólaryljóð could have been written covers a period of three hundred years.¹²⁵ It is a difficult poem to try to date. There is no original autograph manuscript to provide physical evidence. There are no references to the poem in contemporary accounts. There is no mention within the poem of historical events that could be dated. Sólaryljóð can only be dated on the basis of literary influence or internal linguistic evidence.

The works which have been suggested as possible literary influences have been discussed by Njörður Njarðvik in chapter five of his dissertation.¹²⁶ These works may share some language, often demonstrating nothing more than that a single word was in use with a similar meaning somewhere else within the corpus of Old Icelandic literature. It is amazing that coincidence has not produced more linguistic parallels. Particularly with an alliterative verse form such as that used by Sólaryljóð, one would expect to find a large number of formulaic phrases shared in common with other alliterative works, just on the basis of a shared linguistic heritage. The phrase "Fie og fiorvi," for example, occurs twice in Sólaryljóð (in 1.1 and 64.3) and has natural

enough parallels in Icelandic law and proverbs. This particular phrase has parallels even beyond Icelandic, as demonstrated by the “feoh ond feorh” of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and the hypothetical Frisian parallel which has been suggested. Certainly in the instance of the Old English or Old Frisian, there is not much case for claiming direct borrowings. Yet most of the similarities so far found consist of no closer relationship than Sólarljóð’s “at themy myndi heill hrapa” (9.3) bears to the “ill er fyr heill at hrapa” of Reginsmál 25, as now easily evident thanks to Njarðvík’s demonstration. Only the parallels to Hugsvinnsmál are entirely convincing, since there are several exact phrases shared in addition to more shared words and similar ideas. Sólarljóð seems to be an unusually original work.

The dating of Sólarljóð according to shared ideas and motifs is not likely to be productive. The poem is Christian and reflects medieval Christian beliefs and language. It thus shares much in common with every other piece of Christian writing. Njarðvík has made a stanza-by-stanza list of works reflected in Sólarljóð. It shows that, aside from the Edda, Sólarljóð has been mostly influenced by the Bible, by homilies (which themselves reflect the Bible), or by sagas representing Christian legend. What is not specifically Christian tends to accord with universal folk motif. Sólarljóð is reminiscent of visions and trips to the underworld. It is not especially reminiscent of any particular vision or trip to the underworld.

The attempts to date Sólarljóð through genre are not likely to produce much precision, and thus far part of the difficulty has been in determining what the genre of Sólarljóð actually is. Most analyses of Sólarljóð have begun with certain preconceptions about what the poem is in terms of literary genre. In the beginning, it was thought to be part of the Edda, so research consisted mostly in explaining why Sólarljóð was too Christian and too recent to fit.

127 Whitelock, Dorothy, ed. and trans., The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (***)
Later, because of the discovery of "Draumekvædi," Sólaljóð was thought to be a dream poem, and to belong to a period which was especially productive of literature containing dreams. This has continued even after the final stanza, the only one with any reference to a dream, has been universally accepted as spurious. Indeed, if the use of a dream framework could be used to date Sólaljóð to the thirteenth century when dream sequences were especially popular in the sagas, then one could conclude that stanza eighty-three was added in that century to a poem written earlier. No one has yet made that claim. As far as concrete relationships to any specific literary dreams, it is perhaps not too surprising that the only parallels found have been themes of such a universal nature that they cannot demonstrate any definite literary influences.

Finally, Sólaljóð, has been considered as an example of vision literature. Sólaljóð shares a visit to the afterworld with many visions (some of which do occur in dreams), yet in other ways it is striking how unlike most vision literature Sólaljóð remains. Peter Dinzelbacher has given a good definition of vision,\textsuperscript{131} comprising five general characteristics that one can argue Sólaljóð to contain. These include —1) a transformation in space (from earth to hel), —2) a superhuman power (the norms, God?), —3) describability in images (the punishments seen)—4) ecstasy or dream (Sólaljóð's weak point), and —5) a revelation (of the afterlife to father and to son). The lack of a clear ecstasy or dream in Sólaljóð has resulted in stanza eighty-three having been added to the poem. There are clearly reasons to argue against Sólaljóð being a vision. Most important, the visionary elements constitute only a rather small part of the poem as a whole. But assuming Sólaljóð nevertheless to contain a vision, little assistance in dating the poem is thereby gained. Dating by genre is just as difficult with visions as with dreams, because both dreams and visions have had a long and stable history in literature since well before Christianity. Perhaps the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries may have represented something of a peak, but it would

be too much to assign an unknown vision to that time period on this basis alone. Rather than looking at vision literature as a genre, the images used in specific examples of vision literature must be sought to provide evidence of concrete literary influences.

The father in Sólarljóð sees some of the typical literary images of the afterlife: tortures, heat and cold, flying souls, rivers and flames, but there are no bridges, no stench of hell, and no clearly identifiable demons. There is no real framework for the journey, and there is no guide. There is a dreamlike obscurity to the entire episode. Thus far only Thurkill’s Vision (as first noted by Bugge\textsuperscript{132}), seems to have any unique element in common with Sólarljóð. Flames are universal, but to be specifically clothed in them, indeed kymiliga (66.5), does recall the ludicrous scene of the proud man of Thurkill’s Vision. The connected visionary admonition that Thurkill must warn the living has its clear parallel in Sólarljóð as well, though it is hardly unique. On the other hand, even Thurkill’s diabolical theater is not entirely without its early parallels.\textsuperscript{133}

The genre which may be most appropriate to Sólarljóð is gnomic or didactic poetry. Parallels with Hugsvinnsmál and Hávamál include gnomic content as well as specific vocabulary and the ljóðaháttr verse form. This genre of wisdom literature is currently receiving much scholarly attention, primarily due to interest in Hugsvinnsmál and the Disticha Catonis, as well as debate over the dependence of Hávamál on the same Latin work. Unfortunately, the Disticha Catonis would have exerted its influence during the entire period of Latin education and culture in Iceland. Wisdom literature furthermore tends to be rather universal, so that the most supposedly pagan proverbs from the Edda do not sound substantially different from those in the Bible’s book of Proverbs or Ecclesiasticus. The wisdom genre is pre-Christian, and the influence of Cato specifically would have been felt since the opening of formal schools in the early twelfth century, if not already by the missionary


efforts of the late tenth century. Hence, placement of Sólarljóð within the genre of gnomic poetry restricts its possible date of composition very little.

Dating by historical connections has not been productive and is unlikely to become so. There is no mention in Sólarljóð of any historical event. At most there may be clues to contemporary burial practices. The poem's existence means only that there was one educated person inspired to write a Christian poem using traditional Icelandic forms and imagery in addition to traditional Christian concepts. Sólarljóð does not represent a movement, particularly in the absence of any other similar poem. The sins criticised within the poem are universal Christian failings and not especially indicative of widespread contemporary acts. It is a common characteristic of religious writers that their own time is always viewed as history's most sinful, if perhaps not always the most violent.

To properly date Sólarljóð, there needs to be a thorough examination of the language in which it is written. This has been hampered so far because it has been unclear which manuscripts might most accurately contain the original features. AM 166b 8° has long been considered the most accurate manuscript, and pending the completion of a complete stemma, it appears to be the manuscript to work with. Because it is from the seventeenth century it reflects recent linguistic forms and Ólsen's enumeration of these was therefore not especially enlightening. A more productive methodology would be to begin with the assumption that the language is from the seventeenth century, and then search for features older than that. Given the conservative nature of the Icelandic language, however, it may be difficult to achieve much accuracy.

The dating of Hugsvinnsmál may aid in the dating of Sólarljóð. Ólsen's discovery of a large number of adverbs in both poems ending in -liga may not be entirely adequate for assuming both poems to have been written by the

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same author, but there may be other shared stylistic traits as well. The use of this particular adverbial formation could point not to a common author, but to a common era of composition, at least vis-à-vis the eddic poems in ljóðaháttr. It is necessary to know how often these common adverbs are actually used in other forms of poetry as well. If it could be proved that Sólarljóð was written by the author of Hugsvinnsmál, then the dating of one would approximately date the other. The two poems have much in common in any case.

One of the older features possibly present in both poems is the alliteration of v with full vowels. To determine whether Sólarljóð treats v as an alliterating semivowel presupposes a study of metrics to determine how regular alliteration is within the poem, and how far one is justified in emending the text to produce it in the usual places. The 1787 Edda’s emendation of unnit to unnit in stanza twenty-six would produce a vv combination that does not occur on Iceland until the late thirteenth century\footnote{Guðbrandr Vigfússon, ed., Eyrbyggja Saga (Leipzig: Vogel, 1864) XXXVII, n. 1.} If unnit alliterates with v already, and considering that factor alone, the poem could be very old indeed.

Njörður Njarðvík has noted several archaic or peculiar characteristics of the language in Sólarljóð, but nothing likely to limit the date of its composition beyond the time of Old Icelandic generally. He mentions that in stanza fifty, in the first line, hörund is feminine and hungr masculine, while in modern Icelandic both are neuter.\footnote{Njörður Njarðvík, “Solsången,” diss., Göteborgs U, 1993, 126.} In stanza twelve lík still refers to the living body.\footnote{Njörður Njarðvík, “Solsången,” diss., Göteborgs U, 1993, 98.} Other interesting peculiarities are the use of “fyr einni konu” in 11.5 of some manuscripts while others use the accusative “eina konu.”\footnote{Njörður Njarðvík, “Solsången,” diss., Göteborgs U, 1993, 98.} Of “Gygjar sólír” in 51.4, he says “Det bör nämnas att i gammal diktning används ibland pluralis istället för singularis....”\footnote{Njörður Njarðvík, “Solsången,” diss., Göteborgs U, 1993, 127.}
Thus far the dating of Sólarljóð has rested primarily on the "gut feeling" of the scholars who have attempted to set a date. Based on the evidence so far, my own feeling is to place the poem in the thirteenth century, and probably the latter half. This corresponds to Ólsen's dating, but I do not see any necessary influence by the works he used to establish such a late date, and his finding late linguistic forms has no necessary relevance. Njarðvík has established 1206 as the earliest possible date, although I continue to regard the relationship with Thurkill's Vision with some scepticism. My departure from Njarðvík relates to his view of Sólarljóð's continuity with the eddic tradition. Rather than seeing the poem as a final phase in the old tradition, I see it as a highly educated attempt at a late revival. I suspect an influence, if not of Snorri's Edda, then of the same forces which produced it. The poet seems to be following Snorri's advice for poets, using an old classical meter, incorporating native symbolism into the work, but avoiding the excesses of the skaldic poets. Unless Sólarljóð is a clever seventeenth-century forgery, something for which there is no apparent motive, the latest date for the poem's composition would seem to be the middle of the fourteenth century.

24. Provenance

In the light of various nationalistic aspirations reflected in the history of Sólarljóð research it is surprising, yet there have been few suggestions that Sólarljóð was written anywhere other than in Iceland. The poem was written in Icelandic, and that has been enough to fix its provenance to that island.

Despite the long-believed connection between Sólarljóð and the Norwegian ballad "Draumekvædi," there has been little suggestion that Sólarljóð moved to Iceland from Norway. From the start, M. B. Landstad had allowed each of the poems its own national provenance, although he proposed a common source for both poems in an actual vision.141 "Draumekvædi" may have descended from Sólarljóð, but not the other way around.142 Only Ivar Mortensson seems to have suggested anything like Sólarljóð developing out

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141 M. B. Landstad, ed., Norske Folkeviser (Christiania: Tönsberg, 1853) 90.

Vigusson and Powell said of their "Sun-Song" and "Christian's Wisdom," that "both poems are, we doubt not, of Western origin."\footnote{Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, \textit{Corpus Poeticum Boreale} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1883) 1: 203.} By "Western," they sometimes seem to mean any islands west of continental Scandinavia, which might include Iceland. Usually, however, the term refers to the Western Isles or Hebrides, including the Orkneys. Other times Ireland and even Wales seem to be included.\footnote{Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, \textit{Corpus Poeticum Boreale} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1883) 1: lxiii.} Probably Vigfusson includes any of the areas to the south of Iceland and west of Norway where Norwegians settled during the Middle Ages. The cultural center would be Ireland. It is from these areas, and not directly from Scandinavia, that Vigfusson believed Iceland to have been settled. With Powell, he reminds us "that among the first poets we really have any personal knowledge of, the majority are of mixed blood, with an Irish ancestress not far back in the family tree."\footnote{Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, \textit{Corpus Poeticum Boreale} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1883) 1: lxiv.}

As for Sólarrljóð specifically, Vigfusson and Powell believe it reflects the "sweetness and meekness of the Columbian church."\footnote{Gudbrand Vigfússon, \textit{Sturlunga Saga including the Islendinga Saga of Lawman Sturla Thordsson and Other Works}. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon, 1878. clxxxvii.} and so it must have had its intellectual sources in Ireland. "The morals, too, drawn from stories
hinted at as well known, do not refer to Icelandic personages or history."\textsuperscript{148} Likewise, the placename Ryedale is foreign, and "'cras' [line 29.6] is a Gaelic word."\textsuperscript{149} Finally, the old visions are said to have been known to the author of \textit{Sólarljóð}, including "the 'burdens of lead,' Dante's cowls, which King John is said to have used to torture a living man."\textsuperscript{150} Vigfusson's insistence on a foreign location for \textit{Sólarljóð} has not been taken seriously, and the interpretation of "burdens of lead" as lead cowls has had little resonance in later scholarship. The \textit{Sólarljóð} poet could not have been influenced by Dante or England's King John before the thirteenth century, and Vigfusson and Powell dated \textit{Sólarljóð} to the eleventh.\textsuperscript{151} But knowledge of things beyond Iceland would not be in and of itself adequate grounds for assuming a provenance beyond Iceland. Iceland was a part of European Catholic culture, and even harts' horns and forests must have been familiar concepts.

\textit{Sólarljóð} must have been written on Iceland, simply judging from the language. The similarities with Norwegian "Draumkvædi" are nowadays accepted as purely coincidental. Foreign influences are merely indications that the author was well read, and not signs that the poem was written elsewhere. The real question of provenance is whether \textit{Sólarljóð} was written in the north of Iceland or in the south. Is it Benedictine or Augustinian? As with most questions about \textit{Sólarljóð}, there is a large area for speculation, but no definitive answers are likely ever to be found.


2.5. Author

The author of Sólarljóð is unknown, but occasional names have been suggested as possibilities. The oldest suggestion is the story that Sæmundr fröði Sigfús son, who died in 1133, wrote it 3 days after his death.\textsuperscript{152} Earlier scholars wanted to place Sólarljóð at a more ancient date, at at time of pagan and Christian syncretism, while later scholars have believed even Sæmund’s day too early. Nonetheless, the belief in Sæmund as author has been persistent. No scholar has claimed in print that Sæmund rose from the dead to recite Sólarljóð, but the poem’s inclusion in the Poetic Edda has been attributed to the fact that people generally thought it to have been written by him. Sæmund was later supposed to have collected the older poems of the Edda, while Sólarljóð was to have been his own composition. Bergmann accepted the attribution to Sæmund, saying that

...on doit supposer que lui-même, SÆMUND, dans sa jeunesse, a eu la visite nocturne de son père trépassé, le prêtre SIGFÚS, lequel, lui étant apparu en songe, lui aurait exposé ces principes de morale et lui aurait recommandé de les consigner par écrit dans les Chants de Sól.\textsuperscript{153}

No one since Bergmann has suggested an actual name for the poet of Sólarljóð, but there have been some characterizations. In view of the obscure nature of stanzas 76 through 80, Finnur Jónsson dismissed them from the “real” Sólarljóð, and attributed them to “en forskruet person.”\textsuperscript{154} He had no suggestions about any author, hysterical or not, for the remaining “proper” stanzas.

Hjalmar Falk sought to characterize the author of Sólarljóð on the basis of what could be determined from the text. He said

\textsuperscript{152} Jón Árnason: Íslenzkar thjóðsögur og æfintyri (2 vols, Leipzig 1862–4) I, 490.

\textsuperscript{153} F. G. Bergmann, Les Chants de Sól (Strasbourg: Treuttel, 1858) 45.

Ialfald synes meget at tale for at søke forfatteren blandt øens munker,—en mand med boklig kunskap, baade av kirkelig og verdslig art, dog uten den prestevedes fulde kjendskap til den ortodokse lære, som han flere gange lemer adskillig paa. Ved dette friere forhold til kirkelæren har forfatteren faat friere hænder ved stoffets behandling,—hans forkjærlighed for det kristelig-mystiske er ikke blit bundet av hensynet til den geistlige stilling, og hele digtet har faat et originalere præg end ellers hadde været mulig.155

Ólsen disagreed to the extent that he believed the author to have indeed been trained for the priesthood.156

The question of whether any medieval author was priest or monk would not necessarily have had much effect on how well dogma was known or the freedom with which it was treated. There were surely well educated monks and poorly educated priests. The difference between the two classes of clerics had to do with their care of souls. When Páll Jónsson was bishop of Skálholt (1195–1211), there were two hundred ninety priests in that see alone.157 With such a high percentage of the population in the priesthood, the odds might seem to be in favor of any Christian writer being a priest. But it also seems likely that many priests might not have been especially well trained in theology. In addition to the priests, however, there were within both Icelandic sees three houses of Benedictine monks, three Augustinian houses, and a convent, with a second convent opening during the thirteenth century. The writer of Sólarljóð could have been a priest or a monk or a canon or even a nun. On the other hand, there seem to have been highly educated skalds and scholars (Snorri Sturluson among them) who had no known affiliation with Christian orders beyond being educated in Christian schools.


156 Björn Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands 5,1 (Reykjavik: Gutenberg, 1915) 69.

Fredrik Paasche thought Sólarljóð was written during a time of political upheaval, when Christianity itself seemed to be under attack. He wanted to demonstrate that a Christian of the sort praised in Sólarljóð might still have existed even during those hard times. For this reason Paasche introduced the name of Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson. This man, who was killed in 1213, fit the mold of a Christian poet. “Her er kunnskap, her er evner, her er etikk, her er dyp religiositet,” Paasche writes.\textsuperscript{158} Hrafn was well educated, had made pilgrimages abroad, and ran a ferry service as a type of the Christian bridge-building medieval Scandinavians were asked to perform. He treated the sick without payment. He was a skald and a cleric, and he forgave his eventual murderers.\textsuperscript{159} Paasche does not suggest that Hrafn was the author of Sólarljóð. He suggests only that an actual poet having the characteristics valued in the poem did exist in Iceland during a time when it was difficult to be a Christian.

Njörður Njarðvík has gone a step further and suggested that Sólarljóð may contain autobiographical elements. The speaker of the poem could conceivably be the skald himself, speaking from personal experience, rather than being just a literary figure created to carry the poet’s message.\textsuperscript{160} In that case Njarðvík imagines an author who lived a worldly life and was wealthy, but frail and weak in character. He was unconcerned with spiritual matters until something—perhaps nearness to death—changed his position.\textsuperscript{161} Njarðvík does not suggest the author wrote after death, had a vision of the afterlife, or saw his father in a dream.

Det enda vi kan veta med säkerhet är att han har varit en högt bildad man med den tidens mått mått. Vi vet att han var väl förtrogen med eddadjkterna, visionsskrifterna och homilierna, kände till kyrkans

\textsuperscript{158} Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 207.

\textsuperscript{159} Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 207–8.


läror, dess semiotik och symbolik. Och själva dikten säger oss att han
har varit en skicklig poet som väl har behärskat såväl meter som
stil.\textsuperscript{162}

Njarðvík has summarized quite well everything known about the author of
\textit{Sólarrljóð}. Yet it is somewhat optimistic to assume even this much
knowledge, let alone to feel illuminated by it. That the author was highly
educated for the time we know from the mere fact of literacy and the ability to
write a lengthy and apparently original poem. But a great deal of literature
was written in medieval Iceland. That the author was a man is probable
given medieval Christian culture and the father-son framework of the poem.
Yet there were surely educated Icelandic women like Ingunn, who studied
and taught in addition to doing her needlework, and who was inferior to no
one in learning.\textsuperscript{163} Even the father-son framework may have been adopted
simply because it was a set genre especially popular via the \textit{Disticha Catonis}.
Mothers giving extended advice to daughters form a relatively recent literary
subject.\textsuperscript{164} Given the misogynistic tone of medieval Christian tradition and
epecially of the influential preChristian \textit{Cato}, \textit{Sólarrljóð} is almost pro-
woman with its holy virgins and women who (however conniving) were at
least created clean (stanza 10).

The author’s knowledge of the Edda, visions, and homilies is clear, but that
would have been cultural knowledge shared by everyone on Iceland. The
author need not have actually pored over the manuscripts of any of these,
since their contents would have been a main source of both education and
entertainment on the island. Much the same can be said for knowledge of the
teachings, signs and symbols of the church. One would not have had to have
a priest’s training to acquire the sort of religious knowledge evident on the


\textsuperscript{163} Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Jón Sigurdsson, eds. \textit{Biskupa sögur}, 2 vols.
(København, 1858–78) 1: 241.

\textsuperscript{164} Tauno F. Mustanoja, \textit{The Good Wife taught her Daughter. The Good
Wyfe wold a Pylgremage. The Thewis of Gud Women}, Annales Academicae
Scientiarum Fennicae B 61.2 (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura,
1948) p. [?].
face of Sólaljóð. There is much biblical imagery, but biblical history and church doctrine are neglected, if not even unorthodox. Sólaljóð's author has often been portrayied as a brilliant theologian and allegorist, but this seems to depend primarily on the allegoresis and interpretatio Christiana of the modern readers. More has been read into the poem than its author probably intended.

As for the author of Sólaljóð being a talented poet, it is difficult to disagree. But it is the poet's emotional fluency which is more impressive than his or her command of meter and style. The poet has essentially mastered ljóðaháttur, but I must agree with Fidjestøl,\textsuperscript{165} that metrics is not the poem's strongest area. The use of stylistic devices such as anaphor and metaphor is surely striking, as is the economy with which so many ideas and actions are described. The simple image of the sinking sun is made to convey the entire fate of mankind. That Sólaljóð can still be read with enjoyment and profit centuries after its composition is adequate evidence of the talent of its writer.

\textsuperscript{165} Bjarne Fidjestøl, Sólaljóð (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 26.
3. THE MANUSCRIPT RECORD

Before any analysis of a literary work can be made, it is first necessary to establish a correct text. Ideally, there would be only one such text, preserved in a single form, perfectly embodying the author's intent. In the case of any later medieval work, this hypothetical ideal would probably be a manuscript in the author's own hand. Such autographs rarely exist, and none is known for Sólarljóð. The search for such a manuscript has been long and reasonably thorough. At best it has produced certain speculations about what such an autograph may have looked like.

Since the single autograph is lacking, it is necessary to find an archetypical text which might probably be closest to it. For this one must turn to the manuscripts that actually do exist. No examination of all the existing evidence has ever been published. There has not even been a complete listing of Sólarljóð manuscripts. Many scholars have examined various combinations of existing manuscripts, often identifying them by different names and conflicting abbreviations. A cross-referencing and clarification of the previous work is definitely in order. Njörður P. Njarðvík recently produced an edition of Sólarljóð which lists some two thirds of the known manuscripts.\(^1\) That list is supplemented here, with some additional external descriptions designed to help keep the manuscripts straight, and to facilitate the eventual establishment of a manuscript stemma for all copies of Sólarljóð as they may surface. There is also a descriptive list of some of the secondary manuscript sources that pertain to Sólarljóð, including early references to the poem as well as translations and commentaries.

Once the historical material has all been gathered, it becomes easier to organize that material into something approaching a manuscript stemma. It will then be easier to determine what information may still be missing. Knowing the relationships between the manuscripts facilitates the

\(^{1}\text{Njörður P. Njarðvík, Sólarljóð (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands og Menningarsjóður 1991) 226-8.}\)
determination of their relative value, and allows a basis for some limited speculation into what earlier but lost versions of Sólarljóð may have looked like. As it turns out, there is probably no existing manuscript better than the AM 166b, 80, first recommended by Sophus Bugge over a century ago. Yet at the same time, that manuscript is definitely flawed, and not substantially better than several others. The best text of Sólarljóð will have to be reconstructed from several actual manuscripts.

3.1. THE SÓLARLJÓÐ AUTOGRAPH

There is no medieval manuscript containing Sólarljóð. We lack not only the poet’s original, but even any near-contemporary copy. Sophus Bugge explained that “dette Digt findes i Papirafskr., af hvilke neppe nogen er ældre end anden Halvdel af 17de Aarhundert; C L [NKS 1109, fol., and NKS 1866, 4to.] omtaler en Skindbog, som har indholdt Digetet.” In fact, the latter manuscript does not actually mention a parchment, but it appears to be based on one, with alternate readings referred to a contrasting paper manuscript. Another manuscript to actually mention a membrana specifically in connection with Sólarljóð is TS 1492, 4o, in Thott’s Collection of the Royal Library in Copenhagen. There has been much speculation about a parchment source manuscript, known only through hearsay, since it would probably be older than the seventeenth-century paper copies which still exist. However, because parchment was used almost exclusively until the middle of the sixteenth century and frequently thereafter, even a copy of Sólarljóð on parchment would still not guarantee any great antiquity for that copy.

Bugge said that “alle Afskrifter af Sólarljóð maa stemme fra samme Original. Diget er for sig selv afskrevet i flere Papirhskr., der tildels ere lidt ældre end

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2 Sophus Bugge, Norrøn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLV.
3 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) 357.
noget af dem, hvori Gróg., Fjólsv. eller Forspjalsslj. findes."\(^5\) Vigfússon and Powell likewise held that "we can only be sure that these copies are all derived from one single vellum, nay, even from a single copy of a single vellum."\(^6\) All remaining manuscript copies do show great similarity, differing primarily in orthography and completeness. A manuscript may stop or be broken off after as few as five stanzas, or there may be an occasional stanza or line dropped through apparent carelessness, but most variations consist of just a few different words or even spellings. There are no variant readings so major that they have immediately called attention to clearly distinct manuscript traditions anterior to the manuscripts that have been preserved. Whatever the ancestral manuscripts were, all of them apparently agreed rather closely with one another. However, this does not mean there was but one immediate source for all existing manuscripts.

If one follows the hypothesis of Vigfusson and Powell,\(^7\) and holds Sólarljóð to have been massively reorganized or otherwise corrupted, it would seem necessary for at least one copy to have been interposed between the poet's original creation and the copies existing today. On the other hand, it is not likely that there could have been too many copies antedating the seventeenth century, simply because the poem does not seem to have been well known. Sólarljóð has not been cited or mentioned anywhere in medieval literature, and only once previous to existing manuscripts.

The search for any predecessor to the currently known manuscripts has thus far concentrated on parchment. The hunt for a parchment original has been long and thorough. Jón Thorkelsson described his personal search through used book shops, hunting any piece of parchment with Icelandic writing on

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\(^5\) Sophus Bugge, *Norræn Fornkvæði* (Christiania: Malling, 1868) LXI.


It.\(^8\) He gives the impression that this was a popular pursuit of Icelanders abroad during the eighteenth century. Since Jón Thorkelsson’s day more and more private holdings have found their way into public collections or catalogues, yet no Icelandic parchment containing Sólarljóð has attracted attention.

Fredrik W. Petersson wrote that Guðbrandur Vigfússon had thought a parchment copy to have existed in Copenhagen until its having been lost during the eighteenth century.\(^9\) Unfortunately, there is no inventory including such a parchment. Many Icelandic manuscripts have indeed been lost, so it is not unlikely that a parchment copy of Sólarljóð could have reached Copenhagen only to have vanished. The great fire of 1728, for example, destroyed many Icelandic manuscripts. It is known, for example, that a paper manuscript containing Sólarljóð was lost from the P. Resen collection.\(^10\) Any copy on parchment would have been much more likely to have been recorded in some inventory than would such a paper codex, but there is no catalogue of any Sólarljóð manuscript on parchment.

Bugge wondered if it was the reference to parchment in manuscript NKS 1109, fol., that was the reason for Guðbrandur Vigfússon’s claim of the parchment copy of Sólarljóð being lost in Copenhagen during the seventeenth century.\(^11\) Of course, what Bugge meant was not the seventeenth century, but the 1700s.\(^12\) Assuming NKS 1109, fol., to have been

\(^8\) Jón Thorkelsson, “Íslenzk Kappakvædi. II. Fjósaríma. Thórdar Magnussonar á Strjúgi,” Arkiv 4 (1888): 255[?].


\(^10\) Arne Magnussons i AM. 435 A–B, 4to indeholdte Håndskriftfortegnelser med to tillæg udgivne af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat (København: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1909) 119.

\(^11\) Sophus Bugge, Norraen Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLVI, n. 2.

\(^12\) Compare Fredrik Wilhelm Petersson, Solsången. Öfversättning från Isländskan jemte Upplysningar, diss. Lund, 1862 (Köpenhamn: Schultz, 1862) 2.
written in Copenhagen in the eighteenth century, and to have been compared firsthand with a parchment copy, then logically, such a parchment must have been in that city during that century. The argument for the recent existence of a parchment copy of Sólarljóð is indeed based on the references in NKS 1109, fol., and in TS 1492, 40, to a membrana consulted during their writing. Both these paper manuscripts are thought to have been written around 1770, so the parchment would have to have survived that late. It would thus have survived the great Copenhagen fire by decades, and so its loss is puzzling.

Of course, the eighteenth-century copyists could have mistakenly written membrana for a paper manuscript, either through confusion with a parchment consulted in connection with other Eddic poems within a codex, or perhaps as a translation of skinnbók in the sense of a paper volume merely bound in parchment or leather. But it is unlikely that two writers would have made such a mistake, and the manuscripts do not appear to be exact copies of each other. Furthermore, the manuscript references to the membrana are quite convincing, particularly given the contrast with readings from chartæ. It is possible even to gain a good idea of what the parchment’s text probably looked like.

The lost parchment does not appear at all to be anything like an author’s archetype. It seems to have been a rather poor copy, worse than many of the paper manuscripts remaining. The copyists who said they were using a parchment source apparently did not consider the parchment copy to be of any special value either, since they often gave equal or greater weight to the paper copies consulted. In fact, the readings attributed to the parchment source are often those that are furthest away from the ones chosen for modern editions. It seems likely that the authority of the parchment medium may have been responsible for some patently incorrect readings being preferred in late Copenhagen manuscripts even when there were more logical alternatives available from paper sources. It is not inconceivable that the Copenhagen parchment could have been intentionally destroyed by some scholar in order to prevent it from further contaminating the text of Sólarljóð.
In any event, this heavily flawed parchment must not have been the only parchment ever to have contained Sólarljóð. It is unlikely that better paper copies are simply recent improvements on it. They probably have their roots in another old parchment or parchments. About these, however, there is not even the evidence of hearsay. The loss of any older parchment copy of Sólarljóð is not at all difficult to account for. Indeed, it is rather miraculous that any medieval manuscript should have survived until recently. Beyond the usual natural wear, tear and decay from time, moisture, vermin and carelessness, a Catholic poem containing allegories based on pagan gods could well have been suppressed by intolerant Catholic churchmen. Later the Reformation brought burnings of books with Catholic content,\(^{13}\) so Sólarljóð could have suffered for its Christian content as well. Other Icelandic codices were lost at sea,\(^ {14}\) and still others survived history and transit only to be lost in the great Copenhagen fire. Many remaining copies fo Sólarljóð show signs of narrow or incomplete escapes from fire and flood. It is not to be wondered at that any original parchment copy of Sólarljóð has been lost.

Where no actual evidence remains, one can only speculate. We may be certain only that there is no surviving parchment copy of Sólarljóð known today. There is no medieval copy; there is no autograph. Only by looking at the existing paper manuscripts can patterns of textual development be determined which might shed some light on the prehistory of Sólarljóð.

3.2. KNOWN MANUSCRIPT COPIES OF SÓLARLJÓÐ

Despite the lack of any medieval parchment, Sólarljóð has been preserved in many later copies on paper. All in all, there are at least sixty-six known manuscripts or manuscript fragments containing at least part of the poem. Bugge said simply that there were “many” manuscripts,\(^ {15}\) and his statement

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\(^{14}\) Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script* (Reykjavík: Manuscript Institute, 1965) 19.

\(^{15}\) Sophus Bugge, *Norræn Fornkvæði* (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLV.
remained authoritative for over a century, until Njördur Njarðvík placed the number at forty-four in his book Sólarljóð.¹⁶ Njarðvík's was the first attempt to list all Sólarljóð manuscripts to be found in every location. In his subsequent dissertation Solsången his list remains the same, but forty-five copies of the poem are actually discussed.¹⁷ Two of them, treated separately, are contained in the single manuscript codex JS 542, 40. In Solsången Njarðvík notes the significant variants among all forty-five versions.

Unfortunately, Njarðvík overlooked several manuscripts that had been well known to Sólarljóð research. These are included here, and several others are introduced for the first time. The difficulty in locating all manuscripts of the poem lies in the fact that Sólarljóð has rarely been viewed as an independent work, and is therefore rarely catalogued under its own name, much less included in any index. It will be found in collections of poetry, particularly Eddic poetry. As Bugge said, "Digtet har allerede ved Midten af 17de Aarh. været optaget i 'Sæmundar Edda', hvilket var naturligt, da det tillagdes Sæmund."¹⁸ A poem thought to have been composed by the dead Sæmund belongs together with the poems thought to have been composed, or at least collected, by the living Sæmund. To find Sólarljóð, one must thus first check every copy of the Edda. Beyond Nordic libraries, even the Edda may become difficult to locate. Once the Edda has been exhausted, every other collection of old Icelandic verse needs to be examined. There are intriguing catalogue entries no more informative than "later Icelandic ms.,"¹⁹ which may or may not be relevant. Some of the oldest existing copies of Sólarljóð seem to be associated with materials dealing with runes or even astronomy, and are not included in the Edda at all.

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¹⁸ Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLVI.

¹⁹ E.g., Edgar J. Goodspeed and Martin Sprengling, A descriptive catalogue of manuscripts in the libraries of the University of Chicago (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1912) 546.
Any systematic attempt to locate all manuscripts of Sólarljóð has historically been hampered by the fact that none of the manuscripts has any unique value. To be of any antiquity, a manuscript would have to have been written on parchment. While it is quite possible that there may be unknown eighteenth-century copies of Sólarljóð in various collections throughout the world, the odds are against there being any which are not merely copies of the manuscripts already known. The interest of scholars has always been in a parchment manuscript predating the copies we have, and not in the location of every late fragment of Sólarljóð scribbled on paper. While the continued existence of any older parchment is highly improbable, there may, indeed, be several older paper copies of Sólarljóð that have yet to be brought to the attention of scholars. Despite the difficulties, and the improbability of uncovering any superior readings, a search for all the paper copies still seems like a logical first step for any serious examination of the work. After all, the existing manuscripts constitute the entire evidence. Until the list of manuscripts is reasonably complete, it makes little sense to speak of “majority readings,” or to trust too much to even the relative authority of any single manuscript. Even if there were a reliable parchment of reasonable antiquity, the paper manuscripts would still need to be examined for the sake of forming a complete picture of the text. As Jón Helgason explained, the numerous young copies of older works must be examined because there is always the possibility that they derive from sources other than the surviving medieval texts. The result of such an examination is often that the younger copies prove to have no independent value, but this must nonetheless be demonstrated.20 In the case of Sólarljóð, there is no surviving medieval text at all, and so the paper trail is crucial.

An updated listing of Sólarljóð manuscripts follows. It is intended to extend the listing begun by Njörður Njarðvík to include all manuscripts and manuscript fragments of Sólarljóð mentioned in at least the most likely catalogues. Perhaps more important, the aim is to provide enough external

information and cross referencing that the manuscripts mentioned in previous literature may be clearly identified and located. Discrepancies in datings or descriptions are mentioned, and notes on the worth or completeness of the manuscripts are included where possible. Details about copyists and owners are important because they may contribute to the construction of an eventual manuscript stemma, and because the older identifications of manuscripts simply by once-notable owners are no longer illuminating.

Following Njarðvík’s example, manuscripts are listed by the cities and libraries where they are currently to be found. This facilitates reference to library catalogues, published or unpublished, where further information may be available. A serious disadvantage to this procedure is that the manuscripts may also come to be grouped conceptually according to the accident of their current location. This must be avoided. However, until more progress is made in the development of a stemma, a system based on facilitating interaction with the libraries themselves seems appropriate.

In contrast to the manuscript lists by Njörður Njarðvík, the manuscripts are here arranged by format in precedence to number. The library catalogues usually repeat the same signature numbers within each volume size, and it is only by accident that Sólarljóð has thus far never had the same number in quarto, for example, as it has had in folio. Since all the manuscripts are on paper, that fact is only mentioned when it constitutes part of a library’s classification system.

This list contains sixty-six entries. It cannot pretend to be exhaustive even of the catalogues that have been consulted, but it represents a much needed next step in manuscript research. Within this corpus of manuscripts certain patterns begin to emerge. These are discussed in more detail later, but it may be well to note from the beginning that the manuscripts can indeed be reliably grouped according to textual variants. While the writers of the manuscripts often pretend to have consulted multiple sources, there is surprisingly little interaction between distinct manuscript traditions. Two primary traditions were noted by Njörður Njarðvík. These are easily distinguished according to whether the word mátti or nádi is found in line 1.6 of the poem. A third
group chooses one of these and gives the other reading as an alternate.\textsuperscript{21} Within Njarðvík's náði tradition, the manuscripts fall into two further main categories depending upon whether the word klofnad or kólnad appears in line 44.6. Or it could be said that all mátti manuscripts belong to the kólnad tradition. Other variants may determine smaller clusters or families of manuscripts, with loss or transposition of text defining rather large and significant groups within the mátti tradition. The manuscripts do speak for themselves if they will be given the attention they deserve.

3.2.1. BERLIN: Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz

A previously unknown copy of Sólarljóð is owned by the Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin. The relevant part of their collection has been catalogued by Hermann Degering, who describes the codex which contains Sólarljóð.\textsuperscript{22}

\textit{Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz Ms germ. Qu. 329.}

Degering dates this manuscript to the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{23} It is not mentioned by Njarðvík or any other previous literature specific to Sólarljóð. The manuscript volume, in quarto, is titled \textit{Die Edda und andere isländische Lieder}. It was owned by Nikolaus Heinrich Julius, a Hamburg medical doctor with broad interests, apparently including old Germanic literature.\textsuperscript{24} Bound into the volume is a letter to him from Rasmus Nyerup, who dated the

\begin{quote}


\end{quote}
manuscript to the middle of the eighteenth century. Nyerup suggested that
the writer may have been "Eggert Olafsohn, der 1768 starb."

Sólarljóð is found in this manuscript at 210b–219a, where the numbers
represent pages rather than folios, and the letters identify the left or right of
the two columns of text on each page. There are 250 pages in the entire
volume. The manuscript is written within a lined template which seems to
have been especially designed for the inclusion of marginal notes, thus giving
the volume a rather scholarly appearance. There are a few marginalia in a
cursive hand, noting alternate readings but giving no attributions. Some of
these notes seem to be in more recent ink.

Sólarljóð begins at the top margin of 210b with the title given as "Sólarlióth."
It is written in clearly defined stanzas, yet a large number of them contain
seven lines, with the eleventh stanza divided into eight. This version of the
poem is part of the mätti tradition. Stanzas 33 and 34 are transposed, and
lines 21.3 and 21.6 are likewise transposed. Stanza 83 is included in the poem.
Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms germ. Quart. 329 is also
part of a smaller bifrost group of Sólarljóð manuscripts, with that word
appearing as an unusual "bifraust" in line 64.4. The text is quite like that in
National Library of Scotland, Adv.MS.21.5.2, with even the forms of
individual letters similar, particularly in the earlier part of the poem. The
same alternates are listed, though as the poem progresses, the Berlin
manuscript begins silently to use only the form the Edinburgh manuscript
notes as alternate. The two manuscripts even share a running together of
stanzas seventy-nine and eighty into a single stanza of eleven lines.

3.2.2. COPENHAGEN

The Arnamagnæan Institute

The Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection has been catalogued by Kristian
Kålund in the Katalog over den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling on
behalf of Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat. There are two
volumes, each originally published in two parts. The first part of volume 1
appeared in 1888 and the second in 1889. The two parts of volume 2 were first
published in 1892 and 1894 respectively. The culturally significant parts of the Arnamagnæan Collection have been returned to Iceland under a treaty ratified by the states of Denmark and Iceland in 1971, so Kálund’s catalogue no longer reflects actual holdings in Copenhagen. The Arnamagnæan Institute has, however, retained microfilm copies of all works transferred. The actual manuscripts remaining in the Copenhagen collection are listed in The Arnamagnæan Institute and Dictionary Bulletin.25 Almost all AM copies of Sólarljóð are now in Reykjavík, but two manuscripts remain.

AM 427 fol.

This manuscript had formerly been catalogued as Addit. 31a fol. Kálund lists it as number 585 in his catalogue.26 Njarðvík counts this as number 4 in his lists of Sólarljóð manuscripts.27 Finnur Jónsson dismisses this version of Sólarljóð as without importance,28 which it probably is in terms of trying to reconstruct an archetype of the poem. However, this copy has been very significant within the history of Sólarljóð scholarship, and it contains one of the earliest commentaries. This was probably the primary manuscript used by B. C. Sandvig in his Danish translation of 1785.

AM 427 fol. is the manuscript by Jón Ólaðsson of Grunnavík (Joannis Olavii Grunnavicensis) upon which Guðmundur Magnússon (Gudmundus Magnæus) partly based the first printed edition of Sólarljóð in 1787. The manuscript was referred to in that edition as O or Olav (not to be confused with Bugge’s O), and both the Latin translation and commentary were

28 Finnur Jónsson, Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning (København: Gyldendal, 1912) A.1: 628.
attributed there to the writer of the manuscript proper. 29 In addition to the Latin translation and notes by Jón Ólafsson, there are copious later notes. These presumably include the marginal notations said to have been made by Jón Eiríksson of variants from a Swedish manuscript. Rasmus Rask thought these marginalia to have come from Stockholm's *Isl. Papp. fol. nr. 34.* 30

The volume *AM 427, fol.*, is bound in hard paper-clad covers marked with "Solarliod / Völuspá / Havamálu" on the spine. The title page gives the title as *Liber Poemata aliquot / perantiqua continens / vulgo dictas / Sæmundar Edda, / seu / Edda Sæmundina...*, and says the book was written by Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík in Copenhagen during the year 1756. This Jón Ólafsson was the elder of the two scholars sharing that name, and is not to be confused with the Jón Ólafsson who was brother to the writer of *MS Germ Quart. 329* in Berlin's *Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz* (see above, page).

The volume begins with an essay about Sæmund by Árni Magnússon. A preface by Jón Ólafsson follows this, and otherwise the book contains only the poems *Sólarljóð, Völuspá*, and *Hávamál*. *Sólarljóð* begins on the page marked fifty-three, which corresponds to folio 29. The full title is given as "Hjer hefjast / Soolar Ljood / [Sæmundar ens frooda]," with the note *addunt alii* referring to the line in brackets. The primary *S* of the title and the initial *F* of the text are linked together and decorated with five or six suns. Double lines mark top and side margins. Notes made at the time of the manuscript's writing are kept outside this boundary, but there are many later notes in different hands both inside and out. The Latin commentary is in a tiny hand to the right of the text, on recto pages straddling the double line into the margin. *Sólarljóð* concludes with stanza eighty-three on page sixty-seven, folio 36(r). The Latin translation follows on page sixty-eight, with the title

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29 *Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior*, vol. 1 (Hafniae: Gyldendal, 1787) 348.

[Versio] / Hic incipit / ODA SOLARIS / [Vulgo sic dicta, et Sæmundo Poly-
histori, in quibusdam / Exemplaribus adscripta.] There is an argumentum of
about a third of a page followed by the translation itself. The last page is
seventy-nine, folio 42(r), with Völuspá beginning directly on the following
page, folio 42v.

The text of the Icelandic poem is written line for line, with stanzas separated
by a number above each. Initial capitals are fancier than others. There is a
faded red sun drawn in the margin at each of the söl ek sá stanzas, and some
of the more proverbia phrases have been underlined in red. The variants of
the manuscript text are familiar from the first edition. There is a great deal of
hyphenation. As for particulars, AM 427, fol., has the word maatti at line 1.6,
and it does contain the eighty-third stanza. There are no transpositions except
a somewhat unusual shifting of the first and second helmings of stanza
fourteen. Line 6.5 has an unusual vidgirndum taka, but this is corrected to
syndum in the margin. Other less common features are naudgir for naktir
(9.4), forndæmi for fáðæmi (14.1), máttir for sáttir (21.4), holla (alt. holli)
vera for vera hollar in 25.3, and Hjwfr for Útr in 36.1. The second helming
of stanza seventy reads Laasu Einglar helgar Bækur / oc Himna skrift / yfir
höfði theim. These features link the manuscript not only to AM 428, fol.,
which is a direct copy of it, but also to LBS 1765, 4o, JS 542, 4o (B), ÍB 13, 8o, and
probably the fragmentary JS 36, 4o.

AM 428 fol.

Formerly catalogued as Addit. 31b, fol., this manuscript is listed by Kålund as
number 586 in his catalogue.31 He says it is a copy of AM 427, fol. made by
Guðmundur Magnússon in the latter part of the eighteenth century.
Njarðvík does not mention the manuscript at all. The codex title is Poëmata
aliqvot perantiqua / ex / Edda Sæmundina, / nempe / Sólar Liód / Völus-

31 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] Katalog over den Arnamagnæanske
Håndskriftsamling. Udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske
The content of this volume is the same as that of AM 427, fol., though this manuscript is more easily legible. However, it lacks the layered accumulation of notes that make the earlier manuscript so interesting. The original commentary and alternate readings by Jón Ólafsson are included. “Her hefiaz / Sólar Liooð / [Sæmundar ens fróða]” begins on the page marked 70 and ends on page 87, to be followed by the Latin translation which ends with a decoration at the bottom of page 103. Included at the beginning of the Icelandic text is the caveat ex mendoso exemplari chartaceo.

The text of Sólarljóð follows that from AM 427, fol., in most respects, but the spelling differs. Occasionally there are different line breaks or alternate readings are accepted as primary, but this occurs only rarely. In line 28.4 alls á ami væl verdr has been changed to alls er vani, and the first helming of forty-one has been reorganized. There are no other major changes.

Nye Kongelige Samling

Kristian Kålund also catalogued the Old Icelandic collection of Copenhagen’s Royal Library for Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat in the Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter i det Store Kongelige Bibliotek og i Universitetsbiblioteket published in 1900. Although a few of the manuscripts from the Royal Library have also been transferred to Iceland, it seems that none of them contained Sólarljóð.

NKS 1108 fol.

This manuscript had earlier been catalogued as 394 fol. of the Suhrm collection. Kålund catalogues it as number 263, noting that it has red rubrics
and a colored title page. His understated description leaves one unprepared for the gaudiness of this title page. The volume is bound in brown leather with no markings. The title is Edda / Selmundar Prestz / Ins / Frotha. Bugge called the manuscript B, and located the position of Sólarljóð “etter Gróg. og foran Hrafnað.” The writer is identified on the first flyleaf by the inscription: “af Bibliothecu Hytardaelensi exscripta af Arna Bodvari Poët. Island.” Njarðvík, who numbers the manuscript 6, points out that the date 1769 there is in a hand other than that of the copiest, and that the watermark would allow an earlier date. Finnur Jónsson dismissed this manuscript as without importance.

The title of the poem is Solar Lioth. The first line following the title is also in red. The poem occupies pages numbered 255–268, or marked folios 179–185v. Various page numbering schemes seem to have been used within the volume. The text is in a half-cursive hand with stanzas indented and bearing capitalized initials. The verse is written in lines, usually six per stanza. The source seems to have been followed carefully, with false starts erased and begun again properly.

This manuscript belongs to the group that has náði in line 1.6, but includes mátti as an alternate. Line 3.5 is “han let tína,” but “lez trúa” is given as an alternate. Line 28.4 is “allz ami verthr,” but “ser finna fóthr” has been marked as an alternate, perhaps picked up from a wrong page or column in the model. A line—or two half-lines—are missing from stanza thirty-six. The reading for line 42.5, “greniotha á moti” appears to be unique. The mátti

32 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter...udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 112.
33 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLVI.
34 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1868) LX.
manuscript consulted by the writer of this manuscript (or by its model) apparently belonged to the group containing bifrost, since "byfroz" is an alternate for the reading of line 64.4.

Stanza sixty-eight is unusual in dropping the word hafa from line 3, and it also dilutes the warning of line six to "opt coma mein eptir munoth." Stanza sixty-nine contains the well-known occurrence of mark having been changed to mart, with makt given as an alternate. This was surely not a matter of having miscopied a source so much as having multiple sources to choose from—and perhaps suggesting a compromise. Other peculiarities of this manuscript are shared with many from the naldi/klofnad tradition, but stanza eighty-three was taken over from the matti source.

**NKS 1109, fol.**

Because this manuscript mentions a parchment source, it has been given special attention, though it has not been much valued as an authority. It was earlier cataloged as Suhm 877, fol. Kålund lists it as number 264 in his catalogue. It is Bugge's C and Njarðvik's 7. Finnur Jónsson used the manuscript as one of the five upon which he based his 1912 edition. Kålund notes that the codex is from the eighteenth century and is titled Sæmundar Edda ens Frotha. Its history and ownership are outlined on a sheet added to the volume and signed by "J. Olavsön," with the date Nov. 1769 in a different hand:

> Dette Hr. Conferenceraad B. W. Luxdorphs Exemplar af Edda Sæmundi in folio...er en fast accurat og paalidelig Afskrift af den Edda, som forrige Con-Rector paa Holum John Egilsen, nu Pastor Laufasensis, har været Eyere af, hvilket Exemplar ikke aleene er bleven confereret med

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37 Sophus Bugge, *Norraen Fornkvædi* (Christiania: Malling, 1868) 368.

38 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Ærnamagnæsiske Legat*, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 112.


Reference is made to paper and parchment manuscripts belonging to Biarne Haldorsen of Tingøre.⁴¹

The volume is bound in brown leather with a small elephant’s head stamped on the front cover. The title on the spine is EDDA / SÆMUNDI, which is also (in one line) the subtitle on the title page. Sólarljóð is the final poem of the collection, on pages 484–501, immediately following Getspeki Heiðreks. Bugge gives the title as “Her hefist Soolar liood Sæmundar ins froda.”⁴² He says, “dette Haandskrift beraaber sig engang paa ‘membrana’ og oftere paa ‘chartae’, uden at man dog kan slutte noget bestemt om denne Membrans Ælde og Værd.”⁴³ Bugge further points out that the manuscript reading is quite similar to that in his L (NKS 1866, 40), even as regards variants noted in the margins. Finnr Jónsson adds that TS 1492, 40, and TS 773(a), fol., of Thotts samling are identical to each other and the same as this manuscript.⁴⁴

While all these named manuscripts are indeed quite similar, current concepts of identity are stricter than they were in the days before xerography. Certainly the orthography varies considerably between NKS 1866, 40, and NKS 1109, fol. Many of the same alternates are noted, but then each also has some not noted by the other. It is very clear that this manuscript is not a direct copy of NKS 1866, 40, at least without some other paper manuscript having been consulted.

⁴⁰ Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) LX.

⁴¹ [Kristian Kålund, ed.] Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 112.

⁴² Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) 357.

⁴³ Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLVI.

as well. There are also fewer alternates marked in this manuscript, and as the end of the poem and the codex approaches, there appears to have been a rush towards completion with no alternates at all marked after stanza sixty-three. There was quite possibly a resort to the parchment exclusively, without further reference to other manuscripts.

There are some obvious omissions in NKS 1109, fol. Line 9.2 was left out entirely. So was the entire stanza fifty-nine. Line 15.1 is absent, though this one is missing in the Thott manuscripts as well. These omissions were clearly careless mistakes of the writer if there were really multiple sources for comparison. Sometimes it does appear as though an annotated copy was followed directly, since not even the annotations all make sense. For example, there is the note Omitt at line 19.3 with no indication of what is to be omitted. It is noted that the first helming of stanza thirty-eight is missing in the chartæ, but the final helming of thirty-seven, doubtlessly missing as well, was overlooked. On the other hand, some annotations such as an alternate “Vigills” for “Vigolfś” (Sól. 20.4) are found nowhere else, and so were probably not copied.

NKS 1109, fol., concludes with stanza eighty-two, although its writer must have had access to the additional stanza. What is especially interesting is the first line of stanza eighty-two, “Her vid Skiliunz,” having been written at the conclusion of its page in letters about a third taller than normal. Hence, it looks very much like an explicit. The remainder of the stanza, however, follows on page 501, and the poem ends about a sixth of the way down an otherwise blank page.

NKS 1110, fol.

Earlier catalogued as Suhms sml 560, fol., Kālund lists this as his number 265. He reports that the volume is named Edda Sæmundar fróða, and he dates it to the eighteenth century, but he does not mention that it includes Sóláríjöð.⁴⁵

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⁴⁵ [Kristian Kālund, ed.] Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 113.
Njörður Njardvik likewise makes no mention of this copy of Sólarljóð. Bugge has said only that Sólarljóð is positioned first in this eighteenth-century collection, directly before Völuspá.46

This volume is marked as a copy on the container where it is kept, but whether it is a copy of an older NKS 1110, fol., or of some other manuscript is unclear. It is bound with heavy cords sewn to the gatherings at the back, but is without any cover. As part of the binding are letters dated 1749 and 1758. The first page of the volume serves as its cover by default, and is labeled folio 1. Sólarljóð is the first poem, beginning on folio 3 with a title in very fancy writing: "Her Hefiast Solarliod / Sæmundar ens Froda." The poem extends just over half way down folio 6v, where it is followed directly by Vaulo Spaa. The final poem of the collection is "Godrunar Kvidia thridia" ending folio 72r.

The text is written in "modern" cursive writing with each stanza beginning a new paragraph after a small indent. Most such paragraphs fill two full lines with a third of only a word or two, so stanzas are very distinct on the page. This Sólarljóð belongs to the nádi tradition, and lines 44.5–6 read "til triedz metnu og klófnad fyrir utan." Stanzas sixteen and seventeen are run together, though with space between, as are stanzas twenty-seven and twenty-eight. The second helming of twenty-eight is treated as an independent stanza. Manuscript readings are common to the tradition. There are no marginal notations for Sólarljóð, although there are for some of the other poems.

**NKS 1111, fol.**

Kálund numbers this 266 and dates it to the eighteenth century.47 It contains 257 folios, and is titled Seðmundar-Edda. It was formerly Suhms sml. 156, fol. Bugge dates the volume to late in the century and believes it to be at least

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46 Sophus Bugge, Norrøn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) LXI.

47 [Kristian Kálund, ed.] Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Årnamagnæanske Legat, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 113.
partially copied from NKS 1869, 4o. 48 It is Bugge's M (his bold M—the italic M is Munch's edition) but he gives no Sólarljóð readings referred to it.

The volume is unbound. Although the text seems to be complete, the initials of the poems are written in pencil in spaces left for illumination that was never begun. The final folio (four pages) contains a table of contents including thirty-eight poems. "Solar-Lióth" begins on page 449 after the last two lines of "Heithrik Konungr." It ends on page 467 with the eighty-third stanza. The first of the gatherings on which Sólarljóð is written has been displaced to the end of the volume, just before the table of contents. The loose gatherings of the codex are arranged consecutively through page 444, at which point a new gathering begins with page 457. This is where the second helming of Sólarljóð's stanza thirty-six starts. Sólarljóð continues to its conclusion a third the way down page 467. Page 468 is numbered but blank, and 469 starts "Fra Grotto-Saungr." The gathering ends with page 480. Three more gatherings follow, with consecutive pagination through page 512. The displaced gathering follows this, containing pages 445-456, with "Gró-Galdr" running through page 448. The beginning of "Solar-Lióth" is on page 449.

This Sólarljóð belongs to the group which refers to manuscripts from different traditions. In the first stanza the reading náði is given in the text with mátti as an alternate. Line 26.5 is "retto meth göthom lutom," shared with but a few manuscripts, though the alternate "scalto" is given as well. In stanza forty-four "klofnad" is the preferred reading with "kulnoth" given as an alternate. Stanza eighty-three is included.

In line 64.4 "bifrost" is the alternate reading, indicating that the mátti manuscript consulted might have been one of the few containing that reading. However, it seems more likely that this manuscript is simply a copy of some other that had been based on multiple manuscripts. NKS 1111, fol., looks very much like a direct copy of NKS 1108, fol. These manuscripts share some readings that are rather rare. For example, "let tina" is preferred in line 3.5 with "lez trua" only as an alternate reading. In 63.5, the reading is

48 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) LXI.
“fegarns” with “fegarins” as alternate. 69.2 has “mark” with “måkt” as alternate. Not only are the original readings generally the same, but the same alternates are given as well. In fact, some words given alternates in NKS 1108, fol., are marked in NKS 1111, fol., as having alternates, but then the writer has forgotten to supply them. There are also similarities in orthography. The only evidence against NKS 1111, fol. being a copy of the other manuscript is the fact that it supplies line 35.6, which had been omitted in NKS 1108, fol. This could have been supplied from NKS 1869, 40, which is close enough to these other two manuscripts that it would not have produced any additional alternate citations. Trinity College’s L-4-1 is another very closely related manuscript and thus a potential source. Unique to NKS 1111, fol., is the presumably inadvertent omission of line 61.4.

**NKS 1866 4to**

Known as *Codex Luxdorphanus* since it was once owned by B. W. Luxdorph, this manuscript was originally catalogued as *Suhm 28 4to*. Kålund gives it the number 776, saying the title is *Edda Sæmundar Prestz ins Fröda Sigfuzsonar at Odda*. It contains notes by Bishop Hersleb on the Edda generally and on this manuscript. Kålund dates the manuscript to the middle of the eighteenth century and says it has 182 leaves, but he does not mention *Sólarljóð*.49 *Sólarljóð* is placed by Bugge next to last in the collection, after *Gëtspeki Heiðreks* and before *Sonartorrek*.50

In the first printed Edda edition, *Sólarljóð* is said to be thirty-eighth of forty poems in *Cod. Luxdorphiani*.51 In the 1977 catalogue of additions to the British Library, *Codex Luxdorphianus* (NKS 1866, 4o), is said to contain

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49 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat*, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 251.

50 Sophus Bugge, *Norraen Fornkvaedi* (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLVI.

Sólarrljóð followed by two songs by Egill Skallagrímsson. Bugge discusses the manuscript at LVI–LVII. He calls it L, and says it is closely related to C (NKS 1109, fol.). In fact, variants referred to in his edition of Sólarrljóð are generally attributed to CL jointly. Both share the title "Hér hefiast Sólarrljóð Sæmundar ins fróða." Unlike C, this manuscript does not mention parchment, but it does speak of "Chartae" as if in contradistinction to a parchment copy. At Sólarrljóð's stanza eighty-three is the note inserunt chartē. Finnur Jónsson equates NKS 1866, 40, and NKS 1109, fol., but rates both as being without importance. Njörður Njarðvík numbers the manuscript 8 and dates it less specifically to the eighteenth century.

The volume is bound in embossed brown leather with a small elephant's head on the cover. The title on the spine is EDDA / SÆMUNDI. Sólarrljóð begins on page 349 with the title spelled "Her hefiast / Solar Liod / Sæmundar ins Froda." It ends with the comment "Ende Solar Liotta" about a third down page 335, before Sonatorrek. The text is written line for line as verse in two columns on each page. This manuscript belongs to the group with náði in line 1.6, but with mátti as a marginal alternate. Somewhat unusually, the manuscript uses capital letters to indicate reduplicated consonants.

The manuscript contains few if any unusual readings, but it is very heavily annotated with alternates. Many of these are quite trivial, indicating a close

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53 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) LVI–LVII.

54 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLVI.

55 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) 357.

56 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLVI.


attention paid to sources. The alternate readings are often marked as having come from a paper manuscript (marked ch), giving the impression that the base manuscript must have been on a contrasting parchment. Alternates marked simply al. could have come from anywhere, with very few marked as having originated with the writer of this manuscript.

This manuscript is valuable because its detailed notes give a good picture of what the late parchment must have looked like—an error-filled manuscript of the klófnad tradition. It is also clear what sort of paper manuscripts were used. The paper was from the mátti tradition that transposes lines 21.3 and 21.6 and stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four. The charta also merged stanzas thirty-seven and thirty-eight. In other words, the present manuscript seems to have combined a parchment manuscript from the least reliable tradition with paper manuscripts from the least reliable subgroup within the mátti tradition. Hence, this manuscript is of little value in terms of trying to establish an authorial archetype.

Nonetheless, the present manuscript seems to be the oldest within its own tradition of manuscripts with mixed readings. It does seem likely that at least one of the manuscripts from Thott’s collection had direct access to the same source manuscripts and is not a direct copy of this or some descendant manuscript, but NKS 1866, 4o, has seniority.

**NKS 1867 4o**

Kålund has catalogued this manuscript as number 777, saying it was written in 1760 by the priest Ólafur Brynjúlfsson. Besides Sæmundar Edda it also contains “Samtak um Rúnir” by Björn of Skarðsá, 1642, and his “Útlegging yfir Völuspá” and “Um rúnar, ristingar og skrifelse.” Kålund mentions nothing about Sólarljóð, nor is this manuscript listed by Njarðvík. Bugge discusses this manuscript in his Edda edition, but he says nothing about Sólarljóð except to mention its being placed last among the Eddic poems but

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59 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske hændskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat*, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 251.
before the commentary on Völuspá. This manuscript has been photographed and is on microfilm catalogued as MS. micro. 1889 positiv.

The manuscript is bound in unmarked leather with straps to hold it closed to attached metal tabs. The title is given inside as Edda / thath er Fræthi Fornman / na / Samañskrifoth / af / Sæmundi Presti Sigfussyne / enom Frotha...” by “Sr. Olaf Bryniüls syne ad Kyrkiubaj i Austfiördum.” It is dated 1760. The Edda is but the first of twenty-two items listed in the table of contents. Among the eddic poems “Soolarliöd” is listed nineteenth of twenty-nine, between “Hyndlu Liöd” and “Helga kvida Hundings b:” Beginning about a third down page 67, the poem (titled here “Solar Liod”) continues to a little over half-way down page 72.

The poem is part of the náði/klofnad tradition. It is written in a semi-cursive hand with each each stanza starting a new paragraph, but with lines marked (if at all) only by commas. There are generally two lines per stanza broken at the right margin, even if in mid-word. Stanza twenty-two is missing, marked NB in the indent of its beginning in what looks like the original hand. The missing stanza is supplied at the bottom of the page, after the cursive catchword, in slightly smaller letters.

NKS 1869, 4o.

This manuscript has been known as Codex Suhrmianus and is labeled S both by Bugge and in the 1789 Edda edition, because it was owned by P. F. Suhr. It was earlier catalogued as Suhms smt. 72, 4to. Kålund lists it as his number 779 and gives the title as Sæmundar Edda. Njörður Nardvík does not include this in his listing.

Bugge says the manuscript “er afskrevet efter et Papirhskr., som har tilhört Langebek, og Indholdet kan nogenlunde ses af ‘Ordo codicis Langebekiani’,

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60 Sophus Bugge, Norrøn Fornkvaedi (Christiania: Malling, 1868) LXI.

61 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 253–4.
som er meddelt i Edda Sæm. ed. AM. II, p. XVIII–XX”. The quoted 1787 Edda edition places Sólarljóð thirty-fourth among thirty-six poems. The similarity is thus only approximate, since in this volume Sólarljóð is number thirty-one of thirty-three. Markús Jónsson wrote this copy of the Edda sometime during the eighteenth century. The manuscript is said to contain notes in Suhm’s hand, as well as his marginalia, but there is not much in the way of annotation of the text of Sólarljóð proper aside from some unlabeled vertical lines in the margins.

The 1787 Edda edition considers this manuscript notable because it substitutes e for i as in “Anglo-Saxon” orthography. What is meant is surely the modern English spelling of /i/ as e. This peculiarity of orthography is evident in most manuscripts of Sólarljóð to greater or lesser extent and is not at all particular to this one.

The manuscript is currently bound in brown leather with the title EÆDA SÆMUNDI VEL SÆMUNDI stampéd on the spine in gold (together with gold floral designs). There is a table of contents on folio 1v, where “Salar lióð” is number thirty-one. It comes after “Grou galdr” and before “Grotta Saungtr” and “Getspeki Heidreks Konungs,” which conclude the volume. The title within the manuscript is given as “Sólar Leóth,” which starts on the page marked 647. It is preceded by a blank folio following the conclusion of the poem on 645.

The text is written in a very neat rounded book hand, with the verse written line for line. Stanzas are indented but not numbered. The text belongs to the náði tradition and within the smaller group that has “hann let tina” in line

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62 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) LXI.

63 *Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior*, vol. 1 (Hafniæ: Gyldendal, 1787) XX.

64 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 253–4.

65 *Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior*, vol. 1 (Hafniæ: Gyldendal, 1787) XLIV.
3.5. Also unusual are line 20.3 “er han’ fluthi á vald hans Vigolfs” and line 35.6, which is missing entirely. Line 50.2 is “telir hauldra suno” and 61.6 has a unique “meinstaufom” for meinstiga. Stanza eighty-three is included, and the poem closes about two-thirds the way down page 671. Page 672 following is blank and unnumbered.

*NKS 1870, 4to.*

Kålund dates this codex to the second half of the seventeenth century. He numbers it 780, and reports that it was 393, 4to, of Suhrm’s samling. It is not included in Njarðvík’s works. The manuscript is bound in white parchment and appears to have been bent while wet. After two blank flyleaves is the title page marked 1 in pencil. The title is “Sæmundar / Edda.” On folio 1v is a late table of contents listing thirty-six items, mostly Eddic poems. Items twenty and twenty-one are long prose passages written upside down on the same folios containing the Edda, but on opposite faces. Kålund gives the titles “Hvad Grækerne ok annat Folk tagit ur våra Norska fäders aldra äldsta Skriffter,” “Om Gyllende Tahlet,” and “Himmelens Tecken.” The prose contains material about runes, and there is also mention of Scipio, but none of this material is in the hand that wrote the poetry. Sólarljóð is the first poem of the collection, labeled “1. Partur” and beginning on folio 2r. It concludes on folio 8v. The title is “Her hefiaz Solar liod / Sæmundar ins froda.”

Sólarljóð is in a half-cursive to mostly cursive hand, with stanzas written out line by line. Numbers precede each stanza. The Latin translation by Helgi Ólafsson is written in a column to the right of the Icelandic, also line by line. Not all poems in the volume have been translated. There are parenthetic

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66 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat,* (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 254.

67 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat,* (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 254.
alternates given within the Latin. Some words in the Icelandic have been underlined for no apparent reason. Sólarljóð seems to have been written rapidly by a very practiced hand.

This is a nádi-klofnad manuscript with all the usual characteristics. In fact, a close comparison of the text with that of Stockholm's typical Isl. Papp. Nr. 15 revealed the two to be nearly identical even in matters of orthography. This manuscript does expand most abbreviations of the oldest manuscript from Sweden, and there are alternations between the use of d and th, i and e, and i and y, but the similarity is otherwise quite remarkable. Some of the few discrepancies (e.g. "gatu" for "gadu" in 12.1, "liif" for "lik" in 12.6) have been changed in later ink to conform. Considering the presence of the Latin translation, however, it is clear that this manuscript descended from Isl. Papp. fol. Nr. 34, and not from Isl. Papp. Nr. 15. Indeed, folio 160v bears the note "Finitum Holmiæ in posteriorib. idib. Maj a. 1684 Helgus Olai," so the descent must have been direct.

**NKS 1872, 4to.**

Kálund says that this manuscript was written in the second half of the eighteenth century by M. Magnusen. Kálund gives it the number 782, and says it was Suhm's 43, 4to. Njarðvik does not list it. The title of the codex is Or Sæmundar Edda, and it is said on the title page to have been copied from AM 738, 4o, and compared to one of Suhm's quarto volumes.

The volume is bound in brown leather with the title Sæmundi Edda in gold on the spine. The second page includes a table of contents listing fifteen poems, with Sólarljóð being thirteenth, between "Grou galthr" and "Grottasongr." "Gest Speki" is last, with one blank leaf following the conclusion of text on page 309. Sólarljóð occupies pages 229–258. The complete title is "Sólar Lioth / Sem sagt er Se(munthr Prestr / Fróthi hafí qvethit thá hann / Lá anthathr á bór- / rnom." The text is written line by line

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68 [Kristian Kálund, ed.] *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat*, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 254.
in a cursive hand, with stanzas indented but not numbered. This belongs to the ndóti tradition, with no mention of mätti, despite numerous alternate readings.

Among less common readings are “lezt tína” given as an alternate for line 3.5, “briósti” as an alternate to fit line 5.5 and “fríðhann” for fjölvaran in 5.6. The readings generally follow AM 738, 4o, down to the transposition of stanzas forty-three and forty-four. The manuscript to which this was compared could have been NKS 1869, 4o. Most readings not from AM 738, 4o, can be found in that manuscript, and on the basis of such readings it is a more likely candidate than the quarto manuscripts NKS 1866, 1870, or 1891, now in the Royal Library but formerly belonging to Suhm. NKS 1872, 4o, may be most significant as the only manuscript with something other than “organs” (or “organz”) in line 76.3. It reads “Orgerns.”

NKS 1891, 4to.

Earlier Suhms sml. 170, 4to, this copy is said to combine the manuscripts AM 167a, 8o, and AM 167b, 8o, including Sólarljóð and other material. It was written in the second half of the eighteenth century by “Th. M. Isfiord.”

This is Kálund’s number 803, but is not listed by Njarðvík.

The codex is bound in brown leather and labeled COLLECTA / QVÆDAM / EX MSS: / MAGNÆ in gold on the spine. The title page says Collecta Qwædam / Ex manusc: antiquo et Lacer. / Num: 167 Biblioth: A: M: Sólarljóð is number twenty-one of twenty-two items listed in the table of contents. The poem proper occupies pages 179–191. Folio numbers are not marked. The title is given as “Hier skrifast Sólarljos.” The poem is written line for line in four-line stanzas with the first line of each stanza in a round book hand, but the remainder of the verse in cursive script. Stanzas are numbered consecutively in the outside margins, 1–51, this last corresponding to stanza eighty-two.

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69 [Kristian Kálund, ed.] Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 269.
This is a very close copy of the Sólarljóð in AM 167b, 8o, obviously made sometime after that manuscript had sustained the damage it shows today. In particular, stanzas twenty-five through fifty-six are missing. This manuscript also uses series of dots to indicate where text is absent or illegible on the source manuscript. The orthography of NKS 1891, 4o, has been modernized and the text is much clearer than that of its source. There have been some changes, such as the silent taking over of the alteration of “fromann” to “fróðan” in line 5.6. “Ryar Dal” has changed to “Eryardal” in 22.3, and in 69.2 (ms. 39) “mark” was copied but then altered to “mart.” The copyist seems to have had some trouble following stanza 74 (ms. 44), but on the whole NKS 1891, 4o, seems to be a clear and exact copy of a much less clear original.

Thott's Samling

Thott's Samling has long been part of the collection of the Danish Royal Library. It has been catalogued by Kålund in the same volume with the Royal Library and the library of the University of Copenhagen.  

TS 773(a), fol.

Kålund reports that this Sémundar Edda ens Frötha is labeled in Thott's own hand: “Vdkræven efter Hr. Iohn Ejelfsen Præst paa Laafaas, Hands Membrana, som holdes for at være megedt god.”

Finnur Jónsson considers this Sólarljóð to be identical to that in TS 1492 4o and the same as that in NKS

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70 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat, (København: Gyldendal, 1900).

71 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 307.
1109 fol. Njörður Njarðvík lists this as his number 9, and dates it to the latter part of the eighteenth century. Kålund’s catalogue number is 963.

Sólarljóð is on pages 446–460. It is written in a very neat hand with many alternate readings included. The text contains “nádi” at line 1.6, with “matti eingi” as an alternate. In 44.6 the text reads “klofnat” with alternates of both “kolinud” and “kolnat.” Only eighty-two stanzas are included.

TS 1492 4o.

This codex is another Sæmundar Edda from the eighteenth century, Kålund’s number 1053. Finnur Jónsson identifies it with TS 773(a) fol. and says it is the same as NKS 1109 fol. It is Njarðvík’s number 10.

Sólarljóð is last in this volume of loose pages written in a very fine and tiny script. It is titled “Her Hefiast / Soolar Llood / Sæmundar ins Froda,” and it occupies pages 156–162. Like the Sólarljóð of NKS 1109, fol., it has “nádi einginn” in line 1.6 with “matti eingi” as an alternate. References are to clearly plural chartae, though it is possible that just one was consulted as representative of all. The chartae are said to have transposed lines 21.3 and 21.6, and stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four. The paper models also apparently merged stanzas thirty-seven and thirty-eight, but this manuscript correctly notes the absence of both the last helming of thirty-seven and the first of thirty-eight. Hence, it cannot be a mere copy of NKS 1109, fol., which noted only one of the two helnings as missing. Likewise, this manuscript includes stanzas fifty-nine and eighty-three that were missing from the folio. There must thus have been a comparison by the writer of this manuscript with at least one manuscript other than NKS 1109, fol. The reference to a

72 Finnur Jónsson, Den norsk-islamske Skjaldedigtning (København: Gyldendal, 1912) A.1: 628.

73 [Kristian Kålund, ed.] Katalog over de oldnorsk-islamske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 333.

74 Finnur Jónsson, Den norsk-islamske Skjaldedigtning (København: Gyldendal, 1912) A.1: 628.
membrana is made at stanza twenty-eight in the same words used in NKS 1109, fol., making a very close relationship likely. If it is a matter of direct descent, however, this would have to be the parent manuscript.

3.2.3. DUBLIN: Trinity College

The Icelandic manuscripts in Dublin were catalogued by Olai Skulerud in 1918. He reports that one at Trinity College contains Sólarljóð.

L-4-1

This quarto manuscript was catalogued by Skulerud as his number 112. He says it was earlier catalogued as Abb. 1027. This volume of Eddic poetry is said to consist of 634 pages, several of which are blank. Sólarljóð follows Gröv Galar and precedes Fra Fenio oc Menio + Grotta Saunger. Skulerud dates the volume to the eighteenth century. Njarðvík, for whom this is manuscript 17, says only that it is a recent manuscript of uncertain age. Njarðvík’s diplomatic edition of Sólarljóð, however, reveals a fair amount of information about the manuscript insofar as it varies from AM 166b, 80. It belongs to a limited group of manuscripts which begin line 1.6 with the word náthi, but give mátti as an alternate. Stanza eighty-three is present. In

75 Olai Skulerud, Catalogue of Norse Manuscripts in Edinburgh, Dublin and Manchester, Norske historiske kildeskrittfond 45 (Kristiania: Moestue, 1918).

76 Olai Skulerud, Catalogue of Norse Manuscripts (Kristiania: Moestue, 1918) 31.


almost all instances L-4-1 seems to follow the readings of Copenhagen’s NKS 1108, fol. Among its few unique readings is “er makt (al. mark)” in 69.2.80

3.2.4. EDINBURGH: National Library of Scotland

The Advocates’ Library in Edinburgh collected some manuscripts which contain Sólarljóð. These were catalogued by Skulerud in the same volume that covers Dublin.81 Upon the founding of the National Library of Scotland all manuscripts not concerned with legal subjects were transferred to that library. This includes all the manuscripts known to contain Sólarljóð.82 The most recent catalogue of the Icelandic manuscript holdings is that compiled in 1967 by Ólafur Halldórsson. It has not been published.


Olai Skulerud numbered this manuscript 48 in his catalogue, where it is known simply as 21-4-7. He gave the title as “EDDA Sæmundar Prests in[s] Fróða Sigfussonar at Odda,” and said it contains 281 leaves, mostly of Eddic poems. He dated the manuscript to the end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth centuries and reproduced a note by Finnur Magnússon: “No. 4. Edda Sæmundina sive Poetica proprie sic dicta additis pluribus borealis (sic) vetustis carminibus.”83 Njarðvík numbers this manuscript 14 and dates it more recently, to about 1800.84

81 Olai Skulerud, Catalogue of Norse manuscripts in Edinburgh, Dublin and Manchester, Norske historiske kildekriftfond 45 (Kristiania: Moestue,1918).
82 The location of the listed manuscripts was confirmed by personal communication from Olive Geddes, Manuscript Division, National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EW, April 28, 1997.
83 Olai Skulerud, Catalogue of Norse Manuscripts (Kristiania: Moestue, 1918) 13. (Skulerud’s sic [vetustutis])
The catalogue by Ólafur Halldórsson gives a detailed description of the volume (number 38) and a complete list of its contents. The entire volume, aside from two poems (neither of them Sólarljóð), is said to have been written in the same hand about 1750. This hand is identified with a Sauðauksdalsur writer, possibly Eggert Ólafsson. The manuscript is now said to consist of 285 folios, plus two unnumbered flyleaves. The old page reckoning began from what is currently numbered as folio five.85

The quarto volume’s title page is presently numbered as the first folio, with the “Registur” occupying folios 2r–3r. “Volospaa” begins on 5r, and this first page of the actual text was considered the old folio 1r. Sólarljóð thus bears two numbers in the top right recto corner of each folio. The higher number (spacially as well as numerically) is correct. Ólafur Halldórsson was not able to find many clues as to provenance of this manuscript, but noted the mark “M:E S” on folio 285v, and could say that the library acquired the volume from Finnur Magnússon.86

Sólarljóð begins about two-thirds down folio 275v, directly following “Gátur Gestumblinda” and a horizontal line drawn as separator across the text area of the page. The title is “Her hefiast / Sólar=Liód / Sæmundar ins Fróda.” This is written across the page above the two columns of text following. The poem begins with an elaborate three-line initial F centered on the first line of text. All is written in an extremely clear and attractive book hand. The poem is divided into lines of verse, usually six, with runovers flush right in the column. Stanzas are not numbered and there is no additional space between them, but each stanza is indented and begins with a prominent capital. Stanza eighty-two concludes at the bottom right column of folio 281r, even with the usual bottom margin. Sólarljóð continues at the top of folio 281v with the centered heading “Addit aliu manuscriptum / Coronidis Loco:” followed by stanza eighty-three run in like prose across the entire page, but

85 Ólafur Halldorsson, “Catalogue of Icelandic Manuscripts” (Edinburgh, 1967) 38[a].

86 Ólafur Halldorsson, “Catalogue of Icelandic Manuscripts” (Edinburgh, 1967) 38c.
with the final two words "Sólarljóðs sögu" omitted. Although the passage ends with a period, it looks rather like an introduction to the title "Kvædi / Eigils Skalla=Grimssonar / Sem kallat er / Torrek," which follows immediately without any dividing line or additional space.

The heading to stanza eighty-three and that stanza’s missing words link Adv.MS.21.4.7 closely to Additional MS. 4877 of the British Library. The two manuscripts differ considerably in orthography, so the similarity is not otherwise immediately obvious, but in other respects the two versions of Sólarljóð are, indeed, nearly identical. Lines are almost always divided at the same points; particles are included or omitted in the same locations. There is agreement on the use of sem as opposed to er, and so as opposed to svá in any given place. Some of the shared peculiarities include "af himni" for "ór himnum" at 7.2, thaw for their in 9.1, dauckvo for dimmu in line 13.2, and sefa for sega in 43.6. Unusual word order is shared in lines 39.3 and 48.1. Line 42.6 omits the usual mjök, and 82.4 omits minn. Line 47.5 has a distinctive "Gud mallti adur," while the shared "thrádreipum thrumar" of 77.6 is notable. Further less frequent readings found in both these manuscripts include vitar rather than vestan in 54.1, heidvar for heidnar (60.4), òfegra for òfegna (62.2), foro for várú (62.3) and attu for eiga (74,3).

This manuscript belongs to the mátti group, and it does have at least most of stanza eighty-three. Lines 21.3 and 21.6 are transposed, as are the entire stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four. Furthermore, the second half of stanza thirty-eight follows the first half of stanza thirty-seven to merge both stanzas into one.

National Library of Scotland, Adv.MS.21.5.2

This is referred to by Skülerud as an untitled volume of 715 pages in quarto, called 21-5-2 and numbered as his own 45.\(^\text{87}\) He says it contains the poetic Edda and other poetry, for a total of sixty-nine poems. There are different

\(^{87}\) Olai Skülerud, Catalogue of Norse Manuscripts (Kristiania: Moestue, 1918) 10-11.
readings noted in the margin, and the first folio (now Ir) bears the note: “Quondam e libere Skulonis Theod[orl]i Thorlacii Islando-Dani.” Sólarljóð is found at page 462, following “Hrafnagaldr Othins” and followed in turn by “Gullkárs Lióð” on page 481. Skularud estimates that the manuscript is probably from the beginning of the eighteenth century, while Njarðvík places it at about 1800. This is Njarðvík’s number 15.

Ólafur Halldórsson has catalogued this volume as his number 51, and he gives comprehensive information about the manuscript. He describes a fairly elaborate binding with the title EDDA SÆMUNDI. The page numbering from 1-715, in the hand of the original writer, is said to contain a few errors, but it has in any case been superseded by a modern numbering of the folios. After an unnumbered flyleaf I there are 361 folios, the last three blank. Ólafur Halldórsson lists seventy-two items in the volume’s contents, with “Sólar lióð” being number 48, occupying folios 231v-241r after “Hrafnagaldr Othins. / aliis. / Forspialls lióð” and before “Gullkárs lióð.”

The entire volume was written in a single hand, on Iceland in 1755-6, and in Copenhagen in 1758. Sólarljóð belongs to the part written on Iceland, and within that to the section mostly copied from LBS. 214, 40. Indeed, the text of Sólarljóð follows that of LBS 214, 40, quite closely.

The title of the poem is “Sólarlióth,” and it begins at about the final quarter of folio 231v, directly beneath the poem identified in its running head as

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88 Olai Skularud, Catalogue of Norse Manuscripts (Kristiania: Moestue, 1918) 11.


90 Ólafur Halldorsson, “Catalogue of Icelandic Manuscripts” (Edinburgh, 1967) 51-51e.

91 Ólafur Halldorsson, “Catalogue of Icelandic Manuscripts” (Edinburgh, 1967) 51[a].

92 Ólafur Halldorsson, “Catalogue of Icelandic Manuscripts” (Edinburgh, 1967) 51e.
"Forspiallslíóth." The title of Sólarljóð is boldly written, nearly two lines high, and is centered on the text page. The poem's initial F is decorated and extends upward an extra line into the space shared by the title. Sólarljóð is written in lines of verse in a single narrow column at the left of each recto page and at the center of each verso. Stanzas are not numbered but they are indented. The text is in an attractive and extremely clear book hand.

Adv.MS.21.5.2 belongs to the mátti tradition, with just that spelling in line 6.1. It also contains the complete stanza eighty-three. Lines three and six are transposed in stanza twenty-one, and the entire stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four are transposed. The word bifrost in line 64.4 links this manuscript not only to LBS 214, 40, but also to the British Library's Add. MS. 6121 and Add. MS. 11,174, Copenhagen's NKS 1108, fol, Trinity College's L-4-1, and Ms germ. Qu. 329 of the Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin. If Adv.MS.21.5.2 is indeed a direct copy of LBS 214, 40, then it is first of all responsible for making its rather strange line breaks, since the LBS version was written as running text. This might make it a possible ancestor for Add. MS. 11,174 and other manuscripts which follow these line breaks quite closely.

Adv.MS.21.5.2 bears no great resemblance to LBS 214, 40, in terms of orthography. As in most copies of Sólarljóð, the later writer used his or her own way of transliterating the text. There was clearly no great interest in preserving forms of spelling. Therefore, the annotations in this volume dealing with alternates such as te(lir) as opposed to to(lir) must not be comparisons between two source manuscripts consulted, but probably result instead from questions about how to interpret the æ of the original's takir (Sól. 33.2) when transferring it into the writer's own system. Likewise, the alternate readings of disir for Dísi (original Dyse) in 25.1 or nám for námi (original nám) in 24.6 probably represent personal corrections rather than diplomatic comparisons of two different manuscripts. The same alternates then appear in later manuscripts because they were copied directly from this one.

If LBS 214, 40, was the only source for the Adv.MS.21.5.2 Sólarljóð, then the Edinburgh manuscript originated not only the primary line breaks for the
verse and the practice of including certain alternate readings, but also introduced certain other features into a branch of the manuscript stemma. "Gyar sólí" was changed to "gygar sólí" in line 51.4, providing support for the word gyjar in later editions. This manuscript must then also be the source for the change of the name "Radveig" to "Skadveig" in line 79.4.


According to Skulerud, this quarto volume consists of three separate parts including respectively Snorra Edda (1750), Sæmundar Edda (1751), and a collection of other poems (1753). He numbers it 46, catalogue number 21-6-7, saying that it was all written by Jón Egilsson. Some former owners are said to be listed on the title page: Rev. Ebenezer Henderson, and "Jónas Jónsson á bókena ad riet tum erf dum ept er födur sinn. No. 28."

Njörður Njarðvík numbers this manuscript 16 and estimates it to be a little older than the Edinburgh manuscripts he dated to c. 1800.

Ólafur Halldórsson has given a detailed description in his catalogue, where this is item 64. The first book included in the present volume is titled

Bookenn / E=d=d=a Saga / Edur / Kenningabook Islendinga / Samanu

tekenn og skrifud af= / theim Margvijsa Vitra og Vellærda Sagna= / Meistara Snorra Sturlu Sijne, Lögmanue. / Fýrrum ad Reýkkhollte. / Nu aa ný Ritut Epter prentadre Bök I Kaupen / hafn Anno 1665. of Tveimir Islendskumm skrifudum. / theim ordfiillstar til feingust, ad

= / Stoora Vatsns Horne Anno / MDCCL.  

Snorra Edda occupies folios 21r–111r, followed by six shorter selections

93 Olai Skulerud, Catalogue of Norse Manuscripts (Kristiania: Moestue, 1918) 11.


95 Ólafur Halldórsson, "Catalogue of Icelandic Manuscripts" (Edinburgh, 1967) 64e–f.
including Sólarljóð. The original page numbering begins with the Edda, and continues (with mistakes and alterations) through page 115, indicating that the material before Snorra Edda in the volume was added later. First in the volume appear eight items including commentary on the prose Edda and some poetry including Völuspá and Hávamál. The first part of the codex encompasses folios 1–31v.

The second part of Adv.MS.21.6.7 begins on folio 132, and is titled


This copy of Sæmundar Edda begins on folio 132r, with Sólarljóð, so that there are actually two copies of Sólarljóð in the current volume. Folio 132v is numbered as the original page 2, with this numbering continuing (with errors) through page 236 (fol. 257r). The Edda is actually complete by folio 223r, and the second part continues with other material.

ÍOlafur Halldórsson further explains that the third part of this codex begins with folio 258, a title page written “Her Hefiast / Dulkvednar Forn / Drapur / Med Imsra / Frodra Manna / Raadning / Skrifadar Anno / 1753. / af / J: E: S.”97 It contains poetry and commentary, with its content concluding on folio 335r. There is not a third copy of Sólarljóð.

96 ÍOlafur Halldórsson, “Catalogue of Icelandic Manuscripts” (Edinburgh, 1967) 64f.

97 ÍOlafur Halldórsson, “Catalogue of Icelandic Manuscripts” (Edinburgh, 1967) 64g.
The earlier of the two copies of Sólarljóð in Adv.MS.21.6.7, which I shall call Adv.MS.21.6.7 (A), differs utterly from the second version, Adv.MS.21.6.7 (B). Version A belongs to the mátti tradition (and is the one for which Njörður Njarðvík has published some readings 98), while version B is part of the náði tradition, with that word beginning line 1.6. The two versions share an unmistakable hand, but very little otherwise. There is no evidence that the first copy was consulted or even remembered at the time the second version was written.

Adv.MS.21.6.7 (A) is located towards the end of the first part of the codex, the twelfth of fifteen items, between "Draumur Stiórnu Odda" and "Umn Rwnr." It occupies folios 121v–124v, stanza eighty-three written in three lines at the top of 124v, with the rest of the page left blank. The title "SolaṛLlooḍ" is centered at the top of folio 121v, which bears the original page number 95 at the upper left-hand corner. The title is about two and one-half text lines tall; the elaborate initial F about four lines tall. The first line is written larger than the remainder of the poem.

The text is run in, but each stanza regularly consists of two lines broken between the heltings, so the poem could be said to be written as two-line verse. Each stanza begins with an indent and is numbered in the outside margin as part of the original writing, with a decorative loop over each number. Stanza twenty required a third line, so twenty-one begins after a space on its concluding line, and also occupies three lines. Stanza eighty-three is written slightly larger and fancier than the rest and fills three entire lines with the help of a final decoration.

The handwriting is semi-cursive, but appears to be cursive because it is written very gracefully at a rightward slant, with many decorative loops. The ascender of each d loops backwards over the preceding two letters, and descenders loop leftward whenever possible at least the distance of one previous letter. This style is shared by Adv.MS.21.6.7 (B) as well. Unique to A, however, are catchwords written with swirls beneath them, filling the

margins to the bottom of the page. Written in rather darker and less decorative letters, and thereby emphasized, are the lines “opt verdr kvalrædo af konum” (Sól. 10.3), “Liet er Laus ad fara” (37.6), and “Æ koma mein epter munud” (68.6). The words “Soolarllood” in (81.4), “Lykn er Lifa” in (82.6), and “Soolar Liöds Saagu” (83.6) are prominent through size.

The (A) Sólarljóð of Adv.MS.21.6.7 generally follows the readings of AM 166b, 8o, simply expanding most of the abbreviated words there. However, there is nothing about the manuscript that particularly makes it appear to be a direct copy from AM 166b, 8o. Adv.MS.21.6.7 does contain line 9.4, which had been omitted in the older copy, so Jón Egilsson must have at least referred to some other manuscript of Sólarljóð. This manuscript belongs to the mätti tradition, but has none of the common transpositions. The second helming of stanza seventy has a rare “Läsu Einglar Helgar Bækr, oc Himnaskrít, Ífer höfde theim.” The manuscript contains stanza eighty-three, but has as its second line “Var thier Dráp u Kvatt,” and no mention of a dream.

This Sólarljóð includes some interesting variants of some of the names that occur in the poem. Most important is probably “baug Reginz” in 56.6, as this is an especially old example of that variant. “Biugvor” is the first name in 76.1, and “Biadveing” is the eldest sister in 79.4. Some other variants are “honom” for them (15.5), vilia for villdu (23.4), and ganga for ga (25.6). Line 27.6 has “funa foodar” rather than either the standard “finna föður” or the AM 166b, 8o, variant. Line 82.4 omits minn.

The second copy of Sólarljóð found within National Library of Scotland, Adv.MS.21.6.7 is located at folios 133(r) to 136(r). It begins at the top of the recto folio with the very elaborately decorated short title “Seolar=Leod” flush left on the page, followed on the same baseline by “Se(mundar hiñs / fröda Profastz / ad Oddastad” in pointed brackets, the three lines of the continuation together not quite reaching the height of the short title. This is followed by letters roughly two text-lines tall, reading “1. PARTUR Edur QVIDA. / hin Fyrsta.” This refers to the position of the poem Sólarljóð as it appears in this copy of the Edda. There is an elaborate initial F that extends six lines into the following text, and nearly as far above, enclosing the digit from the part number within its uppermost loop.
The text is written in semicursive script much like that of the other version of Sólarljóð, but less carefully and usually less elaborately. Doubled nasals are now usually indicated through capitalization rather than macrons. The letter m often has its left leg loop under to the right. Modern d and ð are both represented by the letter th. In 47.6 máðr is abbreviated though the use of what looks like a rounded z rune; in 58.2 konur is abbreviated α, and in 10.1 ríki is represented by R’. Unusually, even bróður is abbreviated (Sól. 20.6). The repeated phrases are also abbreviated, eventually to S: E: S: (41–45) and M. S. e. th. (65–67, 70–72).

The text is again run in as two-line stanzas, but the breaks are made here according to exigencies of space, without concern for where the meter might fall. In fact, the line break often occurs in mid-word. Stanzas are again numbered in the outside margin, but without the decorative loop. The catchwords are not decorated either. Stanza fourteen was omitted, but appears at the bottom of its page, with the numbering following correctly. Stanza fifty-four, as it begins at the top of folio 135, is incorrectly numbered 56. The numbering continues in order until the poem ends with stanza eighty-two, labeled as 84. Stanzas twenty-eight and twenty-nine are run together but given both numbers—or the number 28 is given to the second helming of its stanza.

After the first page of Sólarljóð, there are running heads of “Seolar” on verso pages and “Leod” on recto pages. These heads fill the centimeter or so of margin between top cut and text, with a horizontal line below them the width of the text area. Beginning with 2, the pages are numbered in the top margin at the outside. Sólarljóð ends on page 7, (folio 136), with “Leod” as its head in the left of the top margin, but with “Forspials lið” as the centered head. There are only the two lines that constitute Sólarljóð’s eighty-second stanza on the page, numbered 84 in the right margin. This is followed immediately by the elaborate heading: “11. PARTUR. / Hrafnagalldur Óthens / For=spiais=Leod. / 11. qvitha.”

Adv. MS. 21.6.7 (B) belongs to the náde tradition, and lacks the additional final stanza eighty-three. There are no transpositions of entire lines or stanzas, but there are many of the lesser transpositions and variants that mark the
tradition formed by LBS 1562, 40, and the Swedish manuscripts. In the third stanza lézt is moved from the second line to the third to read “oc lest vanmetter vera;” the last line of the stanza is missing hafði. The word kveða is missing from line 26.6. Stanza fifteen concludes: “thviat hverba hann Filgia, flester fra Gvude,” while nineteen concludes with “vit at hafa, fer varnade.” Line 24.4 has adopted even the parentheses of its tradition in “(sócu) Dölg / ar hýG ec Sýthla mune.” Line 25.6 ends “ðethro gaa,” while 26.4 has “Grættan hala” for “grøttan göla.” The reading of 27.6 is the peculiar but common “er Seint thiona fóthr.” However, 28.2 is unique with its unusual “alvarlega” for the usual vandliga. 28.4 follows at least part of the Swedish manuscripts with “Alls Ame verthr,” and line 31.5–6 follows the Swedish pattern by eliminating skal.

Adv.MS.21.6.7 (B) does not noticeably stand out as being in any way peculiar, yet it does contain a large number of readings variant to the accepted main tradition. It reads “Sterc” for the usual seig in 37.5. A peculiar reading in 39.4 is “EN heliar grund,” while the second helming of stanza forty has been corrupted to “máttug leiste marga, frá thvi sem fyrrre var.” Typical of the Swedish tradition are “triedz” in line 44.5 and “klofnat” in 44.6. Line 50.4 reads “långa; vatn,” thus associating langa with the previous line through punctuation. Line 51.6 has its own variation on the Swedish tradition with “ór scýdeifnirs scýrme.”

Other variant readings include “vite” for vóttn (57.2), and Reithast for virðusk (66.3), “leyss” for skilja (75.5) and “synthom” for eymðum (75.6). In stanza sixty-two, word order is changed to “er Apast at, thessa heimz öheillom” (62.5–6). There was a transposition of words in stanza seventy as well, but it was marked with numbers centered over the words to indicate preferred positioning: “… lasu Ein / glar ýfer3 hofthe them, helgar1 bækur2.” Finally, as is common in this particular manuscript tradition, line 73.5 has “helgum Deige” for “mörgum degi” and 74.1 begins “Haar=neither” for “Hávar reiðir.”

Proper nouns are also interesting in this manuscript. The names in line 16.2 are Radey and Vieboge, while “Eyrardal” is the placename in line 22.3. Line 42.4 speaks of “gil=/ nar straumar.” The well in line 56.6 is Baugegínz. The Ráðveig of 79.4 has become “BaNveig.” The two characters in 80.3 are a
nearly identical "Svafur oc Svavar," with a final comma associating "loge" with the next line rather than making it part of the second of the names.

3.2.5. LONDON: British Library

The British Library holds manuscripts containing at least six copies of Sólarljöð. Besides the printed catalogues of the library's holdings, there exists a useful list specifically of Icelandic manuscripts which was prepared by H. L. D. Ward. The manuscripts are arranged there by rather broad subject categories. This list was compiled in 1864 and covers the manuscripts collected up to Additional MS 24,973. Although the listing is now over a century old, it nevertheless seems to encompass all material containing Sólarljöð, though a thorough search is certainly in order. There is an index volume to the list compiled by C. E. Wright in 1956, but this lists only five of the Sólarljöð manuscripts and contains certain other gaps. Jón Helgason made a much more recent catalogue of Icelandic manuscripts in the British Library which Det Arnamagnæanske Institut holds pending publication. The Sólarljöð manuscripts known to be in the British Library are as follows:

Additional MS 4877.

This manuscript Edda was volume 21 of the Banks Collection, donated to the British Museum in 1772. The oldest catalogue calls it Edda Islandica and comments on its good handwriting. However, the contents are not listed and very little else is said there. The later published catalogue adds that the arrangement of songs follows that of Copenhagen's NKS 1866 4o, except that

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Sólarljóð (item h) is placed last in the volume. In his catalogue of romances, Ward describes this manuscript as a copy of the Codex Regius with eight additional lays including Sólarljóð. He reports there that the codex is in quarto and that Sólarljóð is on folio 220. This manuscript is not listed by Njarðvík, nor is it listed in C. E. Wright’s index to the Catalogue of Icelandic Manuscripts.

The manuscript volume itself is in quarto, bound in recent blue cloth-clad covers with a natural cream velum binding. It is lettered in gold: “Elder Edda / etc. / Presented / by / Sir Joseph Banks / Brit. Mus. / Additional / MS. / 4877.” On the first folio is marked in pencil “Nº 11” and the title “Edda Sæmundar prestz ins froda Sigfussonar.” A table of contents follows, beginning with Wolospaa and ending with Sólarljóð. Ward commented that the order of poems is the same as that in Codex Luxdorphanus (NKS 1866, 40) “only that in the present MS the two songs of Egill Skallagrimsson are not added at the end.”

The entire volume appears to be written in the same hand. The pages are numbered, probably in the original writer’s ink. There are also folio numbers added later in pencil. Sólarljóð begins a new page, although most of the poems in the volume follow each other directly. This is not the start of a new gathering, and Sólarljóð apparently begins on the center page of a quire. The


original page number is marked 439, which corresponds to the library’s folio 220(r). The poem ends about one third down the page marked 455, which is folio 288(r). The remainder of the page is blank, as is the verso side. No more poems follow, and this appears to have been the original conclusion of the volume.

The manuscript title of the poem is “her hefiaz / Solar=Lióð Sæmundar ins fróða.” The poem is written in separate lines of verse, generally corresponding to recent editions, except for some differences in stanzas two and three, the latter ending up with seven lines. Stanzas are run together without any additional space or numbering, but they are clearly marked by indentation and capitalization. Additional MS 4877 has “mátte” in line 1.6, and it includes stanza eighty-three, with the notation “Addit aliiud Manuscriptum Coronidis loco.” The last two words of the stanza, “Sólarljóðs sögu,” were omitted. The text is written in a clear hand with few abbreviations. Lines 21.3 and 21.6 are transposed without comment, as are stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four. Stanza thirty-seven merges with thirty-eight, so that it contains lines 37.1–3 and 38.4–6.

Additional MS 6,121

The library catalogue says little about this quarto volume, aside from placing it in the eighteenth century. It lists “Carmen solare” as the nineteenth poem, beginning on folio 71b. Ward’s list of Icelandic manuscripts adds nothing about the manuscript itself, but summarizes Sólarljóð as “a moral poem, addressed by a Spirit appearing to his son in a dream, with descriptions of death and the other worlds....” Njördur Njarðvík lists this as his number

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108 British Library Additional MS 4877 fol. 228.


11. He says it is a manuscript of the eighteenth century, acquired from Geir Vidalín and having come to London in 1809. He praises the hand in which it is written as being especially clear and attractive.\(^\text{111}\) According to a colophon on the second original endpaper of the manuscript, the codex was presented by Sir Joseph Banks to the British Library (then Museum) in 1812.

The volume is bound in blue cloth with a velum binding printed: "Icelandic / poetry / presented / by / Sir / Joseph / Banks / Brit. Mus. / Additional / MS. / 6121." Folios one and two consist of a letter signed by Chas. Konig, British Museum, June 24th, 1809, explaining that the volume was shown to and praised by Mr. Herbert (brother to Lord Carnaervon). Folio three is a description of the manuscript (in Latin) by G. Vidalinus, and folio four is a similar (but unsigned) description in Danish.

Sólarljóð is the nineteenth piece in this collection of Icelandic poetry, beginning at the top of folio 71v and ending on 77(r). This makes it the second-to-last selection in the volume, which concludes with Hugsvinnsmál at folios 77v–87. The entire volume of Add. 6,121 is indeed written in a very clear and beautiful (if anachronistic) blackletter book hand. The same general format is followed throughout.

Sólarljóð begins at the top of the page with only a modest short title "Sólarljóth" and a three-line initial centered vertically on the first text line. The verse is divided into lines, and runs down two columns on each page, concluding in the right column of folio 77r. Both columns end evenly at what would be about three lines above the usual bottom margin. The beginning of each stanza is indented, but stanzas are not separated by line spacing. Nor are they numbered. Variant readings are noted in the outside margins, but these rarely question anything more dramatic than orthographical alternations between e with cauda and o with cauda.

The attention to orthography, or perhaps more accurately to calligraphy, seems to override other considerations. For example, lines of verse are

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divided at points which provide lines of attractively similar length rather than consistent stanza form. While the usual pattern of six-line stanzas seems to be followed in principle, some seventeen stanzas contain an extra line, a dozen have two extra lines, and stanza fifty-two is expanded to nine lines. Stanza eighty, on the other hand, has only five lines, but nowhere does the meter seem seriously to be disrupted.

This manuscript contains the "usual" transpositions, both of lines 21.3 and 21.6, and of stanzas 33 and 34. What is interesting is that these transpositions occur not merely at page breaks, but following just those few pages which happen not to end with a catchword to announce what should come next. It is tempting to think that these transpositions might have originated in this particular manuscript. The writer of such a deluxe manuscript might indeed have had a motive for silently "repairing" incorrectly written lines or stanzas by simply transposing the material, particularly in the final few folios of his work. However, stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four are also transposed, yet clearly marked as such. Since this was an annotated manuscript from its inception, there was ample possibility for marking such errors. Furthermore, the manuscript is probably too late and too little copied to be the source of its unmarked transpositions. It does not show any signs of heavy use.

Textual peculiarities of this manuscript thus include the transposition of lines 21.3 and 21.6, of stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four, and also of stanzas thirty-nine and forty, though this last transposition was marked to be corrected by the original writer. There is no merger of stanzas thirty-seven and thirty-eight. Line 1.6 reads mätti, while 54.1 gives an alternate vita for its vitr, but has no mention of any vestan. Line 64.4 has the rare bifrost, and stanza eighty-three is included. Aside from the corrected transposition, all these peculiarities are shared with Add. 11,174, to which this manuscript seems to be closely related. Ms. Germ. Quart. 329 of the Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin likewise shares the main features of these two Additional manuscripts.
Additional MS 10,575 B.

This quarto manuscript, acquired by the British Museum in 1836, contains "Solar Lioth" with a Latin translation "Carmen Solare." Njarðvík lists this as number 12 and notes that the translation is that of Guðmundur Högnason of Vestmannaeyjar.

This is a very slender volume of but the one quarto gathering containing Sólariðóð. It is bound in covers of very fancy patterned cloth, but these are extremely worn and dirty. There is nothing written on the narrow spine, but labels are attached to the top and bottom of the front cover, written 140 and C.15 respectively. Inside the cover are the catalogue marks 10,575B, 203, and (crossed out) N° 68. At the bottom is the British Library's mark 140.C. On the endpaper is the note, "Purchased at Sotheby's / July, 1836 / N° LXVIII of Dr Adam Clarke's / Collection of MSS." Folio 1 begins with the title "Solarlióð / er sagt er ort hafi Semundr ins frothi / Carmen Solare." The poem continues to the bottom of folio 11v, with stanza eighty-three added in a different hand. Folio 12 is blank on both sides, as is the endpaper. The inner rear cover has 140.C written upside-down in the upper right corner.

Add. 10,575 B begins with the brief introductory commentary by Guðmundur Högnason written in Latin in a cursive script across the top of the page. The Icelandic text and its Latin translation or paraphrase follow in separate columns, the Icelandic on the left and the Latin on the right. While all Latin is written in cursive, the Icelandic is in a more usual semi-cursive hand. Stanzas are numbered, and written as lines of verse in the Icelandic, but everything is run together in the Latin. Sometimes the Latin is written across the entire width of the page, intruding between stanzas of the Icelandic. Only where the Latin intervenes is there any additional space between Icelandic stanzas. The pages of the manuscript are bordered in red, with red lines


drawn to separate the Latin from the Icelandic, and to mark the beginning of each stanza of Sólarljóð. These ruled lines were clearly drawn after the text was written, as a probable attempt to give some visual order to the jumble of Latin and Icelandic. The lines are occasionally drawn across the text and they also cross a repair in the paper of the first folio. A later hand has occasionally altered the Latin, and stanza eighty-three has been added to both Icelandic and Latin in a late and amateurish hand.

The manuscript shows signs of long and regular use. The paper is yellowed and blotchy, with a red stain on folio 1. The text itself is very clearly but not particularly carefully written. Textual and orthographical features of this manuscript, though sometimes somewhat unusual, are almost identical to those of Additional MS 11,173. While Add. 11,173 is a carefully and attentively made copy of Sólarljóð, Add. 10,575 B seems to be a very quickly made, facile transcription by someone expert at the task, but not intending to produce a copy for anything beyond personal reference. With its less elaborately formed letters, Add. 10,575 B is actually easier to read than the more carefully written Add. 11,173 it resembles.

The most distinctive characteristic of this manuscript is, of course, the Latin that accompanies it. As far as the Icelandic is concerned, the orthography is somewhat unusual in that capital letters are very consistently used to indicate double letters. Otherwise there are no abbreviations except for elisions marked with apostrophes. M and n are rather distinctively written, with the left legs tending to curl to the right, looping under the body of the letter. Stanzas are numbered and regularly consist of six lines. Line 8.3 was omitted, but is marked to be inserted from where it was written vertically in the left margin.

This manuscript is part of the náðr tradition, with the word appearing at 1.6 as nath'. There are no transpositions of lines or stanzas, and the eighty-third stanza was not originally included. The later addition of stanza eighty-three is written with a much wider pen in a different hand, and with a less black ink than the rest of the manuscript. The Latin translation accompanying stanza eighty-three is written line-for-line as verse, unlike the rest.
Additional MS 11,165

The published catalogue refers to this quarto volume as *Edda Antiquior, vulgo Saxmundina sive Poetica dicta*, and dates it to the eighteenth century.\(^{114}\) The catalogue entry is not particularly enlightening. In his *Catalogue of Romances*, Ward indirectly indicates the presence of *Sólarljóð* by saying the codex is a copy of *Codex Regius* plus the same additional eight lays as in *Add. 4877*, except in a different order.\(^{115}\) His own manuscript list of manuscripts does mention *Sólarljóð* by name,\(^{116}\) and it is also indexed by Wright,\(^{117}\) but there is not so much as a mention of the folio on which *Sólarljóð* begins. This copy of *Sólarljóð* is not included in Njarðvík’s edition.\(^{118}\)

Add. 11,165 is bound in blue cloth with a cream velum spine. Stamped on the spine in gold over black background panels is “ELDER / EDDA/ BRIT. MUS. / ADDITIONAL / MS: / 11,165.” The original title page, marked in pencil as folio 2, reads “EDDA / Se(m)undar / Prestz ens / Frotha Sig= / Fuß Sonar.” The first and last two of these lines are in red; the third line is black. At the front of the volume is the note “Purch’d of Profr / Finn Magnusen / July 1837.” The first folio contains a table of contents, but this is not in the same hand as the text of the volume. On the unnumbered page preceding (probably the original cover before binding) is the number 280 in red, perhaps Finn Magnusen’s catalogue number.

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The entire volume is written in the same half-cursive hand. Titles and the initial letter of each poem are in red. There are red lines framing titles and text, these having been added as decoration rather than serving as guide lines. The pages are generally written in two columns of verse, but prose sections are written across both columns. Each poem normally begins at the top of a recto page following an entirely blank verso, even if this means leaving the entire preceding folio blank. Although not especially impressive in its calligraphy, this manuscript does exhibit a rather luxurious use of paper, with several folios left blank after the conclusion of Hamthis Maal (concluding the poems from the Codex Regius) without any apparent technical motivation. There are also a half dozen blank folios at the end of the volume, following Sólarljóð.

Sólarljóð begins at the top of folio 139 and ends on the recto side of 144, about half-way down the page. The title is given simply as “Sólar Lióth.” The first line of each column on the first page (lines 1.1 and 4.1) is written in red ink, in accordance with the volume’s usual format. After the first page there are running heads, in red, reading “Sólar” on verso and “Lióth” on recto pages. There are no original page numbers. The text is in two columns on each page, written line for line as verse in six-line stanzas, with any runovers clearly marked as such. The stanzas are not numbered, but they are marked by indentation (except for the two beginning with red lines) and their initials are very slightly fancier than other letters.

The hand is notable only for using the same almost vertical accent to dot i, mark long vowels, or to indicate a double consonant. There are no other common abbreviations. Alternate readings are included from the time of initial writing, with space sometimes being left for the letters marking the footnotes where alternates are to be found. This Sólarljóð belongs to the náði tradition with “náthe” in 1.6, but with “máttí” nonetheless being given as an alternate. Stanza eighty-three is included without comment. There are none of the common transpositions. The most unusual feature is in line 3.5,
which has "han let tina," though "lez trúa" is given as a footnote.\footnote{119} This, together with "retto" altered to "scaltu" in 26.5\footnote{120} seems to link this manuscript to Copenhagen's NK5 1108, fol. and Trinity College Dublin's L-4-1.

**Additional MS 11,173**

The printed catalogue of the British Library refers to this quarto manuscript as *Carmina Vetustissima Islandica* from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and says that it includes "Carmen Solare," together with Latin translation and notes by Guðmundur Högnason.\footnote{121} Ward's *Catalogue of Romances* discusses the manuscript,\footnote{122} but adds nothing important. His *Numerical List* credits Hafdan Einarson (sic) as having identified the author of the Latin commentary in a note signed with a ligature of H and E.\footnote{123} This note appears in the volume as part of a colophon following *Sólarljóð* on folio twenty...Njörður Njarðvík lists this manuscript as his number 13. He dates it to the eighteenth century, saying it was owned by Hálfdan Einarsson until 1781.\footnote{124}

*Add. 11,173* is a collection of gatherings that clearly had independent existence before being bound together in the current codex. The volume is labeled ICELANDIC / POETRY and BRIT. MUS. / ADDITIONAL MS. / 11,173 on its spine. The first gathering shows much more wear and thus appears much older than the others. It consists of ten folios dealing with runes, and

\footnote{119} British Library, *Add. MS 11,165*, 139(r).

\footnote{120} British Library, *Add. MS 11,165*, 140(v).


\footnote{123} H. L. D. Ward, "Numerical List of the Icelandic Manuscripts in the British Museum" British Museum Dept. of MS, 1864, 196.

originally labeled as folios 100-109, presumably having been part of some earlier volume. This gathering is labeled 173 in red at the upper right front of the otherwise blank bifolium that encloses it, apparently as part of Finn Magnusen's cataloguing system. On the first flyleaf of the volume is the note: "Purch'd of Profr / Finn Magnusen / July 1837."

The second gathering of Add. 11,173 contains only Sólarljóð, and is similarly marked in red with the number 286 on its flyleaf. This is followed by gatherings 287 "Krako Mal" and 288 "Vaulospa," through 293 "Sniás Quadi" and "294 "Kötlu Dramafr." It was only the first gathering that seems to bear any old page numbers. There are 144 folios in the volume as a whole, as numbered in recent pencil in the upper right-hand corner of each recto page.

Sólarljóð begins on folio eleven, and concludes on nineteen, followed by the colophon on recent endpaper marked as folio twenty. The title is given in three centered lines as "Solar Lioth / er sagt er ort hafi Se(mundr inn frothi / Carmen Solare." This is followed by the Latin introductory commentary in cursive script. Thereafter the Icelandic text is given on the left of the page and the Latin translation is given to the right. The Latin is always run in, sometimes extending to the far left margin, intruding between the stanzas of the Icelandic. The Icelandic is reproduced in a regular six-line stanza. Sometimes there is space between stanzas, and the Latin sometimes comes between stanzas, but usually the only marking of stanzas is by a number (in the original hand) hanging into the left margin. At the beginning of a page the writer may forget to indent the text beyond the space to be left for the stanza number.

The Icelandic text is notable primarily as being all but exactly the same as that in Additional MS 10,575 B, especially since both diverge considerably from the readings of the oldest manuscripts. Even some of the orthographical features, such as a capital to represent a doubled letter (not common in Sólarljóð manuscripts), are shared. The letter z is used in both to represent st even medially. The n, which in Add. 10,575 B had had its left leg curl under the letter, has here been stylized (where it represents a double n) to the point that the character more resembles a c with an acute stroke extending from its
upper arm. Double m resembles an inverted (. It becomes clear how a word like finna could be changed to the fiona sometimes found in Sól. 27.6.

Add 11,173 most resembles a carefully made copy of the facile Add. 10.575 B, but with more attention being paid to the appearance of the writing than to transmitting the sense of the text. However, there is no really clear connection between the manuscripts in either direction. Add. 10.575 B does have the correct “naktir” at 9.5, while Add 11,173 has changed it to “hattir,” so in the absence of any third manuscript, Add. 10.575 B (which also simply looks older because of its shabby condition) would probably have to have preceded Add. 11,173.

Add. 11,173 lacks the diacritics of Add. 10,575 B, and often has e for the i of Add. 10.575 B. Add. 11,173 belongs to the nāðr tradition (“nath’,” Sól. 1.6) and it lacks stanza eighty-three. There are none of the common transpositions. The manuscript contains various later corrections, probably by the hand of Hálfdan Einarsson. Most of these corrections or comments are concerned with the Latin version.

Additional MS 11,174

The printed catalogue of the British Library identifies Add. 11,174 as a commentary by Vigfús Jónsson on Ynglingatal, together with old Nordic poetry with its best variant readings. The manuscript is dated to the eighteenth century.125 Ward’s Numerical List adds only the fact that this quarto “collection of old poems” consists of 129 folios.126 The copy of

125 List of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Years MDCCXXXVI-MDCCXL. London: Trustees, 1843. 6 (1837). 38.
Sólarljóð included here is listed in Wright’s Index,\(^{127}\) but it is not included in Njarðvík’s listing.\(^{128}\)

The volume is bound in blue cloth with parchment spine, labeled in gold on black background: ICELANDIC / POEMS / BRIT. MUS. / ADDITIONAL MS. 11,174. The first old page bears the note, “Purched of Profr. / Finn Magnusen / July 1837.” The large red number 292 appears in the top right corner; below that is 2745 (last digit uncertain) in pencil, and at the bottom right is the number 114A, over 114.C crossed out. The first numbered folio consists of a slip of paper, the width of about half a page, bound into the volume at 90°. This contains information about the commentary on Ynglingatal which follows on the folio numbered 2. This commentary ends on folio 36, originally page 69, and is signed there by its author. The verso is blank, as is the following unnumbered folio on both sides. This last folio shows the wear and tear of having been a cover for the preceding.

Folio 37 begins a second part of Add. 11,174. No longer are there page marks beyond the folio numbers in pencil. The text begins with Hugsviniö-Maal written in two columns, with alternate readings noted to the right of each. This is the usual format for this part of the codex, all of which seems to be in the same hand. In addition to Hugsvinismol, this section contains other non-Eddic poems with which Sólarljóð is often found, such as Sona Torrek Egils Skallagr: Sonar (66r), Krákomál (77r), and Merlinus Spaa (85r). Sólarljóð starts a new gathering at 69r, a gathering that ends at 76v, with neither folio appearing to have ever been a separate cover. The second part of the codex ends on folio 111f, followed by three blank folios. Part three of Add. 11,174 is numbered 112 on its cover, and begins with Alldar-Háltur ordtr af Thorlaki Gudbrands syni Widalín. The third part comes to an end at the bottom of 129v, the last page of the codex, which appears to be the natural conclusion of the text.

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Sólarljóð begins at the top of folio 69r and is written in double columns, ending on 73r, two-thirds down the second column. The poem is followed immediately by Af Kríngilnefju. The title is given simply as "Solarlióth." Sólarljóð is reproduced in six-line stanzas of poetry with the start of each stanza indented. The lines do not necessarily break at the usual places (if there are usual places) and several stanzas have seven or eight lines. The stanzas are not numbered. Alternate readings are marked with a number above the text, and the corresponding notes are written at the upper outside corner of each page. There are few such notes, and these refer mostly to questions about the proper reading of single letters.

There are not many abbreviations, but more are used in longer lines to prevent runovers. Orthographical peculiarities include the use of insular *F* and an unusual *ar* ligature. The letter *k* begins with a stroke that often makes it look as though it were preceded by the letter *i*.

Add. 11,174 belongs to the mátti tradition. Lines 21.3 and 21.6 are transposed, as are the entire stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four. Stanza eighty-three is included as part of the poem. Other notable characteristics include *sterk* for *seig* in 37.5, *sefa* for *seg* in 43.6, and *bifrost* for *brjóst* in 64.4. Line 78.6 omits the word *vitri*. These characteristics, as well as others, link this manuscript closely to Additional MS. 6121. Furthermore, line breaks in Add. 11,174, though fewer, nonetheless bear a great resemblance to those in Add. 6121. The listed alternates are the same in both manuscripts, and there are some less-common spellings and other orthographical features that do not seem native to either writer, yet which were taken over by both. Ms. Germ. Quart. 329 of the Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin likewise shares the main features of these two Additional manuscripts, but there are differences especially in the alternate readings.
3.2.6. REYKJAVIK: Landsbókasafn

The manuscript collections in Iceland were catalogued by Páll Eggert Ólason in three volumes from 1918, 1927, and 1935–7. The supplementary volumes, aside from the first in 1947, and the fourth in 1996 have not revealed new copies of Sólarljóð. Despite the varied denominations ÍB, ÍBR, JS, and Lbs, those collections have all now been included in the Landsbókasafn, the Icelandic National Library.

ÍB 13 8vo

Jón Thorkelsson dated this manuscript to around 1750 and said it was owned by Oddur Thórðarson. Ólason numbers this 6680, calling it "Kvæðasafn á Sæmanda-Eddu," but not mentioning that the manuscript contains Sólarljóð. For Njarðvík this is Sólarljóð manuscript number 42. The volume is in various hands and dates from the eighteenth century.

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ÍB 539 8vo

This is Njarðvík’s Sólarljóð manuscript number 43. Ólason calls it Hin Eldri Edda edr Brot af Eddu Sæmundar prests hins Fróda and numbers it 7204. It is in the hand of Dáða Níelsson and was written in 1836.136

ÍBR 36 4to

Njarðvík lists this as Sólarljóð manuscript number 32, and dates it to the early part of the nineteenth century.137 Ólason calls the volume “Qvidur” úr “Sæmundar Eddu” ásamt nokkurum fornaðum and numbers it 7698.138 He reports that it is in the hand of Einar Bjarnason, but does not mention the fact that the manuscript contains Sólarljóð.

ÍBR 24 8vo

Ólason’s catalogue number is 7803 for this volume of Lioða Eðda edr Edda Rhytmica Sémundar Sigfússonar hins Fróda.139 The catalogue does not mention Sólarljóð. Njarðvík lists this as number 44 and ascribes it to Jón Níelsson of Grænanes, putting the date at 1840.140

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JS 36 4to

Ólason’s 4929 contains “Solar Liöd Sæmundar Fröda.” He dates it to around 1798.\(^{141}\) Njarðvík puts the date at “strax före 1800,” adding that the manuscript contains only stanzas 25–81 of Sólarljóð.\(^{142}\) He lists the manuscript as number 33.

This volume is a collection of loose, worn pages between embossed leather covers. Sólarljóð is the second item in the volume, following “Draumur kvinnu Pilati.” Perhaps the most interesting thing about this version of Sólarljóð is that it never did contain stanzas 1–24. It begins with stanza twenty-five, at just that point Finnur Jónsson labeled as “de egenlige Sólarljóð.”\(^{143}\) The manuscript title is given as “Hier skrifast Solar Liod Sæmundar Fröda,” and the text follows without any break.

Although it might be possible that this manuscript copied a lost original lacking the beginning stanzas, it seems more likely that they were simply omitted here. The volume appears to be selective and to reflect a spiritual interest. However, the eighty-second stanza with its unambiguous Christian prayer is also missing. Stanza eighty-one is followed directly by “Nockrar Dæmesøgur ur spekulum Regale edur Kongs skugg sion,”

This Sólarljóð contains many readings that seem not to appear in any other manuscripts. Some examples are “Leif” for bæt in 26.3, “suenda” for snemma in 29.2, “fisast” for fíkjask in 34.3, “hufin” for hnipinn in 43.3, and “Buggeir” for Baugreirs in 56.6. In line 56.5 “mæta” replaces křeina. In addition to the entire stanzas that are missing, lines 79.4–5 are also absent. Line 75.5 is missing so that “thig bid eg skilia oss alla illu frá” becomes the entire helming. Perhaps more interesting are the characteristics that this


\(^{143}\) Finnur Jónsson, Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning (København: Gyldendal, 1912) A.1: 631.
manuscript shares in common with others. Some of these are the use of “fröda” for finna in 27.6, “vælingxi” for verdri in 28.3, and “æirs” for ægis in 30.3. There is a change of word order in 31.2 and in 33.1 the word “nu” has significantly been added. Line 36.1 has “Hríufr” for Lutr, line 38.4 has “vegrer” for meyir, and line 51.5 has “skriðu” for skiðu. This manuscript also belongs among those that have sá for leið in line 55.2. These characteristics place JS 36, 40, in close proximity to Lbs. 1765, 40, and JS 542, 40 (B), without allowing it to be the sole source for either of them. It seems likely that JS 542, 40 (B) was the source followed by this manuscript.

JS 542 4to

This manuscript, numbered 5435 by Ólason, contains two copies of Sólarljóð. The second of them is followed by the Latin translation by Guðmundur Högnason of the Vestmannaeyjar.144 Njardvík numbers this 34. He adds that the volume combines various fragments dating from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.145

According to Njardvík's list of variant readings, JS 542, 40, (A) belongs to the náði tradition, with that as the reading in line 1.6.146 The manuscript does not, however, follow the klofnad tradition, since it has the word kolnad in line 44.6 instead.147

The second copy of Sólarljóð, JS 542, 40, (B), belongs to the mátti tradition,148 as one might expect from the presence of Guðmundur Högnason's translation. Many characteristics are shared with the manuscripts LBS 1765, 40, and JS 36, 40 (see the latter for details). This manuscript is more complete and therefore cannot be descended directly from JS 36, 40. If the line of

descent runs in the opposite direction, then this manuscript must have been written before 1798.

**JS 648 4to**

This nineteenth century Sólarljóð is Ólason’s 5541 and Njarðvík’s 35. Ólason speculates that it could possibly have been written by Pál Tómasson around 1833.\(^{149}\)

**JS 84 8vo**

Njarðvík’s number 41 and Ólason’s 5627, this manuscript is a collection of Eddic poetry written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.\(^{150}\)

**Lbs. 214, 4to**

Not listed by Njarðvík, this copy of *Edda Sæmundar ens Fröda* is numbered 562 by Páll Eggert Ólason. He says it was written in the eighteenth century, and includes Sólarljóð as the fifteenth poem, on folios 149r–152v.\(^{151}\)

The covers of this volume are clad in black cloth, and the page ends are colored red. For this new paper was added to the edges of the original pages before cutting. The title on a faded green label on the back reads “Sæmundar Edda og nokkur forn.kvædi.” At the beginning is a note that the book was number N-85 of the manuscript collection of “H: Bp(ö) Finnssonar.” This was noted also on a green label on the book’s back, but the inside note continues: “innihald Sæmundar-Eddu med hendi Jóns prófs. Haldórssonar, eptir ther exemplari en folio, sem Assessor Arni Manusson med egin hendi hefur skrifad á pappir i Kaupinshafn, eptir sjalfri Membrana.” There follows a list of


four supplementary poems and a note to see the full table of contents at the end.

The Edda in this volume occupies the first 244 pages, all of the volume with original page numbers. Following this as the twenty-ninth poem is *Gullkárslióð*, written in a new hand on an unnumbered page. Next is *Hyndluljóð*, on folio 126r. *Sólarljóð* follows *Krakumál* as the forty-third item in the entire collection, or the fifteenth of the appendix. Another table of contents is found on folio 161r, with the verso blank and one loose end sheet to complete the volume.

"Sólar Liöð" begins on folio 149r after the three lines of text concluding *Krakumál*. All eighty-three stanzas are included, run in as though prose, but with ample space left between stanzas. The poem concludes on folio 152v, about half-way down the page, with its final line centered horizontally, just before the title of "Liöð Órvar Ódds." Margins are marked off by vertical lines to the left and right of each page, but there are no notes written in that space, aside for an "al fyra" to the "fyna" in line 82.3.

This manuscript is part of the *mátti* tradition, with that word written as "mätte" in line 1.6. The eighty-third stanza is present, and lines 21.3 and 21.6 are transposed. Stanzas 33 and 34 are also transposed. Lines 28.4 and 36.1 are written as parenthetical. Stanza sixty-four has "bifrost" for *brjóst* in line 64.4. This manuscript is the source for the *Sólarljóð* in National Library of Scotland Adv.MS.21.5.2, and more information about peculiarities of this branch of the stemma can be found in connection with that volume.
Lbs. 631 4to

Ólason discusses this manuscript as his number 959. He places “SólarLiöd” eleventh in the volume, on folios 78–91. Njarðvík’s number is 22. He says the codex includes writing from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Lbs. 756 4to

Ólason’s catalogue lists this as number 1084. Most of the volume is said to be from 1777 and provenance is given as the Bjarneyar in Breidafjörður. “Soolar Lioöd” is seventh, occupying folios 113–7. Njarðvík lists this as number 23, dating it at 1777.

Lbs. 818 4to

This is catalogued as number 1138 by Ólason, who dates it “180 [sic] af Olaf Sveinssyne.” He says it contains mostly Eddic poetry, but he doesn’t mention Sólarlýð. Owners of the manuscript were “Kolbeirn Biarnarson og Jón Pétrsson frá Stælarfelli.” Njarðvík numbers it 24, dating it from the latter half of the eighteenth century.

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Lbs. 932 4to

Ólason numbers this 1248, writing that "SólarLiood" is part II, folios 75–78. The manuscript belonged to Brynjólf Benedictsen. Njarðvík lists this twenty-fifth, and dates it from the eighteenth century.

Lbs. 966 4to

Ólason's number 1283, this manuscript contains "Soolar-Liód Sæmundar ins Froda" in the third fragment on folios 17–21. Njarðvík numbers it 26, and dates it to the latter half of eighteenth century, while Ólason placed it at the end of that century.

Lbs. 1199 4to

This codex is numbered 1522 and said by Ólason to be a "Skinnband" written in different hands from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Within it, Sólarljóð is number X, folios 90–100. Njarðvík, numbering this 27, adds that Sólarljóð may be in the hand of Hákon Ormsson from 1646. That date would make this the oldest Sólarljóð manuscript.

The volume is currently bound in a dark brown leather binding marked Edda, said to have been "samanfest i eitt á Flatey á Breiðafirði arid 1830," though letters of more recent date seem to have been incorporated within the current binding. In addition to the library's bookplate is a note that the book

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158 Páll Eggert Ólason, ed., Skrá um Handritasöfn Landsbókasafnsins, 3 vols. (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1918–1937) 1: 393


163 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Sólarljóð (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafraðistofnun Háskóla Íslands og Menningarsjóður 1991) 228.
is "úr safni héra Eiriks Káld 8/5 94." The volume title is given as Edda Snorra Sturlusonar Lögsgömanns Samantekin árð 1215 ásamt ymsum öðrum fornkvæða = Kírilgam. There are two leaves that were part of the binding, plus one blank sheet, the title page (its verso blank), a sheet including the table of contents (on both sides), and then Bokin Edda begins. The older paper has attracted a fair amount of black mold.

The tenth old folio of the manuscript has been recently numbered 10 in its corner, and almost every tenth page thereafter is also numbered. Völsespá begins on the folio numbered 90. It is followed by Vafthrudnismál on 92, and Sólarljóð on 93, but these folios are not numbered. The table of contents lists a total of twenty-two works contained in the volume, including two copies of Hávamál. Hugsvinnsmál is also included, but the compiler's interests seem to have ranged from runes to the natural sciences.

The title of Sólarljóð is given as Hier skriuffast Sóljar Llood. The poem begins on folio 93r a little less than half-way down the page, following the end of Vafthrudnismál. It concludes on 95v, a little more than half-way down the page, the rest being left blank. Völsespá, Vafthrudnismál and Sólarljóð are all in the same hand.

Sólarljóð is written in a half-cursive hand using frequent abbreviations. The text is run in without line or stanza breaks, but there is regular punctuation which seems to represent intended line divisions. Stanzas are likewise marked through the addition of extra space before the initial word of each. The text is part of the náði tradition, and the eighty-third stanza is not included. The entire line of 14.3 was omitted but has been added in apparently later ink. Some of the text has been cut at the top of the page, and some letters at the inside margin have been obscured in the binding process. The text of this copy of Sólarljóð is transcribed here in full in chapter 6.

Lbs. 1441 4to,

Ólason lists this manuscript as number 1768, but he does not mention Sólarljóð. He reports that the manuscript is titled Edda Sæmundar
Sigfussonar hins Fróða. It is written in two hands from around 1760, in that of “Guðmundar Ísföld” and that of “thorsteinn Pétrsson á Stáðarbakka.”

Njarðvík lists this codex as number 28, but in his Solsången the attribution to Hákon Ormsson is incorrectly made here instead of at number 27, Lbs. 1199 4o. Njarðvík’s earlier Sólarljóð is correct.

*Lbs. 1562 4to*

Ólason’s catalogue names this manuscript Sæmundar-Edda and assigns it the number 1892. It is dated to around 1660 with parts from the eighteenth century. Sólarljóð is not mentioned. Njarðvík numbers this 29. He points out that the beginning of the poem is missing, starting only with “-héðinn” in the second line of the eleventh stanza.

The volume consists of loose, fragmentary pages, reinforced where necessary. Sólarljóð is on the second quire of six remaining leaves. Following the penciled folio numbers of the volume, the Sólarljóð fragment begins on 6r and ends two-thirds down folio 11r, where it is followed immediately by “Hrafnagáldr Oðins (Vorspiils Lióð).” According to a “Registur ifer thessa Sæmundar Eddu” on folio 1, “Solar Lióð” is the first of thirty-eight poems.

Stanzas begin left after an indent, except that stanza seventeen runs directly into sixteen, probably due to the page ending at that point. This manuscript cannot be certainly classified as part of the náði tradition since the first ten and one-half stanzas are missing, but it does lack the eighty-third stanza and any

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of the transpositions that might also have linked it to that tradition. On the other hand, there are many characteristics present that link Lbs. 1562, 4o, to the tradition of the manuscripts found in Sweden. Some of these include the name “Eyrðdal” in line 22.3, the word “(söcku)dólgr” with parentheses in 24.4, “öðru gaa” in 25.6, “&” for ek in 36.2, “stekr” for seig in 37.5, “klofnad” for kölnat in 44.6 and “helgum” for mörgum in line 73.5.

**Lbs. 1765 4to**

Ólason’s 2098 is a fragmentary Sæmundar-Eddu, written by “Hjálmar skáld Jónsson í Bólu.”\(^{169}\) The catalogue does not make mention of Sólarljóð, but Njarðvík lists this manuscript as number 30, saying it was written around 1860–75.\(^{170}\) Many peculiarities are shared with JS 542, 4o (B), and JS 36, 4o, some of which are described in conjunction with the latter manuscript. This may be a copy of JS 542, 4o (B).

**Lbs. 2797 4to**

Njörður Njarðvík numbers this manuscript 31 in his listing.\(^{171}\) Ólason does not mention Sólarljóð at all, but lists the codex as 378, Sæmundaredda og nokkur fornkvædi, written by Gisli Konráðssón in 1820.\(^{172}\)

**Lbs. 709 8vo**

Ólason’s 3083 and Njarðvík’s 36, this is an eighteenth-century collection of poetry attributed to the author “Sæmundr fróði.”\(^{173}\)

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This manuscript is not listed by Njarðvík, but Ólason says it contains Sólarljóð. He numbers this 3093 and places the volume's contents in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.174

The volume is a collection of unrelated paper quires, mostly in cursive hands, together with notes and lists scribbled on the backs of letters and the like. These contents are bound in covers clad in marbled paper, with a dark brown spine labeled Misc. in gold lettering. The pages are untrimmed. Sólarljóð is first in this collection, on six sheets of once-blue paper. There seems to be mostly religious material in the volume, though it also contains subjects such as elementary mathematics.

The title of Sólarljóð, on folio 1r, is given as “Solar Lioð Sæmundar Froda er frann daudur kvad.” The text is all written together in cursive script as though the poem were a single sentence. There are few upper case letters, and the letter ð does not appear in the body text. There are superscript nasals, but few other abbreviations. This copy of Sólarljóð gives the impression of having been written for devotional purposes, particularly because of the emphasis given to the prayers within the poem. Stanza seventy-five is written in block letters, larger and bolder than the rest of the text. The same is true of 82.4–6, which is retained as a closing benediction despite the addition of stanza eighty-three.

LBS 719, 8, is part of the náði tradition with “náde” in line 1.6 but with stanza eighty-three present, albeit rather mangled. There are a large number of peculiarities in this manuscript, but they are mostly idiosyncratic and do not help place the manuscript in a stemma. For example, 2.3 changes manni to “mig,” making the narrator part of the story of the greppr and the gestr. There are some changes of word order such as “frá gude” in 15.6 and “snúa sárum” in 16.5. Line 19.6 reads “vite ad hafa firer varnade.” The name

Vígúlfr appears as “Vidulf” (20.3), and Rygjardal is given as “eiardal” (22.3). Lines 34.5–6 read: “verda ad liötum longum margann hefur audur apad.” Line 39.2 has an unusual “sanndad og stiörnu.” Likewise unusual is “thansamra” for “thann dapra” in line 45.3. Line 52.3 reads “sigrhimna siö.” An alternate reading is included for the conclusion of stanza seventy-nine: given “Keipp (:Krippvor:) hin ingsta ok hennar sister, Siö.” A great many of these peculiarities seem to be shared with Lbs 756, 40, and no other manuscript.

Of special interest is the conclusion of Lbs 719, 80. Stanza eighty-three is included, but it is combined with stanza eighty-two and the lines are intermixed. The resulting stanza is as follows, with the last two lines centered in a bold book hand:

Hier vid skiliúmst og hittast munnumm á feigensdeige finunn (fira)
var sa froður skapaður ad daður heirde solarliðs sogu da samlegt
frode var thad draume i kvadt sem thú sast hit sanne fírdá engennu.

Drottinn minn geve theim dauðu ró enn
hinum likn er lífa.

Lbs. 1393 8vo

This volume of “kvæði,” copied in the nineteenth century, is Ólason’s number 3775.175 Njörður Njarðvík says the volume contains many disparate fragments, and lists it as number 37. Sólarljóð ends with stanza 49.176 This belongs to the mætti tradition, with stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four transposed,177 and stanzas thirty-seven and thirty-eight merged.178

**Lbs. 1458 8vo**

Ólason says that this late “Kvæða Bók” contains “Sólarljóð,” and assigns the manuscript the number 3840.179 Ólafur Halldórsson lists the book as his number 38 and places it between 1860 and 1880.180

**Lbs. 1692 8vo**

This volume contains a copy of “Sólar Lióð Sæmundar Prests Frøða” based on that of Eggert Ólafsson.181 In content it bears no striking resemblance to MS Germ Quart. 329 from the Berlin Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, which Nyerup had attributed to an Eggert Ólafsson.182 Nor does it resemble Adv.MS.21.4.7 of the National Library of Scotland, said by Ólafur Halldórsson to be written in a hand similar to Eggert’s.183 Ólason numbers this manuscript 4074, saying Sólarljóð is on folios 1–11. Njarðvík dates this to around 1810 and assigns the number 39.184

The volume is in poor condition with loose pages, the edges of which have been burned. Sólarljóð is first in the volume, but its pages are all whole. The text is divided into lines and stanzas, but the stanzas are not numbered. Stanza eighty-three is present, but seventy-five is missing. This Sólarljóð is part of the mátti tradition, with that word in line 6.1, but without any of the transpositions common within the tradition. Significant variations from AM

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182 (See above under the manuscript in 3.2.1).


166b, 80 seem to either follow those of a large number of other manuscripts or to be completely unique. Some rare readings are "lægdu" for drógu in 23.1, "bresta" for springa in 54.6, "sárlega" for hardliga in 67.6, and "synt" for kvadt in 83.2. There are some marginal notes, not easily legible, which tend to be explanatory as often as offering alternates.

**Lbs. 2298, 8vo**

Ólason lists this "Sæmundar-Edda" as 4680 in his catalogue, but he does not mention that it contains Sólarljóð.¹⁸⁵ Njarðvík makes this Sólarljóð manuscript number 40. He says it is in the hand of Daði Nielsson from 1835–6.¹⁸⁶

**Lbs. 4361, 8vo**

The library catalogue lists this recent addition as its number 1419 and says only that it includes poetry in various hands.¹⁸⁷ The covers of the volume are cardboard, clad in marbled paper where it remains. The binding is dark red and crumbling. The gatherings of the volume are loose. Sólarljóð begins on folio 31v with the title "Solar Liod Sæmundar Enns Frøða." The names Gudmundur Gudmunds son, Olafur Gabriels son, and Gudmundur Arnason appear along with the date 1852 on a sheet that appears to be an unrelated document once used as a cover. Sólarljóð is written in a very delicate book hand with such perfect, regular letters that reading is difficult.


The letters are anachronistically constructed primarily of vertical minims, and the ink is faded.

This manuscript is part of the mátti tradition and shows most of the particular traits of that tradition except that it lacks the eighty-third stanza. Lines 21.3 and 21.6, and stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four have been transposed. The second helming of stanza thirty-seven and the first helming of stanza thirty-eight have been omitted, with “heim á hvøriu” appearing twice in line 38.6.

Lbs. 4361, 8vo, adds the words “Svikid og” before tregat in line 10.2. Line 28.6 has “veit” for hyggr, while line 30.3 has “Ægirs heimi” for ægisheimi. Line 46.3 has been changed to an interesting but not unusual “burt fra briostum mier” and 48.4 becomes “hvørsu muna darlausir.” Stanza fifty-four begins with “Vita” instead of Vestan. The manuscript shifts one word in 56.4–5 to read “hornum / drucku their fullann hin hreina mjød.” Line 62.3 has “foru” for váru, and line 74.3 gives “attu” for eiga. There are many variants shared here with just a very few other manuscripts, but those manuscripts seem to be different for almost every example.

Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi

The Sólarrljóð manuscripts of the Arnamagnæan collection are all now held here, aside from the recent AM 427, fol., and AM 428, fol., which is Guðmundur Magnússon’s copy of it. Those remain in Copenhagen.

AM 738 4to.

Kálund has catalogued this manuscript as number 1853. He says Sigurður Gislason of Bæ wrote the codex in 1680. Jón Sigurðsson made notes on the manuscript, and it includes marginalia by Árni Magnússon, among others. Kálund reports that Sólarrljóð is the nineteenth poem in the manuscript,
occupying leaves 80–83v, before “Gest speke” and after the table of contents of “Edda Ethur Samtok Fonra æfinntyra....”188

Sophus Bugge calls this manuscript O for its owner (but not writer) “Johanne Olavia,” the amanuensis of Guðmundur Magnússon.189 This was the younger Jón Ólafsson, the brother of Eggert. Bugge finds this to be among the better copies of Sólarljóð.190 According to Bugge, Sólarljóð is written “nærmest efter en Gridformular og foran Gestumblindes Gaader med Kong Heidreks Tydninger; men Digtet er ikke optaget i den paa næstsidste Side givne Fortegnelse over ‘thættir Sæmundar Eddu.’”191 Bugge points out that the 1680 date of writing was written on the title page of the codex.192 This manuscript is one used by Finnur Jónsson as a basis for his editions.193 Njörður Njarðvík lists it as his number 5.194

The manuscript has an unusual format with long narrow pages. The title of the relevant poem is centered on folio 80 as “Hier skrifast Sólar liöd / sem sagt er sæmundr pre / stur frödi haffi kved / id thā hann lä än / dadur a bo / runumm.” The poem is given the roman numeral xxxix, and the page is marked 35 from some earlier system. The text is run together with some additional space preceding each stanza, if it does not begin a new line. Stanzas are always clearly marked in some way, though they are not numbered. The initials of the “Söl eg sä” stanzas are conservatively decorated, as is the first

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189 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) p. [?].

190 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLVI.

191 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLVI.

192 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLIV.


letter of the title. There is usually a decoration in the bottom margin of the page.

The handwriting is extremely clear, and the text closely resembles the modern editions, since they were largely based on this copy. This version of Sólarljóð is primarily remarkable for being reliable and unremarkable. It is similar to AM 167b, 8o. Despite the title with its mystical reference to the dead Sæmund speaking, the eighty-third stanza is not included. The poem ends with stanza eighty-two, just over two-thirds of the way down folio 83v. The word "drottnn" is there written all in capitals, but the name of the poem is not emphasized as it often is elsewhere. Sólarljóð is followed directly on the page by "Gestspeke," which is numbered xxxx.

**AM 750 4to.**

According to Kálund, this fragment of Sólarljóð is in a codex named Snorra Edda, written by Jón Snorraason in the latter half of the seventeenth century. He makes it sound as though the poem has been rather thoroughly obliterated: "Efter slutningen af Eddas 1ste del bl. 36v er resten af siden, der har indeholdt begyndelsen af Sólarljóð, overstreget og overklæbet. Derpå følger 'Annan partur Eddu.'"\(^{195}\) The codex is catalogued as Kálund's number 1866, and is not mentioned by Njarðvík at all.

In fact, this Sólarljóð fragment is completely legible. The paper which had been glued over it has been detached, and the poem has been written over only with a single large X across the entire page. Although only the beginning of Sólarljóð remains, this one page of nineteen lines (plus two for the title) is enough to include the first ten stanzas and all but part of the last line of the eleventh. It breaks off after "hún var" The catchword *theim* is written in the lower right margin, indicating that the poem had probably

continued beyond this fragment. (This is not the first part of *LBS 1562, 4o*, however, despite ending close to the point where that manuscript of *Sólarljóð* begins.)

The complete title of the version of *Sólarljóð* here is “Hier Byriast Sólar Liöd, Er Súmer Eijgna Sæmündi Sigfúßýne i odda, er nefndúr er hiñ fröde.” The poem is written in a half-cursive hand. The text is run in, but lines seem to be marked by punctuation and there is some extra horizontal space between each stanza. There are alternate readings included in parentheses within the text. This is part of the náði tradition, and generally shares important features (as far at the poem extends) with the Swedish manuscripts.

Arni Magnússon’s note in the manuscript, dated 1711, says that most of the volume (which would include *Sólarljóð*) was written in the hand of Thorleifur Clausson. Jón Snorrasón had been an owner.

*AM 155a oct.*

Kálund has catalogued this manuscript as number 2366.V. *Sólarljóð* is a fragment titled “Hier skriffast Solarliod.” Only the first five stanzas are included. Kálund dates the fragment to around 1700.196 Bugge placed the writing in the second half of the seventeenth century. He calls the manuscript G, saying that it consists of loose pages with *Vafthrúðnisvál*, followed by *Sólarljóð*. He says it is closely related to K [*AM. 167b 8o*].197 Since Bugge claims his K to be related to his O as well,198 this manuscript must thus also be related to *AM 738, 4o*. (Bugge’s actual references are to *AM 155, 8o,*199


197 Sophus Bugge, *Norræn Fornkvædi* (Christiania: Malling, 1868) 357.

198 Sophus Bugge, *Norræn Fornkvædi* (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLV–XLVI.

199 Sophus Bugge, *Norræn Fornkvædi* (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLVI.
a predecessor volume which contained additional fragments no longer bound in the current AM 155a, 8o. Njarðvík numbers this Sölarljóð fragment as 3 in his list of manuscripts. He does not decide between the two previously suggested dates.

Finnur Jónsson said that the correspondence with AM 167b oct. is exact, except for a single variation, and that both manuscripts are in the same hand. While both manuscripts are certainly in the same rather difficult hand, the orthography nonetheless varies. AM 155a, 8o, also repeats the word ‘hann’ in line 2.1, which AM 167b, 8o, does not, while the latter manuscript is alone in repeating a syllable from line 3.6. In line 4.1 AM 155a, 8o, reads ‘drick’ while AM 167b, 8o, reads ‘dryckinn.’ The greatest variation—the one to which Finnur Jónsson probably referred—is the unique reading in AM 155a, 8o, of “ad garði” for the usual of gotu in line 2.6. Both manuscripts do belong to the náðr tradition (though they spell the word differently) and both share an unusual ‘fromanu’ in line 5.6.

The “Her skriffast Solarlið” of AM 155a, 8o, is located in Part V, on folio 1r. It follows six lines from another text (not Vafthrúðnismál), and has its title centered left and right on the page. The text is run in as prose, except that stanza five begins flush left even though there had been enough space to run it in to the line above. The poem breaks off at the end of the page at the point where stanza five concludes. The verso side of the folio contains unrelated material, so it is extremely unlikely that this Sölarljóð ever extended beyond the fifth stanza.

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This is the manuscript which is considered to be the best, and upon which all editions have been primarily based since that of Bugge in 1867. In Kålund's catalogue it is number 2377. He dates it to the seventeenth century but suggests no writer. The volume is a collection of unconnected pages with “Solar liod” on folios 45v–48, “efterfulgt af de første linjer af ‘Liflyngs Liod’,” and followed by “Haconarmal” on folio 49.  

Bugge, who first stressed the importance of this particular manuscript, refers to it as I and gives the title as “Hér skrífast Sólarljóð.” Bugge explained that the manuscript comes from Borgarfjörður and was written around the middle of the seventeenth century. He praises it, saying, “Den er den bedste af alle mig bekjendte Atskrr. og har paa flere Steder bevaret det rette, hvor de øvrige Afskrifter har en Forvanskning, saaledes i 33,3; 27,5; 70,5, o. fl. St.”

Vigfússon and Powell found this manuscript to be “the best of the paper copies...and in the second generation from the vellum.” They dated the manuscript to about 1660. Finnur Jónsson made use of this manuscript in his editions of Sólarljóð, giving a diplomatic rendition in his Norsk-Islandske Skjaledigtning A1 (see chapter 4 on editions).

Njörður Njarðvík lists this as manuscript 1, and prints a diplomatic edition in his Solsången. In his earlier Sólarljóð, he included a photographic reference...
reproduction of the first page of the manuscript. This reproduction illustrates a notable characteristic of this particular manuscript, namely, that there is no division of the text into lines or stanzas. This is characteristic of the seventeenth-century manuscripts, but unusual among those written later. Likewise, the oldest manuscripts use more abbreviations than the later ones. The title is spelled "Hier skriffast Solar lid. This is the oldest known manuscript to contain stanza 83, thought to be a recent addition to the poem.

The manuscript was microfilmed in 1960 and the institute holds positive photographic copies made in 1977. It is presumably from the photo that Njörður Njarðvík concluded the kom of line 29.1 to be kem. There is a dim mark shown on the print that could be mistaken for the tail of an e on cursory examination, though not on closer inspection even of the photo. The mark is either due to translucency of the paper allowing marks from the other side of the page to be seen, or more likely, it is a shadow cast from a raised fiber of the manuscript’s paper. I have examined the original manuscript, and can find no evidence of an e in this location. The ink may have been drawn very very slightly beyond the perfect closure of the o because of the prominent paper fiber mentioned, but this is a much more perfect o than many in the manuscript.

The photographic copy in the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi is an excellent duplicate of the manuscript, and in some ways more revealing than the original. The evidence of repair to the edges of the pages, clearly seen on the photographs, is all but invisible in the actual volume. The paper of the manuscript is opaque under normal lighting. The ink is a uniform extreme black throughout. As can be seen from the diplomatic editions made from this manuscript, there are slightly fewer abbreviations in the final two stanzas than in the rest of the text. The handwriting is also more expansive in stanzas eighty-one and eighty-two, however, stanza eighty-three again

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becomes more compactly written. The variation is typical of the writer’s rather undisciplined style, and does not indicate any later addition or even any apparent desire to fill the page. The last two text lines of Sólarljóð are centered horizontally but then followed immediately by the title “Liwflyngs Liod” in letters of regular size, followed by a boldly written first line and two more lines of regular text.

**AM 167b oct.**

This codex contains loose fragments of various manuscripts. Sólarljóð is fragment 6a, which, according to Kålund, includes only the one poem, preceded by the fragmentary conclusion of a preceding poem. His catalog number is 2379. Kålund dates Sólarljóð to the last half of the seventeenth century.²¹¹ Bugge placed the dating more precisely at the end of the seventeenth century. He said that the codex, called K, includes Hávamál and the commentary by Björn of Skarðsá (see below), but he does not say whether these were in the same hand as the fragment containing Sólarljóð. He claims the copy of Sólarljóð to be closely related to his O [AM 738, 4to].²¹² Finnur Jónsson used this manuscript as one of the primary base texts in his edition of 1912.²¹³ Njörður Njarðvík points out that the poem is fragmentary, missing stanzas 25 through 56.²¹⁴ Njarðvík agrees with Bugge’s dating, and shows that the

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²¹² Sophus Bugge, *Norrøn Fornkvæði* (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLV–XLVI.


watermark precludes any date before 1650. This manuscript is number 2 in Njarðvík's listing.

Sólarljóð occupies folios 1r–4v of fragment six of AM 167b, 8o. This quire must have consisted originally of three sheets, the center one of which is now missing. That accounts for the absence of stanzas twenty-five through fifty-six. Furthermore, the remaining pages are in poor condition (though since restored) with particularly the top lines sometimes crumbled away. All this damage had occurred before the manuscript was copied into NKS 1891, 4o.

The title is given as "Hier skriffast solar lid." The poem starts about halfway down the page after six or seven text lines of another poem. The text of Sólarljóð is run together like prose, with no particular marking of stanza beginnings. There are numbers in the margin every few lines, but these correspond neither to stanzas nor text lines. The poem concludes with stanza eighty-two and is followed by the two-line title of "Skagfyrdinga edur Hugardóms Drápa Halls Magnússonar" and four lines of the respective text. This is in the same hand as Sólarljóð, but folio 5r begins a new hand. The text of Sólarljóð is indeed close to that of AM 738, 4o, even in matters of orthography. However, there are inversions of words not shared between the manuscripts, as well as alternate readings within AM 738, 4o, that are ignored here. Hence, there is no overwhelming evidence of AM 167b, 8o, being a direct copy of the earlier manuscript. Keeping in mind that the editions of Sólarljóð are heavily based on these two manuscripts, it can simply be said that both of them look like relatively accurate copies of the poem itself.
3.2.7. **STOCKHOLM**

The Royal Library in Stockholm (Kungl. Bibliotheket) contains several manuscript copies of Sólarljóð. The relevant catalogue was published by Vilhelm Gödel in two volumes, 1897–1900.²¹⁵

**Papp. fol. nr. 34.**

This has been one of the more important manuscripts in the history of research connected with Sólarljóð. It is no longer considered to be one of the best manuscripts, however, and it was overlooked by Njardvik. The 1787 Edda edition, partly based on its readings, referred to this manuscript as Svec or Svecus. The codex was not available to the editor of that edition, but he made use of its variants as they had been marked in another manuscript.²¹⁶

Rasmus Rask referred to *Papp. fol. nr. 34* as *St.*, short for Codex Stockholmensis, when he used it as the main text consulted for his edition of Sólarljóð. Afzelius gave a rather complete description of the manuscript as early as 1818. He called it

Codex Stockholmensis (St.) chartaceus, in forma folii, qui utramque et Sturlesonii & Saemundi Eddam exhibet et in edit. Arna-Magn. Eddae dicitur Svecus, ab Helgio Olai filio scriptus anno 1684, et sequenti, ut opinatus est Cel Rask, originem debet."²¹⁷


²¹⁶ *Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior*, vol. 1 (Hafniæ: Gyldendal, 1787) XLIV.

²¹⁷ Arvid August Afzelius in [Rasmus Rask, ed.] *Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða ...ex recensione Erasmi Christiani Rask curavit Arv. Aug. Afzelius* (Holmiae: Typis Elmenianis, 1818) [vii].
Rask was probably wrong about *Nr. 34* *fol.* being the source manuscript for the others in the Stockholm collection. Afzelius mentions in a footnote to his introduction\(^{218}\) that Helgi Ólafsson came from Iceland to Stockholm in 1682, so for him to have made his copy in 1684, he would have had to have copied it from another manuscript already in Sweden.

Bugge discusses this manuscript in his *Edda* edition.\(^{219}\) In Gödel’s catalogue this is number 90, said (again) to have been written in 1684 and to contain both Eddas. The writer is said to have been Helgi Ólafsson. *Edda Sæmundar hins fróða* includes *Sólarljóð*, together with its translation into Latin. The *Sólarljóð* translation was made by Ólafsson himself, although he did not make all the translations in the volume. The manuscript is a copy of *Papp.* 8:o nr. 15.\(^{220}\)

“After hefia Solar-Liöth Sæmundar ins frötha” is the first poem of the collection (following Snorra Edda and a supplement to it), beginning on the folio numbered (in pencil) 285, and ending on the verso of the one labeled 291. The Latin is written in a column on each page beside the Icelandic. The poem concludes with the eighty-second stanza. The manuscript is held on film as *MfH* 570 (neg).

**Papp. 4:o nr. 11.**

According to Gödel, this *Sæmundar-Edda* is a copy of *Papp. 8:o nr. 15*. He assigns it the number 189 and cites the postscript saying it was copied by

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\(^{218}\) Arvid August Afzelius in [Rasmus Rask, ed.] *Edda Sæmundar hins Fróða ...ex recensione Erasmi Christiani Rask curavit Arv. Aug. Afzelius* (Holmiæ: Typis Elmenianis, 1818) [vi].

\(^{219}\) Sophus Bugge, *Norræn Fornkvæði* (Christiania: Malling, 1868) LIII.

Gabriel Duhre from Gudmunn Olsson’s manuscript in 1690. Njörður Njarðvík makes no mention of this manuscript.

“Her hefiast Sólar Lioth Sæmundar ins frötha” is the first poem of the volume, occupying pages 1–27. It concludes with the eighty-second stanza. A Latin translation of stanzas 1–30 is written in the right-hand column beside the original Icelandic stanzas. A Latin translation of stanzas 69–82 follows the end of the Icelandic poem on pages 29–31. The marked pagination appears to be original.

The most interesting detail of this manuscript is probably the transposition of stanzas 44 and 45, clearly an error in copying from Guðmundur Ólafsson’s original Papp. 8:o nr. 15. Both stanzas begin with “Söl ek sá.” All stanzas are numbered in a hand indistinguishable from that of the text. The two transposed stanzas have been given the correct labels, so the stanzas of the poem are numbered in the sequence: 42, 43, 45, 44, 46, 47.

**Papp. 4:o nr. 46.**

In Gödel’s catalogue this is manuscript number 224. It is dated to the latter half of the seventeenth century. The title of the volume is Sæmundar Edda, but it also contains that of Snorri. It is a copy of Papp 8:o nr. 15, written in the hand of Guðmundur Ólafsson.

Rask used this manuscript in his early edition of the Edda, where it is referred to it as G for Codex Guðmundi, having been owned by Guðmundur Ólafsson. It is not mentioned by Njarðvík. In the introduction to Rask’s Edda edition,

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A. A. Afzelius describes it as “C. Gudmundi (G.) chartaceus, in Quarto, Eddam quoque Sturlesonii et Scaldam continet. In possessione Gudmundi Olai filii fuisse, nomen eidem inscriptum indicat. In margine lectiones variorum subjungit.”

There is also a note in the manuscript mentioning the binding of the volume in 1843, probably written by A. I. Arwidsson, who published a catalogue of the manuscript collection shortly after that date. This note suggests that the claim of the “Gml Hðskr Katal” that the manuscript was in the hand of Guðmundur Ólafsson may not be correct. The annotator believed the manuscript to be too old to have been written by Guðmundur Ólafsson, and that he might in fact have brought the volume with him from Iceland.

Sólárliðað is the first poem of the collection, titled “Her hefiast Sólar-Liðth Sæmundar ins frötha.” There are eighty-two stanzas, all numbered. Each stanza is carefully written in six lines, even if it means having only a one-word line as in 80.2. There is no translation included, but there are extensive marginal notations.

Papp. 8:o nr. 15.

The primary manuscript owned by Guðmundur Ólafsson is this smaller volume from which Papp. 4:o nr. 46 was copied. Gödel assigns this the number 272, and dates it to the latter half of the seventeenth century. He says it was written by Johannes (Diethericus, Theodericus) Gröne, with the marginalia of Guðmundur Ólafsson, who brought the volume to Sweden in

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223 Arvid August Afzelius, in [Rasmus Rask, ed.] Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða ...ex recensione Erasmi Christiani Rask curavit Arv. Aug. Afzelius (Holmiæ: Typis Elmenianis, 1818) [vii].
1681. It was earlier listed as number 1 in “Mss och Islandske Böker.” Gödel says this manuscript was used in the edition of 1787.

Rasmus Rask called this manuscript F when he used it in his Edda of 1818. In that edition it is described as “(F.) C. chartaceus in Octavo, inter Islandica N. 5, cui ab initio pag. 1. litteram F. inscriptam invenimus.” Gödel pointed out that Rask’s “5” is a typographical error for “15.” Sólarrljóð is the first poem of the codex. It begins with a decorative F (in “Fie ok fiorve”) which is so elaborate as to be illegible. Hence, the letter F at the top of the page was probably added at an early date in order to explicate the poem’s initial illuminated letter.

Bugge discusses this manuscript at p. LIII, but it is not mentioned by Njarðvik. This is one of the oldest manuscripts containing Sólarrljóð and the ultimate source for all its manuscripts in Sweden, except Uppsala’s R 692 4to. It is a beautiful little volume, finely written, but soiled from much use. The title of Sólarrljóð is given as “Her hefiast / Sólar Liöd Sae / mundar ins Fröda.” Stanzas are run together and unnumbered, except for a few marked in another hand. Lines break in mid-word (as can be seen from the title) and abbreviations are frequent. The poem ends on folio 8r with stanza 82.

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228 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Forvikvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1868) LIII(?).
3.2.8. UPPSALA

Manuscripts containing Sólarljóð may be found at the Uppsala University Library (Uppsala universitetsbibliotek), housed in Carolina Rediviva. They were included in a catalogue published by Vilhelm Gödel in 1892.\textsuperscript{229}

\textit{R 682 fol.}

Gödel dates this manuscript to the eighteenth century. He says it is a copy of Stockholm's \textit{Icelandica Papp. fol. nr. 34}, and was previously catalogued as \textit{Don. var. n:o 619}.\textsuperscript{230} Njörður Njarðvík lists this as his number 20, and says that the accompanying Latin translation is not that of Guðmundur Högnason.\textsuperscript{231} In fact, the translation is apparently that of Helgi Ólafsson from the same Stockholm manuscript from which the Icelandic had been copied. Even the same alternate Latin choices have been repeated, though this version integrates them into the text parenthetically rather than adding them in the margin. Sólarljóð is the first poem of the manuscript, beginning after a blank folio. The title is "Her hefiar Solar-Lioth Sæmundar ins Frotha." It includes eighty-two stanzas.

\textit{R 682a fol.}

Gödel does not include this manuscript in his catalogue. According to Njarðvík, who numbers it 21, the watermark dates this manuscript to no

\textsuperscript{229} Vilhelm Gödel, \textit{Katalog öfver Upsala Universitets Biblioteks fornisländska och fornnorska handskrifter}, Skrifter utgifna af Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Upsala 2.1 (Upsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1892).

\textsuperscript{230} Vilhelm Gödel, \textit{Katalog öfver Upsala Universitets Biblioteks fornisländska och fornnorska handskrifter}, Skrifter utgifna af Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Upsala 2.1 (Upsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1892) 26.

earlier than the end of the eighteenth century. The volume, bound in paper, is titled *Edda Sæmundar ins Frotha*. "Sölar Liöth Sæmundar ins Frótha" begins the collection, occupying pages 9–46. Although *R 682a* fol. approximately follows *R 682* fol. and the other Swedish manuscripts, it is not an exact copy of any. Even the title is different. This carefully written manuscript gives orthographical alternates (such as "komaß" for "komass" in line 1.6) which makes it look like an overly exact copy of some other (Swedish) manuscript, yet none of the other Swedish manuscripts seem particularly close to this one in orthography. The manuscript begins with a large decorative flourish something like the illuminated initial in *Papp. 8:o nr. 15*, but here it is only a decoration and not an initial (F follows in "Fe ok feörwi"). While *e* is often used for *i*, the alternation does not occur in the same locations as in the other manuscripts now in Sweden.

*R 691 4to.*

Gödel says this is another copy of the Stockholm Royal Library's *Papp. fol. nr. 34*. The volume is titled *Carmina Islandica* and it was earlier catalogued as Nordinska saml. n:o 220 4:o. Gödel dates it to the 1700s. Njarðvík numbers this 18, calling it a late manuscript, perhaps eighteenth century.

*Sólarljóð* is titled "Her hefur Solar-Ljod Sæmundar ins froda." It is another copy of Stockholm *Papp. fol. nr. 34*, including the same Latin translation by Helgi Ólafsson. The Icelandic is in regular six-line stanzas with the Latin given line by line in the right column beside it. There are eighty-two stanzas, all numbered and in the usual order. In this manuscript *Sólarljóð* is not first in the collection, but eleventh, beginning only on the forty-second full folio.

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The manuscript does reflect the substitution of e for i common to the other Swedish manuscripts.

R 692 4to.

According to Gödel, this manuscript is from the latter half of the seventeenth century. The title of the volume is Poæm. Island., and “Sólar Liöd” occupies folios 16v–18. The codex was earlier catalogued as Salanska saml. n:o 15 4to.²³⁴ Njörður Njarðvík lists this as his number 19 and dates it tentatively to the latter part of the eighteenth century. He points out that Sólarljóð ends with the seventy-third stanza.²³⁵ Gödel’s earlier date seems more likely than Njarðvík’s.

This codex includes the manuscript fragment Johan Henrik Schröder found in Strengnäs. That fragment formed the basis for Tholander’s edition and translation of Sólarljóð in the journal Iduna in 1818. The edition claimed to be based on a fragment from a quarto manuscript thought to have been the Swedish source used in the 1787 Edda edition. The Iduna edition was an attempt to preserve the text of this remaining fragment.²³⁶

Gödel describes R 692 4to as combining three different fragments, the second of which (fol. 9–18) includes “Kvedi Eigils Skalla Grims sonar Er hañ kallar Torrek,” “Gëtspeki Heiðreks konungs,” and “Sólar Liöd.” This corresponds to the description of Schröder’s fragment, which is said to have contained “Kvedi Eigils Skallagrim’s Sonar er hann kallar Torrek,” “Giet-Speki Heidreks

²³⁴ Vilhelm Gödel, Katalog öfver Upsala Universitets Biblioteks fornisländska och fornorska handskrifter, Skrifter utgifna af Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Upsala 2.1 (Upsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1892) 37–8.


Kong's" and "Sólar-Liöd." As described in the introduction and notes to the Iduna edition, this version of Sólarrljóð inverts the usual order of stanzas 33 and 34. Stanza 38 is omitted entirely in the manuscript, although the edition supplies it from the 1787 edition. Hence, although the poem extends through stanza 73, it only contains seventy-two stanzas.

The stanzas of the poem are not numbered, and there is no division into lines of verse. Each stanza begins a new text line which breaks at the right margin without regard to meter. The first letter of each stanza is indented and capitalized. Each stanza occupies about one and one-half lines. The poem begins with a large decorative F four text lines deep and extending upwards into the margin for the equivalent of about two lines beyond the first line of text. The text contains more abbreviations than most Sólarrljóð manuscripts, but nothing approaching those of AM 166b 8o. Although abbreviations were expanded silently in the Iduna edition, the edition does demonstrate most of the manuscript's orthographic peculiarities. The edition cannot be relied upon for total accuracy, but it shows that, unlike other manuscripts in Sweden, this one belongs to the tradition which has "mátti" in the last line of the first stanza rather than "nádi." Another interesting detail is the capitalization of "Greppr" in line 3, not shown in the edition, but perhaps lending support to Ölsen's idea that it is a personal name.

This manuscript of Sólarrljóð no doubt originally contained the entire poem, but the final folio has been lost. The manuscript has suffered water damage, with a liquid stain evident in the bottom margins, extending into the text area only on the last remaining folio. The text on the recto side can easily be read through the stain. On the verso, the wet page evidently adhered to the one following, not only smearing the ink, but causing it to lift off the page when the two sheets were separated. This damage is first evident on what corresponds to the last line of stanza 70. As the edition said, the last three


stanzas are unreadable, or at least contain large gaps where the ink has been removed. The final page of the poem was no doubt completely destroyed, and discarded some two hundred years ago.

3.3. SECONDARY MANUSCRIPTS

In addition to actual copies Sólarljóð, there are other manuscripts that pertain to the poem. Because there are no particularly old copies of Sólarljóð, it would be especially valuable if there might be at least references to it in medieval manuscripts. Perhaps something might thus be learned about its age, author, or circulation. Unfortunately, no reference to the poem has been found dating to before the seventeenth century.

The earliest scholarship dealing with Sólarljóð is to be found in manuscript form, mostly as brief comments written in the margins of some of the manuscripts that contain the poem. Likewise, early translations into Latin may be useful insofar as translations are also interpretations. Most of these translations accompany the Icelandic text in the manuscripts discussed above, and have been mentioned there. There are, however, also some independent commentaries and translations. The sources mentioned here are mostly those that have been commonly referred to in the published literature on Sólarljóð. This list can perhaps serve as the basis for a complete survey to be undertaken later. The commentaries attributed to Björn Jónsson of Skardsá, for example, exist in many copies.

3.3.1. Manuscripts Mentioning Sólarljóð

Copenhagen, Royal Library: NKS 1886, 4to.

Kálund's number 798, this manuscript was written in the second half of the eighteenth century by Thorleifur Arason Adeldahl. It contains Björn Jónsson of Skarðsá's "Nokkuð lítið samtak um rúnir" (1642), "Ráðning Brynhildarljóða," and "Völuspá med kommentar."240

Sophus Bugge says this commentary on Völuspá contains the oldest reference to Sólarljóð.241 In the forward to his Norræn Fornkvædi, Bugge confirms the date and authorship of this commentary based on Stockholm’s Isl. Papp. fol. nr. 38 (see below).242 Another copy of all three commentaries is contained in Copenhagen’s NKS 1867 4o. However, a citation of Sólarljóð by Jón lærði in the Bodleian’s manuscript Marshall 114 is now thought to predate any possible reference by Björn of Skarðsá.243


In his forward to Norræn Fornkvædi, Bugge cites this manuscript as confirming the idea that Björn Jónsson of Skarðsá knew Sólarljóð. Here the commentary on Völuspá supposedly written by Björn is titled "Nokkorar málsgreinir um that hvaðan bókin Edda hefr sitt heitú" (MS pp. 239–84) but it contains no reference to Sólarljóð. Instead, the Sólarljóð reference is to be found in the commentary on Sigdrifumál’s rune verses which follows it, "At fornu i theirri gömlu norrønu kölluduz rúnir bæði ristingar og svo

240 [Kristian Kálund, ed.]. Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter ... udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat, (København: Gyldendal, 1900) 259.
241 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1868) 357.
242 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1868) LXI.
skrifelsi," on pages 285–9. The reference to Sólarljóð is on page 288: "Svo segir i Sólarljóðum gömlu: Bækkr ek sá etc. fáðar feikn stófum."244

**Oxford, Bodleian Library: Marshall 114**

This manuscript has been catalogued by Madan et al. as their number 8676. It is there dated to the first half of the seventeenth century. The volume is known as a copy of Snorra Edda transcribed from the *Codex Upsaliensis* (c1300).245

Einar G. Pétursson246 argues that the commentary on Sigdrífumál's runes in *Isl. Papp. fol. nr. 38* of the Stockholm Royal Library was written not by Björn Jónsson of Skarðsá but by Jón lærdi. Part of the evidence consists of a reference to Sólarljóð on page 7r in *Marshall 114*, written before 1639 in the hand of Jón lærdi. If the dating is correct, this, and not the commentary correctly or incorrectly attributed to Björn Jónsson, is the oldest known reference to Sólarljóð. This discovery, however, shifts the earliest mention of Sólarljóð back only some three years.

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245 Falconer Madan, H. H. E. Craster, and N. Denholm-Young, eds., *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford which have not hitherto been catalogued in the quarto series, with references to the oriental and other manuscripts*, vol 2, part 2: Collections and miscellaneous MSS. acquired during the second half of the 17th century (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937) 1208–9.

3.3.2. Commentaries and Translations.

*Copenhagen, AM 427 fol.*

Guðmundur Magnússon based the first printed edition of *Sólarljóð* on three manuscript translations in addition to his own.247 This manuscript of the poetic Edda contains two of them. The manuscript was written by Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík (Joannis Olavii Grunnavicensis). It contains the text of *Sólarljóð*, together with the writer’s Latin translation and commentary. It also contains Jón Eiríksson’s marginal notations of variants from a manuscript thought by Rask248 to be Stockholm’s Isl. Papp. fol. nr. 34.

**Papp. 4:o nr. 48**

This manuscript is titled *Skaldskap. Edduruel ie Miscellanea ad Eddam pertinentia*. It contains various poetic fragments bound together without much care to their organization. *Solis Carmina (Hic incipiuntur Solis Carmina Sæmundi...Multiscij)* begins on folio 2v and continues through its eighteenth stanza on 6v. The poem resumes in the same hand on folio 17r with the last two lines of stanza 24. On folio 19r the poem breaks off again after the third line of Stanza 36. The rest of the folio and its verso are blank, so the poem probably never continued beyond this point. The translation is probably based on that of Helgi Ólafsson, though there are some deviations. A second copy of the same translation is found on folios 202r–212r. There are more notes included in this version than in the first, and the complete poem is recorded, up through the eighty-second stanza. The parenthetical alternate translations of the fragments appearing earlier in the volume are also

247 *Edda Sæmundar hins Fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior*, vol. 1 (Hafniæ: Gylwendal, 1787) XLVI–XLVII.

included in this complete translation, together with additional alternates. Nowhere in this volume is there a version of Sólarljóð in Icelandic.

Other Manuscripts

The third source used in the 1789 Edda edition was an Edda manuscript which had been owned by Guðmundur Hógnason (1713–1795) of Vestmannaeyjar (Gudmundus Hugenius Vestmanneyiensis), and included his notes. He had earlier translated Sólarljóð into Latin, and this translation circulated widely in many different manuscripts. He did not include the last stanza (number 83) of the poem. Guðmundur Magnusson was impressed by the manuscript’s annotations, calling them “brief but brilliant.” This important manuscript, if it indeed contains the Icelandic text of Sólarljóð in addition to the Latin, has not been identified.

There are several Latin versions of Sólarljóð in manuscript form. Most of these have been mentioned only in conjunction with Icelandic versions when they appear, as is usual, side by side. But there are various Latin copies of the poem which stand by themselves without the Icelandic original. These do not seem ever to have attracted any scholarly attention. Most of the Latin manuscripts appear to be copies of but a few originals, such as those of Guðmundur Hógnason or Helgi Ólafsson, but there are frequently alternate readings. It could even be that one of the Latin translations may contain an unknown and valuable interpretation of part of Sólarljóð, but the search for such continues to be reserved for Latinists. Guðmundur Hógnason’s translation may be found in Add. 10,575 B, Add. 11,173 and JS 542 4o, (B). Helgi Ólafsson’s translation may be found in Papp. fol. nr. 34, R 682 fol. and R 691 4to. Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík made a translation in AM 427 fol. A

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249 Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, vol. 1 (Hafniæ: Gydendal, 1787) XLVI.

Latin translation is also present in *Papp. 4:o nr. 11*, but the translator has not been determined.

### 3.4. A MANUSCRIPT STEMMA

To date, the only published attempt at a manuscript stemma for *Sólarljóð* has been made by Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell for the prehistory of the poem. Njörður Njarðvík has explained that a stemma is simply not worth the effort, given the manuscript situation. Nothing can be known of the relationship of the best extant copy to the original, most copies are so late as to be of no importance, the dating of many is uncertain, and some of the writers may have known the poem by heart and not copied their models exactly. While it is true that a stemma requires a great deal of time and effort without normally producing new information, the first steps toward establishing a stemma for *Sólarljóð* have been surprisingly rewarding. With over sixty manuscripts under consideration, it has become nearly impossible to see through the forest without a tree. In the absence of a manuscript tree, the manuscripts have tended to be grouped conceptually by the libraries or cities in which they have accidentally come to be preserved, rather than by textual characteristics shared with other manuscripts. The seemingly important manuscripts are those which for one reason or another have been cited most often, and not necessarily those which are oldest and stemmatically closest to the archetype. Too often manuscripts have been given inordinate importance simply because they have been readily available or written in clear orthography. They have been valued because they have corresponded with a scholar’s preconceived idea of what the original must have looked like, or simply because they have contained the magic word

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membrana. Folios have been given obvious preference over volumes in smaller format.

The comparison of such a large number of manuscripts as contain Sólarljóð is indeed a daunting task. Yet only by determining the relationships between the manuscripts can the relative value of the writings be ascertained. Those of lesser value may then be set aside so that efforts can be focused on a smaller number of manuscripts. Progress can be made one step at a time. Although there is general consensus that AM 166b, 80, is the best manuscript, the only reason stated in the literature for so believing is that it “har paa flere Steder bevaret detrette, hvor de øvrige Afskrifter har en Forvanskning.”253 Since the original manuscript does not exist, it requires an uncomfortable amount of faith to follow a determination even by Sophus Bugge of what a “right” reading is, vis-à-vis a “corruption.” A manuscript tree, while still not supplying a correct reading, would at least provide a more objective basis for rejecting some variants as corrupt.

The usefulness of a manuscript stemma has not been questioned. The practicality or even possibility of deriving such a stemma has been the great barrier. There are simply too many manuscripts with too many orthographical variants, too few substantive variants, and too much uncertainty regarding date of composition. Fortunately, however, some of the manuscripts do contain some clues.

Sólarljóð manuscripts fall into three primary groups. Njördur Njardvík noted that among the various manuscripts, the last line of the first stanza alternates between readings of náði or mátti.254 The choice between these two modals seems to distinguish two separate manuscript traditions, although the separation does not remain entirely clear. Some manuscripts, for example, list both words as alternates, and at the same time other variant features may be divided along lines unrelated to the náði/mátti schism. Yet the division is surprisingly distinct under the circumstances. The náði manuscripts can be

253 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLV.
likewise broken into two groups—those which (like the mátti manuscripts) have the word kólnat in line 44.6, and those which (like most in Sweden) have the word klofnad instead. Although Sólarmió manuscripts often seem to have contact with several different ancestors, particularly in the case of late manuscripts, they tend to borrow from manuscripts that were themselves quite alike. Manuscripts are compared within the same textual family and rarely to manuscripts that are very much different. Hence, the three traditions can be followed from the very oldest manuscripts through to the most recent.

Although manuscripts may be distinguished by date, it is difficult to assign any very precise date to many of the manuscripts. Some have not been restricted to any time period narrower than two hundred years. In the case of two similar manuscripts it may thus be impossible to tell which is the ancestor and which the descendent.

Surprisingly, the oldest manuscripts are the ones easiest to place. They were most often written by scholars, or soon came into the hands of scholarly collectors. There is thus often some early notation of who the writer was, when and where the copy was written and even what models were used. There may be records of ownership or mention in auction catalogues. Since the writers of the older manuscripts were often prominent people, their personal handwriting is sometimes recognizable. The most recent manuscripts are the most difficult to place. As Njarðvík has remarked, they were often produced simply to satisfy the demand of collectors.\textsuperscript{255} As a consequence they tend to be of little value and have usually exerted no further influence. The most recent manuscripts are hard to place precisely into a manuscript stemma, but on the other hand, they are of so little importance that it scarcely matters. Any seeming innovations during the last century more likely come from carelessness and the influence of printed editions than from contact with any ancient manuscript or remaining oral tradition.

Some steps have already been taken towards establishing a manuscript tree. The literature often mentions various similarities between manuscripts. Sometimes it is even stated that one manuscript was copied from another. Usually manuscripts are identified by owner, which may not be especially helpful since famous collectors have tended to own several different manuscripts. Yet it does narrow the field. Likewise, comparisons have been made to better-known codices which may bear no genetic resemblance to the manuscript in question, but which nonetheless provide a starting point for research. The large number of manuscripts can at least be broken down into various blocks of similar texts. These blocks provide a manageable area within which more detailed work can perhaps be done.

The manuscripts in Sweden form the most clearly defined block. In 1681 Guðmundur Ólafsson brought to Sweden the manuscript now held by the Swedish Royal Library as Isl. Papp. 8:o nr. 15. This is one of the very oldest codices containing Sólarljóð. It has been the ultimate source of all the manuscripts in Sweden except for Uppsala’s R692, 4o. Furthermore, these Swedish manuscripts seem to have been largely isolated from the influence of manuscripts beyond the national borders. At least three copies were made from Isl. Papp. 8:o nr. 15. One of these, Isl. Papp. fol. nr. 34, served as a model for at least three further Swedish manuscripts, superseding the earlier one as apparent authority. One can only speculate as to whether this authority came from the volume’s greater size, greater circulation, or greater normalization of language. In any event, the resultant stemma looks like this:
NKS 1870, 4o, also belongs to this tree. It was copied in Sweden from Isl. Papp. 4o, Nr. 34, but then made its way to Denmark. It seems to be the oldest of the Sólarljóð manuscripts in the Royal Library at Copenhagen, where it may even have exerted an important influence. At least the náði/klofnad tradition is well represented in later Danish copies.

Although clear relationships of descent can be determined here only for these eight manuscripts, there are other manuscripts that belong to this same tradition, which are therefore likely to be related in some less obvious way. The oldest existing manuscript of this tradition was written in about 1660 and is currently in the National Library of Iceland, known as Lbs. 1562, 4o. Later manuscripts are NKS 1110, fol., and NKS 1867, 4o, of the Royal Library in Copenhagen; Adv.MS. 21.6.7 of the National Library of Scotland (its Sólarljóð B); and Lbs. 966, 4o, Lbs. 709, 8o, Lbs 1458, 8o, JS 648, 4o, and JS 84, 8o, all of the National Library of Iceland. It may be possible to fit these remaining
manuscripts into a stemma with the others based on their actual text, even though there is no explicit mention of what manuscript was being copied.

However, although the manuscripts of any given tradition are few enough to allow for a reasonably thorough comparison, lines of descent are sure to have contained manuscripts now missing. The parchment manuscript referred to in NKS 1109, fol. and TS 1492, 40, clearly belonged to this same tradition. Yet it is highly unlikely that this parchment still exists, if it ever did.

A second group of manuscripts is related to AM 738, 40. It is similar to AM 167b, 80, which is, in turn, close to the fragment AM 155a, 80. These last two manuscripts were written in the same hand with “only a single variation,” so they must have had a common source, or one served as source of the other. The similarities do not look quite as great as claimed by Finnur Jónsson, but given the fragmentary state of these manuscripts, they nevertheless do seem to belong to the same tradition. NKS 1891, 40, claims to be a copy made from AM 167b, 80, plus another manuscript, but its Sólarljóð was evidently referred only to AM 167b, 80. Similarly, NKS 1872, 40, is a direct copy of AM 738, 40, with another manuscript consulted. Using a dotted line for relationships the exact nature of which is uncertain, the stemma looks something like this:

![Diagram](image)

These manuscripts are all part of the group having *náði* in line 1.6 and *kólnad* in line 44.6, although there are few clear lines of descent within this tradition. This tradition seems in large part to be a default grouping for orphan manuscripts. There are at least fifteen other manuscripts in this tradition, including the oldest one preserved. Some links between these manuscripts have been noted, but since most are not located on the European continent, they have not received the scholarly attention that has been devoted to manuscripts in the most popular collections.

Copenhagen’s *NKS 1869, 4o*, is the most likely of the quarto manuscripts once owned by Suhm that could have been consulted by the writer of *NKS 1872, 4o*. *NKS 1111, fol.*, is also said to have descended in part from this manuscript. This produces a stemmatic branching like this:

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NKS 1869 4o
    /   \
   /     \
NKS 1872 4o  NKS 1111 fol
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There have been some other similarities noted between certain other manuscripts within this tradition, but this has not gone much beyond noting that two given manuscripts have much in common. Such links should be viewed as links to be explored rather than as lines of descent. *ÍB 539, 8o*, and *Lbs. 2298, 8o*, were both written by Daði Nielsson at more or less the same time and so may well have had the same source. The pairings of British Library *Add 10,575 B* with *Add 11,173*, and *Lbs. 756, 4o*, with *Lbs. 719, 8o*, indicate similarities that are more than random, but little more.

Another important manuscript tradition forms a bridge between those manuscripts having a reading of *náði* in the last line of the first stanza and those reading *mátti* in that location. There has been some effort to establish a stemma around *NKS 1109, fol.*, since it mentioned the parchment source.
TS 1492, 4o, and TS 773(a) fol., said to be identical manuscripts, are thought to have the same source. NKS 1866, 4o, is the same as NKS 1109, fol., but doesn’t mention parchment. This has historically produced a stemma of sorts, though it has never before been drawn out as such.

The two British Library Additional codices were compared in their catalogue to Copenhagen’s NKS 1866 4o and found to have the same general contents. However, the copies of Sólarljóð were not compared specifically.

The unknown manuscript at the root of the above historical stemma is not the only source used by the manuscripts in question. Together with NKS 1108 fol. and L-4-1 (but excluding Add. 4877), these manuscripts all contain alternate readings from other manuscripts. These manuscripts straddle the mátti/náði division. They also vary as to whether stanza 83 is included. Using another unknown manuscript as the starting point, the one from the mátti tradition, the tree might look different. NKS 1109, fol., and TS 773(a), fol., keep closer to the náði original, while NKS, 1108, fol., TS 1492, 4o, NKS 1866, 4o, and L-4-1 all borrow the additional stanza from the mátti group.

I believe the historical stemma for these manuscripts to have been determined prematurely. First of all, Add. 4877 does not contain the alternate readings of mátti and náði that constitute the primary criterion for membership in this category. While it does, in fact, have the apparent characteristics of the mátti
manuscript consulted by the others, this was part of the Banks collection and not likely to have been available to Copenhagen copists. While the other manuscripts all belong in a vague grouping of manuscripts reading both mátti and náði, the closer relationships are far from clear. There are at least two separate groupings within this tradition. The groups may be distinguished on the basis of orthography, line breaks and choice of alternates. However, one really need not go beyond the titles for an initial determination. The two subgroups of the mátti/náði manuscripts are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Her hefiast Soolar Liood</th>
<th>Solar Liod</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sæmundar ins Froða</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKS 1109, fol.</td>
<td>NKS 1108, fol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKS 1866, 4o</td>
<td>NKS 1111, fol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS 1492, 4o</td>
<td>L-4-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS 773(a), fol.</td>
<td>Add 11,165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The determination an exact stemma within these subgroups remains to be undertaken.

The final main tradition of Sólarljóð manuscripts is the mátti tradition, so named for the appearance of that word at the beginning of line 1.6. Although the word mátti itself is generally considered to be in error, it is this tradition to which the most respected manuscript, AM 166b, 8o, belongs. Also of note is the eighty-third stanza which is common in this tradition and otherwise appears only in manuscripts that have been compared with one in this tradition. All the manuscripts of this tradition have a form of kölnad in line 44.6.

Within the mátti tradition are three distinct subgroups. The first accords with the well-known AM 166b, 8o, in most respects. The most significant feature of this group is probably the presence of "himnaskrift" or "himna skrift" in the second helming of stanza seventy. This facilitates alliteration at the same
time it disrupts rhythm as perceived by a modern ear. A second group of mátti manuscripts transposes stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four, and lines 21.3 and 21.6. A third group makes these transpositions and also omits six lines, effectively merging the first half of stanza thirty-seven with the second stanza of thirty-eight.

One might wish to perceive the oldest mátti manuscript, AM 166b, 8o, as the ancestor of all the others, with the second group simply adding errors and the third group adding yet more. However, no such lines of descent can be drawn, at least based on current data. The manuscripts most like AM 166b, 8o, do not especially look as though they were based on it, while the manuscript tradition with the most errors seems to predate the tradition with fewer errors. Clearly there are important manuscripts missing or unidentified within this overall tradition.

Finally, there are some isolated pairs of manuscripts sharing certain things in common. The Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen holds a manuscript, AM 428, fol., known to be a direct copy of their AM 427, fol. National Library of Scotland, Adv.MS.21.5.2 is known to be a copy of Lbs. 214, 4o, held by the National Library of Iceland. Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin, MS germ. Qu. 329 is thought to have been written by Eggert Ólafsson, while Rekjavík's Lbs. 1692, 8o, was also based on Eggert Ólafsson's manuscript. It is not certain, however, that it is either the same manuscript or even the same Eggert Ólafsson being referred to. National Library of Scotland, Adv.MS.21.4.7 is very close to Add 4877 of the British Library, and both refer to a source manuscript that remains unknown.

The manuscripts of the mátti tradition can be arranged according to the three primary subgroups:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Himna skrift</th>
<th>Transposed</th>
<th>Transposed and merged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM 166b 8o</td>
<td>MS Germ Qu 329</td>
<td>R692 4o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.MS.21.6.7 (A)</td>
<td>Lbs, 214 4o</td>
<td>Adv.MS.21.4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÍB 13 8o</td>
<td>Adv.MS.21.5.2</td>
<td>Add 4877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM 427 fol</td>
<td>Add 6121</td>
<td>Lbs. 4361 8o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM 428 fol</td>
<td>Add 11,174</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS 542, 4o (B)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lbs. 818 4o?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS 36 4o</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lbs 1393 8o?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lbs 1765 4o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only mátti manuscripts not clearly fitting into these groups are Lbs. 932, 4o, and Lbs. 1692, 8o. These are probable himnaskrift manuscripts, but it is impossible to be sure from Njarðvík's edition. Likewise, the placement of Lbs. 818, 4o, and Lbs. 1393, 8o, into the group transposing and merging stanzas is based on incomplete evidence. They merge stanzas thirty-seven and thirty-eight, and they transpose stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four, but it is not clear that they transpose lines 21.3 and 21.6 as do the other manuscripts.

For a final picture, all manuscripts can be arranged very loosely according to the most probable time of their writing, generally clear within a century, either to a final terminus, or sometimes a definite year. They can at the same time be divided according to whether they follow Njarðvík's nádi or mátti pattern, or the kólnad or klofnad pattern. If the stemmatic patterns mentioned above are then added in, the result looks something like the chart on the following two pages:
**NÁDI**

- klaifnað
- Add 10,575 B
  - Lbs. 756 40 (1777)
  - Add 11,173 (b 1781)
- Lbs. 709 80
- Lbs. 966 40
- R682a.fol

**MÁTTI**

- Adv.MS.21.4.7
  - (c1750)
  - Lbs. 214 40
- Adv.MS.21.5.2
  - (1755–6)
  - Lbs. 932 40
  - Lbs. 818 40
  - Add 4877 (b 1772)
- JS 542 40 (B)
  - [JS 36 40] (1798)
- Add 6121–
  - Add 11,174

**NINETEENTH CENTURY**

- ÍBR 36 40
  - Lbs. 2797 40 (1820)
- JS 648 40 (c1833)
  - ÍB 539 80—Lbs. 2298 80
  - (1836)
  - (1835/6)
- JS 84 80
  - ÍBR 24 80 (1840)
  - Lbs. 1458 80
  - (1860–80)
  - JS 542 40 (A)
  - Lbs. 1765 40
  - (1860–75)
- Lbs. 1692 80
  - (c1810)
- Lbs. 1393 80
- Lbs. 4361 80
The division into time periods is generally accurate at best to the appropriate century, unless the manuscript is marked with a date in parentheses. Unless a specific date is given, the order in which manuscripts are listed within a wider time period is random. The letter $b$ before the date indicates that the manuscript was written sometime before the given date, which may represent only a recent historical record of the manuscript's existence.

The division into náði and mátti columns depends, of course, on which of those two words is to be found in the final line of the first stanza. Kólnað or klofnad are variants found in line 44.6, with all mátti manuscripts containing kólnað. Manuscripts in square brackets are missing the first stanza, so that nothing can be said for certain about the náði and mátti variant. Partial manuscripts can sometimes be tentatively located on the basis of other features, however. The manuscripts in the boxes contain both of the two possible readings of 1.6 as alternates.

There are other characteristics that tend to follow the traditions associated with either mátti or náði. One of these is the presence in most mátti manuscripts of the eighty-third stanza. Manuscripts with this additional stanza are listed in italics. Note that the manuscripts JS 36, 40, and Lbs. 1562, 40, lack the final stanza, which may indicate that had they included the first stanza, it would have been written with náði. AM 155a, 80, contains only five stanzas, yet is known to follow the readings of AM 167b, 80. The manuscripts Lbs. 756, 40, and Lbs. 2298, 80, among others, appear to have been originally written without stanza eighty-three, but to have had it added in some later hand. Such manuscripts are marked with a +. The four manuscripts followed by the symbol ~ have both the word mátti and the eighty-third stanza, yet in some other ways are said to resemble the náði manuscripts.257

Manuscripts which have been copied from another known manuscript are joined by a solid line. Similar manuscripts of unknown relationship are joined by dashed lines. Dashed lines joining manuscripts on the same

vertical level indicate that the manuscripts are near duplicates or that they are in the same hand. The manuscripts enclosed in boxes belong to the same subgroup of manuscripts. Within the mátti group, the subgroup marked with # contains some form of the word himnaskript in stanza seventy. Those marked with ! transpose stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four, and lines 21.3 and 21.6 (except that a ? indicates the latter transposition is unclear from Njarðvík's edition). Manuscripts marked with % omit six consecutive lines, with the result that stanzas thirty-seven and thirty-eight are merged into a single stanza.

Presented in this manner, the manuscript variations appear much less random than they have hithertofore. The mátti characteristic and the eighty-third stanza reinforce each other, indicating that there are indeed two distinct manuscript traditions at work, and not merely random slips of memory. Likewise, the klofnad manuscripts contain many readings (and some peculiar interpretations) not shared by the kólnad group. In those cases where the direct influence of manuscripts can clearly be traced, it is obvious that the original manuscripts are followed rather scrupulously in all but orthography and those incomprehensible names. If one proposes yet another vertical column to represent a more correct tradition represented by an ancient parchment or some oral tradition, it is clear that the existing manuscripts can have had little contact with that tradition. The lost Copenhagen parchment could only have been a standard member of the klofnad tradition.

The manuscripts form rather closed clusters. Where there is frequent crossing of the border between primary types, it is clearly because multiple source manuscripts were compared, and as much is often stated by the writers. This concerns mainly those manuscripts in the boxes. The more recent the manuscript, the more probable it is that there will be a confusion of various determinative characteristics. The latest manuscripts may also have been influenced by printed editions.

This graphic listing is only the first step to be taken in the analysis of Sólárhlóð manuscripts. The clusters of similar manuscripts here revealed should be examined more closely to determine the precise relationships within them. This clustering effect could surely be enhanced by examining more of the
individual variants. For example, the single rare feature of himna skrift in 70.5–6 seems to indicate that AM 427, fol., and Adv.MS.21.6.7 had contact, perhaps directly, with the primary manuscript AM 166b, 80. At the very least, to produce a proper stemma all the manuscripts need to be found and their variants recorded.

If there are three distinct manuscript traditions, there must be archetypes of each. The náði group is clearly the larger among manuscripts of any antiquity. The oldest manuscript, Lbs. 1199, 4o (1646), is of this type, as are Lbs. 1562, 4o (c 1660), Isl. Papp. 80, Nr. 15 (b 1681), and AM 738, 4o (1680). Although the last two of these have been held in some regard by scholars of Sólarljóð, the first two have been almost totally unknown until Njarðvík’s edition. Unfortunately, these also seem to be nothing special. They contribute no new readings and appear very modern in their orthography. None of these oldest náði manuscripts seems to be a single source of the others, so there must have been another manuscript preceding them, and probably several. The early AM 750, 4o, already contains alternate readings.

The alternative mátti reading is found during the seventeenth century only in AM 166b, 80 (c1660) and R692, 4o, and Njarðvík places the latter manuscript a century later. The other manuscripts of this tradition may all descend from AM 166b, 80. R692 4o, for example, at first looks like it could have been copied directly, despite its many variants. The highly abbreviated older manuscript may not have been easy to follow or expand exactly, accounting for later variations. Is AM 166b 80, then, the only intermediary between an original manuscript of Sólarljóð and the entire mátti tradition? Probably not. There are distinct subfamilies of mátti manuscripts. Like R692, 4o, others also lack the himna skrift of stanza seventy. Some manuscripts also invert stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four, or merge thirty-seven and thirty-eight. Lines 21.3 and 21.6 may be transposed. There are many variant choices of vocabulary. The variants occur in such a way that makes it doubtful that AM 166b, 80, could have been the source of all the manuscripts

of its tradition. Yet almost all mátti manuscripts do seem to contain stanza eighty-three, unless they are broken off before even stanza eighty-two has been reached.

There is some reason to believe that stanza eighty-three may have been composed by the writer of AM 166b 8o. First of all, the final stanza is written out more extensively, with fewer abbreviations, than are the other stanzas. This could be because it was being written for the first time and not merely copied. Then, too, there is a correction in line 83.1. This is the only such correction in the manuscript. The word kuædi was struck out and replaced by the word frædi.259 This could indicate a poet’s revision, perhaps necessitated by the similarity of the word kuatt in the following line.

On the other hand, however, the additional concluding stanza could have been copied from another and older manuscript. Stanza eighty-three is more modern than the remainder of the poem, and so the writer of AM 166b, 8o, may have been copying from a manuscript which contained a completely written-out new stanza added to a much-abbreviated original. Stanza eighty-two is more abbreviated than eighty-three, but less so than the other stanzas. Perhaps the writer of AM 166b, 8o, simply abbreviated less as he or she reached the end of the poem. There may have been nothing more than a desire to fill out the page. Likewise, the correction of kuædi to frædi could mean nothing more than that the抄ist caught a mistake, a mistake perhaps caused by interference from the following line. Adv. MS. 214.7 and Add 4877 both suggest that their stanza eighty-three came from a source other than AM 166b, 8o.

Even if manuscript AM 166b, 8o, was the first to add stanza eighty-three, it does not follow that its writer had access to an archetypical Sólaljóð. It simply removes the absolute necessity of there having been an intermediate manuscript. This leaves us with at least five significant manuscripts, all from the seventeenth century, for which no previous influence has been demonstrated. These are Lbs. 1199 4o, Lbs. 1562 4o, AM 166b 8o, AM 738 4o,

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and *Isi. Papp* 80, 15. It is extremely likely that all other existing manuscripts
descend from these, although the relationships have not yet been adequately
demonstrated. Perhaps something of the archetype could be learned from a
comparative study of only these five manuscripts.

Guðbrandur Vigfusson and F. York Powell made the only previous stemma
for the prehistory of *Sólarljóð*. They proposed an archetype *A*, a lost
vellum of unknown age, from which was copied a corrupt paper *a* in around
1640. Both these copies have since been lost. All present copies supposedly
derive from copy *a*. The original vellum was blurred and hard to read in
places, thus producing the mistakes found in the paper copy. The resultant
stemma looks like this:

```
   A
    /
   / |
  /  |
 /   |
\    a
   \  |
    \ |
     \|
      our present copies.
```

This earlier stemma required an intermediate manuscript between the
*Sólarljóð* archetype and present copies because the authors believed the
*Sólarljóð* we know to be a corrupt mixture of at least three different poems.
Since this hypothesis has been generally rejected, the need for an
intermediary *a* is gone. But the oldest existing manuscripts do not look as

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260 Guðbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, 2

261 Guðbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, 2
though they could have been copied directly from the author’s original. There was probably at least one separate prototype of each of the three main manuscript traditions. This requires a stemma something like this:

```
    A
    /--
   /   \
klofnad kólnað mátti
```

our current copies.

Yet it is not clear that the klofnad, kólnað or mátti manuscripts descended directly from the archetype. At current levels of knowledge it still makes little sense to speculate about the prehistory of Sólarljóð manuscripts. There remain quite enough questions still to be answered about the manuscripts for which there is tangible evidence.

3.5. THE BEST MANUSCRIPT, AM 166B, 8o

It is strange that AM 166b, 8o, should be regarded as the most correct manuscript when its most striking characteristic is a bogus additional stanza. Even the subtle but important marker mátti was rejected by Bugge in favor of the majority reading. AM 166b, 8o, is the odd man out here, and not because it has the “right” reading. It seems more likely that a writer might accidentally substitute mátti for an original náði than the other way around. The merits of the manuscript lie elsewhere.

The strongest argument in favor of AM 166b, 8o, is perhaps its old appearance. In its somewhat abbreviated form (e.g., H. for heilagur in 75.3) it
resembles a medieval manuscript more than most others do. The other manuscripts, even those from the seventeenth century, tend to avoid all but the most common abbreviations. Indeed, a baroque exuberance in orthography testifies that the seventeenth-century copyists within the main náði tradition did not at all feel compelled to follow their sources letter for letter.

Bugge felt *AM 166b, 8o*, to contain the “right” readings at 27.5 (*manna hverr*), 33.3 (*ynðísheimi*), and 70.5 (*og himna skript*). These were not his sole criteria, but the only ones he chose to pass on to posterity. On the basis of Njarðvík’s edition, the primary manuscript (*AM 166b, 8o*) can be seen to read *manna huor* at 27.5, while the other oldest manuscripts, aside from *Lbs. 1199, 4o*, and *AM 738, 4o*, read *manna hverr*. Even Bugge’s own edition again departs from the “right” reading. At line 33.3 the model manuscript has *indis heimi i* while all others have *ægisheimi*. At 70.5 the model’s *ok himna skript* is entirely missing from the other oldest manuscripts, much to the benefit of their meter. It appears that the claim for *AM 166b, 8o*, being the best manuscript depends on the principle that the manuscript with the most difficult readings is probably the most accurate.

When Sophus Bugge canonized *AM 166b, 8o*, he was not aware of *Lbs. 1199, 4o*, or *Lbs. 1562, 4o*. He did believe *AM 738, 4o*, to be one of the best manuscripts. Stockholm’s *Isl. Papp. 8o, Nr. 15* was mostly ignored, probably because Rask had already edited it. Bugge’s main purpose was to introduce a new, especially good, but previously unknown manuscript. That manuscript is now recognized as the best, and there is no compelling reason to displace it from that position. No other manuscript is substantially better, but at the same time it should also be remembered that none of the oldest manuscripts is drastically worse. *Lbs. 1562, 4o*, may be rejected on the practical grounds of its incompleteness. Following similar reasoning, *AM 166b, 8o*, may be promoted as the only seventeenth-century manuscript with all eighty-three

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262 Sophus Bugge, *Norræn Fornkvæði* (Christiania: Malling, 1868) XLV.

stanzas. There is certainly every reason to prefer AM 166b, 80, over other mátti manuscripts, but it should not be viewed as having a monopoly on “right” or “best” readings.

The klofnad tradition of manuscripts is characterized primarily by readings that seem strange and illogical. The illogic no doubt arises in large part because there has been less effort expended over the centuries in interpreting these particular readings. Nonetheless, most klofnad variations seem hard to defend. The stemma for klofnad manuscripts is relatively clear. It would seem that this tradition had very few representatives on Iceland, and that its significance has been exaggerated by its influence on the continent, and especially by the fact that one of the manuscripts holding the klofnad Sólarijóð may have been written on parchment. On the other hand, the nádi/kólnad tradition contains some of the most respected manuscripts with the readings most often chosen by editors as being correct. However, this tradition lacks some of the consistency of the others. It rarely seems that one manuscript is an exact copy of its predecessor. It often appears that the copyists within this tradition were simply good at applying their own reasoning to solve textual problems with which they were confronted. The earliest manuscripts already show great variation, but where readings seem wrong, the errors seem based on misapplied logic more than mere misinterpretation of orthography.

AM 166b, 80, is as logically consistent as any of the manuscripts, and more than most. Its readings are better than average. Yet it is not perfect. The consensus approach taken by standardized editions seems fully justified, particularly if they concentrate on readings from the oldest manuscripts.

3.6. CONCLUSION

There is no single, absolutely best text of Sólarijóð. The original manuscript and any particularly old copies are lost, probably forever. No external records are known that can even prove the existence of the poem much prior to the middle of the seventeenth century. There are, however, many recent manuscript copies containing Sólarijóð.
It is not known how many manuscripts of Sólarljóð actually still exist. Sixty-six manuscripts containing at least fragments of Sólarljóð have been located here. These are held by libraries located in seven different European cities in addition to Reykjavík on Iceland. Only some two-thirds of the manuscripts had been known to previous research. Certain manuscripts have been examined and repeatedly edited based on intuitive ideas of their relative worth. Because each editor has had his own system of identifying the manuscripts consulted, there has been a great deal of confusion concerning even the small corpus of manuscripts thus far edited.

The manuscripts known to contain Sólarljóð have been identified and cross-referenced here to the various systems that have been used to specify them in past literature. Some description of the manuscripts has been given where possible. Once it is clear which manuscripts are which, some patterns begin to emerge.

The Sólarljóð manuscripts can be organized according to textual features into three primary traditions. Within these traditions are several identifiable subgroups or manuscript families. At this stage of research it is still difficult to determine direct lines of descent for many of the individual manuscripts, but further analysis of each manuscript subgroup should eventually result in the branches of a manuscript tree gradually becoming distinct. The chart beginning at page summarizes the current state of knowledge, organizing the manuscripts according to three main traditions and displaying some smaller groupings and lineages. At this stage there is a great need for an edition showing variants from all manuscripts.

The currently emerging stemma, though still far from complete, allows some derivative manuscripts to be disregarded (the copies made from Isl. Papp. 8o Nr. 15 and Isl. Papp. fol. Nr. 34, for example), so that more attention may be devoted to the less obvious and perhaps more important manuscripts. The more important manuscripts would be those which are less derivative, and coincidentally probably older. However, it is entirely possible that the most recent manuscript could be an exact copy of the oldest parchment. Until all manuscripts of Sólarljóð have been found and methodically examined,
Sólarljóð lacks the foundation needed for building any sort of meaningful interpretive structure.

The most significant manuscripts so far do appear to be those of the oldest level—*Lbs. 1199, 4o; Lbs. 1562, 4o; AM 166b, 8o; Isl. Papp. 8o Nr. 15, AM 738, 4o*, and perhaps *AM 167b, 8o*, and the fragment *AM 750, 4o*. The contributions of later manuscripts so far seem restricted to rather obvious errors contributed to readings found in these earlier manuscripts. Even the parchment manuscript that may have survived into the eighteenth century appears to have been quite similar to *Lbs. 1562, 4o*, and *Isl. Papp. 8o Nr. 15*, so later manuscripts based on it would be unlikely to contribute improved readings.

Nothing very useful can be said about the manuscript or manuscripts from which the oldest existing examples descended. Because there is very little important difference between existing manuscripts, credence is lent to the idea that there were only a few immediate source manuscripts behind all of them. On the other hand, there are alternate readings given in at least one of the earliest existing manuscripts, and clearly distinct manuscript traditions are already evident. There was almost certainly more than a single manuscript preceding those remaining, and there were probably several.

At the current stage of research there are no variants that seem to show any more insight into the author's original ideas than have previously been available through existing editions of Sólarljóð. Nothing in the manuscripts would lead one to believe that any of the writers had any personal knowledge of the poem beyond what was gained through copying from another manuscript. There is no indication of any live folk-transmission of Sólarljóð. All variants can be accounted for through careless copying, the consultation of multiple source manuscripts, variant orthography, or futile attempts to clarify more obscure passages.

The use of the popular *AM 166b, 8o*, as a base manuscript for establishing a Sólarljóð text is reasonably justified. It is nearly complete, and it is not a copy of any other manuscript known. Some of its readings may be better than those found in other manuscripts. But *AM 166b, 8o*, is not the original text of
Sólarljóð, and its readings are not necessarily best in every instance. AM 166b, 8o, may actually be the best manuscript, but only by the narrowest of margins. It would not be wise to disregard the others.
4. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

4.1. Introduction

There has been a great deal of information published about Sólarljóð. It mostly consists of brief notices in lexica and literary histories, and adds little if anything to knowledge about the poem. The introduction to the first edition of Sólarljóð in 1787 already contained most of the material still being repeated even today. To be sure, there have been some important works about Sólarljóð over the years, but these are really surprisingly few.

Unfortunately, what information there is about Sólarljóð has never been easily available, especially outside the Nordic countries. The 1787 edition brought Sólarljóð to a wide audience of scholars, who in turn did much to popularize the work, sometimes (as was the case with James Bereford in 1805) with no other information available to them. Even as late as 1949 Charles Venn Pilcher wrote about the impossibility of consulting a wider bibliography than he was able. He complained that books were out of print and that libraries did not willingly ship their books all the way to Australia. Yet interlibrary loan is necessary even in Scandinavian capitals, and materials such as the 1787 Edda are now of such an age as to be kept under lock and key by those libraries fortunate enough to possess them. Access to materials can be something of a problem.

Little of the oldest material, however, is of any real value to a modern researcher. There are now better editions than that of 1787. A. C. Bang’s much-quoted footnote about Sólarljóð, for example, is only a footnote and scarcely worth the cost of a photocopy, much less one sent between libraries on different continents. On the other hand, some materials are important.

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1 James Bereford, The Song of the Sun (London: [J. Johnson], 1805) vi.


3 A. Chr. Bang, Udsigt over den norske kirkes historie under katholicismen (Kristiania: Cammermeyer, 1887) 82, n 1.
The 1787 edition contains notes, for example, that might still inspire a new idea, and it is certainly of historical interest. A thorough Forschungsbericht is needed to serve as an accurate bibliography specific to Sólarljóð and to summarize and evaluate the work that has been done.

One of the difficulties in locating materials is the inconsistency in references. The names of books and even their authors are generally abbreviated with no expansion of the abbreviations given anywhere. Unfortunately, what may have been standard, well-known works a century or two ago are not necessarily so well known by Scandinavianists today, much less to scholars from other areas who might have an interest in Sólarljóð. It is most likely Latinists who will recognize the sources of the poem and not Scandinavianists. It is not practical, of course, or possible to make a universal table of references, but steps taken towards a complete bibliography of the subject should provide a key to the most essential works. Such a bibliography should also help with names.

Personal names are variously recorded in the literature on Sólarljóð. Björn Ólsen, for example, may be called or catalogued as Bjarni by those who do not recognize that as the dative form of Björn. Ólsen may appear as Olson. In the literature Petersen and Petersson are the same person, but distinct from Petúrsson. Modern patronymics are always treated in the literature as if they were family names. Library catalogues are less consistent, so sometimes even family names may be treated there as patronymics, so that one has to look up the first name, sometimes with only its initial to go by. Sometimes authors actually do write under multiple names, such as Guðbrandur Vigfússon who wrote mostly under the name Gudmund Vigfusson. He defended his use of the anglicized form against those charging him with lack of patriotism, so that is probably the form he would have preferred to be used here. In fact, he seems to have always spelled the Icelandic form as Guðbrandr, as opposed to the Guðbrandur of modern spelling conventions. In short, he is rather consistently referred to here by a name he never actually used. It soon

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becomes clear that the possibilities in naming are infinite, and that no guide could resolve every possible discrepancy.

The same range of variation holds for book titles. Consistency has not always received the valuation some give it today, much less the consistency necessary to find anything via a computer search. In the case of titles, variations are mostly due to translation among the various Nordic languages. Sometimes changes have been made in accordance with national spelling reforms. The solution would seem to be a careful reproduction of the original title, but it appears that some books were published simultaneously in different countries with slight differences even on their title pages.

My solution to these problems has been to give complete information about the copy of each book I have actually examined. The book titles, for example, may also appear somewhere in slightly different form, but the books shown here do exist as described and are available somewhere with such a named author and title. I have resisted modernizations and standardizations, assuming that the modern standard form is always an obvious alternative to be tried in any library catalogue if the form on the title page cannot be found. Archaic forms, on the other hand, are harder to predict when one is confronted only with the modern counterparts.

4.2. Editions.

4.2.1. Introduction

There is no universally accepted standard edition of Sólarljóð. There are over twenty-five different versions to choose from, though, of course, some are better, more up to date or more easily available than others. None of the Sólarljóð editions probably represents quite what the original poet had in mind. A reader examining the poem for the first time is likely to be confronted by two or three versions differing not only in the wording of particular lines but in the number and ordering of stanzas as well. Unfortunately, the editions of Sólarljóð which depart most radically from the norm are those in the larger poetry collections most likely to be held by the local library. For example, the version in Vigfusson and Powell's Corpus
Poeticum Boreale\textsuperscript{5} divides the text of Sólarljóð into two different poems and adds lines from yet a third poem, while printing it all in a stanzaic form not found in any other edition or in any manuscript. On the other hand, Finnur Jónsson's emended text in Den Norsk-Islandske Skjaldedigtning\textsuperscript{6} merely employs a special orthography not adopted by other editors. For the most part, variations among editions are simply the result of applying different standards for normalizing or modernizing Icelandic text. Other variations result from different interpretations of the underlying manuscript text or from attempts to reconstruct the poem as it may have been composed by the original poet.

In the history of Sólarljóð editions there have been two de facto standards around which other editions have clustered. The first such standard was the Sólarljóð edition found in the Arna-Magnæan Commission's Edda of 1787.\textsuperscript{7} This was the first edition ever to see print, and it also had the authority of the Arna-Magnæan Commission behind it, not to mention its own impressive scholarship and sheer physical mass. Its influence is still being felt over two hundred years later. This edition was followed by several others giving different readings, usually based on additional manuscripts. The most important other edition within the group taking the 1787 edition as a standard was probably that of Rasmus Rask in his 1818 Edda.\textsuperscript{8}

The second de facto standard has been the Sólarljóð edition in Sophus Bugge's Norræn Fornkvæði of 1867.\textsuperscript{9} The group of editions clustered around it has effectively replaced the first group. Bugge expanded the number of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{6} Finnur Jónsson, ed., \textit{Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning B1} (København: Gyldendal, 1912) 635–48.
  \item \textsuperscript{7} \textit{Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior}, vol. 1 (Hafniae: Gyldendal, 1787) 348–404.
  \item \textsuperscript{8} Erasmus [Rasmus] Rask, ed., \textit{Edda Sæmundar hinns fróða} (Holmiæ, 1818) 121–30.
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Sophus Bugge, ed., \textit{Norræn Fornkvæði} (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 357–70.
\end{itemize}
manuscripts used, introducing the one which was to become the standard manuscript, *AM 166b, 80*. However, even Bugge’s emendations to the original manuscript text have found resonance in later editions, whether or not Bugge has been given credit. For the century following Bugge’s edition, there were no important additions of manuscripts to the basic *Sólarljóð* corpus. Non-orthographic variations in editions have been due instead to different emendations made by each subsequent editor. Almost invariably, these new emendations are rejected by the next editor, who effectively returns the poem to the state in which Bugge left it, before going on, of course, to add his own emendations. The editions of Hjalmar Falk¹⁰ and Björn M. Ölsen¹¹ in this century (1914 and 1915, respectively) follow this same pattern, although they have some additional stature because they are accompanied by considerable commentary.

A third standard seems to be developing with the version published by Bjarne Fidjestøl. He uses Bugge’s normalized orthography (as transmitted via Falk), but otherwise sticks mostly to the text of *AM 166b, 80*.¹² Njörður Njarðvík has since based his editions directly on that same manuscript, but with a few reversions to readings from the majority of manuscripts in his modernized edition of 1991.¹³ The only standard on which there is complete agreement seems to be *AM 166b, 80*, itself, so until or unless a regularized version of that manuscript establishes itself as a new standard, the safest basis for work on *Sólarljóð* may be a straight best-text transcription. Finnur Jónsson’s *Norsk-Islandske skjaledigtning*, part A (1912),¹⁴ contains a

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transcription of *AM 166b, 80*, that is more legible and easily available than the only alternative from the *Solsången* of Njörður Njarðvík. For an edition in regularized Old Icelandic, the most reasonable alternatives are those in Njarðvík's *Solsången*, Fidjestøl's *Sólarljóð*, or Bugge's older but more widely available *Norraen Fornkvæði*. At the least, one should be able to rely on a regularized edition to give all stanzas in their generally accepted order, without departing from generally accepted conventions on orthography. For a scholar willing to make some allowances or to rearrange the text, however, any of the editions to date can actually be made to serve. The biggest problem may be simply finding any edition, for not until this century has any edition of *Sólarljóð* ever been published in a volume titled *Sólarljóð*. In one way or another, the poem has always been connected to the poetic Edda.

4.2.2. Guðmundur Magnússon: The Arna-Magnæan Edda, 1787.


The modern history of *Sólarljóð* can best be said to have begun in 1787 with the poem's first printing. It was included in the massive edition of the *Edda Sæmundar hins Fróda* published by the Arna-Magnæan Commission in three volumes between 1787 and 1828. There had been some scholarly interest in *Sólarljóð* even before the first Edda volume of 1787, but this edition contained the first version of the poem printed in Icelandic, and one which was to have particularly great influence. Had *Sólarljóð* not been included in this first edition of the Edda, it seems unlikely that later ones would have printed it. The fate of *Sólarljóð* has continued to be bound together with that of the poetic Edda as a whole, with the bonds beginning to

loosen only in the early twentieth century. The modern history of Sólarljóð is close to that of the Edda.

The poetic Edda had been discovered by 1643 and its existence was well known internationally throughout the eighteenth century. There was a growing excitement about the possibility of there being a Germanic equivalent to the mythology of the classical Mediterranean world, but the Edda continued to be circulated mostly in fragmentary translations of dubious quality, often as individual poems. It was in 1762 that James Macpherson first published the supposed works of Ossian, and the same romantic and nationalistic movements that once made Ossian a household word helped popularize the Edda as well.

Nonetheless, it took a surprisingly long time for the Edda to reach print. Árni Magnússon (whose name usually appears in older texts Latinized as Arnas Magnæus) had over the course of many years acquired the world’s largest collection of Icelandic manuscripts.16 Before his death in 1730, Árni had established a testamentary foundation to publish the manuscripts he had collected during his lifetime. The foundation eventually received its charter from the king of Denmark in 1760, and it began its publication work gradually, with the first texts appearing only in 1772.17 The publication of the poetic Edda was thus one of the earliest projects of the Arna-Magnæan Commission, even though it was not completed until very nearly a century after Árni’s death. Not surprisingly, by the completion of the project in 1828 there were other printed Edda versions available as well.

The Arna-Magnæan Commission’s edition is Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiqvior, vulgo Sæmundina dicta, published in Copenhagen by the Commission and Gyldendal in three impressively large volumes dated 1787, 1818, and 1828, respectively. The work was best known in its day by its abbreviated Latin subtitle Edda Rhythmica seu antiqvior, and


17 Halldór Hermannsson, Old Icelandic Literature, Icelandica 23 (Ithaca NY: Cornell UP, 1933) 8.
it was apparently most often catalogued under this subtitle by libraries acquiring it near the time of its publication. However, the work was well known and is often referred to in the literature simply as "the edition," the "Copenhagen edition" ("Köpenh. Uppl.," \(^{18}\)), the "AM edition," "Eddukvæðautgafa Árnaneffndar," \(^{19}\) "the Commission's edition" (C.U.\(^{20}\)), and the like. To complicate matters further, the title is spelled somewhat differently even on the several title pages within each of the three volumes, and these differences are reflected in later citations. However, there is no similar publication with which this edition can really be confused.

The first Arna-Magnæan Edda volume (1787) includes the mythological poems, with the second volume (1818) containing the heroic poems (odas mythico-historicas). The third volume (1828) consists of Völuspá, Hávamál, and Rigsmál, together with an extensive Lexicon Mythologicum, as well as other appendices and notes. For each of the included Eddic poems there is an introduction, after which the Old Icelandic edition is given on the left of the page, with a line-by-line Latin translation on the right of the same page. Variant manuscript readings are listed below that, and further below, at the bottom of the page, are the editor's textual notes and comments in Latin.

The poem Sólarljóð (spelled either as "Solar-lióð" or usually "Sólar-lióth"), is included as an appendix to the first Edda volume at pages 347–404, and is translated with the title Carmen Solare. Here begins the modern tradition of including Sólarljóð with the mythological poems of the poetic Edda, but only in a separate appendix. Even this looks like an afterthought, since the table of contents says nothing about an appendix and lists Sólarljóð simply as the thirteenth poem.\(^{21}\)


\(^{19}\) Björn M. Ölsen, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands og Ísl. Bókmenta V Nr.1 (Reikjavik: Gutenberg, 1915) 4.


The actual editor of the first volume of the Arna-Magnæan Commission's poetic Edda was Guðmundur Magnússon (Gudmundus Magnæus), the Commission's secretary. He was responsible for editing the text, making the Latin translations, and supplying the notes for the individual poems. Most of what has been written about Sólarljóð can be traced back to his one-page introduction to the poem. He says the poem consists of the speech of a dead father to his son in a dream, that Sæmund was supposed to have composed the song from his funeral bier, and that the meter is the same as in Fjölsvinnsmál. He quotes Jón Ólafsson (presumably from the manuscript AM 427 fol.), who claimed the poem to be moral and Christian in all respects, and probably not by Sæmund. Jón pointed out that the trinity is invoked, but the overall style is mythical—or rather allegorical. Guðmundur Högnason is also quoted from another manuscript, suggesting that Sólarljóð takes its name not only from its frequent mention of the sun, but because the sun is a symbol of life's brevity and a reminder of the moral preparations necessary to be made in anticipation of death. It is tempting to assign a number to each of these comments, and to then summarize all later works on Sólarljóð simply by listing the appropriate numbers in the order in which the same comments appear in each later work. As a brief summary of ideas about Sólarljóð, Guðmundur Magnússon's comments are still mostly current two centuries later.

Guðmundur Magnússon's edition of Sólarljóð for the Arna-Magnæan Commission's Edda was based on several manuscripts. Variant readings are marked from eight different written sources, although only five of them were available first hand. Guðmundur gives readings from manuscripts he identifies as Anon., E, G, H, L, O, S, and Suec. Anon. consisted of variants copied from a no longer available anonymous codex into manuscript E.

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Manuscript $E$, or Codex Ericianus, was named for its owner Jón Eiríksson (Johannus Erichsen). It was available to Guðmundur and is described by the Arna-Magnæan Commission in its introduction. Besides the notes from Anon., $E$ contains variants from several other unavailable manuscripts. One of those manuscripts was designated $L$ for the archivist J. F. Langebek. $L$ is described at xliii, and in Volume 2 of the Arna-Magnæan Edda at page xx. The manuscript referred to as Suec. or Suecus was from an unknown Swedish source, again available only through notations in $E$. Manuscript $E$ thus contains Anon., $L$, and Suec. in the form of annotations. Despite such a clear identifying characteristic, I have not been able to trace manuscript $E$ to current library collections. Bugge, however, indicates it is a copy of NKS 1866 4o. The originals of Anon. and $L$ also remain unidentified. Pehr W. Tholander did demonstrate an affinity between Anon. and another manuscript which has turned out to be $R$ 692 4o in the university library at Uppsala, but this connection requires further verification. The original Suec., however, was thought by Rasmus Rask to be the Codex Stockholmensis, which is in the Icelandic collection of the Royal Library in Stockholm catalogued as Papp. fol. nr. 34.

The remaining manuscripts credited in the 1787 Edda were all actually available to Guðmundur for use in his edition of Sólarljóð. The manuscript $G$ was named for owner Geir Vídalín, and could possibly be Add. 6.121 in the British Library. That manuscript was donated by Vídalín, while no others seem to be associated with his name in the catalogues. $H$ was named for Guðmundur Högnason or Hugenius and is described at page xlvi of the 1787 Edda. $O$ (not to be confused with Codex Oblongus which is referred to by that initial elsewhere in the same volume) is also abbreviated Olav. and was

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26 Sophus Bugge, ed., Norraen Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) LXi.


named after Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík. This manuscript is probably the one currently catalogued as AM 427 fol. S was named for P. F. Suhr and is easily identified as NKS 1869 40. It is described as having odd orthography, "quod e pro i ante qvaslibet vocales Anglo-Saxonum more substituat."29 However, this applies to most of the manuscripts.

Sophus Bugge, in his Norræn Fornkvædi of 1867, made the most complete study of Sólarljóð manuscripts up until the current decade. Based on the readings from the 1787 Edda edition, he said the manuscripts belonging to Guðmundur Högnason and Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík seem to have been among the better ones.30 Jón Ólafsson's manuscript has since been definitely identified as AM 427 fol.,31 but Guðmundur Högnason's still remains to be located. It is not clear whether it has been lost, or has simply not been identified among the manuscripts we have. In any case, it is clear that the 1787 edition was indeed based on manuscript versions that were better than most.

The 1787 Edda's edition of Sólarljóð attempts to take the single best reading from all the manuscripts that were available to its editor. Usually the editor has simply taken the majority reading, listing the variant manuscript reading or readings in the notes. When a minority reading is chosen, however, there is more likely to be a reason given for the selection. Nevertheless, the giving of reasons is inconsistent. The motivation for selecting one alternative may be simple euphony, or another alternative may be rejected because it is "wrong." Sometimes the manuscripts are marked as all being wrong. Unfortunately, we are not often told why a reading is wrong, unless it is a matter of an obvious slip of the pen. The first edition of Sólarljóð is valuable because it does consistently reproduce the variants from the manuscripts it uses, giving an idea of what might actually be in those manuscripts. Its


30 Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1867) xlvi.

explanations concerning the correctness of particular readings may leave something to be desired, but then few editions have presented their reasoning at all.

For the current researcher the value of the 1787 Sólarljóð lies in its interpretations, and not in its use as an edition of the poem. As a list of variant manuscript readings, the 1787 edition has been superceded by the editions in Bugge’s Norræn Fornkvæði and in Njarðvík’s Solsången. As a simple text of the poem, the 1787 edition fails for several reasons to be useful. The edition’s procedure of combining manuscripts without standardizing their orthography has produced a very strange hodgepodge of orthographical styles. This has been aggravated by the edition’s own archaic neolatinate typography and frequent tendency to gratuitously hyphenate words. Of course, the biggest difficulty in using this particular edition has been the simple passage of time. The volume is old enough that libraries prefer to restrict its circulation, while newer editions are more easily available and have their notes written in modern languages. Nonetheless, Guðmundur Magnússon’s edition of Sólarljóð for the Arna-Magnæan Commission’s Edda was an excellent beginning and, orthography aside, it varies surprisingly little from the most recent edition of the poem over two centuries later.

4.2.3. James Beresford, The Song of the Sun.


The second printed appearance of Sólarljóð in its original language was in 1805. James Beresford, having apparently discovered the poem in the 1787 Edda edition, was so impressed by it that he tried to bring it to a wider audience by reprinting it and translating it into English. The book seems to

32 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993).
have found a wide circulation in Britain, and four reviews of it are listed by Hermannsson, perhaps the record for a work on Sólarljóð. The Icelandic text as well as the Latin translation are printed at the end of the book, but both are taken from the Arna-Magnæan Commission's 1787 edition and offer nothing new. The notes of the original edition have been replaced by Bereford's own notes. The Icelandic text is printed with d for the Arna-Magnæan edition's th, and most length markers have been dropped. This edition has as its sole advantage being printed on opaque paper.

4.2.4. Pehr Wilhelm Tholander. Iduna's Sólarljóð.


The third printed version of Sólarljóð in Old Icelandic—the second new edition—appeared in 1813. It was printed, together with a Swedish translation, as an article in the journal Iduna (earlier subtitled en skrif för den nordiska fornälderns älskare) at pages three to fifty-four. The title is "Sólar Lióð, med Öfwersättning från Isländskan," and it is divided into three parts: "Anmälan" (5–7), "Sólar Lióð" (8–49), and "Upplysningar" (50–54). This Sólarljóð edition has been the source of some bibliographical confusion because the article is unsigned, and because the journal has been reprinted with new dates for subsequent editions. Lee Hollander's Bibliography of Skaldic Studies attributes this work to A. A. Afzelius and the year 1818. Hermannsson, on the other hand, correctly attributes it to P. W. Tholander with the proper date of 1813 in his Bibliography of the Eddas.

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*Iduna* itself attributes the translation to Tholander in volume 5 and to Afzelius in volume 11. Biographical materials on Afzelius universally seem to attribute the work to him while such materials on Tholander similarly always list the *Iduna* work as Tholander’s production. Nowhere does there seem to be mention of the contradiction, although there may be more than past editorial practices behind the fact that the literature on Sólarljóð always refers to the *Iduna* edition simply by the name of the journal.

The mystery began quite simply with the failure of *Iduna* to credit the editor/translator of its Sólarljóð. Each contribution to the journal was normally signed with an abbreviated form of the contributor’s name, but the contributor of “Sólar Lióð” was omitted. As one might expect, it was in the next issue, volume five (1814), that the oversight in volume four was corrected. On page 42 there is a footnote to an article signed Thththr for Tholander, wherein it is explained that “Ett arbete af deśa anmärkningars författare är äfwen den Öfversättning från Sólar Lióð, som är införd i Idunas Fjerde Häfte.” 36 This is the most immediate and most convincing explanation of the article’s authorship. It must have been contributed by P. W. Tholander.

Tholander’s contribution was indirectly confirmed in *Iduna*’s seventh issue. There A. A. Afzelius himself contributed a one-page memorial poem “Till fornforskaren Tholander. Under hans sista sjukdom.” 37 An editorial footnote adds “Idunas Fjerde och Femte häften innehålla flera bevis på denne uttröttlige fornforskare’s grundliga kunskaper.” 38 As concerns volume four, this note can only refer to “Sólar Lióð,” since all other articles there were clearly credited to other contributors. Nearly thirty years later, *Iduna*’s general editor repeated this confirmation of Tholander’s editorship. E. G. Geijer, in his “Berättelse om Göthiska Förbundets Stiftelse och Verksamhet,” includes Tholander in his reminiscences and reconfirms that “Bidrag af honom finnas

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36 *Iduna* 5 (1814): 42.


38 *Iduna* 7 (1817): 20n.
i Idunas 4:de och 5:te häfte." Nevertheless, in the same volume where Geijer's article appears, there is a list of "Författare i Idunas Föregående Häften" where Tholander is credited only with his three articles in volume five. A. A. Afzelius is credited with both "Solar Liod med öfversättning" and "Upplysningar till Solar Liod," the edition having been broken down that way in the original table of contents to volume four.

It should perhaps be noted here that Iduna's Sólarljóð edition was always discussed as being a unitary work, always referred to simply as a translation. The Icelandic edition, after all, must have been considered merely a printing of the single original Icelandic manuscript it is based on. Only the translation was a creative work. The separate listing of notes to the edition was surely no more than a convenience to the reader wishing to locate them in the volume, and not an indication of separate authorship. The introductory notice has never been referred to separately, although it does take a broader editorial viewpoint, speaking for the journal as a whole. Iduna was the publication of the Götiska Förbundet, a patriotic brotherhood devoted not only to nordic antiquity but to song, drink and fellowship as well. Iduna was the organ of the entire group (even if much of the work may have devolved on Erik Gustaf Geijer) and it is not surprising that any individual contributor might speak for the journal as a whole. The article could easily have been left unsigned because Tholander indeed considered himself to be writing on behalf of the journal in the capacity of one of its editors rather than as the contributor of an original work. But despite the neutral anonymity of the introduction, its emphasis on the youth of the (twenty-two-year-old) "ung Fornforskare, Herr Johan Henr. Schröder" seems more likely to have come from the forty-three-year-old Tholander than from Afzelius, himself only twenty-eight, or even from Geijer at thirty.

40 "Författare i Idunas Föregående Häften" Iduna 11 (1845): 106.
41 "Författare i Idunas Föregående Häften" Iduna 11 (1845): 100.
The attribution to Afzelius of "Sólar Liðd, med öfversättning från Isländskan" in the eleventh volume of *Iduna* may have been made through simple analogy with the "Völu Spá med öfversättning från Isländskan" which Afzelius did contribute to volume three. However, the attribution had already been made at least ten years earlier, being reflected in the *Biographiskt Lexicon öfver namnkunnige svenska män* of 1835. The studies of Icelandic language which Afzelius made with Rask as his teacher are mentioned there, and the article enthusiastically explains that

Prof på dessa studier äro Afzelii i Iduna införda öfversättningar af Sàmundar Eddan och Solar Liðd, öfversättningar, hvilken i poetisk anda, kraft och språk-förmåga aldrig torde kunna öfverträffas, om än måhända en skarpere kritik kunde vid et eller annat ställe finna något att ändra eller rätta.43

Of course, Afzelius contributed to *Iduna* only *Völsúspá* from among the Eddic poems. He did, to be sure, translate the entire Sæmundar Edda, including *Sólarljóð*, but the translations were published elsewhere. There is a tendency to confuse Afzelius’s work for *Iduna* with his work on Rask’s edition and on his own translation of the entire Edda. Afzelius did make a translation of *Sólarljóð*, but it is found in his Edda of 1818, and not in *Iduna*. The *Iduna* translation bears so little resemblance to the translation in *Sæmund den Vises Edda*, that it is difficult to conceive of any single person rendering the same material so differently at two different times. Even after Rask’s additional instruction in Icelandic, Afzelius is unlikely to have made such drastic changes to a translation which "aldrig torde kunna öfverträffas." The translation of *Völsúspá* in *Iduna* is not identical to the translation of *Völsúspá* in Afzelius’s Edda, but the two are quite close, with the later of them merely a revision of the earlier. The *Sólarljóð* translations, however, are totally different. The *Sólarljóð* in the 1818 Swedish Edda was by Afzelius; the *Sólarljóð* translation in the 1813 *Iduna* was surely by Tholander.

43 *Biographiskt Lexicon öfver namnkunnige svenska män*, vol. 1. (Upsala: Palmblad, 1835) 103.
The 1818 date of Afzelius’s Sæmund den Vises Edda translation does correspond to the 1818 date of the second printing of the fourth volume of Iduna, making confusion between the two Sólarljóð translations more likely. For all practical purposes the second printing is identical to the first, but the date on the title page of the journal is given as 1818 with no mention at all of the original 1813 publication date. Also, the orthography on the title page of Sólarljóð has been slightly altered in the second edition to “SólarLiðd, med Öfwersättning från Isländsken.” The variations one finds in citations of this edition may depend on which printing of the journal is actually being cited. The second edition was no doubt intended to be identical to the first, but some typographical errors have been corrected while even more have been introduced. The second edition corrects the first edition’s misnumbering of stanza 33 and more consistently encloses footnote numbers in parentheses. On the other hand, the second edition misspells liósra in 12.3 and transposes the last two letters of thruma in 77.6. It deletes length markers from vf in 14.5, thó in 17.4, nív in 79.3 and adds length markers to sa in 39.1 and 60.1. In 80.4 a regular round s replaces the first edition’s long s; the comma is deleted from 82.5, and line 83.4 begins with f instead of long s. Even more trivial is the more obvious difference that the first edition consistently marks vowel length with an acute accent, while the second edition also employs grave accents and circumflexes for the same purpose. The external history of the Iduna edition is a more likely source of possible disagreement than is anything in the edition itself.

Tholander’s edition of Sólarljóð was based on a manuscript fragment that Johan Henrik Schröder had found in a shop in Strängnäs. The fragment consisted of just two sheets in quarto, containing “Kvedi Eigils Skallagrimr Sonar er hann kallar Torrek,” “Giet-Speki Heidreks Kong’s” and “Sólar-Liðd, som dock endast går till 73 stropher, af hwilka de 3 sidsta äro oläsliga.” This description corresponds closely to that of a manuscript fragment currently in

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the library of the University of Uppsala, collected in a volume cataloged as R 692 4to. The fragment used in Iduna does indeed seem to be identical with R 692 4to, and is discussed in chapter three above. Since Schröder, this young researcher of the Göthiska Förbundet, was later to become librarian and professor at the University of Uppsala, it is not at all strange that the manuscript should have found its way into that library.

When Schröder's manuscript was compared by Tholander with the 1787 Edda edition, a correspondence was found between it and the variants from the manuscript Anon., as they had been listed in the 1787 Edda edition. As explained in the introductory notes to the Iduna Sólarljóð, it was clear that Schröder's fragment had been removed from a larger codex. That codex, it was believed, could well have been Anon.,

af den namnkunnige A. Magnäus så högt wärderades, att han påstod det Woluspa, dem förutan, aldrig kunde rätt begripas, och att de desutom gjort honom stor nytta wid utredningen af Sólarlióð, och andra qwäden.46

Tholander assumed that Árni Magnússon had found Codex Anonymous to have been especially valuable, but that it had been permanently lost by the time of the 1787 Edda edition. If Schröder's fragment hadn't actually been removed from Codex Anonymous, it was at least an exact copy made from it. Iduna would publish Schröder's manuscript fragment to preserve it from any further loss. More important, however, was the desire to publicize Sólarljóð as a memorial to the great Nordic past.47

Tholander's enthusiasm seems to have lent the Schröder fragment an exaggerated importance. The discovery shed no new light on the poem. The variants from the 1787 edition had already been noted there, and the earlier edition, in fact, was used in Iduna to supplement gaps in Schröder's

manuscript—not the other way around. Even the history of Codex Anonymous was slightly distorted in Iduna, as by the confusion of the 1787 Edda’s editor Guðmundur Magnússon with the more famous Árni Magnússon.\textsuperscript{48} The most notable characteristic of Schröder’s manuscript fragment is that it is incomplete, going only to seventy-three stanzas.\textsuperscript{49} Tholander doesn’t say whether or not the poem could have continued beyond that point on the next sheet of the original codex. That would have had to have been the case for the Schröder fragment to have actually been part of Codex Anonymous, since Anon. readings do continue beyond that point in the 1787 Edda. (R 692 4to does indeed show evidence that the Sólárljóð version was once complete.)

The correspondence of the fragment with Anon. seems somewhat questionable based on the two relevant Sólárljóð editions. It is very true that Schröder’s manuscript fragment as reproduced in Iduna is much closer to Anon. than to any of the other manuscripts used in the 1787 edition. At the very least, however, the orthography of the two editors differs. For example, the 1787 Edda gives a reading of “davkvu” from 13.2 in Anon.,\textsuperscript{50} while Iduna has “dauckvu.”\textsuperscript{51} Other variations seem more substantial, such as “fyrir” from Anon. in 19.6\textsuperscript{52} opposed to “ad” in Tholander,\textsuperscript{53} or “Helgr” in Anon.


\textsuperscript{50} Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiqvior, vol. 1 (Hafniae: Gyldendal, 1787) 356.


\textsuperscript{52} Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiqvior, vol. 1 (Hafniae: Gyldendal, 1787) 360.

23.654 and “Helgi” in Tholander.55 Furthermore, there are more substantial variations in Tholander’s edition than are marked in the Edda edition (e.g. 28.5), but then the 1787 Edda doesn’t list absolutely all variants at all times.

The entire Sólarljóð is published in Iduna, supplemented with text from the 1787 edition where Schröder’s manuscript is incomplete. The Icelandic “Sólar Lióð” is printed on verso pages with the Swedish translation “Sol-Sången” on the facing recto pages. There are 72 endnotes (the upplysningar) which generally refer only to the Arna-Magnánæn edition, pointing out where Schröder’s manuscript diverges from the primary version. The Icelandic text of the Iduna edition varies in few important ways from that of the 1787 edition, beyond what is mentioned in the notes of those respective versions. Unfortunately, it is difficult to know which variations have their source in the manuscript and which do not. Tholander’s Sólarljóð edition is not an accurate reproduction of R 692 4to by any modern standard. In the last stanzas, those that were reconstructed from the Arna-Magnánæn variants, the manuscript is removed as a possible source of difference between the two editions. There it becomes evident that at least capitalization and punctuation have been regularly altered by Tholander. In these last stanzas the occasional u replacing a v from the earlier edition, or a d replacing a th, are no doubt simple typographical errors in reproducing the text from 1787, and not attempts to reconstruct spelling based on those usual in the manuscript fragment. Editorial principles are never described.

For the entire Tholander edition, most orthographical variation from the 1787 Arna-Magnánæn edition is fairly predictable, although there is still a good deal of variety. A word like og, for example, is spelled og, ok, and oc within the same edition, as it may have been also in the manuscript. Although the distinction between long and round s is retained, Tholander’s edition is modern enough to distinguish between u and v. Except in initial position, th has been replaced by d. Final t of the 1787 edition is printed by Iduna as d.


The reflexive ə becomes ət and nominative ə is modernized to -ur. The ə of the earlier edition is often replaced by i. Ő is represented by au, but AM's av becomes o or ə. Tholander has few length markers and does away with most of the odd hyphenated words of the 1787 Edda. Nasals are often doubled, and æ becomes e, while e and ei alternate with each other and sometimes even with ie. Simple orthographical differences make Tholander's Sólarljóð look quite different from the one in the 1787 Edda, and much more legible to the modern eye.

Larger variations from the 1787 edition of Sólarljóð have been compensated for with the help of the earlier edition. The Schröder manuscript was missing a stanza, namely the last 3 lines of stanza 37 and the first three lines of stanza 38. The corresponding six lines from the Arna-Magnæan edition were inserted there so the numbering of the stanzas in Tholander's edition agrees with the 1787 edition. Likewise, although the manuscript fragment continued only to the seventy-third stanza, the remaining stanzas were supplied from the earlier edition. Since the editors of Íðuna were primarily interested in promoting their Nordic heritage, it was important that the poem be complete. Stanzas 33 and 34 of the Arna-Magnæan edition are transposed in the Schröder manuscript (and Tholander edition), but the variation is marked by Tholander and referred to in the 1787 edition. From Stanza 74 to the end, the significant variations from the Arna-Magnæan edition are the ones mentioned for the anonymous manuscript in the notes to AM.

Tholander's edition of Sólarljóð has little value for today's scholar. The small size of the volume makes it handier than the 1787 edition, and the orthography is more modern and easier to read, but all more recent editions can make those claims. Any remaining value would have come from the edition's preservation of readings from the Schröder manuscript. This is the first single-manuscript edition of Sólarljóð. Unfortunately, it simply is not a reliable reproduction of that manuscript. The editorial principles are not made adequately clear, and it is hard to tell what comes from the manuscript, what comes from the editor, and what comes from the 1787 edition. Since the manuscript which served as the basis for Tholander's edition really is the same as that preserved in R 692 4to in Uppsala, the reliability of the edition in
following it can at least be tested. It is not to be trusted for any details.
However, the Schröder manuscript does not appear to have been among the
more valuable ones in any case, aside from being the only one in Sweden
belonging to the tradition of AM 166b 8o and not Papp 8o, 15. Furthermore,
the edition contains no scholarly contribution or any interpretation of the
poem aside from that involved in its translation into Swedish.

4.2.5. Rasmus Rask’s Edda.

_Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða_. Collectio carminum veterum
scaldorum Sæmundiana dicta. Quam, ex codicibus pergamenis
chartaceisque cum notis et lectionibus variorum, ex recensione Erasmi
Elemenianis.

In 1818, the same year as the second printing of Tholander’s _Sólarljóð_,
another edition of _Sólarljóð_ was published, this one edited by Rasmus
Kristian Rask. It is part of Rask’s complete Edda edition, which not only
included both the mythological poems and the heroic poems in the same
volume, but was issued with a companion volume containing the Prose
Edda. _Sólarljóð_ (spelled _Sólar-Ljóð_) is again included as an appendix to the
mythological poems of the poetic Edda, this time located at pages 121 to 130.

This edition of the Edda owes its publication to Arvid August Afzelius, who
had been interested in translating the entire poetic Edda into Swedish.
Realizing that he couldn’t complete the task by himself, however, he thought
of Rasmus Rask, whom he had earlier met in the Arnamagnæan collection of
the Royal Library in Copenhagen, shortly after Rask had returned from nearly
three years in Iceland. Afzelius invited Rask to Stockholm at his own
expense and Rask lived in his home for nearly three years as they worked
together on their respective Edda projects.56 Rask prepared a new Icelandic

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56 Arvid August Afzelius, _Minnen_ (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1901) 112.
edition while Afzelius made the Swedish translation which he published separately as *Sæmund den Vises Edda*.57

Rask's Edda edition seems to have achieved wide circulation. Its popularity was derived not just from Rask's great authority as a philologist, but also from the fact that he made both Eddas available in two handy volumes at a time when the Arnamagnæan Commission was still years away from completing the publication of the three volumes of its poetic Edda.58 Rask's Edda edition was entirely his own work, with Afzelius only writing the Latin introduction for it and seeing to its publication. In January of 1818, Rask was given the title of professor and, two days later, a stipend to finance a trip to Asia. Within six weeks Rask had left for India via Russia and Persia.59 Afzelius was left with the job of making sure Rask's edition of the poetic Edda was published.

Rask's Edda edition is based mostly on manuscripts located in Sweden, and for *Sólarljóð* there was no need to go beyond the Royal Library in Stockholm. From the Islandica collection of that library he used *Papp. fol. nr. 34, Papp. 4:o nr. 46*, and *Papp. 8:o nr. 15*, which are, in fact, three of the oldest existing manuscripts containing the poem. The most important of these manuscripts for Rask's edition was *Papp. fol. nr. 34*, which Rask called by the abbreviation *St. for Codex Stockholmensis*. Afzelius describes it as

chartaceus, in forma folii, qui utramque et Sturlesonii & Sæmundi Eddam exhibet et in edit. Arna-Magn. Eddae dicitur *Svecus*, ab Helgio


Olai filio scriptus anno 1684, et sequenti, ut opinatus est Cel Rask, originem debet.\textsuperscript{60}

Rask was wrong about \textit{Papp. nr. 34 fol.} being the source manuscript for the others in the collection (see chapter 3 above), but they are all closely related and \textit{nr. 34} did apparently have the advantage of a clear hand\textsuperscript{61} and a large format.

Rask also consulted the manuscript abbreviated as \textit{G.} for \textit{Codex Gudmundi}, which Afzelius described as

\begin{quote}
chartaceus, in Quarto, Eddam quoque Sturlesonii et Scaldam continet. In possessione Gudmundi Olai filii fuisse, nomen eidem inscriptum indicat. In margine lectiones variorum subjungit.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

This is now catalogued in the Royal Library at Stockholm as \textit{Papp. 4:o nr. 46}. The third and final manuscript used for Rask’s \textit{Sólarljóð} was referred to by Rask as \textit{F.}, this one an anonymous paper codex “in Octavo, inter Islandica N. 5 [sic], cui ab initio pag. 1. litteram F. inscriptam invenimus.”\textsuperscript{63} This is the manuscript \textit{Papp. 8:o nr. 15}. The three manuscripts used are closely related to each other, with the result that Rask’s edition does not need to contain an extensive critical apparatus comparing manuscript variants.

Rask’s thirty-seven footnotes describe the rare differences between his three manuscripts, but they more often note readings from the previous editions. The 1787 Arnamagnæan Edda is referred to as \textit{Hafn.}, and the Tholander edition as \textit{Idun. or Id. 4}. Rask’s is not a complete critical edition marking all variants, but is instead another attempt at reaching a conjectural best text of

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{60}] Arvid August Afzelius, in Erasmus [Rasmus] Rask, ed., \textit{Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda} (Holmiæ, 1818) vii.
\item[\textsuperscript{61}] Arvid August Afzelius in Erasmus [Rasmus] Rask, ed., \textit{Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda} (Holmiæ, 1818) iii.
\item[\textsuperscript{62}] Arvid August Afzelius in Erasmus [Rasmus] Rask, ed., \textit{Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda} (Holmiæ, 1818) vii.
\item[\textsuperscript{63}] Arvid August Afzelius in Erasmus [Rasmus] Rask, ed., \textit{Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda} (Holmiæ, 1818) vii.
\end{itemize}
Sólárlið. Hence, the three basic manuscripts are sometimes abandoned in favor of variants from the manuscripts known through the 1787 Edda or Iduna. Rask does suggest some emendations of his own, independent of both manuscripts and previous editions, but these he restricts to his notes. In the second half of stanza 3, he suggests that

\begin{verbatim}
traðhu hjarta
hann læzt trúa theim,
er áðhr fæðhi vālyndr verit
\end{verbatim}

might be better than the reading in the body of his text.\footnote{Erasmus [Rasmus] Rask, ed., \textit{Edda Sæmundar hinns fróða} (Holmiæ, 1818) 121, n.1.} Likewise, he says, it might have been preferable either to emend 27.4 to “mjök fyrir-gerir,” or alternatively, 27.5 to “manna hveim.”\footnote{Erasmus [Rasmus] Rask, ed., \textit{Edda Sæmundar hinns fróða} (Holmiæ, 1818) 124, n.4.} Rask is one of the more conservative editors of Sólárlið in terms of making alterations.

Nevertheless, the orthography of the Rask edition has been modernized. Rask distinguishes both between \textit{i} and \textit{j} and between \textit{u} and \textit{v}. \textit{V} has been retained, however, in combination with a preceding \textit{a}, e.g., \textit{gavtu}, where it probably represents an \textit{av} digraph in the manuscripts. More significantly, perhaps, the spelling seems to be mostly regularized. Once the spelling of a word has been decided on, that spelling is usually retained for the entire poem. Many of the words that had been hyphenated in the 1787 Edda have been joined by Rask, but there are some words previously written separately that Rask has joined by hyphens. Rask includes more length markers over vowels than were found in the previous editions.

The greatest substantial variation in Rask’s edition compared to the earlier editions is the name \textit{Ráthveig}, which replaces \textit{Baug-vör/Baugveig}. As for formal variation, Rask is the first editor to follow B. C. Sandvig\footnote{B[erthel] C. Sandvig, trans., \textit{Forsøg til en Oversættelse af Sæmunds Edda. Første Hefte} (Kjøbenhavn: Horrebow, 1783).} in dividing...
the poem into logical segments. The text is broken with simple dingbats before stanzas 8, 10, 15, 19, 25, 33, 53, 69, and 76. There is nowhere any mention by Rask or Afzelius of the function of these breaks, although they are repeated (with one addition) in the translation by Afzelius in the same year. The dingbats would appear by modern editorial conventions to mark breaks or suspected breaks in the manuscripts, but they do not. B. C. Sandvig had already included such breaks in his Sólarljóð translation of 1783, where he had inserted thematic headings for each segment. The dividing lines in the Rask edition also mark shifts in action rather than missing text. Beresford had earlier commented on segmentation of poetic themes in Sólarljóð in the notes to his own edition and translation.67

As a Sólarljóð edition for the modern scholar, Rask's Edda still has the advantage of a handy format. The entire poetic Edda is in a single small volume, unburdened by excessive notes. As a once widely distributed classic, Rask's Edda is not especially difficult to find, and has frequently been referred to in older literature. Rask's edition can certainly still be used to provide an adequate version of Sólarljóð. However, since Rask has added no information or interpretation to the text, and has not explained his grounds for preferring one reading over another, there is no reason to seek out this edition or prefer it over a more recent one.

4.2.6. Müller's Islandsk Læsebog.


By the time Sólarljóð appeared in Ludvig Christian Müller's Islandsk Læsebog of 1837, the Edda had become well known even outside the Nordic countries. The brothers Grimm had edited the heroic poems—those dealing with Germany's own legendary past—in 1818. The French, too, had begun

67 James Beresford, The Song of the Sun (London: [J. Johnson], 1805) xxvii–xxviii.
educational exchanges with Iceland, desiring to become better acquainted with its language and literature. Müller expresses a fear that the Danes will be introduced to their own literary treasures only through the example of foreigners. Although the Danes do not seem to have shared quite the patriotic enthusiasm of the Swedish Göthiska Förbund, nationalism was still a primary motivating factor in the popularization of Icelandic literature in Denmark. Icelandic was, after all, not just the language spoken in a rather remote part of the kingdom, but it was clearly related to the roots of even the Danish language itself. As Müller put it, "det man kalder 'det Nordiske Oldsprog' og 'det nuværende Islandsk' er ikke mere forskjelligt end Kjøbenhavnerens Talesprog fra den Sjællandske Bondes, der boer i de Landsbyer, der ligge Hovedstaden nærmest."  

Whether or not there was actually more scholarly interest in the Icelandic language abroad than there was in Denmark, at least some Danes must have been interested in learning the language, for Müller had been teaching it. He complains in his introduction, however, that he had lacked appropriate teaching materials. This Icelandic reader was designed to fill that lack. The book includes Sólarijórð at pages 321–329, but without any introduction or notes beyond the appearance of some words in the glossary at the back of the volume. Also included are two complete sagas, together with various poetry selections, mostly from the Edda.

In his introduction, Müller expresses an admiration for Rasmus Rask, both on philological and pedagogical grounds, but he has not simply reprinted or standardized Rask's earlier edition. In fact, there is no mention of any sources for the edition at all. However, Müller's Sólarijórð does seem to be based

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68 Ludv. Chr. Müller, ed., Islandsk Læsebog (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1837) [iii].

69 Ludv. Chr. Müller, ed., Islandsk Læsebog (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1837) [iv].

70 Ludv. Chr. Müller, ed., Islandsk Læsebog (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1837) [iv].

71 Ludv. Chr. Müller, ed., Islandsk Læsebog (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1837) [iii–iv].
primarily on Rask’s edition. For example, it reflects all but one of Rask’s section breaks (the one before stanza 8 is missing). Müller (or his printer) also uses Rask’s system of marking long a with a circumflex and long e with a grave accent, instead of marking all long vowels with the acute accent current nowadays. But in addition to Rask, the 1787 Edda edition has probably also been consulted. In Stanza 14, line 5, for example, Müller rejects the readings of both important previous editions and follows the alternate manuscript versions noted in the 1787 edition. There is no way of knowing from Müller’s edition whether the manuscripts which had been used in the earlier editions were consulted first hand, or even whether other Sólarljóð manuscripts had been encountered during Müller’s stay in Iceland in 1832.

Müller’s purpose was not to edit manuscripts, but rather to teach Icelandic. As one would expect in a reader designed for didactic purposes, the orthography has been thoroughly standardized. While Rask seemed to aim at consistency, Müller came closer to achieving it. Regular orthographical variations from Rask’s edition include the use of ð for ðh except initially, ø for av, st for the reflexive z, tzt for zt, and k for c. Müller is also more economical with hyphenation and punctuation than Rask had been. Where there are differences between Rask and the 1787 editions that go beyond orthography, Müller tends to follow the earlier edition. Müller is quite conservative and has not even emended the text to make the number of lines in each stanza uniform. In all but Tholander’s edition, stanza 2 had contained an extra seventh line. Müller presented Sólarljóð to his students without removing every blemish.

The edition of Sólarljóð from Müller’s Islandsk Læsebog is a very modern looking version of the poem’s text. However, the volume is difficult to find, and it adds no new readings or interpretations. There is no critical apparatus at all, and nothing especially illuminating in the glossary. Müller wrote a textbook to fill a specific need, and in his introduction he expressed the hope that his book would soon become superfluous.72 For today’s scholar, Müller’s

72 Ludv. Chr. Müller, ed., Islandsk Læsebog (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1837) [ii].
edition of Sólarljóð may be easily pronounced superfluous in accordance with his wishes. Other texts are now available for use.

4.2.7. P. A. Munch’s Edda, 1847


In 1847 Sólarljóð accompanied the first Edda edition to be published in Norway. The named editor of the volume was the well-known historian and philologist Peter (sometimes Peder) Andreas Munch, but Munch gives credit to the linguist Carl Richard Unger for having done much or most of the work. Only publishing regulations prevented Unger from being credited as a co-author, writes Munch,73 and Unger was, in fact, listed as co-author of the Oldnorsk Læsebog Munch and Unger published that same year. Sólarljóð is included only in the Edda volume, and once again, only in an appendix. Munch does at least state his reasons for only appending Sólarljóð and not including it in the main text: “Sólarljóð er et smukt Digt, og synes endog at være meget gammelt, men det er christelig-religiøst, og kan saaledes hverken regnes blandt Eddadigtene, eller i Ælke maale sig med noget af disse, da det jo umuligt kan være ældre end Christendommens Indførelse i Norden.”74 The poem is included in the appendix with other poems preserved only on paper, and can be found at pages 178-184.

Despite the book’s subtitle, no variant readings are given for Sólarljóð. In fact, Sólarljóð does not appear to have been considered important enough to merit any comment or attention beyond its inclusion. Munch based his edition of the Edda on the oldest manuscripts, and he tried to purge the text of later emendations. He is quite precise in naming and describing the manuscripts

73 P. A. Munch, ed., Den Ældre Edda, (Christiania: Malling, 1847) xviii.
74 P. A. Munch, ed., Den Ældre Edda, (Christiania: Malling, 1847) xi.
upon which the edition is based. Munch even describes the spelling conventions of the manuscripts and gives some sample diplomatic transcriptions. But none of the named manuscripts contains Sólarljóð. There is no mention of any source for this particular poem. It was presumably based on another edition, perhaps that of Rask.

Compared with its predecessors, Munch's edition most closely follows that of Rask, including once more Rask's same division into segments. Lines are usually broken at the same places as in Rask's edition rather than following the Arnamagnæan edition of 1787. Nevertheless, not all line breaks are the same as Rask's, and there are some different readings, sometimes corresponding to the variants listed in the 1787 edition.

Munch's edition, like that of Müller, has been regularized on a very consistent basis, not just occasionally updating orthography in a random manner. This is not surprising with an editor known for his involvement in the spelling reform of his own language. However, Munch and Müller use slightly different principles of regularization. According to Munch's system, non-initial th (as reflected in the 1787 edition) becomes d, c is replaced by k, z is spelled sk, prevocalic i is written as j, and the Arna-Magnæan edition's v is now u, except preceding a vowel. Nominatives ending in n have the nasal doubled. The hyphenated words of the 1787 edition are joined. AV is generally spelled as ø, and where the Arna-Magnæan edition had æ, Munch distinguishes between æ and ø. Munch is also consistent in his marking of long vowels.

Munch's edition introduces some changes that go beyond simple spelling variation. In 13.6 he changes virtar to virktar, reflecting an older Icelandic spelling, but departing from the manuscripts and previous editions. Likewise kvadl becomes kvæði in 83.2. In 30.2 Munch changes syrgir to hrygvar, and in 66.5, kymiliga to kynliga, in both cases following variants included in the 1787 edition. In 20.3 lagthi is changed to flyði, and in 27.6 sinn fjöna becomes seint finna. It is Munch who first introduces the word brot for burt in 46.3, an

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innovation editions followed for nearly a century and a half. Finally, Munch proposes Gjallar for the name in 42.4, and Ráðvör for the name in 79.4.

Manuscript variants are of little use in trying to establish what manuscripts may have been the basis for Munch’s edition. To judge by Njarðvík’s collection of variant manuscript readings,76 Munch’s edition most resembles LBS 1458 8o in Reykjavík, followed by LBS 2298 8o. LBS 1458 8o was copied long after the publication of Munch’s edition. LBS 2298 8o precedes the edition, but it is extremely unlikely that Munch would have had access to it, especially since it was copied only after Rudolf Keyser, Munch’s most obvious source of Icelandic manuscripts, had already returned to Norway. Munch had certainly seen the Copenhagen manuscripts, and probably those in Berlin, Edinburgh and London. Unger had likewise copied manuscripts in Copenhagen and London, but though he also visited Stockholm, the research trip took place only after the publication of the Edda edition. If there are any clues about sources to be found, they would perhaps be in the collection of manuscript copies made by Unger and given to the university in Oslo.

Munch’s edition was the first standardized scholarly edition with its editorial principles outlined, and it seems to have circulated widely. The greatest value of this edition of Sólarljóð, however, is probably that it was used by Bugge, who borrowed some of its readings. The note about Sólarljóð being Christian and therefore late,77 is also sometimes quoted in the literature. To be sure, Munch’s edition is a modern-looking text that could probably serve as well as any existing edition for most purposes, but its contribution to the history of Sólarljóð editions is only incremental. There are no notes, no interpretations, no references to sources, and no reasons given for any of the editorial decisions made aside from general orthographic principles. Munch has simply printed the text of Sólarljóð in a standardized form of Old Icelandic.

76 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 7–89.

77 P. A. Munch, ed., Den Ældre Edda, (Christiania: Malling, 1847) xi.
4.2.8. Friedrich Wilhelm Bergmann: *Les Chants de Sól.*


The Strassburg professor Friedrich Wilhelm (Frederic Guillaume) Bergmann published the first new edition of Sólarljóð outside the Nordic countries, and the first to receive an entire volume to itself. It did much to help spread awareness of Sólarljóð as a poem, simply because it reached a larger, French-reading audience. Bergmann’s book was the first to treat the poem separately, and consequently the first to treat it at length. Giving Sólarljóð a volume of its own did not indicate its severance from the Edda. Bergmann simply examined Eddic poetry one poem at a time, developing more detailed arguments than most philologists were willing to venture.

Despite the influence of Bergmann’s *Chants de Sól* in France, England and Germany, it seems to have attracted little attention in the North, where almost all studies of Sólarljóð have otherwise originated. Bergmann’s work on the poem is rarely referred to in the literature, although Fidjestøl’s recent book has been a notable exception. Because Bergmann is better known for interesting theories than for plausible ones, it is perhaps not entirely surprising that his influence has been limited. Nonetheless, this is one of the more thorough older studies of Sólarljóð.

As an edition, Bergmann’s *Chants de Sól* makes no special contribution. It corresponds to Munch’s edition almost exactly. The text of Sólarljóð is printed in four-line stanzas where the short lines of the verse are written together as Germanic long lines. Alliteration is marked, and there is an interlinear French translation. The Icelandic text is closest to that of Munch, which was presumably its basis. Punctuation differs and Bergman distinguishes between e and ẹ. In stanza eleven the names are Svafudr and
Skart-Hédinn, and in seventy-nine Munch's Ráðvör becomes Baug-vör. The differences are mostly orthographical. Bergmann uses i for Munch's j, as might be more practical for a French-speaking audience. Likewise, length is marked by circumflex and the compositors were forced to replace ð and th with Greek characters.

4.2.9. Theodor Möbius


Sólarljóð did not reach Germany until 1860, through the Edda edition of Germany's first professor of Nordic languages, Theodor Möbius. In view of the apparent interest in Eddic poetry in Germany even long before that date, the delay is somewhat surprising. Völuspá, after all, had been translated into German as early as 1772. However, the German equivalent to the sort of nationalistic movements which had helped promote the Edda in the Nordic countries was not of the sort to be interested in a later Icelandic Christian poem. In Germany there was no feeling of shared language, and even some resentment after the conflict with Denmark. German interest was mostly concentrated on the heroic poems of the Edda, since their subject matter was shared with the German epic _Nibelungenlied_. Sólarljóð was usually appended to the mythological poems instead of to the heroic poems.

It is an interesting footnote to the history of Sólarljóð, however, that when it was finally introduced to Germany, there was once more a connection with the Gothiska Förbund of Sweden. According to Edith Marold, Theodor Möbius was first inspired to become a Nordist by the Swedish romantic poet Atterbom, one of the more active writers of the Gotiska Förbund.

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78 J. N. C. M. Denis, _Die Lieder Sineds des Barden_ (Wien, 1772).

In Möbius’s Edda Sólarljóð is in an appendix with six other poems. The entire Edda edition is based on Munch’s earlier edition, which Möbius does credit. Sólarljóð is an exact reprint of the poem from Munch’s edition down to the same punctuation (aside from probable typographical error). The only difference is that while Munch still prints the second stanza in seven lines, Möbius runs the last two together to achieve a six-line stanza. There is a vertical bar inserted into the Möbius text at the spot where Munch had his line division, but there is no mention in the notes as to why the bar is there.

4.2.10. Sophus Bugge. Norræn Fornkvæði.


1867 marks the second edition of Sólarljóð to have an extensive apparatus of variant readings. Sophus Bugge’s Sólarljóð is included in his edition of the Sæmundar Edda, the Edda being called with Bugge’s typical scholarly neutrality simply Norræn Fornkvæði. However, Sólarljóð is once again relegated to an appendix, because it is Christian rather than pagan, and perhaps because it doesn’t have the authority of a parchment medium behind or under it. Bugge writes,

‘Sæmundar Edda’ henfores i mange Papirafskr. Sólarljóð, hvilket Digt jeg kun har medtaget i et Tillæg, da det er kristeligt. Men da dette folkelige, i ljóðaháttr digtede Kvæde for en stor Del bevæger sig i de gamle mythiske Forestillinger og da det neppe passende vil kunne indlemmes i nogen anden Samling, bør det nødig ganske udelukkes.

\[^{80}\text{Theodor Möbius, ed., Edda Sæmundr hins Fróða (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1860) 220–7.}\]
\[^{81}\text{Theodor Möbius, ed., Edda Sæmundr hins Fróða (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1860) iii.}\]
\[^{82}\text{Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) XLV.}\]
Despite its Christian theme, there are thus still enough pagan ideas in Sólarljóð to make it at least slightly relevant to a collection of Icelandic mythological poetry. In his fear of Sólarljóð not otherwise fitting into any collection of poetry, Bugge recognizes that the poem does have independent esthetic value and deserves to be printed somewhere.

The greatest contribution of Bugge’s Edda to the study of Sólarljóð lies in its use of an expanded manuscript base and its introduction of the manuscript now considered to be closest to the original. Bugge was convinced that all existing manuscripts were ultimately copied from a single older manuscript,\(^{83}\) and that none of those preserved has any great authority. Bugge did include an extensive apparatus of alternate manuscript readings, with reference also to previous editions. However, he found no point in going into too much detail.

Ved disse Digte [Grógaldr og Fjölsvinnsmál], ligesom ved de følgende [Sólarljóð], der ere udgivne efter Papirhaandskrifter, vilde det have været unyttigt og altfor vidløftigt at medtage alle Læsemaaider i de benyttede Hskrr.; jeg har efter bedste Skjøn gjort et Udvalg og ikke nævnt mange aabenbare Forvanskninger, som kun forekomme i enkelte Afskrifter."\(^{84}\)

Nevertheless, it was a significant step forward that Bugge showed an awareness that there are more manuscripts of Sólarljóð than those used by the Arnamagnæan Foundation in its edition, or those which may be found in the nearest national collection. The basis of research was thus expanded well beyond the few manuscripts mentioned in earlier editions. Bugge doesn’t try to be absolutely exhaustive, since he doesn’t believe any of the manuscripts to have any special authority. But he does note every important manuscript he has access to and is thorough in his identification of which manuscripts he is using.

\(^{83}\) Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) XLV.

\(^{84}\) Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) XLIV.
Bugge here introduces the manuscript *AM 166b oct.* to the study of *Sólarljóð*, giving it the label *I*. He says that “Den er den bedste af alle mig bekendte Afskr. og har paa flere Steder bevaret det rette, hvor de øvrige Afskrifter har en Forvanskning....”\(^85\) That manuscript is still generally considered to be the best. Other manuscripts that had not been used in previous editions of *Sólarljóð* were Bugge's *K* (*AM 167 oct.*) and *G* (*AM 155 oct.*). Alternate readings were also taken from manuscripts:

\[B, — NKS 1108 fol.,\]
\[C, — NKS 1109 fol.,\]
\[G, — AM 155a oct.,\]
\[L, — NKS 1866 4to.,\]
\[M, — NKS 1111 fol.,\]
\[O, — AM 738 4to., and\]
\[S, — NKS 1869 4to.\]

Bugge actually equates his *G* with *AM 155 oct.*\(^86\) but this *Sólarljóð* fragment is currently to be found in *AM 155a oct.* instead. Bugge also discusses *Sólarljóð* being present in *NKS 1110 fol.*,\(^87\) and in *NKS 1867 4to.*,\(^88\) but neither of these manuscripts seems to have been used in the edition. Likewise, Bugge is aware of the Stockholm manuscripts, at least to the extent of *Papp. fol. nr. 34 (=St), Papp. 4:o nr. 46 and Papp. 8:o nr. 15*, but he does not accord them any great value. He does, however, note that it is “Stockholm cod. 15 oct.” from which the others there were descended and not *St* as Rask had believed.\(^89\)

Beyond these manuscripts, Bugge also took into account the editions of Munch, Rask, and the Arnamagnæan Commission. Through the 1787 AM

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\(^85\) Sophus Bugge, ed., *Norræn Fornkvæði* (Christiania: Malling, 1867) XLV.

\(^86\) Sophus Bugge, ed., *Norræn Fornkvæði* (Christiania: Malling, 1867) XLVI.

\(^87\) Sophus Bugge, ed., *Norræn Fornkvæði* (Christiania: Malling, 1867) XLV.

\(^88\) Sophus Bugge, ed., *Norræn Fornkvæði* (Christiania: Malling, 1867) LXI.

\(^89\) Sophus Bugge, ed., *Norræn Fornkvæði* (Christiania: Malling, 1867) LIII–LV.
edition, he used readings from Erichsen’s manuscript, which he thought to have been copied from L [NKS 1866, 4to].\textsuperscript{90} He also held Guðmundur Högnason’s and Jón Ólafsson’s [AM 427 fol.] manuscripts in esteem, and suggested that there might still be copies of these on Iceland. Such Icelandic manuscripts might even prove to be more accurate in certain respects than manuscripts Bugge knew.\textsuperscript{91} Bugge was aware, of course, of the more recent manuscript copies of Sólarljóð in the collections he visited, but he was understandably less interested in mere copies of more primary manuscripts.\textsuperscript{92}

Since all existing manuscripts are recent copies, Bugge made an entirely normalized edition rather than following spellings from any of the manuscripts examined. Bugge’s edition thus appears very similar to those of Müller, Munch, or Möbius. As Bugge says, “Ved Udgivelsen af Digtene Gróg., Fjólsv. og Sólarlj., som blot ere bevarede i senere Papirafskrr., har jeg ikke beholdt dissees Retskrivning, men brugt en Skrivemaade, der i det hele er den for det gamle Sprog nu almindelig vedtagne.”\textsuperscript{93} If recent paper copies of lost original manuscripts can have no ultimate authority, there is little point in preserving their orthographic peculiarities.

Bugge follows the same division into parts as was originally made in Rask’s edition. Even punctuation is quite similar. However, Bugge tries to provide alternative readings to the editions that have preceded his. He also makes emendations designed to correct the text. Thus, there are changes such as thann veg in the first stanza for thá götu as given by Munch and (in various spellings) the other editions. Although this reading is found in none of the manuscripts Bugge examined, he thought it better fit the alliterative pattern of the verse. For the most part Bugge’s variations consist of different line

\textsuperscript{90} Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) LXI.

\textsuperscript{91} Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) XLVI.

\textsuperscript{92} Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) XLVI.

\textsuperscript{93} Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) XLIV.
breaks, spellings and word order. Some of the changes restore (or perhaps introduce) older linguistic forms to the text, as when æ is distinguished from œ and the relative pronoun sem is regularly replaced by er. In stanza twenty the usual reading of lagði has been restored from Munch’s emendation to flyði. In 25.6 Bugge has óskum for earlier auðnu. Stanza twenty-eight begins with Æsta dugir instead of Munch’s Æstanda thikkir, and in thirty-three the old Oegisheimi becomes Yndisheimi. Bugge changes some names, introducing Gylfar in 42.4, and Ráðny and Vébodi in 16.2. In stanza seventy-nine Njörd’s eldest daughter is Ráðveig. Stanzas forty-seven, eighty, and especially seventy, are changed rather extensively, but Bugge makes all such alterations clear in his notes.

Bugge’s edition was the first to give adequate explanations for its emendations and choices of one reading over another. The changes are actually quite conservative and very well reasoned. Bugge’s emendations have been accepted by most subsequent editors and translators, who often seem unaware of the debt they owe to this edition. While the Sólarljóð of the original author’s intent has probably been lost forever, the poem survives in a form best embodied by Bugge’s edition. For although nearly every scholar who has investigated Sólarljóð since Bugge has made his own alterations to Bugge’s text, it is always Bugge’s version which forms the foundation to which the text of Sólarljóð is always returned.

4.2.11. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell, 1883


Sixteen years after the publication of Bugge’s Edda edition, Sólarljóð appeared in yet another edition, this time by Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell, although Powell’s contribution has regularly been ignored. Given that the authoritative, opinionated pronouncements so typical of all of Guðbrandur Vigfússon’s works are the rule here, too, it is not at all surprising
that Powell should have remained invisible. The “we” in this edition is hard to see as anything but imperial.

*Corpus Poeticum Boreale* consists of two large volumes, both published in the same year. Volume one contains Eddic poetry, and thus Sólarljóð (at pages 202–17), while volume two contains court poetry. Both volumes have been reissued in an identical reprint of 1965 by Russell & Russell of New York. The main contribution of this edition to the history of Sólarljóð scholarship is a division of the work into two separate poems called the “Sun-Song” (202–11) and the “Christian’s Wisdom” (211–17). The edition attributes both poems to the same author, yet confesses that they could have been written by different people.

In the MS. the two poems which we have here separated are run together without division, the headless Christian’s Wisdom first, and then following without break or capital letter the Sun-Song. The latter perfectly distinct in subject, regularly divided into three parts, Death, Hell, and Heaven, and ending with its rightful epilogue, which gives us the title ‘Sun-Song.’ The poet must have given it this title from the striking words ‘sól ek sa,’ seven times repeated in the first part of this lay.

Vigfusson and Powell suppose a vellum manuscript from which all existing copies of Sólarljóð (and the “Christian’s Wisdom” and some other poems) have ultimately been copied. This vellum was allegedly transcribed onto a paper manuscript around 1640, when the vellum was already “blurred and in parts at least hard to read,” but both vellum and paper copy have since been

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lost.\textsuperscript{97} Unfortunately, according to the hypothesis here, the transcription was made in a rather random fashion, with scraps of poetry from various parts of the vellum inserted into the paper manuscript in a new order whose motivation is unclear to modern scholars. This supposed rearrangement would have been far more comprehensive than the careless transpositions, omissions and reinterpretations common to manuscript transmission. Nevertheless, such a random and complete reorganization of an original text is perhaps not as implausible as it might seem, since it fairly well describes the modus operandi of Vigfusson and Powell themselves in their treatment of the Edda they received.

\textit{Sólarljóð} is reorganized primarily on structural grounds. The phrase “Sól ek sá” is repeated a very precise seven times, and Vigfusson and Powell believe the rest of the poem must also have been composed with similar parallelism and structural regularity. They see the \textit{Sólarljóð} proper—what they call “The Sun-Song”—as a tripartite description of death, hell, and heaven, with each section beginning with the phrase “frá thví es at segja.”\textsuperscript{98} Since the phrase only occurs twice in the existing manuscripts, its absence at the beginning of the last section about heaven indicates a gap in the transmitted text. Such a gap would also help account for the section about heaven being so short. Vigfusson and Powell translate “frá thví es at segja” as “Now I shall begin to tell,”\textsuperscript{99} thus obviating any need for \textit{thví} to have an antecedent, and making it a suitable opening line for the three sections. The points of thematic division correspond to those suggested by Rask in 1818, except that Vigfusson and Powell make a division before rather than after the invocation of stanza seventy-five.\textsuperscript{100}


The final section of Vigfusson and Powell’s “Sun-Song” is an epilog or fourth part consisting of a prayer. There is an invocation of God in one stanza, and then three stanzas devoted to the father’s instructions to his son. Between these stanzas the editors delete “a fragment dealing with mystic figures” because they see no connection between it and the remaining two poems.¹⁰¹ These are the stanzas mentioning the familiar names of Óðin, Þjóðvalin, and Njárðr, as well as Bingvör and Listvör. The excised stanzas are, however, included in an appendix to “The Christian’s Wisdom.”¹⁰²

As for “The Christian’s Wisdom” itself, it is supposed to have consisted of several parables, of which five remain in their complete form. As an epilogue, seven counsels are included. These bits of advice are the aphorisms so often compared to those of the Hávamál. To these, Vigfusson and Powell add a concluding section of three stanzas with material actually taken from Hávamál, but “which would seem to be part of our poem.”¹⁰³ The parts taken from Hávamál are those with “the key words ‘ek sá.’”¹⁰⁴ These words presumably modify the counsel stylistically so it doesn’t fit with the presentation of the remaining advice within Hávamál. Vigfusson and Powell seem unsure about their connection to the “Christian’s Wisdom,” saying that the words “ek sá” would refer the fragments only to “some such poem as the Christian’s Wisdom.”¹⁰⁵ A better fit would seem to me to be with the “Sun-Song,” since it has the similar formula “sól ek sá,” and contains visionary material, while the “Christian’s Wisdom” does not. Yet


the Hávamál fragments do seem to duplicate on a smaller scale the method of the “Christian’s Wisdom” in giving an example followed by an aphorism.

Since Vigfusson and Powell see the “Sun-Song” and the “Christian’s Wisdom” as entirely separate poems, there should be no objection in following the example of the existing manuscripts and examining the text of the “Christian’s Wisdom” first. It corresponds to the first part of Sólarljóð as printed in all editions previous to this one. However, it begins not with the first stanza, but with the usual stanza eighty:

Hverjo bragði their bellt hafa
Svaforr ok Svafriði:
Blóð their vaokðo, ok benjar sugo,
‘undir ... eyvana.’

Corpus Poeticum Boreale says nothing about the gap marked in the last line, where Bugge had been able to read illum in the same manuscript (AM 166b oct.) used by Vigfusson and Powell. (Most other manuscripts and all editions had öllum.) The stanza as given here illustrates the four-line units in which both the “Sun-Song” and the “Christian’s Wisdom” are printed. The four-line stanza combines the first and second, and the fourth and fifth lines of the usual Nordic six-line stanza into long lines on the German and English pattern.

After this first stanza taken from near the end of the traditional Sólarljóð, Vigfusson and Powell return to the beginning and have as their second stanza the usual first stanza beginning “fé ok fiaorvi.” The poem then continues in its usual order on through stanza thirty-two of the traditional single poem. Then stanzas 34–36 are taken from the “Havamal collection,” inserted as a supposed fragment of a “lost fable.” (This edition also treats

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107 Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 370.

Hávamál as a random collection of mostly unrelated verses.) Finally, the stanzas normally numbered 76, 77, 78, and 79 in Sólarljóð are included as an appendix to the “Christian’s Wisdom.”

The traditional poem then resumes as the “Sun-Song,” but printed before the “Christian’s Wisdom” in the volume, beginning with Sólarljóð’s usual stanza thirty-three. This edition’s stanzas run parallel with the traditional stanzas through Vigfusson and Powell’s number forty-four, the traditional stanza seventy-five. Then Vigfusson and Powell skip the “mystic” stanzas 76–80, which they had moved to the appendix of the “Christian’s Wisdom” (or in the case of 80, to the beginning of the “Sun-Song”). Finally, Vigfusson and Powell’s stanzas 45–47 correspond to the usual stanzas 81–83.

Once the stanzas from the two poems of the “Sólar-Lið” of the Corpus Poeticum Boreale are put back in their usual order, and the material from Hávamál is removed, this edition does not vary so much from its predecessors. It is based primarily on AM 166 8vo (Bugge’s I) from c. 1660,109 AM 166b 8o does not break Sólarljóð into lines, as do most other manuscripts,110 so Vigfusson and Powell’s organization into four-line stanzas is not as unreasonable as it might otherwise seem. Even in this century E. V. Gordon defined ljóðaháttr as a stanza consisting of “two long lines with caesura, alternating with two lines containing three stresses and no caesura.”111 This is the form that was used by Vigfusson and Powell.

The Sólarljóð edition in Corpus Poeticum Boreale restores “ö to a ligature, but of ao rather than of the av from the days of the AM edition and Rask. Likewise, u is generally printed as o, especially in inflectional endings. Vera is given an unrotacized spelling in all its forms (vesa, es, vas). J is returned to i, perhaps in part to facilitate its vocalic quantity being counted by the


110 Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvaði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) XLV.

reader. Frequent hyphens are added, probably to help indicate which syllables are stressed or alliterated. The guiding principle seems to be to perfect meter. Vigfusson and Powell say of their two poems that "they are in an old metre, and preserve the quantity accurately."\textsuperscript{112} Fairly frequent emendations are made for the sake of meter, but the editors do at least note that they have made changes. The orthographical alterations reflect the belief of the editors that these two poems originated in the early eleventh century.

This edition by Vigfusson and Powell has had little real influence in the history of Sólarljóð scholarship, unless through Finnur Jónsson, who seems to have shared many of the same ideas of its editors. Yet Jónsson did not actually cite it and subsequent scholars have mentioned it only as a differing tangential viewpoint. The significance of this edition lies primarily in the fact that its notes are written in English, and that it has the authority of Guðbrandur Vigfússon behind it, a man who enjoys a huge reputation in at least English-speaking Nordic studies to this very day. Corpus Poeticum Boreale is an impressive and truly encyclopedic work and likely to be found in nearly every academic library. Although hardly on the cutting edge of modern research, it has recently been reprinted. The Sólarljóð of Corpus Poeticum Boreale is probably the one most likely to be encountered first by scholars outside the Nordic area.

Simply because of the wide circulation of this Sólarljóð edition, it has probably exercised undue influence. Sólarljóð has been made to look like a jumbled mass of disconnected and incomprehensible verses, and this may have contributed to the surprising lack of interest English-speaking scholars have shown in the poem. Vigfusson and Powell's edition contains the first complete English translation of Sólarljóð since the execrable verse of James Bereford, based on the Latin from the 1787 edition. Since Vigfusson and Powell, English translations of Sólarljóð have, perhaps not coincidentally, been mostly incomplete or have reorganized the order of its stanzas.


_Eddalieder_. Altnordische gedichte mythologischen und heroischen
inhalts herausgegeben von Finnur Jónsson. I. Gedichte

Finnur Jónsson concludes the nineteenth-century publishing history of
_Sólarljóð_, and begins the twentieth century with four different editions of
the poem. The first was published in 1888 as part of his edition of _Eddalieder_,
number 2 in Eugen Mogk’s series _Altnordische texte_. Once again _Sólarljóð_
appears in an appendix (at pages 101–8) with little said about it. _Sólarljóð_ is
probably taken primarily from Bugge’s edition in the same way as were its
sister poems _Grógaldr_ and _Fjölsvinnsmál:_

> Was endlich die lieder _Grógaldr_ und _Fjölsvinnsmöl_ betrifft, so habe ich
> Bugges text zu grunde gelegt. Diese lieder sind nur in späten
> papierhandschriften aufbewahrt. Diese sind alle gleich gut oder
> vielmehr gleich schlecht. Doch wird cod. AM 738 qv. für einen der
> besten angesehen.\(^{113}\)

This would make Bugge’s _O_ the ultimate manuscript authority for the 1888
edition, instead of the _I_ (AM 166b 8o) Bugge himself used. However, Finnur
Jónsson’s edition tries to reconstruct an ideal language rather than to follow
any specific manuscript.

Finnur Jónsson is explicit in his statement of editorial principles for his Edda
as a whole. Orthography is standardized on a phonetic and metrical basis,
following the examples of Müllenhoff-Hoffory,\(^{114}\) E. Mogk,\(^{115}\) and Sievers.\(^{116}\)
The umlaut of á to ā is carried through everywhere. The combinations _lf, lk, lm_,
and _lp_ are always preceded by short vowels. A vowel preceding another

\(^{113}\) Finnur Jónsson, ed., _Eddalieder_ (Halle a. S.: Niemeyer. 1888) ix.

\(^{114}\) Müllenhoff-Hoffory, _Voluspá***_.

\(^{115}\) Eugen Mogk, _Hávamál***_.

\(^{116}\) Eduard Sievers, _Proben einer metrischen Herstellung der Eddalieder_.
Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1885.
vowel is always to be pronounced short, but the editor has fortunately written the long vowel so readers are able to still recognize the word. Although the diphthong ja may be written as éa for the sake of meter, this change does not occur in Sólarljóð. Whereas meter may dictate the use of uncontracted historical forms of some words,117 more relevant to Sólarljóð is the consistent dropping of the e of ek, es and ero under the rules of bragarmál or poetic language.118 Pronouns frequently elide with the preceding word. E and o are always written in word endings in place of i and u respectively.119 This makes the edition somewhat resemble the Swedish manuscripts. S is used in place of r in all forms of vérn. ‘Eth’ (ð) is always written as ‘thorn’ (or d or t), except in the final stanza which seems to be regarded as a late addition and so not subject to archaic spelling.

Finnur Jónsson is firm in his insistence that Old Norse poetry was never written in a “long line.”120 Thus, Sólarljóð is returned to its traditional six-line stanza. “Endlich haben wir das sechszeilige metrum, den ljóthahótt. Die erste zeile jedes halbverses besteht der regel nach aus drei oder vier (ausnahmsweise aus zwei) silben, die zweite aus vier, die dritte aus fünf.”121

Finnur Jónsson notes a division of the poem between stanzas 32 and 33, the same spot as Vigfusson’s division into “Christian’s Wisdom” and “Sun-Song,” but he has no such division markers at any other point. Like Vigfusson and Powell, he finds that poems have been rearranged and have had material interpolated, but he proceeds in a more conservative manner than they, simply noting suspicious passages in brackets and always keeping Bugge’s stanza numbers for reference.122 However, Finnur Jónsson does reject Sólarljóð’s stanzas 76 through 80 as spurious, skipping them to

120 Finnur Jónsson, ed., Eddalieder (Halle a. S: Niemeyer. 1888) xii.
renumber the usual stanzas 81 and 82 as 76 and 77. The final stanza 83 is also rejected, and incorrectly referenced as B-78 (instead of B[ugge]-83). The notes are also keyed to this incorrect number.\(^{123}\)

4.2.13. Finnur Jónsson, 1905.

_Sæmundar-Edda_. _Eddukvæði_. Finnur Jónsson bjó til prentunar.

In 1905 Finnur Jónsson published another edition of the _Sæmundar-Edda_, subtitled _Eddukvæði_. This was the first time the Edda was ever printed in Iceland.\(^{124}\) Once again, _Sólarljóð_ appears in an appendix, now qualified as a "samsteypa af kristilegum kvæðum frá 12. öld."\(^{125}\) This time _Sólarljóð_ is specifically associated with _Grógaldr_ and _Fjölsvinnsmál_ in the introduction, while it is distinguished from the other Eddic poems:

\[
\text{thetta kvæði á eiginlega ekkert skylt við eddukvæðin, en finst í handritum oft saman við thau, og í mör gum útgáfum; af thví að thad á fyrirmynd sín í eddukvæðunum og af thví að thess hefur verið óskad, að thad væri látið fylgja kvæðunum, hefur thad verið tekið upp í bók thessa; en kvæðið er alkrístilegt, og ekki ort fyr en á 12. öld.}\(^{126}\)
\]

_Sólarljóð_ is printed with the Edda because tradition associates it with the Edda. This tradition is not only one from the manuscripts, but has become a tradition for printed editions as well.

Finnur Jónsson no longer tries to translate the _Sólarljóð_ into such an old hypothetical linguistic form, and so produces an edition that much more resembles that of Bugge than it does even his own earlier edition. Compared

\(^{123}\) Finnur Jónsson, ed., _Eddalieder_ (Halle a. S: Niemeyer. 1888) 133.

\(^{124}\) Finnur Jónsson, ed., _Sæmundar-Edda_. _Eddukvæði_. (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1905) iii.

\(^{125}\) Finnur Jónsson, ed., _Sæmundar-Edda_. _Eddukvæði_. (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1905) 460.

to Bugge’s edition, personal pronouns are still contracted or deleted, forms of *vera* are printed with *s* for *r*, and *hinn* is still rendered as *enn*. There are otherwise fewer orthographical variations from Bugge than in the 1888 edition. Bugge’s emendations have generally been silently accepted (eg., *veg* in 1.4 and *bölvi* in 80.1), but new emendations are also made in silence. For example, 70.1 reads (as does the 1888 version, aside from orthography): “lásu theim englar yfir.” Both of Jónsson’s first two editions occasionally divide lines at different points than did Bugge’s edition but they agree with each other except for 48.1–2. Likewise, the wording is the same in both editions, except that the newer occasionally omits some pronouns that had been included in 1888, and the earlier *Ráthveig* is changed to *Bööveig* (B79.4). The differences between the two editions are mostly orthographical, with the later edition being truer to the manuscripts.

The text is broken by lines along the points of division made by Rask, before the eighth, tenth, fifteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-fifth stanzas. Before stanza 25 is the heading “Hín eiginlegu Sólarljóð,” and thereafter there are no longer any divisions marked within the poem. However, stanzas 54–56 are marked with smaller type as having been interpolated, as are stanzas 76–80. Bugge’s stanza 83 has been completely omitted in the 1905 edition, without comment.

4.2.14. Finnur Jónsson, 1912A.


Finnur Jónsson’s last edition of *Sólarljóð* appears in *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldeidtning*, published by the Arnamagnæan Foundation in 1912. It is actually two editions in one, the first (in part A) being a diplomatic transcription of the manuscripts, and the second (in part B) being an emended text.
The diplomatic edition is by far the more interesting. It can be found in volume 1 of part A at pages 628–40. It is said to be based on the manuscripts AM 166b 80, AM 167b 40, AM 738 40, and NKS 1109 fol. Other manuscripts are listed as having been consulted, but are dismissed as being nearly identical copies of these primary versions. The chief basis of the edition is AM 166b 80 (the earliest of the manuscripts listed and the same used for Bugge’s edition), although the notes are less than clear on the point. The text of that manuscript is printed verbatim, but with abbreviations expanded in italics. Alternate versions are mentioned in footnotes, but slight orthographical variations are ignored. Unfortunately, Jónsson doesn’t indicate whether the manuscript gives any indication of how its abbreviations are to be expanded. For example, it is not clear whether an ok has been interpolated by the editor (perhaps based on the other manuscripts) or whether it has been expanded from an ampersand. Likewise, there is no indication of any manuscript superscripts. In fact, the manuscript does contain abundant superscript information, particularly markings of r and nasals. Of course, the most diplomatic edition is the photographic reproduction of the manuscript.

This third edition by Finnur Jónsson clears up some mysteries from his earlier editions. “De egenlige Sólarljóð” that begins with stanza 25 is now contrasted with the first twenty-four stanzas captioned “samling af moralske eksempler.” Sólarljóð is, then, a poem from the twelfth century, made up of two parts, the first being a collection of moral examples and the second being Sólarljóð proper. This division, as well as an unlabeled division before stanza nineteen, is made even in the diplomatic version, although neither division is marked in the manuscripts.127 For stanza eighty-three, which had been silently omitted in the 1905 edition and again “medtages ikke” in the 1912 emended edition, an explanation is given. A note to the diplomatic text says: “Dette v. mgl. i alle de øvr.; i Ny kgl. sml. 1866 tf. den bemærkning “inserunt chartae.”128 The stanza was omitted because it had not been included in all manuscripts. The note about the stanza being included in the paper

127 Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 357.

manuscripts is no doubt taken as implying that the stanza was not included in a parchment manuscript.

Despite the references to several manuscripts, this edition closely follows AM 166b 8o, as can be confirmed by comparison of this version with the transcription made from AM 166b 8o alone in Njörður Njarðvik's Solsången. The two editions are nearly identical. Jónsson interprets as s what Njarðvik prints as z to represent the manuscript’s word-final sibilant. Jónsson’s ø is often interpreted by Njarðvik as ø. There are some differences in the expansion of abbreviations, such as Jónsson’s ok instead of og for ampersands. The latter spelling is Njarðvik’s choice and seems to correspond to the manuscript’s most frequent way of writing out the word. Otherwise, the differences lie in the interpretation of word divisions and line breaks. Jónsson does not insert any punctuation beyond a period at the end of stanzas, and he adopts corrections in the manuscript (e.g. 12.4–5) silently.

Finnur Jónsson’s norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning A1 edition of Sólarljóð could have contained more extensive and clearer notes. It is not obvious even that AM 166b 8o is the manuscript being so exactly followed, or that, for example, the stanza numbers are not included in the manuscript as they are in many later ones. The editorial principles are outlined only briefly in the general introduction to the volume as a whole.129 Nonetheless, Jónsson did indeed publish a very accurate, though not perfect, transcription of AM 166b 8o.

4.2.15. Finnur Jónsson, 1912B.


As one might expect, Finnur Jónsson’s 1912 emended text of Sólarljóð (pp. 635–48) is quite similar to the edition he published seven years earlier. One

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might also expect to see similarities with the diplomatic version in volume A1, but these are not particularly evident. The text of B1 has very little to do with that in A1. The emended 1912 (B1) edition most resembles Finnur Jónsson’s own 1905 edition, even though one might have supposed them to have been based on different manuscripts. No editorial principles are enunciated for this last of Jónsson’s Sólarljóð editions, but it is clear that the “best” manuscript readings are used in favor of those of any one particular manuscript. The goal is an ideal text, so past emendations are once more removed and new ones are made.

Since this edition is one of the most widely available for inspection, and since, on the other hand, there is no reason to actually use it when volume A1 is likely to also be at hand, there seems little need to make a detailed description. The B1 edition differs primarily from the 1905 edition in the spelling of earlier ő as o with a cauda, and the frequent change of ą to ő with a cauda. Now r is yet more often written as s, as where verit becomes vesit in 3.6. There are some differences in word order and line divisions, mostly related to the addition, removal, or relocation of pronouns. Changes are made for the sake of meter and not for meaning. However, in 42.4 Gilfar is now capitalized as it was in Bugge’s edition. In 51.4 solir is restored to the plural, following the primary (AM 166b 8o) manuscript. Line 2.2 adopts Bugge’s “opt harðla,” but with the quotation marks. Gangandi is deleted from 2.6, with a new shift in the line break.

Finnur Jónsson is still adamant about Sólarljóð being a fragmentary collection of unrelated verse. “De egenlige Sólarljóð”\textsuperscript{130} still begins with stanza twenty-five, as distinguished from the “samling af moralske eksempler”\textsuperscript{131} that precedes it. Stanzas 54–56 and 76–80 are bracketed as interpolations (though the significance of the brackets is not mentioned on the pages in question), and 83 is omitted silently. Perhaps the most useful part of the 1912 B1

\textsuperscript{130} Finnur Jónsson, ed., \textit{Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning} B1 (København: Gyldendal, 1912) 639.

\textsuperscript{131} Finnur Jónsson, ed., \textit{Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning} B1 (København: Gyldendal, 1912) 635.
emended edition of Sólarljóð is the Danish translation which is included in lieu of notes at the bottom of the page.

4.2.16. Hjalmar Falk, 1914.


In 1914 Hjalmar Falk published a commentary on Sólarljóð which had been intended to form part of a work with Moltke Moe on Draumkvæde some twenty years earlier. The final product looks more like a collaboration with Sophus Bugge, because of the frequent references to suggestions having been made by Bugge. Falk’s edition of the text used is nearly identical to that in Bugge’s Norræn Fornkvædi, even tending to reflect similar punctuation.

This edition’s primary variation from Bugge’s is the placement of Bugge’s stanza eighty (about Sváfr and Sváfrlogi) as the poem’s first. This is a change that had been made by Vigfusson and Powell,132 and Falk claims that Bugge had also adopted the view that this stanza should be first.133 The motivation for this change is to give the opening narrative a pair of names such as those associated with the other exempla in the first part of the poem. Otherwise, all stanzas follow in their traditional order but with their new numbering not referenced to the earlier editions. Thus, each stanza after Falk’s first bears a number which is one higher than the number it has in Bugge’s edition. After stanza 80 the systems merge again, so that Falk’s stanzas 81 and 82 are numbered as in most other editions. Bugge’s stanza 83 is omitted entirely.

Falk’s edition is not printed continuously, but only segment by segment according to the sections into which the poem has been divided since Rask’s edition (following Sandvig’s 1783 translation). Like Vigfusson and Powell,


Falk does give each section a title, thus helping to explain why the divisions are made. A new division is made before stanza seventy-nine (Bugge’s 78), and stanza fifty-eight (Bugge’s 57) marks the beginning of a new subdivision of the section generally beginning with Bugge’s stanza fifty-three. Each segment is followed by a verse-by-verse Norwegian paraphrase, and then by Falk’s commentary.

Falk’s main orthographical changes vis-à-vis Bugge are the changes from ö to o with cauda or to ø, from æ to ø with cauda, and from lt to llt. Most changes involve word order. The most significant change from Bugge aside from the relocation of stanza eighty is in Falk’s stanza seventy-seven which varies from Bugge’s seventy-six as italicized (but with my ö replacing Falk’s o with cauda):

\[Ljúgvör ok Listvör \]
\[sitja í Lævíss dyrum\]
\[Ofgiarns stöli á;\]
\[norna dreyri\]
\[fellr ór nösum theim,\]
\[sá vekr fjón med fyrðum.\]  

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Falk always gives the reasons for his alterations, since his edition is primarily an accompaniment to his commentary. This is the first major study devoted solely to Sólarljóð since Bergmann’s over a half century earlier. The support either of Bugge or of published precedent is claimed for all emendations.

Falk’s emendations include the common omission of gangandi in 2.6 (always following the traditional system of numbering rather than Falk’s), the transposition of veginn and vaknaði in 6.3, and the substitution of kemr for verðr in 10.3. In 18.6 Falk changes funa to hita, sacrificing the alliteration within the full line. Line 20.3 reads “thá er lagði á Vigúlfs vald,” and 45.4–5 is broken before luftusk. In 47.6 sour becomes saurr, and in 51.6 skydrupnis becomes skindrepnis. 54.1 and 56.1 are broken after “sá ek” to make the

parallelism more obvious. Bugge's *virðusk* in 66.3 is changed to *væddusk*, *vandir* is added to the beginning of line 80.6, and 70.6 now reads “lásu theim englar yfir.”

Falk's *Sólarljóð* might have provided a serviceable edition of the poem, but it was completely overshadowed by Björn Ólsen's edition which was published the following year. Then as now, the greatest flaw in Falk's edition was probably the transposition of stanza eighty, which gave *Sólarljóð* a numbering system for its stanzas no longer corresponding to the one which had become standard over the previous century and a quarter. Falk's *Sólarljóð* has recently served as the basis for the edition by Bjarne Fidjestøl, but with stanza eighty returned to its original place. Of the emendations mentioned in the previous paragraph, Fidjestøl accepted only the addition of *vandir* to 80.6 and the new line division between 45.4 and 45.5. Nonetheless, Falk's edition has continued to exert some influence.


Björn Magnússon Ólsen published an edition of *Sólarljóð* in the fifth volume of the *Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenzkra bökmenta að fornu og nyju* in 1915. This edition has had more influence during this century than any other edition, perhaps because there was not to be another one for another thirty years.

Ólsen restores the usual ordering of the stanzas 1–82, noting the additional final stanza (Bugge’s 83) as occurring in some manuscripts. Ólsen neatly solves the problem of the first parable lacking named characters by proposing that *Greppr* and *Gestr* could be proper names. That problem out of the way, there is no longer any need to rearrange the order of the poem.

Ólsen follows the tradition of dividing the poem into various sections, breaking it in the usual places, but also adding additional divisions of his own. Each division is titled. The first section is labeled "Dæmatháttr" and is
subdivided into five individual exempla labeled “Greppr ok Gestr” (stanzas 1–7), “Unnarr ok Sævaldi” (8–9), “Sváfaðr ok Skarðheðinn” (10–14), “Ráðny ok Véboði” (15–18), and “Sörli enn góðráði ok Vigúlífr” (19–24). The second section begins with stanza twenty-five and is labeled “Ráðatal.” Each stanza is labeled as an individual counsel, numbered one through seven, and ending with an additional stanza (32), the “náðurlagserindi.”

The third section, “Um líf ok dauða ok annat líf,” begins with stanza thirty-three, and is subdivided into six parts. The fifth and sixth of these parts correspond to the usual divisions before stanzas fifty-three and sixty-nine, but the second, third and fourth parts require new dividing lines. “Lífit,” the first subdivision, is described in stanzas 33–36. “Dauðinn” is described in 37–46, and “Líkit náttsett ok grafit” in 47–49. The fourth subdivision bears the heading(s) “Hörundar hungr ok laugavatn. Á Nornastól. För um sigrheim,” and it encompasses stanzas 50–52. “Í kvölheimum” (53–68) is the fifth subdivision, and it is further subdivided, with its first four stanzas receiving their own titles, and the fifth (57) beginning a twelve-stanza “Píslir ranglátra.” The sixth and final subdivision of section III is “Í paradís, Ömbun réttlátra” covering stanzas 69–75.

The fourth section begins at the traditional division before stanza seventy-six, and is labeled “Rúnatháttr. Njarðardoetr” with the subdivisions “Starf Njarðardætra” (76–77), and “Rúnaletríð” (78–80). The fifth and final section is titled “Níðrlag” (stanzas 81–82).

Ólsen’s edition takes that of Falk, its immediate predecessor, as its point of departure, but the final product more closely resembles Bugge’s edition. Falk is followed in the case of some varying line divisions (3.5/6, 45.4/5, 47.4/5 [but not 55.1/2, or 56.1/2]), and in a few differences in word order (20.3, 38.6). The most significant following of Falk’s edition over Bugge’s is probably Ólsen’s adoption of Falk’s (ultimately Rask’s) “Norna” for Bugge’s “járna” in 76.4. Perhaps Ólsen’s edition ultimately resembles that of Bugge more than that of Falk simply because Falk’s renumbering isn’t followed, and beacause, as in Bugge’s edition, Ólsen’s orthography uses ð instead of an o with cauda.
As opposed to Bugge’s Sólarljóð, Ölsen’s orthography employs enn for the article hinn, with similar variation throughout all its forms. There are no other changes which can be globally applied. Ölsen has adopted the names “Hringvör” for Bugge’s “Bjúgvör” (76.1) and “Baugveig” for Bugge’s “Ráðveig” (79.4). Ölsen’s greatest innovation is Stanza 70.4–6, which has a novel

Lásu englar bœkr
ok ymna skript
helgar yfir höfði theim.135

For over half a century the monograph by Björn M. Ölsen remained the most recent scholarly edition to be accompanied by extensive commentary on the text itself. As such, it has been so frequently cited as to have achieved a certain authority probably not actually deserved by its text edition. Subsequent scholars have used Ölsen’s edition, but they have taken his emended readings mostly as points of departure and controversy, preferring to restore Sólarljóð’s text to its state before Ölsen’s alterations, hence, to something once more akin to Bugge’s edition. Ölsen’s commentary has been more important than his edition, although many have followed his transformation of greppr and gestr into proper nouns.

4.2.18. Ernst Albin Kock, 1946.


Ernst Albin Kock included an edition of Sólarljóð in his Norsk-isländska skaldediktningen (Vol.1) of 1946. More than the name of this edition has been taken from Finnur Jónsson’s 1912 effort. This edition follows Jónsson’s “rettet tekst” with its pronomial contractions and non-rhotacised forms of vera. Nonetheless, there are more than enough changes to qualify this as an entirely new edition. Aside from a new pattern of punctuation, changes consist for the most part in more consistent spellings, as of enn always with

two n’s, allt with two l’s, and honom with two o’s. The more substantial changes tend to return to Bugge’s edition.

As for unique changes, Kock changes módr to módugr in 4.2. He deletes hann from line 6.6, and that from 78.5, while replacing snúa with venda in 16.5. 17.1 reads “Á sinn thrótt trúðu,” and 28.4 becomes “alls áveill verðr.” Kock indicates a suspected omission by beginning the first line of stanza 26 with an elipsis, but no explanation is given. 41.3 reads “sem sæik a göfgan god” and 44.6 is “ok kólnuð allt fyr utan.” Kock restores the á Jónsson omitted vis-à-vis Bugge’s 43.2, but he appends it to the end of 43.1, producing an asymmetrical “Söl ek sá á.” 46.2 is given as “—thá vas ek hræaddr—” where other editions have føedr. Myklum becomes myklan in 58.6, eyndum is spelled eymdum in 75.6. Word order is changed in 62.6 and 76.5. Kock follows Ólsen in using Hringvör for Bjúgvör, and he reorganizes line 79.5 as “en yngsta Kreppvör.” stanza eighty-three is not included.

Kock’s is the most recent edition to receive wide circulation as part of a larger collection of texts. There are no notes or comments beyond reference to section numbers of his Fornjermansk forskning136 and Notationes Norroenæ137 where individual words are explained. Subsequent works dealing with Sölarljóð have not cited this edition except in bibliographies, but it was adopted as base text for an Italian translation in 1962.138


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136 Ernst A. Kock, Fornjermansk forskning, Lunds Universitets Årsskrift NF Avd. 1, Bd. 18 (Lund: Gleerup, 1922).


138 Mario Gabrieli, La Poesia Scaldica Norrena. Introduzione e testi, Pubblicazioni della Scuola di Filologia Moderna dell’ Università di Roma 9 ([Roma]: Edizioni Dell’Ateneo, [1962]).
Einar Ólafur Sveinsson published his edition a year after Kock's in Íslands þúsund ár, at pages 471–92. The text is printed without comments or notes, omitting the final stanza. The stanzas are not numbered. This edition clearly owes much to Ólsen, treating Greppr and Gestr as proper names and putting stanzas seventy-nine and eighty within quotation marks. Ólsen's division into five main parts is followed, with the parts labeled with roman numerals but not titled. The more traditional breaks (or subdivisions) are marked with simple dinglebs.

Like nearly every editor, Sveinsson has had to change the spelling of his immediate models. For example, enn becomes inn, and i-forms are preferred for all articles. Hón becomes hon, hánum becomes honum, thvít is expanded to thvít at. Doubled consonants are preferred except that theirra becomes theira.

Although Einar is clearly familiar with Ólsen's edition, he is more conservative, and tends to fall back once more on Bugge's readings, especially in cases where Ólsen confesses to having little manuscript support. Not infrequently, a reading is taken from Finnur Jónsson. As with Jónsson and Kock, engvan is preferred to øngvan (12.4, 13.3) and engar to øngvar in 74.6. Sveinsson takes "víð sorg" from Jónsson in 30.2, syndusk in 59.5, and the name Bódveig in 79.4. This edition has had a following in Iceland.


Guðni Jónsson returns to the tradition of appending Sólarljóð to the poetic Edda. He includes it in his _Eddukvæði_ of 1954, at pages 609–29. Guðni divides Old Icelandic poetry into two main branches, "eddukvæði" and "dróttkvæði." ¹³⁹ Given this traditional division, Sólarljóð can only belong in the collection of Eddic poetry, especially as Guðni questions the attribution of

any of the traditional Eddic poems to Sæmund anyway.\textsuperscript{140} Guðni states his purpose as an attempt to present a popular edition to an Icelandic audience, criticising the only other Edda edition printed in Iceland—that of Finnur Jónsson—as neither following the manuscripts nor being readable by modern Icelanders.\textsuperscript{141}

Guðni Jónsson’s edition of Sólarljóð corresponds almost exactly to that of Einar Ól. Sveinsson. It marks part divisions with the same roman numerals Einar Sveinsson took from Björn Ólsen, but returns to the tradition of numbering stanzas. The eighty-five or so points of variance are mostly matters of punctuation and modernized spelling. Guðni always uses æ where Einar has æ, and the character ð is replaced by ð or a. Words with pt, such as opt, eftir, or skrift, are printed with ft instead (oft, eftir, skrift). The most significant changes are 26.2, where Guðni Jónsson has “thau er thú unnit hefr” in place of “thá er þér unnit hefr;” 30.2, where he has “at vēr hryggvir förum” instead of “at við sorg förum;” 76.4, where he restores járn for norna; and 81.2, where “er ek þér kennt hefi” is contracted to “er þér kennt hefik.” 25.6 and 38.6 change Einar’s word order. 51.5 follows Finnur Jónsson instead of Einar, and Björn Ólsen’s and Einar Sveinsson’s quotation marks are dropped from stanzas 79 and 80.


Mario Gabrieli produced a parallel text translation of Sólarljóð and three other works to demonstrate to a Southern European audience that the medieval North produced literature and not just ravaging Vikings. Sólarljóð


occupies pages 85–114 of his volume, with the Icelandic on the left of each page and an Italian translation on the right. Eighty-two stanzas are included.

Although Gabrieli claims to be opposed to the sort of text emendation that cuts the source into segments and rearranges it, the Icelandic version he prints is one of the furthest removed from the manuscripts. It is a reprint of the 1946 edition by Ernst A. Kock, which in turn reflects the highly emended edition published by Finnur Jónsson in 1912. Although Gabrieli’s version of Sólarljóð follows Kock extremely closely—down to the use of exclamation points at 19.3 and 4, for example—the versions are not absolutely identical. All Kock’s digraphs are printed as separate letters. Gabrieli does follow Ólsen in capitalizing Greppr as a proper name, and in the breaking point of lines 54.1/2. Other variations from Kock are so minor that they could simply be typographical errors.

Gabrieli’s introduction provides information of a general sort on Nordic techniques of poetic composition, such as the use of heitur and kennings. In the footnotes to Sólarljóð there are random Germanic cognates given for selected words from the text. The only significant contribution over Kock’s edition is the translation into Italian.

4.2.22. Ólafur Briem, 1968.


Ólafur Briem includes Sólarljóð in his 1968 Eddukvæði, taking Guðni Jónsson’s process of modernization even further. The edition is accompanied

142 Mario Gabrieli, La Poesia Scaldica Norrena. Introduzione e testi, Pubblicazioni della Scuola di Filologia Moderna dell’ Università di Roma 9 ([Roma]: Edizioni Dell’Ateneo, [1962]) 9.


by extensive notes based on Björn M. Ólsen, Hjalmar Falk, and Frederik Paasche, explaining difficult words for a popular audience. Stanza eighty-three, however, is omitted without comment. The edition is marked for division at the usual points, and seven of the sections are given titles. These titles are reminiscent of Ólsen’s: I. Dæmatháttur (at the beginning), II. Rúðatal (before stanza 25), III. Líf ok dauði (before 33), IV. Í kvölheimum (before 53), V. Í paradís (before 69), VI. Rúnatháttur and Njarðardætur (before 76), and VII. Njúrðlag (before stanza 81). Despite the similarity in titles, Ólafur Briem’s edition follows that of Guðni Jónsson much more closely than that of Björn Ólsen. It is thus also closer to Einar Sveinsson’s edition than to Ólsen’s, but there are no readings parallel to Sveinsson that aren’t also found either in Ólsen or in Guðni.

The main characteristic of Ólafur Briem’s edition is its modern appearance. Ólafur has eg for ek, og for ok, að for at, úr for ór, sem for er, um for of, and the like. -lega replaces the old suffix -liga, -ur replaces -r, -st replaces -sk, and -ð replaces participial -t. The main change in substance which Ólafur Briem makes aside from choosing between readings paralleled by either Ólsen or Guðni Jónsson is to omit the word er from 6.3, and to reintroduce “vald hans Vígúlf’s” to 20.3. These are readings going back to the editions of Finnur Jónsson and Sophus Bugge.

This Edda edition by Ólafur Briem is especially handy with its compact form yet copious notes. The comments on Sölarljóð are based on the works by Ólsen, Falk and Paasche, and are as clear as one might expect from a popular edition. The editor’s own intrusion is minor.


Perhaps the greatest significance of Ólafur Briem’s edition is that it has carried enough authority to be reprinted almost without change. Kristján Karlsson

includes Briem’s edition in the first volume of his own 1976 Íslenskt ljóðasafn, but without titles, notes, stanza numbers, or credit. While Briem’s titles are omitted, the same roman numerals are used, and Briem’s other divisions are marked with asterisks. Aside from line 45.5 where Kristján has lukust for Ólafur Briem’s luktust, the variations are all in diacritics and punctuation. Kristján has voru where Briem had vóru (11.1, 16.1, 37.5, 56.3, 61.5, 62.3, 65.5, 66.5, 69.5, 72.5), komu where Ólafur Briem had kómu (21.6, 37.1) and eg for Ólafur Briem’s one ég (24.5). In 27.4 Kristján Karlsson omits a comma, and in 37.5 he changes the semicolon to a colon.


Bjarne Fidjestøl includes an edition of Sólarljóð as an appendix to his valuable book Sólarljóð. Tyding og tolkingsgrunnlag, at pages 59–79. It appears in a column on the left of each of those pages next to a Nynorsk translation by Severin Eskeland147 in the right column. The basis for this Icelandic edition is that of Hjalmar Falk from 1914148 but, Fidjestøl says, without most of Falk’s emendations.149

Fidjestøl first rejects Falk’s reordering of the poem, and begins with the standard “Fé ok fjórvi” of the traditional stanza one. Guð is capitalized in all forms, in each of its thirteen occurrences. Likewise, all other references to the deity, such as Drúttinn, Fadir, Sonr, and Andi, are similarly capitalized. Falk’s accented ø is always replaced by a ligature of œ. There are a few differences in punctuation. The remainder of Fidjestøl’s alterations consist in returning emendations to a standardized form of what stood in the original manuscript

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AM 166b 80. As a result, this edition actually looks much more like Bugge’s edition than like Falk’s, but some of Bugge’s emendations were rejected as well. Bugge’s insertion of [Bólvi] into 80.1 was retained, but the word was placed at the beginning rather than at the end of the line. Fidjestøl’s second helming of stanza seventy now reads

lásu englar
helgar bœkr
(ok himna skript) yfir höfði theim.

In all, there are about seventy points of variation from Falk’s edition. Whereas the differences from Falk’s work result in changes in meaning, or at least changes in word order, the differences between Fidjestøl’s edition and Bugge’s edition are very minor, consisting mostly of changes in orthography, line divisions, and the like. Yet Fidjestøl does depart from Bugge’s edition in nearly ninety instances. Fidjestøl’s edition of Sólarljóð seems to take a slightly more conservative view of the text than Bugge’s edition did, but with a more modern and consistent standardization of the orthography.

Fidjestøl has printed a practically invisible roman numeral II before stanza thirty-three, and a III before stanza fifty-three. There are no notes to the edition. The edition is simply appended to the end of the monograph for reference purposes, and it is easy to forget it is there. Nonetheless, this is a handy edition of the poem and one of the most reliable versions of the text. As George S. Tate wrote, “for Sólarljóð Fidjestøl’s revision of Falk’s text seems soundest.”150

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4.2.25. Alan Boucher, 1985

*The Lily and Lay of the Sun.* Two mediæval religious poems.
Translated from the Icelandic by Alan Boucher. [Reykjavík]: Bóksala stúdenta, 1985.

Alan Boucher includes an Icelandic version of Sólarljóð as part of an opposed-text translation into English. He emphasizes that the parallel Icelandic is only a working text and not to be taken as a critical edition.\textsuperscript{151} It is said to be based on several of the previous editions, though none is specifically named. Spelling is normalized “approximately to that generally used for the verses in editions of the saga literature.”\textsuperscript{152} This means that “for the separate article enn, en, et are used, as distinct from the demonstrative hinn, hin, hit (mod. hið), while for the Middle Voice suffix (mod. -st) -sk, -mk are used rather than the -z form of the manuscripts.”\textsuperscript{153}

This version of Sólarljóð most closely resembles the one by Einar Sveinsson over a generation earlier, sharing to a large extent even punctuation. The article is now spelled as enn rather than Sveinsson’s inn, and the earlier ór has become úr. Sveinsson’s ó has changed to a, and the ligature æ has been replaced by æ, perhaps reflecting only the limitations of the typewritten format. Otherwise, earlier inconsistencies in normalization have been corrected, with most of the variations bringing orthography closer to that used by Guðni Jónsson in his 1954 edition.

There is also a clear influence of the edition by Björn Ólsen, with many of its emendations now accepted even where they had not been adopted by Einar Sveinsson. The readings of lines 19.2–3, 25.6, 26.2, and 38.6 may be traced back to emendations made in the 1915 edition. Björn Ólsen’s capitalization of

\textsuperscript{151} Alan Boucher, *The Lily and Lay of the Sun* ([Reykjavík]: bóksala stúdenta, 1985) iv.

\textsuperscript{152} Alan Boucher, *The Lily and Lay of the Sun* ([Reykjavík]: bóksala stúdenta, 1985) v.

\textsuperscript{153} Alan Boucher, *The Lily and Lay of the Sun* ([Reykjavík]: bóksala stúdenta, 1985) v.
Greppr as a personal name has been taken over (as it had also been by Einar Sveinsson) but now the gestr has been returned to anonymity. Boucher is generally economical with the capitalization of terms that may be personifications.

This edition does not have section divisions marked. It is probably most notable for a novel reading of the second helming of stanza 70:

lásu englar
ymna skript
ok helgar bækri yfir höfði theim.\(^{154}\)


Sólarljóð. Útgáfa og umfjöllun: Njördur P. Njarðvík.
Bókmenntafraðistofnun Háskóla Íslands og Menningarsjóður.

Njördur Njarðvík published a modernized edition of our poem in his book Sólarljóð in 1991. The edition actually appears twice: once in its entirety, and then stanza by stanza with extensive notes on the text. As one might expect, the edition most closely resembles that of Ólafur Briem, thanks to a shared modern system of orthography. However, since Briem's main purpose is to make the poem accessible to a popular audience as part of the Edda, while Njarðvík's is to present a single manuscript in standardized orthography, there are differences. Most differences arise from the manuscript used by Njarðvík (AM 166b 8o) and can thus be predicted. Global differences in orthography include Njarðvík's restoration of h to all forms of the demonstrative article. He uses of for Briem's um, -st for reflexive -zt, fyrir for fyr, and sem for er. Njarðvík's use of punctuation is generally more conservative than Briem's, and he uses kómu for Briem's komu.

In 1.4 Njarðvík restores götu for Bugge's suggested vegu from over a century earlier. Likewise, he restores gangandi to 2.6, where it had been long deleted.

\(^{154}\) Alan Boucher, The Lily and Lay of the Sun ([Reykjavík]: bóksala stúdenta, 1985) 1-41.
Greppur becomes once again a common noun (1.3). Öngvar is restored to 12.4 and 13.3, urðu to 16.1. 16.3 has gjöra for Briem's gera; 32.4 has gjörla for gerla, and 49.3 has gjörir for gerir. In 28.1 thykir is restored over dugir. 29.1 has an unusual kem instead of kom (due to a misreading of AM 166b 8o). Stanza thirty-nine differs in several points from Briem's, most significantly having dimmheimum for dynheimum. 51.5 has skinu for er skein; 67.2 has hafa for höfðu.

In Njarðvík's 1991 edition 70.3–6 reads:

lásu englar
helgar bækur
og himnaskrift yfir höfði theim.

Öngvar replaces Briem's engar in 74.6, and Njarðvík has leysa for skilja in 75.4, syndum for eymdum in 75.6, Bjúgvor for Hringvör in 76.1 (which still differs from the manuscript and Jónsson's transcription), and järna for norna in 76.4. Most interestingly, in 80.1 Njarðvík omits the bölti which had been very tentatively suggested by Bugge but accepted by everyone since.

In another exciting departure from editorial tradition, Njarðvík changes the points at which the poem is divided. He draws a very short thin line at points where editions have usually drawn them since the days of Rask. Doubled tiny lines mark the spots where Briem had marked major divisions with Roman numerals. However, the correspondence ends after stanza seventy-four. Njarðvík places his final break, a single line, at that location, before stanza seventy-five. Aside from Finn Magnusen's 1822 translation, the dividing point is otherwise always found between stanzas seventy-five and seventy-six. Njarðvík makes no subsequent divisions. Stanza eighty-three is omitted from the edition, but may be found in the book's later discussion.

156 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Sólarljóð (Reyjavík: Bókmenntafraðistofnun Háskóla Íslands og Menningarsjóður, 1991) 163.
Not all variations from Briem's edition bring Njarðvík's edition closer to the manuscript. The 1991 edition does sometimes depart from the manuscript, aside from the mere orthographical variations. Sometimes the majority reading of the various manuscripts is preferred to AM 166b 8o. For example, 1.6 has náði for the matti of the manuscript. Line 8.3 has honum for hann, line 9.4 (missing in the manuscript) is supplied, and 11.1 has voru for urðu. 12.4–5 changes word order, 15.5 has honum for theim. 18.6 has milli for mezal. 21.6 adds en at the beginning of the line; 26.6 adds a kveda not in the manuscript. There is a considerable amount of alteration taking place with pronouns and articles, usually adding them.

Some names have been changed. The manuscript's baugreirz becomes baugregins in 56.6; Bingvør becomes Bjúgvör in 76.1. The manuscript's ek så is reversed to så eg in 61.1, 62.1, 65.1, and 69.1 to conform with the first lines of stanzas 63, 64, 66, 67, 70, 71, and 72. In 66.6 skiginn becomes slegin, and an er is added to 69.2. Other changes include the transformation of hafa to höfðu in 72.2, and "j modugum munad" to "móðug á munad" in 77.3. In 78.5 úr is added; in 79.1 thær is deleted. In 82.5 theim is deleted. The final stanza changes hefði heirt to heyrði in 83.1.

The value of Njörður Njarðvík's edition in Sólarljóð is primarily to Icelanders wanting a modern version based on the chief manuscript, AM 166b 8o. This is, however, also the most recent edition published and widely available. The opening page of the manuscript is reproduced clearly on page 12, and this one photo reveals more about the manuscript than has a great deal of past research. Njarðvík's own text is a useful contribution summarizing the state of Sólarljóð knowledge.

4.2.27. Njörður Njarðvík, 1993a.

In 1993 Njarðvík published his dissertation Solsången, wherein he included two different versions of the text of Sólarljóð. The first is a diplomatic rendering of AM166b 80. For the first time almost all variants from almost all known manuscripts were included in the notes. Those variants which are no more than orthographical curiosities are generally omitted, which makes the mass of information easier to comprehend, though the edition is thus also less exhaustive. The transcription of the primary manuscript still lacks indication of superscripts and abbreviations, as did Finnur Jónsson's transcription. Njarðvík’s expansions are noted in boldfaced type, but there is no indication of what marks are being expanded. Furthermore, the distinction between bold and regular type is inadequately reproduced in the photocopied dissertation. However, one may hope for a typeset version of this work, and in the meantime it serves to corroborate the readings of Jónsson in his diplomatic edition.\footnote{Finnur Jónsson, ed., Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning A1 (København: Gyldendal, 1912) 628–40.}

Considering the room for multiple interpretations of any character within a manuscript, the transcriptions by Jónsson and Njarðvík are remarkably similar, even where the two editors supply their own expansions to abbreviated words. However, there are some variations even where characters are written in the manuscript. The manuscript uses what appears to be a half-cursive z in places where standardized orthography would have an s. Jónsson usually renders this character as s, while Njarðvík reproduces it as z. As a consequence, every word-final s in Jónsson's transcription (except leiks in 12.3, Vígulf's in 20.3, and krás in 29.6) is rendered as z in Njarðvík's transcription. Njarðvík does use s, however, in all those places where he supplies a missing s/z, except for 75.6, where he doubles the final z of the manuscript’s oz. In positions other than word-final, the manuscript employs a long s, which both editors render simply as s.

Another orthographical problem is posed by the character Jónsson usually, but not always, renders as ó. It resembles an o with a straight acute hairline rising from the right top of the letter. Jónsson’s ó is thus close to its physical
appearance. Njarðvík uses the letter ø to represent it more according to its phonetic value. The letter ð occurs in Njarðvík only in dölgar in line 24.3.

Since Finnur Jónsson and Njörður Njarðvík have provided the scholar with the only modern attempts at a diplomatic edition of any Sólarljóð manuscript, their differences are worth noting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jónsson</th>
<th>Njarðvík</th>
<th>lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sijn</td>
<td>syn</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>særir</td>
<td>sækir</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kom</td>
<td>kem</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forum</td>
<td>förum</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giori</td>
<td>giøri</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at</td>
<td>ad</td>
<td>32.6, 33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niít</td>
<td>nijt</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seigia</td>
<td>segia</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sueigd</td>
<td>sveigd</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quolldi</td>
<td>kuøldi</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flö</td>
<td>flo</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skop</td>
<td>skp</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se ec</td>
<td>saec</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blyi</td>
<td>bliji</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In lines 12.4–5 Jónsson has "onguan hlut / mättu their annan muna," where Njarðvík has a different word order among more minor changes: "onguan mättu hlaut / their annan muna." Here Jónsson silently transposed hlut and mättu per a superscript notation in the manuscript, while Njarðvík simply ignored the markings. Elsewhere, Jónsson has sometimes printed i where Njarðvík has long j (26.3, 30.5, 76.4).

Most differences are found in the editors' expansion of abbreviations. Njarðvík consistently expands the manuscript's & into og, conforming to the most frequent expansion in the manuscript itself (e.g. 82.6). Jónsson, on the other hand, uses the common standardized ok. Njarðvík writes mez where Jónsson writes med, also where it is an affix (7.6, 18.6, 21.5, 74.2, 76.6),
following the manuscript grapheme. Some variations in expansions are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jónsson</th>
<th>Njarðvík</th>
<th>lines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hanum</td>
<td>honum</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vid</td>
<td>vit</td>
<td>6.5, 48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fagrt</td>
<td>fagurt</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eru</td>
<td>ero</td>
<td>32.6, 36.6, 74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thui</td>
<td>thvi</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vid</td>
<td>vit</td>
<td>42.6, 48.6, 58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thviat</td>
<td>thvit</td>
<td>43.4, 45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alldrei</td>
<td>alldrei</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hefr</td>
<td>hefir</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>konur</td>
<td>konr</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dockwo</td>
<td>dockuo</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>virduz</td>
<td>virdaz</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horund</td>
<td>hosund</td>
<td>71.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modur</td>
<td>modr</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hafdi</td>
<td>hafdi</td>
<td>83.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the latitude that exists for an editor expanding abbreviated text, the two diplomatic editions are remarkably similar. Jónsson doubled some consonants left single by Njarðvík (11.4, 11.5), while Njarðvík has doubled one earlier left single (24.5). Njarðvík punctuates this edition with commas inserted according to modern rules, whereas Jónsson simply added periods at the end of each stanza. Njarðvík does keep these. The two editors break the run-in text of the manuscript at different places for lines 12.4–5, 26.1–2, 44.4–5, 50.4–5, 54.1–2, 56.1–2, 78.4–5, and Jónsson’s 80.1 which is Njarðvík’s 80.1–2. Njarðvík writes as one word what Jónsson transcribes as:

<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>van mettr</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trü thu</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hiengu theim</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feikn stófum</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sa ec</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
syð hladit     77.5
hiartar horn   78.4
solar liod     81.4

On the other hand, Jónsson wrote as one word what Njarðvík gives as:

a valld       20.3
i hugum       25.3
als a          28.4
thesa heims    60.5
thra reipum    77.6

The text of Njörður P. Njarðvík's edition would hardly justify replacing Finnur Jónsson's edition, although it is an important confirmation of the accuracy of the earlier work. What makes this edition essential—and it is essential—is the apparatus with alternate readings. For the first time an attempt has been made to include readings from absolutely all manuscripts. To do this some compromises had to be made, such as ignoring variations in orthography. A few important manuscripts were also overlooked. Aside from the priority given to AM166b 80, there is no distinction made in the relative values of the manuscripts. And always, one simply wishes for more information. Nevertheless, this edition is currently the most convenient way to access the greatest number of manuscript readings.

4.2.28. **Njörður Njarðvík, 1993b.**

In addition to the diplomatic edition of AM166b 80, Njarðvík's dissertation includes a standardized Old Icelandic edition of Sólarljóð, together with a line-by-line commentary. This edition is essentially the equivalent of his modernized version of 1991, with a reversal of the modernization procedure. It is less like the 1993 diplomatic edition since some majority readings have been accepted over the single manuscript. H is dropped from demonstratives, og becomes ok again, and -st becomes -sk. The letter ð is changed to o with cauda; final -ur becomes -r. The final cluster -ft becomes -pt, ð becomes t in past tenses and in at (versus að). Finally, z becomes s. A semicolon is used to separate clearly different clauses.
The standardized Old Icelandic version has few variations from Njarðvík's modern edition beyond the orthography. Line 38.5 now begins with er as does the manuscript. Line 72.2 retains the manuscript's hafa instead of the modernized edition's past tense. The final stanza eighty-three is omitted entirely in the 1993 standardized version as it was in 1991.

All in all, this most recent standardized edition of Sólarljóð does not differ greatly from the first modern edition made by Sophus Bugge over a hundred years earlier. Orthography has been changed some. Articles are standardized without the initial h found in Bugge and the manuscript. Njarðvík uses the spelling aldrei for Bugge's aldri. Bugge's hánun is written honun. The letter ð becomes o with cauda. Njarðvík prefers doubled consonants (e.g., illt in 5.2, almáttkum in 7.6, enn in 22.1, allt in 25.6).

Some of Bugge's emendations have been rejected by Njarðvík, and the influence of Björn Ólsen's edition is evident. While the following variations between the editions of Bugge and Njarðvík may be minor, they bracket a period which included many emendations and revisions of the Sólarljóð text. These two editions mark the closing of a historical circle, and perhaps more important, their differences tend to represent the latest points of textual controversy.

In Njarðvík's standardized Old Icelandic edition of Sólarljóð, Bugge's "thann veg" is restored to "thá götu" (1.4). Line 2.6 begins with Gestr, following Ólsen's line division and view of it being a name. Njarðvík's æ ends line 7.5 instead of beginning 7.6. Bugge's vár is restored to urðu in line 16.1. In 19.3 Bugge's "thó thér fagrt mæli fyrr" is restored to the manuscript's order of "thó fagrt mæli fyrr ther." Njarðvík deletes er from both 20.3 and 51.5.

There are several more places at which the lines of poetry are given different points of division. Njarðvík breaks line 26.1–2 after thau rather than before it. He breaks 44.4–5 after var, while Bugge breaks before it. In 45.4–5 Njarðvík (like Ólsen) breaks before luktusk instead of after. The breaks for 47.4–5 and 78.4–5 come after that instead of before as in Bugge's edition.
Njarðvík writes ei for Bugge’s eigi in 26.3 and 60.3. Bugge’s seinar becomes seint in 27.6 (both rather far removed from the manuscript reading). Njarðvík’s 28.1 has the manuscript’s thykir instead of Bugge’s dugir. Line 28.4 replaces Bugge’s án x with á mis (as does Ólsen). Njarðvík’s line 29.1 contains the present tense kem instead of Bugge’s kom, a new (but incorrect) reading of the manuscript important to Njarðvík’s interpretation (1993, 111). In the tradition of bragarmál, Njarðvík appends Bugge’s ek to the preceding verb (as -k, unless there is already a final k) in 35.2, 36.3, 39.5, 40.3, 44.3, 52.2, 52.5, 57.3, and 74.2, while Bugge’s thúiat is likewise contracted to thúit in 35.3, and hversu to hve in 38.2.

In line 39.3 Njarðvík has dimmheimum instead of Bugge’s dynheimum. In 43.5 Njarðvík follows Ólsen and the manuscript to print harðla instead of Bugge’s heldr. In 46.4, like Ólsen and the manuscript, the 1993 edition has burt instead of brot. At is deleted from the new 46.6, and hin from 47.2. At the end of line 47.6 Bugge’s sour is replaced by samr, following Ólsen and staying closer to the manuscript. Other variations are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bugge</th>
<th>Njarðvík</th>
<th>lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>einmana</td>
<td>munadlarlausir</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>med</td>
<td>vid</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thóttu</td>
<td>syndusk</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kynliga</td>
<td>kymiliga</td>
<td>66.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er</td>
<td>sem</td>
<td>68.3, 79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mart</td>
<td>margt</td>
<td>67.2, 69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skilja</td>
<td>leyse</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eymðum</td>
<td>syndum</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ráðveig</td>
<td>Bauðveig</td>
<td>79.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Njarðvík’s 70.3–6 is a manuscript-true “lásu englar / helgar boekr / ok himnaskrift yfir hófði theim,” disagreeing with both Bugge and Ólsen. Whereas Bugge follows the majority of manuscripts in having hófðu in 72.2, Njarðvík follows the manuscript with hafa. Njarðvík rejects Bugge’s now
traditional interpolation of [bölvi] in 80.1, mentioning it only in his notes.\textsuperscript{158} There are a few other instances in which words have been added or deleted entirely. Njarðvík adds undir to the beginning of line 80.6, following the manuscript. Also following the manuscript, ok is added to the beginning of 82.6. Bugge's ek is deleted from 81.2, and Njarðvík does not include stanza eighty-three at all in his standardized edition.

Njarðvík's normalized Old Icelandic edition is a relatively conservative rendering of the text, comparable to those of Bugge or Fidjestøl. The normalization has a slightly modern flavor, with spellings such as aldrei for the more traditional alári, but the orthography used is generally such that it corresponds to common dictionary entries for Old Icelandic. The text does not follow AM166b 8o alone, but accepts readings from other manuscripts as well. Some of Njarðvík's own ideas are reflected, too, such as his acceptance of Gestr as a proper name, but not grepr. The accompanying commentary explains all such changes, and they are certainly no more extensive than Bugge's emendations. Most are relics from Ólsen's edition, and so familiar. This edition is entirely adequate, and proves to be very handy when working with Njarðvík's dissertation.

4.2.29. Conclusion.

It is surely lamentable that there is no old manuscript preserving the original text of Sólarljóð in the exact form its author must have intended. Yet it is perhaps more to be regretted that there has been no universally accepted standard edition of the poem to be used as a common basis for discussion. Much of the scholarship to date has revolved around questions of which manuscript readings and, more important, which emendations should be accepted. The poem as a whole (or as a collection) tends to be overlooked as a result.

Currently, the best version of Sólarljóð is the diplomatic edition found in Njördur P. Njarðvík's 1993 doctoral dissertation, Solsången. It is not only a

\textsuperscript{158} Njördur P. Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 154.
rendering of the chief manuscript, AM166b 80, but it also notes alternate readings from a large number of other manuscripts. A very similar diplomatic text, but lacking the valuable apparatus of alternate readings, was edited by Finnur Jónsson in Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning, A: Tekst efter handskrifterne.\textsuperscript{159} As a practical matter, this edition is more readily accessible than Njarðvík’s, and has clearer typography. A good normalized text is that included in Bjarne Fidjestøl’s Sólarljóð. Tyding og tolkingsgrunnlag.\textsuperscript{160} However, Fidjestøl’s reading must be taken entirely on faith as there are no notes. Sophus Bugge’s venerable Norræn Fornkvædi of 1867 contains a very good normalized edition of Sólarljóð.\textsuperscript{161} It is Bugge’s edition which has been the de facto standard edition of Sólarljóð, for though it has never been called a standard, it explains its choices and contains the readings which have best survived each new fashionable wave of emendation.

The only edition to have actually been called a standard is Björn Ólsen’s Sólarljóð. Ólsen’s edition has indeed been very influential, particularly on the later versions from Iceland. But most of Ólsen’s emendations have been removed by those following him, and Fidjestøl significantly turned to Falk’s edition instead. At another period P. A. Munch’s edition, forgotten today, had exerted even greater influence.

Perhaps the most remarkable fact about editions of Sólarljóð is that they differ so little. There really is a Sólarljóð, a central core poem that is always left despite differing attempts at emendation. The first edition of 1787 is not radically different from the most recent edition of 1993. The earliest editions can still be used, but they are founded on small, rather haphazardly determined manuscript bases. The editions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries try to restore a hypothetically ideal Sólarljóð which

\textsuperscript{159} Finnur Jónsson, ed., Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning A1 (København: Gyldendal, 1912) 628–40

\textsuperscript{160} Bjarne Fidjestøl, Sólarljóð. Tyding og tolkingsgrunnlag (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 60–71.

\textsuperscript{161} Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvædi (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 357–70.
almost certainly never existed. Orthography is used from centuries before Sólarljóð could have been written, or else the poem is massively reorganized. The editions by Falk and Vigfusson and Powell should be avoided simply because the arrangement of their stanzas is unnecessarily confusing. Yet even these can be restored to the Sólarljóð which has become traditional. The latest editions of Sólarljóð have returned to the manuscripts, and thus to a corpus of alternatives which is surprisingly limited, especially with AM166b 8o being considered the best manuscript by all who have investigated the problem.

The perfect edition has not yet been published. Not all manuscripts have been located so their variants could be noted. No ranking of manuscript value has been made beyond determining the one best exemplar, yet other manuscripts clearly give better readings in places. At least Sólarljóð has finally been excised from the Edda and is no longer edited as an afterthought. The next step is an electronic edition based solely on the manuscripts, with its editorial principles clearly described in detail, and without any alterations to make the resulting edition conform to any preconceived theories about the text.

4.3. Translations

Most of the interpretive work done with Sólarljóð has been in the form of translation. The beauty and ambiguity of the original has been caught best through simple rendering of the original words into different languages. The earliest Latin translations have been the most influential, to some extent forming the basis for the first edition of Sólarljóð with its own accompanying translation into Latin. Indeed, many of the earliest translations into modern languages were made from the Latin translations of Guðmundur Magnússon or Guðmundur Högnason and not directly from any Icelandic original.

The Scandinavian languages are well represented among the translations, as is English. Most major secondary studies contain some sort of translation. The translations reflect the state of Sólarljóð scholarship, but often with a considerable delay. Rarely is there any mention of sources, but given the various emendations made within Sólarljóð editions, it is usually possible to determine which ones have served as bases or influences. Unfortunately, the
tendency of Sólarljóð scholars to question the authenticity of various parts of the poem has led also to only selected parts of Sólarljóð being translated.

Halldór Hermannsson's Islandica bibliography\textsuperscript{162} contains a good listing of Sólarljóð translations. Since the last supplement\textsuperscript{163} there have been many new publications, of course, but these are almost all reprints of the earlier translations. Notable exceptions are Ivar Orgland's Norwegian translation,\textsuperscript{164} and Gunnar D. Hansson's translation into Swedish.\textsuperscript{165} Below is a listing only of the English translations of Sólarljóð. Of all those published in English, only the translations of Thorpe, Hollander, and Boucher are complete (give or take the questionable stanza eighty-three) and in the same stanzaic order as the manuscripts.

William Herbert, 1804.


The translation itself is dated December, 1803, and includes only five stanzas, numbers 10–14. The title of Sólarljóð is given as "Gunlaug and Rafen," and it is to be found at pages 61–70 in the volume. The five stanzas correspond to the narrative of Sváfadr and Skartheðinn, except that the characters have been renamed Gunlaug and Rafen to stress the perceived similarity of the content to Gunnaulgs saga. The verse is rendered into six-line stanzas with endrhyrne. This is followed by a note praising Iceland's prohibition of duelling in 1011, long before most of Europe did the same. The actual saga's


\textsuperscript{164} Ivar Orgland, \textit{Islandske Dikt Frå Sólarljóð til opplysningstid} (Fonna, 1977) 121–140.

\textsuperscript{165} Gunnar D. Hansson, trans., Roj Friberg illus., \textit{Solsången. Sólarljóð. Tolkning, kommentar, efterord} (Göteborg: Anthropos, 1983).
story of Gunnlaug, Rafen and Helga is then summarized in prose. The second volume of the work is dated 1806, but it contains nothing relevant to Sólarljóð.

The entire collection of Select Icelandic Poetry, is reprinted at pages 163–312 of Works of the Hon. and Very Rev. Willaim Herbert, Dean of Manchester, etc. Excepting those on Botany and Natural History; with Additions and Corrections by the Author. Vol. I. London: H. G. Bohn, York Street, Covent Gardon. 1842.

"Gunlaug and Rafen" is in this volume at pages 255–60. The complete works fill two other volumes as well. Volume two was published in 1842, and volume three (Attila, King of the Huns) earlier, in 1838.

James Beresford, 1805.


James Beresford made his translation or imitation of Sólarljóð not from the original Icelandic, but from the first edition’s Latin translation of Sólarljóð. After a description of the poem and its alleged author Sæmund, the actual translation begins on page twenty-nine. The Latin source is reprinted along with the English on facing pages. Sólarljóð has been rendered into elaborate rhymed verse with stanzas of four lines each, according much more to the sense than the letter of the original. Stanzas 76, 77 and 80 are left out because they were considered incomprehensible, but stanza eighty-three is included.

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166 James Beresford, The Song of the Sun (London: Johnson, 1805) vi.
167 James Beresford, The Song of the Sun (London: Johnson, 1805) xv.
Andrew James Symington, 1862


The ""Sólar Ljóð"—"Sol' or 'Sun-song'" occupies pages 262–4 of the appendix, "Specimens of Icelandic Poems." Stanzas fifty-one through seventy-five and stanzas eighty-one through eighty-three are included. In other words, the part dealing with the journey through the afterlife is translated, with the conclusion and the superfluous final stanza, but the stanzas with the obscure pagan references are skipped. The Sólarljóð selection is translated into six-line stanzes of blank verse.

Benjamin Thorpe, 1866

*Edda Sæmundar hinns Frôda.* The Edda of Sæmund the Learned from the Old Norse or Icelandic, with A Mythological Index. Part I–II. London, Trübner & Co., 60, Paternoster Row. 1866.

The two volumes have been combined into one, but retain separate pagination. "Solarlióð. The Song of the Sun" is in the first volume at 118–83. A brief introduction on page 117 calls Sólarljóð a "Voice from the Dead" and suggests that the first seven stanzas are connected to the rest only loosely. The poet's own Christianity was thought by Thorpe to be in a transitional state from heathendom, but he admits that the Odinic references could possibly have sprung from the poet's imagination.168

The translation follows the original line by line, and is quite poetic, although there is no attempt to create rhyme or reproduce alliteration. This may also be the most accurate translation to date, but it was made before Bugge's edition and hence is not based on the now-usual manuscript AM 166b, 80.

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There is a reference to Bergmann's commentary, so the Icelandic base text may have been the same 1847 edition by P. A. Munch\(^{169}\) that was printed by Bergmann.\(^{170}\) The Thorpe translation has been reprinted twice:


The "Song of the Sun" is on pages 111–20. The two introductory paragraphs are also reprinted. The stanzas are printed here as numbered prose paragraphs instead of following the original line breaks, so the diction appears somewhat more peculiar than earlier. The volume is part of a series called: Norrøna. The History and Romance of Northern Europe. A Library of Supreme Classics Printed in Complete Form. Viking Edition. There were only 650 sets printed.

The second reprint is in the volume:


Some bibliographical confusion has arisen because there are actually two reprints of the original translation. In this, the second of them, both

\(^{169}\) P. A. Munch, ed., _Den Ældre Edda_, (Christiania: Malling, 1847).

\(^{170}\) See F. G. Bergmann, _Les Chants de Söl (Sólari Liðið)_ (Strasbour: Treuttel et Würtz, 1858.)
occurrences of the word *Eddas* on the title page were corrected to *Edda*. The two printings bear different dates, perhaps in order to make the limited editions appear more exclusive. There were only 450 copies claimed for this second printing. In the 1907 version "The Song of the Sun," again occupies pages 111–20, with no apparent changes from 1906. The volume is listed as number eleven in the series: Norrœna. Anglo-Saxon Classics.

**Vigfusson and Powell, 1883.**


This is primarily an edition of *Sólarljóð* but it includes a translation into English as well. The poem is divided into two main parts. "Sólar-liód–The Sun-song" is at pages 202–11, and "The Christian's Wisdom" is at 211–17. The translation is in prose at the bottom of each page following the Icelandic original. There are additional notes at pages 508–11, but these deal mostly with the Icelandic and any English translation is fortuitous. The translation is a good one and follows the Icelandic mostly line for line. However, the edition itself is less than reliable. The poem has been completely reorganized and neither stanza numbers nor line numbers correspond to anything anywhere else. The translation is so conservative that it often omits passages thought to be uncertain, even where they are included in the Icelandic. Such omissions are marked with elipses.

**Charles Sprague Smith, 1891.**


Charles Sprague Smith published a translation of *Sólarljóð* called "The Sun's Song" in *The Andover Review* 16 (1891). This particular issue of the journal has been bound within hard covers and can be found catalogued in the Landsbókasafn Íslands under *The Sun's Song* by Ch. S. Smith. It is not likely
to appear as a separate book anywhere else, however, so the bibliographical reference to it as a book in Islandica \(^{171}\) is somewhat misleading. "The Sun's Song" is the third article in this issue of the journal.

There is a relatively lengthy introduction which gives an interpretive summary of Sólarljóð, comparing it to Dante and the Edda. The translator's high-flown prose and romantic attitude are reminiscent of Beresford at the opening of the century:

The classic art of Norseland is not statuesque and noble in perfect symmetry of form, nor clad in that wonderful harmony of coloring or of rhythmical measures that Greek art borrowed from Greek nature, but rude, massive, strong. Its rhythms are attuned to the pulsings of its storms; its characters and imagery are as bold and rugged as its mountain and coast lines, as dread and mysterious as its fogs. \(^{172}\)

Fortunately, the actual poetic translation is more restrained. The stanzas are highly alliterative and printed in four lines.

The translation is based on the edition by Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell, and so includes only forty-six stanzas, 33–75 and 81–83.

**Watson Kirkconnell, 1930.**


*The Sun-Song*, under the heading "The Arctic Dante (ca. 1050 A.D.)" is located at pages 54–60. The verse is rendered into four-line stanzas, but these are printed together without break between any individual stanzas. An extra line's space is added at the same points as in the edition of Guðmundur


\(^{172}\) Charles Sprague Smith, "The Sun's Song" *Andover Rev.* 16 (July, 1891): 30.
Vigfússson and F. York Powell. Larger segments are labelled Death, Hell, Heaven and Invocation. Like the earlier English editions, this translation begins with stanza thirty-three. It continues through the sixty-eighth stanza to the heading "III. Heaven" where a new stanza has been written:

I now rehearse [what my eyes beheld  
In the highest, holiest Heaven,  
Where life is illumined with endless light  
And rest will reign forever].

An attempt is surely being made here to supply an opening stanza for the rewards described, in parallel with the "frá thví er at segja" introduction to the punishments starting at stanza 53. Sólárlióð resumes with stanzas sixty-nine through seventy-five, and then skips to eighty-one through eighty-three.

Lee M. Hollander, 1936.


Lee Hollander was able to break away from the influence of Vigfusson and Powell to give the first complete English translation of Sólárlióð since their work over half a century earlier. Hollander has also incorporated the important research of the intervening years in his introduction and notes. "The Sun Song [Sólárlióð]" is at pages 101–15.

The translation is rendered into four-line stanzas with asterisks marking logical breaks, but without any headings being given. The English is intentionally archaic and its most essential feature seems to be alliteration. This is the best translation since Thorpe\textsuperscript{174} and the one most cited. Stanza eighty-three is not included.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{174} Benjamin Thorpe, \textit{Edda Sæmundar hinns Fröða} (London: Trübner, 1866).
\end{flushright}
Charles Venn Pilcher, 1950.


"The Lay of the Sun. An Icelandic Divine Comedy" occupies pages 1–15, including five-and-one-half pages of introduction. Perhaps the most interesting point in the introduction is the positing of two parchment manuscripts containing the poem 175 instead of the usual one, but no argument is given for the claim. Pilcher himself describes the translation:

The rendering is tolerably literal, and I have endeavoured to give it some similarity to the original through an alliterative flavouring. I have translated only the part of the poem which describes the Vision, and in that I have omitted two short sections which our English taste would find it difficult to appreciate. 176

Although tolerably literal, the translation does make certain interpretive assumptions one could question. Wealth is generally referred to as "Mammon," for example, and "norna stöli," the seat of the norns in Sól. 51.1, is rendered as "the Mount of Purgatory." 177 The stanzas translated are 33–53, 57–75, and 81–82, though stanzas are only ever numbered in editions or translations that include all of them. Pilcher uses an alliterated six-line stanza.


Auden and Taylor, 1981.


The famous poet Wystan Hugh Auden rendered the Poetic Edda into English with the assistance of Paul Beekman Taylor. ‘The Sun Song’ was included at pages 180–90 in a translation made by Taylor alone. Sólarrljóð is translated into stanzas of four lines, lightly alliterated. This may be the best English translation from an artistic standpoint. All stanzas except eighty-three are included. However, the stanzas have been rearranged and do not follow any accepted order. This renders the translation all but useless from an academic viewpoint.

For some reason stanzas seventy-one and seventy-two have been transposed. Perhaps this serves to unite stanza seventy-two about those feeding their mothers with the preceding stanzas about helping others, while uniting seventy-one about fasting to the following stanza about self-punishment. There are no notes mentioning that changes have been made to the text, much less telling why. The obscure stanzas seventy-six through eighty have understandably been removed from their usual position, but the divine invocation of stanza seventy-five still clashes against the concluding address to the heir in the last two stanzas. Meanwhile, the obscure section is no less obscure when it comes between two of the narrative examples. The unnumbered stanzas follow the order: 1–14, 76–80, 15–70, 72, 71, 73–75, 81 and 82.


The Lily and Lay of the Sun. Two mediæval religious poems.

Translated from the Icelandic by Alan Boucher. [Reykjavík:] Bóksala Stúdentaka, 1985.

Boucher’s translation of Sólarrljóð puts the English and Icelandic on opposing pages. The poem is printed in six-line stanzas. Alliteration is preferred to precision, but unless it is needed to produce alliteration, there is none of Hollander’s archaic language. The work follows Ólsen’s idea of turning
Greppr and Gestr into personal names, but most of the interpretations seem to date from much earlier, even though Fidjestøl's recent work\textsuperscript{178} is known and cited on page iv.

The translation is generally quite good, and is one of only three to include in proper order all but the questionable stanza eighty-three. However, it does tend to interpret the original rather than render its ambiguity. The first helming of stanza seventy-six, for example, is given as follows:

\begin{verbatim}
Hringvör ok Listvör  At Loki's door
sitja í Herðís dýrum  Lying and Lusting
organs stóli á;\textsuperscript{179} sit in the seat of Greed;\textsuperscript{180}
\end{verbatim}

There is no clue how \textit{Herði} becomes 'Loki', but Loki is said in the notes to be the pagan equivalent of Satan.\textsuperscript{181} The Satanic possibility was discussed by Ólsen, who also discussed hypotheses concerning the other names. \textsuperscript{182} 'Greed' comes from an unattributed emendation made by Guðbrandur Vigfussson and Powell.\textsuperscript{183} All these interpretations are quite daring.

There is a brief introduction at pages iii–v, the English translation occupies pages 2-29–2-43. There are a few notes on pages 45–8. The book is reproduced from typescript.

\textsuperscript{178} Bjarne Fidjestøl, \textit{Sólarrljóð} (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979).

\textsuperscript{179} Alan Boucher, \textit{The Lily and Lay of the Sun} ([Reykjavík]: Bóksala Stúdent, 1988) 1-42.

\textsuperscript{180} Alan Boucher, \textit{The Lily and Lay of the Sun} ([Reykjavík]: Bóksala Stúdent, 1988) 2-42.

\textsuperscript{181} Alan Boucher, \textit{The Lily and Lay of the Sun} ([Reykjavík]: Bóksala Stúdent, 1988) 47.


Carolyne Larrington.


Carolyne Larrington, the most recent translator into English of the Poetic Edda, has made a translation of Sólarljóð, although it has not yet seen publication. In her dissertation, however, various individual stanzas or helmings were translated into English. These are stanzas 6b, 9, 10b, 13a, 19, 27b, 29, 30, 33, 34, 39b, 46, 48b, 52, 64, 66, 74, 78. The translated passages are especially valuable because simple accuracy was obviously valued over interpretation or poetic ornamentation.

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184 Carolyne Larrington, personal communication to author, 2 February, 1997.
5. Sólarljóð AND WISDOM LITERATURE

5.1. Introduction

Sólarljóð has been associated with the Edda for as long as there has been any evidence of the poem at all. The eddic poems to which it has most commonly been compared have been Völuspá and Hávamál, with one of the oldest manuscripts (AM 427 fol.) containing these three poems alone. The comparison thus has its roots in the very earliest observations. As Sólarljóð research has continued, other eddic parallels have been found. These mostly consist of no more than a few vaguely similar elements, mostly in the very late Svipdagsmál, which also shares the themes of a talk with a dead parent and a journey to something like the underworld. In Svipdagsmál, however, there is a fairytale context quite different from the didactic presentation of Sólarljóð. The two poems constituting Svipdagsmál above all share with Sólarljóð a seeming return to an intentionally archaic style. Thus, the older eddic poems seem to have served as a model both for Svipdagsmál and for Sólarljóð. Njarðvík has already touched very briefly upon some of the eddic parallels with Sólarljóð.¹ Völuspá and Hávamál remain the most important poems to be reckoned with.

Sólarljóð was first separated from the eddic context when scholars noticed parallels between it and the Norwegian Draumkvæde. Through the Continental ballad, the Icelandic poem was seen to share analogues in the larger corpus of European vision literature. Sólarljóð was thus seen not as a primarily eddic poem with a Christian point of view, but rather as a thoroughly Christian poem with a very thin pagan veneer. Of course, the Christian core had been clear to many from the beginning of recorded research, but there now came a shift in ideas concerning the purpose of the pagan elements. Originally it was thought that Sólarljóð had been given a pagan flavor to make it more palatable to heathen Icelanders during the period of conversion. Gradually it became clear to most that the pagan

images were simply allegorical. The poem was aimed at Christians rather than heathens, and its metaphors were no less Christian than those from the classical mythology that intrudes into the Christian writings of southern Europe. More and more parallels were eventually found with more traditionally Christian literature.\(^2\)

A major breakthrough occurred around the turn of the century with Falk's discovery of the links between Sólaljóð and Hugsvinnsmál.\(^3\) The relationship was originally seen to be linguistic—Sólaljóð appeared to have borrowed language verbatim from Hugsvinnsmál. The greater significance of Hugsvinnsmál, however, is that it is a translation of a continental European work, the *Disticha Catonis*. The *Disticha Catonis* is a well-known piece occupying a very distinct place in the context of medieval European literature. To the extent that Icelandic works have tried to imitate *Disticha Catonis*, something more can be understood about them. The *Disticha Catonis* is an example of gnomic literature. In it, a father passes wisdom on to his son. This is, of course, precisely the framework used by Sólaljóð. Furthermore, the passing on of wisdom is exactly what had linked Sólaljóð with Völuspá, Hávamál, and even Svipsdagsmál. The genre was found which encompassed Sólaljóð as a whole, and which put it into a known context. Through the link with *Disticha Catonis* it becomes easier to see the debt Sólaljóð may owe to the Latin-literate world, but more important, it is easier to perceive the aims of the poem itself.

Through parallels with Völuspá and Hávamál, Sólaljóð is able to speak with the authority of Icelandic antiquity. It adopts the voice not simply of the father, but of the forefathers. Through parallels with the *Disticha Catonis*, Sólaljóð brings to bear all the wisdom and authority of the medieval academy. Classical learning is reflected also in the later dream framework added to Sólaljóð, with its apparent dependence on Macrobius. Sólaljóð has a rather traditional Christian message, but instead of presenting it in a


straightforward but dull homiletic manner, the author chose to compose a poem and to give it the most authoritative and powerful voice possible.

5.2. Völuspá

Sólaljóð's primary connection to Völuspá has been through the difficulties scholars have had in fully comprehending either of them. Despite the obvious Christian content of Sólaljóð, it was usually given an early date, and perhaps attached to the Edda in the first place, simply because of its obscure imagery. As Berthel C. Sandvig once stressed, "i Sæmunds Edda er Mørkhed et Tegn til Alderdom." Since Sólaljóð is obscure, it must thus be very old. But age, in turn, is a basis of authority. Ideas which have survived for generations are taken more seriously than the latest fashion. The author of Sólaljóð may have to some degree imitated the mysterious otherworldly style of Völuspá in order to give his or her own work a certain patina of antiquarian authority. He or she wanted Sólaljóð to look old.

Of course, it is those heathen names that have so firmly attached Sólaljóð to the distant past and to Völuspá. Sólaljóð incorporates the heathen tradition very specifically through its reference to the gods Øinn and Njörðr. On the other hand, even Völuspá sounds very Christian with its apocalyptic last battle and restoration of the destroyed world under a single lord. Both poems are traditionally viewed as mixtures of both Christian and preChristian elements. Vigfusson and Powell wrote of Sólaljóð:

It is not unlikely that the author, or authors, may have known Volospa. The spiritual connection between the two poets, one a heathen with glimpses of Christianity, the other a Christian with heathen remembrances, warrants us in placing their works in juxtaposition.²


For Njárðvík, the poems are not analogous simply through a random mixture of different world views. Sólarljóð can be viewed as Christianity’s reply to Völsípio’s pagan conception of the world. According to Njárðvík, the greatest similarity between the two poems occurs at those points where Völsípio shows the most Christian influence. To demonstrate direct similarity he compares stanza thirty-nine of Völsício with stanza sixty-four of Sólarljóð:

Sá hon thar vada thunga strauma menn meinsvara oc mordvarga, oc thannz annars glepr eyrarúno; thar saug Níðhöggr nái framgengna, sleit vargr vera— vitóð er enn, eða hvat?

(Menn sá ek thá er margan höfðu fé ok fjörvi rænt; brjóst í gegnum rennu brögnum theim öflir eitrdrékar. (Sól. 64)

(Vsp. 39)⁷—

The similarity is certainly not one of language, but with closer examination some vague parallels do emerge. In both passages evildoers are being punished, presumably in some sort of hell. The punishing agents in both poems are dragons: Níðhöggr or unnamed eitrdrékar. Narðvík draws a parallel also between blood being sucked in Völsício, and what he refers to as the vampires (vampyrerina) in stanza eighty of Sólarljóð as well.⁸

As far as images of hell are concerned, Völsício actually seems rather more traditionally Christian than Sólarljóð. Forcing the condemned to wade in

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⁷ Njörður P. Njárðvík, Solsängen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 221.

⁸ Njörður P. Njárðvík, Solsängen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 222.
streams or rivers is a common motif in Christian visions of hell, though they are usually rivers of fire or other torment. Sólarljóð lacks any river unless it is the stream of stanza forty-two, which seems instead to deal with the ocean. The dragon, of course, is a Christian symbol best known from the book of Revelation. But the dragons of Sólarljóð’s stanza sixty-four are pale in comparison to the large Satanic-like flying beast of Völsögð. The punishing dragons in Sólarljóð must range somewhere between the venomous serpents of a Germanic snake pit and the worms that gnaw corpses in some more southerly memento mori. Sólarljóð has not borrowed the dragon from Völsögð for this stanza, but it has taken over the imagery of serpents, as it elsewhere uses wolves, from the larger context of Germanic literature. Only in stanza fifty-four are there dragons resembling Völsögð’s Njörn, namely the vánar dreka. These, like the dragon Njörn, are huge and airborne, but they are multiple and unnamed, and so cannot be traced to Völsögð.

What Sólarljóð shares most with Völsögð is atmosphere. Njarðvík noted this, too, pointing out that both poems shared the idea of wisdom stretching beyond death and the grave, with narrators who can see things that are hidden from mortal eyes.9 The primary shared atmospheric element is mystery. Both poems are obscure because they deal with things that mortal beings are not supposed to know. Both have narrators who have returned from the dead to tell the living what the living have to look forward to in the future.10 The glimpses provided are not overly clear because they are of realms unfamiliar to those in this world, and the visions are too large to be reduced to words. The wisdom is surely there, but it is more than we can fully grasp, for we of this earth are forbidden to know too much. The speech of the völva is cut short at the end, and the father in Sólarljóð likewise makes clear that “allar ógnir / fær thú eigi vitat” (68.1–2).

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9 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Solsängen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 221.

In the above parallel example suggested by Njardvik, it is surely the “Sá hon thar vada” (Völuspá 39.10) parallel with “Menn sá ek thá” (Sólarljóð 64.1) that is most significant. In both poems the critical narrative viewpoint is “ek sá,” or “I saw.” The speakers represent absolute authority, and an eye-witness perspective. The völva of Völuspá speaks with so much authority, so omnisciently, that in this line she can even refer to herself in the third person, but mostly she too is “ek.” The two speakers are not reporting their ideas, beliefs or suppositions, but instead what they see, know, or remember. They report something that has already happened and been seen in some other dimension and which is therefore immutable and unavoidable. They are not telling about dreams or visions but about concrete experiences they have had since dying. They speak with a supernatural authority. The authority of a parent like the father in Disticha Catonis is very great, and his wisdom is to be respected because he has necessarily learned much during his longer lifetime. Yet the authority of a dead parent is even greater, for the dead have learned not just from life, but from death as well. Death apparently has more to teach than life does, to judge by the knowlege of the seeress, of the father in Sólarljóð, of the dead mother Groa in Svípdagsmál, and the hanged man in Hávamál 157. This superior knowledge of the dead is nothing novel in Old Icelandic, but motivates all necromancy.

The use of the formula “ek sá” is remarkable in both poems because of its repetition. While it is not uncommon for formulaic phrases to be repeated in alliterative poetry in the way “lé ok fjórví” from the first line of Sólarljóð occurs again in 64.3, both Sólarljóð and Völuspá go beyond accidental repetition of a felicitous phrase to use repetition for rhetorical effect. The phrases “sól ek sá” and “menn sá ek thá” (together with “marga menn sá ek”) constitute the most striking feature of Sólarljóð simply through their regular repetition. Völuspá utilizes this same repetition, but it is less obvious because the text alternates between “I remember,” “I know,” “I saw,” and even “I see.” Nonetheless, the repetitive parallel style of Völuspá is

11 Njóður P. Njardvík, Solsången (Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 221–2.
unmistakable in its memorable refrain of "vituð ér enn—eða hvat?" Sólarljóð appears to have borrowed a rhetorical technique from Völuspá.

Another borrowing from Völuspá could be the overall structure of the poem. Both Völuspá and Sólarljóð share a primary tripartite construction. In Völuspá this is based on past, present and future. In Sólarljóð it is based on life, death, and afterlife. Völuspá begins with a recounting of old tales concerning the creation and naming of the earth, with subsequent ancient history (Vsp. 1–26). Then there is a brief transitional section in which the seeress tells about current secrets and how she was invoked and paid to make her prophesy (especially stanzas 28 and 30). This roughly describes the present situation, relating the circumstances of her current speech. Finally the events to be expected in the future are prophesied. Sólarljóð begins in like manner with examples of occurrences in the past lives of mortals, with bits of advice relevant to the living generally. Then comes the transitional story of the narrator’s own death. Finally, the trials of the afterlife are described.

Both poems tell their tale in three stages. Both begin with material which is known to the audience. The seeress tells about a past Óðinn surely knows already. He has played a part in much of what happened. The speaker of Sólarljóð begins with parables of universal application. The son, and indeed the poem’s audience, knows Sváfaðr and Skarðhēinn already, if not by those names, then as Gunnlaug and Hrafn. The parables and even the counsels have universal application and speak a recognizable truth. The father and the seeress both begin by establishing their credentials as observant, wise individuals.

In the second stage, the two visionaries tell how they come to be imparting knowledge. The Völuspa seeress has been invoked through the magic of Óðinn and paid in jewelry. Sólarljóð’s father has had a protracted, intense confrontation with death, and wants his son to be able to face death without fear.

Finally, both the paternal seer and the seeress describe what they have seen that is not visible to their hearers. Although wisdom was contained in the first part of the messages, the most critical wisdom is imparted at the end. It is
at the end that the real mystery is revealed. To note a similar tripartite construction of both Völuspá and Sólarrljóð is more than to point out that each has a beginning, middle and end. A special groundwork is laid out specifically for the transferral of important knowledge.

The structure of both poems, of course, could be further subdivided based on narrative content. Völuspá, particularly, invites controversy concerning its structure, but the general trends are clear. Völuspá begins with an epic-like invocation of “allar helgar kindir” (1.1–2)\(^{12}\) by whom the seeress wishes to be heard. It closes with a very abrupt “Nú mun hon sœcqvaz,” marking the need to break off. Sólarrljóð reverses this pattern with a start so abrupt that many have felt the preserved text to be missing something at the beginning.\(^{13}\) The end of Sólarrljóð, on the other hand, is much less abrupt than that of Völuspá. Only after the concluding admonition in stanza eighty-one to relay the poem’s warning does there come a rather abrupt “hér vit skiljumk” parallel to Völuspá’s “Nú mun hon sœcqvaz.” But the speaker of Sólarrljóð goes on to refer to a future meeting and then closes with a brief Christian prayer. (This ignores the later addition of a further stanza eighty-three.) While Sólarrljóð shares with Völuspá the establishment of the foundation necessary for claiming the authority to prophesy or reveal gnomic mystery, that authority is viewed differently. The two poems do have different world views.

That Sólarrljóð has a different view of the world than does Völuspá can be seen very clearly from the differences in invocations. Sólarrljóð lacks the epic opening of Völuspá, failing to directly address a formal audience. There is not even an invocation of the Christian God, as is usual in Icelandic helgakvæði. Sólarrljóð is much more humble, dealing only with “fyrða kind” rather than “allar helgar kindir,” to compare the first stanzas of the two

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poems. Of course, it is mankind that is the prime interest of the Christian religion, with Christ himself being referred to frequently as the "son of man." It is this lesser-sounding, more human element that seems to serve as an "answer" to the point of view expressed in Völuspá.

Völuspá deals with cosmic entities. It describes the creation and destruction of worlds, taking as its subject gods, elves, dwarves and men. Sólarljóð, on the other hand, is interested only in the human perspective. It is a personal story told by one man, describing his own fate and the fates of other individual men. Even as general examples, the human beings in Sólarljóð tend to be so individual that they can be assigned names. This Christian answer to pagan Ásatrú focuses on the fate of the human individual and on what happens to him or her in life and after death. The Christian God is a personal God. That He is invoked at the end, in conjunction with the expected final judgement, shows the Christian emphasis on eternal reward. Völuspá describes the fate of the world; Sólarljóð describes the fate of the individual human being.

Despite this obvious opposition of perspectives, there is little reason to believe that Sólarljóð in any way actually addresses Völuspá or anything expressed therein directly. Sólarljóð was not likely written in order to be an answer to Völuspá. What Sólarljóð may take from the other poem beyond the apparatus for conveying wisdom is a reflection of its phraseology and motifs, and hence a taste of its general atmosphere. The mysterious stanzas following the narrator's death are the ones that most recall Völuspá. They are, of course, the stanzas dealing with things that cannot be known by the living. The death itself in Sólarljóð is told in cosmic terms, with descriptions of heavenly bodies and the realms of the afterworld. Although the universe does not cease to exist as in Völusp usually comes from God or a saint who is responsible for granting the vision. Repetition, such as the anaphoric "ek sá" of the two Icelandic poems is also significant. It illustrates a sort of trance-like state or special ritual which adds a sense of mystery. A close Christian equivalent is found in the biblical vision of Revelation, which also includes a
similar “og eg sá,” “og eg sá,” “eftir thetha sá eg” beginning modern chapters five, six, and seven respectively.\textsuperscript{14}

Most important to the visionary style is the apocalyptic language creating a mysterious atmosphere. This language is comprised of often grandiose but obscure symbolism. The images are of a universal nature such that they are partly comprehensible and seemingly real, while at the same time they are general enough to encompass what cannot be seen or known. The specification of directions is an effective technique, since a non-specified military force, say, “from the south,” can be easily imagined by an audience without being unambiguously identified. Ambiguity is important. Numbers are also useful, because they give the impression that something is being specified very precisely, when it may not, in fact, be at all clear what it is that is being enumerated. Likewise, names seem very specific, even when they are understood by all to be allegorical at best. Symbolic images are very effective, since symbols can speak more powerfully than words.

Universal symbols one can expect to see in visionary literature include the four elements earth, fire, air, and water. Water can be represented also by seas, rivers and lakes, while mountains and meadows best represent earth. Springs are useful to indicate the source of anything, gates and paths make good transitions, as do graves, caves, and clouds if moving between worlds. Ships and horses provide transportation. Blood is a classic symbol, as is wine (i.e., mead or beer) or a sword. Speech, writing or song can be effective to represent supernatural wisdom. Finally, animals, monsters and other beings are useful, but these seem to be especially prone to vary among cultures, just as natural fauna varies across the world. Such motifs can almost be assumed a priori of a seer saying anything, and since Völuspá and Sólarljóð are both related by seers of one sort or another, it is not surprising that they share some of these symbols.

Sólarljóð and Völuspá both utilize the technique of giving cosmic directions, carefully pinpointing events in locations that cannot really be identified. The

\textsuperscript{14} Biblián thad er Heilög Ritning (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bibliufélag, 1974).
dragons of Sólarljóð are seen flying vestan (54.1). The Sól ar hjört is led sunnan (55.1–3), and níðr synir are seen riding norðan” (56.1–2). There is nothing coming from the east. Contrariwise, in Völuspá reference is made to things or events sunnan (the sun shining 4.5, 5.1; Surtr approaching 52.1), norðan (a hall 37.1), and austan (Slóðr 36.1, Hrymr 50.1, Muspell’s ship 51.1). This time nothing is seen coming from the west. However, there are some additional locations in Völuspá with norðr (doors of Náströnd 38.4), austr (Lárnviðr 40.1), and perhaps one should also count nêðan (the cock 43.6, Níðhöggr 66.3) and ofan (a lord 65.3). Sólarljóð’s angels do come ofan (7.2).

The two poems could be seen as being oriented in opposite directions, but it is more likely that both are simply using the same technique to show they encompass the cosmos in all directions. They simply overlook one of the alternatives more or less by accident. With “Utan ok innan, upp ok níðr” (Sól. 52), the Sólarljóð poet is clearly trying to cover as much ground as possible. In fact, the “hvâð ek fyrst um sá” of stanza fifty-three could refer to the dead man looking east, since it comes immediately before the descriptions of what is seen vestan, sunnan and norðan. Christian burials are oriented towards the east, so that would presumably be the first direction a corpse to look. The complete compass may thus be included. Nothing much should be presumed about the incomplete chronicling of directions in Völuspá, since the poem is so fragmentary.

Of course, the specification of compass points as sources of visionary action is common beyond the shores of Iceland. The Bible uses this technique less than one might expect, but there are still dozens of instances, such as with the angel ascending from the east (frá sólaruppkomusta) in Rev. 7.2, or the four gates opening in different directions in Rev. 22:13. A better Christian example is perhaps the apocryphal Apocalypse of St. Thomas, where each event in the destruction of the world begins not only from a specific direction but also at a specific hour of the day. It is interesting that neither Völuspá nor Sólarljóð ever specify time with the regularity of biblical prophesy.

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Numbers are especially important in Sólarljóð, though perhaps somewhat less so in Völsþpa. In the former there is one night specified for lying dead (47.2). There are two together who lead the sölarr hjört. There are seven counsels (32.2), sigurheima sjau (52.3), and niðja synir are sjö saman (56.2–3). Nine days are spent in norna stöli (51.2) and Njörðr has nine daughters—a named pair plus another seven sisters. Völsþpa restricts itself to three and nine. First thrír quómo in a trinity of Óðinn, Höeinir and Lóðurr (Vsp. 17–18), not unlike the Christian trinity named but not numbered in Sólarljóð. Then thriárr maidens come to form a trinity of norns (Vsp. 20.3). Gullveig is burned and reborn a ritualistic three times (Vsp. 21). The other important number for Völsþpa is nine, with nine worlds and nine mysterious roots (Vsp. 2).

The importance of numbers in visionary diction can be seen also by comparing Revelation with its carefully enumerated four beasts (4:6) seven candlesticks (1:13), seven stars (1:16), seven seals (5:1), twelve gates and angels (22:12), thousand years (20:2), and the like. Everything has its proper number. Even when the symbolic number has a clearly defined referent (e.g. the seven churches), a mystical atmosphere is created.

Anker Laugesen has made the point that nine seems to be the pagan or evil number, while seven is good and Christian, at least in the northern world. He suggests that the use of seven and nine in Sólarljóð demonstrates its mixture of the pagan and the Christian.16

Laugesen cites Adam of Bremen as claiming nine to have been a holy number for the heathens.17 However, five and eight are also shown to be important in the Edda.18 Twelve also has great significance, especially


because it is the product of two times six.\textsuperscript{19} As noted above, three appears thrice in \textit{Völuspá} alone (or four times counting Gullveig's burnings and births separately). So while nine may be the most important number in nordic heathendom, a fairly wide range of numbers is represented.

Laugesen claims that nine is little represented in medieval literature because it is overladen with its epic pagan past.\textsuperscript{20} Yet there is little evidence of nine actually being considered an evil number in medieval literature. It is, after all, three times three, a trinity of trinities, or holiness squared. It is the sum of the numbers four—four gospels, four cardinal directions, four elements, four humors—and five (the Pentateuch, five fingers, five senses, five planets, five wounds of Christ, and a prime number). To be sure, nine is not especially popular. Only the Nine Worthies come to mind. Yet nine is not associated with any of the negative images one finds, for example, in Revelation with all its specified numbers.

The avoidance of nine, if avoidance it be, goes all the way back to the Bible. Nine is used often enough in the Bible that it does not seem as if it is being shunned, but it is nonetheless rare. It is common in compound numbers such as nine hundred or ninety-nine, but the number nine itself occurs only once in the entire New Testament. In Luke 17:17 there are nine ungrateful lepers, admittedly not precisely a positive image. The ninth hour is connected with the Passion, but it is also the hour of prayer. Of the two numbers usually considered evil in the Christian world, eleven is fairly rare and thirteen never appears at all in the New Testament, although the neutral fourteen and fifteen do. The good number twelve is very common as are all the numbers less than seven. Despite the number seven being the Hebrew number of perfection, outside of requirements that ritual acts be performed seven times, that number is associated mostly with days (constituting a week) or years (an analogous unit perhaps further alliterating \textit{sheba}/\textit{shaneh}).

\textsuperscript{19} Anker Teilgård Laugesen, \textit{Syv-Ni-Tolv}, Studier fra Sprog- og Oldtidsforskning 237 (København: Gad, 1959) 40.

\textsuperscript{20} Anker Teilgård Laugesen, \textit{Syv-Ni-Tolv}, Studier fra Sprog- og Oldtidsforskning 237 (København: Gad, 1959) 38.
Medieval Christianity surely found more biblical precedent for the use of seven than for the use of nine. But Christianity had its own evil numbers in eleven and thirteen, and did not need to borrow numbers from any pagan system. Twelve was important to pagan numerology without Christianity needing to avoid it. Sólarljóð does clearly utilize seven and nine as mysterious numbers of power. This mysterious use of numbers is more important than the specific meaning actually attached to the numbers.

It is the use of numbers rather than any specific meaning of the numbers that attaches Sólarljóð to Völuspá. Laugesen noted the significance of nine fitting so well into nordic rhyme and meter.21 For a powerful image of dark mystery "nine nights" works better than "seven nights" whether in modern English or Old Icelandic. Likewise, "seven sisters" constitutes a more powerful image than "nine sisters" simply because of alliteration. There is not a single instance of a number being specified in Sólarljóð without that number also alliterating. As part of their visionary diction, Sólarljóð and Völuspá both use alliterative numerology. As with a recent phrase like "all the seven seas," it seems more useful to analyse entire phrases with their stylistic effect rather than to attempt to specify individuals encompassed by the numbers. When Sólarljóð reduces the number of the "nine daughters of Njörðr" to "seven sisters" in stanza seventy-nine, it is not likely that an evil pagan symbol is being transformed to a good Christian symbol simply because Ráðveig and Kreppvör are excluded. It seems much more likely that a powerful and mysterious group of women is being partly introduced while leaving it an equally powerful and mysterious group of women. Gnomic knowledge has been transferred, but it is too great for us to understand.

The recording of mysterious names is another visionary technique employed by Sólarljóð which is reminiscent of Völuspá. Ráðveig and Kreppvör (79) may be the best examples of unknown names. They have so puzzled the copyists of the manuscripts that it seems unlikely that we will ever know the original forms of the names, much less what they may have been intended to designate. The writer of Sólarljóð uses roughly one proper name for every

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21 Anker Teilgård Laugesen, Syv-Ni-Tolu, Studier fra Sprog- og Oldtidsforskning 237 (København: Gad, 1959) 54.
two stanzas of the poem. It is difficult to be more precise, because that requires a determination of what qualifies as a name. Most names are inventions of the author, and these invented names seem to be usually based on some real etymology. Hence, it is just possible that common nouns like greppr (1.3) and gestr (2.5) are indeed intended to be names. Likewise, a word like dróttinn (35.3, 82.4) or Ærfi (78.1) is certainly being used as an appellation.

Sólarljóð shares with Völuspá the use of names from pagan mythology. Sólarljóð mentions the god Óðinn by way of “Óðins kván” (Sól. 77.1), and the giantess Hel is referred to through the realm she rules, or perhaps as a character (31.1, 39.4, 51.4). Völuspá mentions both these beings (e.g. Óðinn 24.1, Hel 43.8) as well as several other familiar supernatural figures by name. These other figures are not mentioned in Sólarljóð, while Sólarljóð conversely mentions Njörðr (79.3), who is not included in Völuspá. The two poems cite the same general mythology, but not necessarily each other. The one other shared or almost shared name is that of Völuspá’s dwarf Dvalinn (Vsp. 11.4, 14.2). The word dvalinn appears in Sólarljóð in the compound Vígðavalinn (Sól. 78.6), though there is no apparent relation to dwarves. Of the hundred and a quarter odd names listed in Völuspá, then, Sólarljóð recalls at most three.

Aside from Óðinn, Hel, and Njörðr, no known Norse divinities are actually named in Sólarljóð. Ráðveig and Kreppvör (stanza 79), the daughters of Njörðr, are not known from any other source. They have most recently been interpreted as sins rather than as goddesses. The phrase “Óðins kván” certainly suggests a goddess, but she is not named directly. If this refers to the goddess Frigg, Óðinn’s usual consort, then there is another point of intersection with Völuspá (33.5). If this is Freyja, as some have suggested, there is an intersection via her periphrasis as “Oðs mey” in Völuspá 25.8. If she is Jörð, as seems most likely, then she is a personification of Earth not mentioned in Völuspá and thus not restricted to the pagan world, either. Likewise, the Hel


of Sólarljoð is shared as much with the Christian hell as with Völuspá. Hel is used only as a descriptive genitive in Sólarljóð. The goddess or giantess is not named unambiguously as an acting character in the poem.

Völuspá uses names more intensively than does Sólarljóð, because the seeress is displaying a more precise and encyclopedic knowledge than the deceased father. In the world of magic, to name is to know, and so even the long catalogue of dwarves has its place in Völuspá. The seeress, after all, is demonstrating that she knows more than the gods themselves. The father in Sólarljóð needs to impart only enough information to warn his son. Names are much less important in the Christian poem. The norns are mentioned in both poems, but Völuspá (20) names them while Sólarljóð does not. Völuspá (5) personifies the sun and moon in a way Sólarljóð does not, thereby making the common nouns into names. Völuspá includes and names dwarves and valkyries, both species unknown to Sólarljóð. Unlike Völuspá, Sólarljóð does mention dísir, female spirits generally better known from pagan than from Christian contexts, but the poem does not name them.

Sólarljóð does name a remarkably large number of names, however. These names were earlier considered to be of the same nature as those in Völuspá: mysterious, but ultimately capable of being decoded through comparison with other eddic poetry and with the help of the invaluable keys provided by Snorri’s Edda. Where no eddic connection could be found it was necessary to turn to etymology. While both these techniques have occasionally been productive, or at least interesting, the tendency has been to mythologize names that would never have caused problems had Sólarljóð not been connected with the Edda.

The brief narratives with which Sólarljóð begins mostly each tell about two named characters. Most of these names are not commonly used in Iceland, yet they all are plausible. Unnarr and Sævaldi (9.2), Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn (11.2), Ráðny and Véboði (16.2), and Sörla (20.2) and Vigúlf (20.3) are all fairly average sinners, to judge by their stories. They bear fairly average names, in the sense that they apply to no one specifically but could apply to anyone generally. Names make the stories more concrete, but unlikely names keep the audience focused on the point made rather than speculating on whether
the Skartheðinn of Sólarljóð might be their great uncle. If the audience can find etymological significance leading to a better Christian understanding, then so much the better.

Aside from Hel, Sólarljóð shares no placenames with Völuspá. Sólarljóð’s Rygjardal (22.3) is a very mundane sounding placename with its -dal suffix, but it is not known to refer to any specific place, earthly or otherwise. Perhaps Völuspá shares this technique of suffixing to produce names such as Niðavellir (Vsp. 37.2). But the only localizing suffix shared in common is -heim. Völuspá has iötunheim (Vsp. 48.3) and vindheim (Vsp. 63.5), while in oegisheimr (30.3), yndisheimr (33.3), and dvalarheimr (35.4), Sólarljóð has three different appellations for the world Völuspá calls by the word miðgard (Vsp. 4.3) or fold (57.2). The more allegorical sigrheimar (52.4) and kvölheimar (53.3) of Sólarljóð find their only other resonance in a very mundane verold in Völuspá (Vsp. 29.6).

The similarity between Sólarljóð and Völuspá, in names as well as in other factors, lies in the mysterious incomprehensibility of the two poems. In both, there are names for which there are no satisfying referents. In some cases unknown words are treated as names when they may well be common nouns. This is not a matter of treating clearly comprehensible words like greppr and gestr as proper names, but of giving up on finding a semantic content for words. If no meaning can be found, it has been assumed that those words must therefore be names. This includes such instances as “niðja sonu” (56.2) being considered the sons of someone named Nið, or “vánar dreka” (54.2) being the dragons of Ván. Of course, there are fine lines to be drawn, since former mysteries now more or less solved—as with “Fégjarns borgar” (63.5) or “Sólkötlu synir” (78.3)—may still involve some degree of personification. Gylfar straumar (42.4) and Glævalds götu (54.3) are usually treated as names simply for the lack of an alternative. “Dómvald” (29.3) may be a name in the same sense that Vigdalin (78.6) is, or it may be more like Fadrir, Sonr, and heilagr Andi (75.1–3).

One thing to note about the names in Sólarljóð is that the names become more mysterious in the final third of the poem. As is to be expected, the afterlife is less clear than the world we mortals can see. While the pairs of
humans in the opening exempla were assigned names, the men and women in hell have no names. They are known only by their sins, or by their punishments. They are all simply helgengnír (68.3) and have lost their personality. The supernatural beings, too, are unnamed. The horns are known only through Vöulsól; they are not named in Sólarljóð. The “helgar meyjar” (73.1), just like the “heljar meyjar” (38.4), remain anonymous. In the wisest part of the poem, the otherworldly equivalent of the seven counsels, the participants are all named, at least by way of heiti. Bjúgvör ok Listvör (76.1) are clearly names, thanks to the clue provided by the ending -vör. Likewise Ráðveig and Kreppvör (79.4–5) have feminine endings, though all vary in the manuscripts. The construction is similar to that used for Vöulsól’s Gullveig (Vsp. 21.3). Yet other names, such as Herðir (76.2) and Svafr and Svafrlogi (80.3) are coinages revealing nothing. Svafr and Svafrlogi look just like the paired names of mortals in the opening example, except that the pair is linked through the Svafr- component of both names.

Beyond names, symbols are important for the atmospheric visionary style, since a seer must convey more than is possible with ordinary language. There are particular symbolic images shared by both Sólarljóð and Vöulsól, though the actual language may bear little similarity. Sólarljóð’s hart’s horn (55.6, 78.4) may remind one of Heimdall’s horn in Vöulsól (46.6). Fredrik Sander went so far as to make Vigdvalen a byname for Heimdall, presumably because Vigdvalinn bears a horn.24 On the other hand, the horn is also a Christian symbol, as indicated in “daz himilisca horn” of Muspílli 73, and by the many horns in the Bible.

Horns can also be drinking vessels. There is a horn of mead in Sólarljóð 56.5. Mead is connected to Vöulsól through the mead drunk by Mímir from Urð’s well (Vsp. 19), which in turn recalls the “brunni Baugregins” of Sólarljóð (56.6). This image of drinking mead from a well, however, just as strongly recalls drinking the “lifandi vatn” from Jakobsbrunnur (Jónsbok 4:11), given the Christian context of Sólarljóð.

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The trinity of giantesses, the norns of the twentieth stanza of Völuspá score runes on wood to determine fate. In Sólarrjóð runes are scored by the daughters of Njördr (79.1-3). Runes also seem to be a punishment in Sólarrjóð 61.4. There could be a connection between runes and fate, but the nine daughters in no way resemble the three norns.

Rivers or streams are shared between Völuspá and Sólarrjóð, but they are such common geographical features that it is hard to see any significance. In Völuspá's Ragnarök, the sun darkens (41, 57) and the earth sinks into the sea. This is somewhat parallel to the reddening of the sun as it sinks into the sea in Sólarrjóð. Rather more strained is the parallel between the sun rising again for the living as implied in Sólarrjóð, and the renewal of the Earth from the waves in Völuspá (Vsp. 59). Few concrete images are actually shared between the two poems. Völuspá has "nú heima," (Vsp. 2.5); Sólarrjóð has "sigrheima sjau" (52.3). In Völuspá Eggthér sat "á haugi" (Vsp. 42.1-4) and in Sólarrjóð Vígðvalinn bore the horn "ór haugi" (78.6-7). Both poems refer to the sun, to water, to mould, and most frequently to Hel, but Völuspá's imagery does not help at all in explaining unclear imagery from Sólarrjóð.

If Sólarrljóð is reminiscent at all of Völuspá it is because both are written in Old Icelandic verse, both are tales told by the dead and both share a mystical atmosphere. The two poems have tripartite structures, and both deal with eschatology, although Sólarrljóð deals with the death of an individual while Völuspá deals with the end of the world. Both poems were created through the use of some similar techniques, using some similar symbols. However, there are very few points of very exact correspondence, and these can be attributed to general revelatory technique and the shared Icelandic eddic tradition.

5.3. Hávamál

Parallels have also been noted between Sólarrljóð and the eddic poem Hávamál. E. H. Meyer went so far as to define Sólarrljóð as a "späteres, zuerst um 1643 erwähntes, christliches, kaum noch zur eddischen Poesie zu
rechnendes Gedicht, das zuweilen gegen Hav. polemisirt...."25 Most recently Njarðvík also felt that "Sólarljóð kan ses som en kristen replik på Hávamál och Völuspá, dvs. på Hávamál's levnadvisdom och Völuspás världsbild."26 While Sólarljóð is indeed reminiscent of Hávamál in some ways, it never addresses that poem directly. Nor does it take any contrary positions of clear significance. What Sólarljóð does do is to share the same verse form and diction as found in Hávamál. Both poems belong to a larger tradition of gnomic poetry. The author of Sólarljóð may have known Hávamál, but there is nothing in Sólarljóð that resembles a direct reply to it.

Hávamál and Sólarljóð do both attempt to convey life's wisdom. Both poems use the same ljóðaháttr verse form, and have at times, at least, similar messages. Nonetheless, the parallels between Hávamál and Sólarljóð are generally exaggerated. Njarðvík has said

Det är ställt utom allt tvivel att Sólarljóð's upphovsman har läst Hávamál och varit väl förtrogen med dikten. Man kan hålla för troligt att Sólarljóð's versmått till och med har valts med tanke på Hávamál. Denna är asadyrkarnas klassiska gnomiska dikt, och den spegler deras livsåskådning förmodligen bättre än någon annan dikt. Sólarljóðs allegorier och de sju levnadsreglerna är till viss del ett kristet svar på Hávamáls levnadsregler.27

I believe Njarðvík overstates the case here somewhat. Hávamál is certainly the classic gnomic poem of Ásatrú, but this is largely due to our modern perspective. The poem is fairly clearly a compilation of verses, some even in different meter, and some probably Christian. Hávamál was preserved only in one manuscript, aside from its quotation by Snorri and a few lines of it cited in sagas. Individual stanzas and groups of stanzas surely had an

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26 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 221.

independent existence in Icelandic literature before becoming part of Hávamál. The collection as a whole did not necessarily have such overwhelming significance at the time Sólarljóð was written as it does today. Hávamál simply preserves pagan Icelandic thought, as Njarðvik says, presumably better than other remaining poems. The evidence that Hávamál was during the Middle Ages a pagan classic requiring a Christian response is rather thin. The evidence that Sólarljóð is responding to it is even thinner.

Nonetheless, Hávamál is powerful evidence for ljóðaháttur having regularly been employed for gnomic poetry in medieval Iceland. It is the primary medium in which the various gnomic verses of Hávamál were originally written and the medium through which they were bound together. The same verse form was also used for the gnomic Húgsvinnsmál. Sólarljóð must have adopted ljóðaháttur because it was a meter frequently used for poetry supposed to express great wisdom. If the author of Sólarljóð imitated Hávamál or other gnomic poetry in the choice of meter, it was surely a wise decision. Because of the shared meter, Sólarljóð sounds like Hávamál and gains whatever authority Hávamál and similar gnomic works might have had. The ljóðaháttur meter may also be especially well suited to didactic verse, as will be discussed below in connection with Húgsvinnsmál.

The parallels in content between Hávamál and parts of Sólarljóð are striking. They are striking, that is, until one considers how similar in content collections of gnomic verse generally are. What ideas Sólarljóð shares with Hávamál it mostly also shares with the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or Wisdom, for example. In one form or another, most such collections contain the same sort of warnings not to rely on strangers, not to be beguiled by women, to be faithful to friends, not to trust in wealth, and the like. Of course Sólarljóð and Hávamál are written in the same language, in the same verse form, and they reflect the same national culture. Sólarljóð is thus far more likely to share similarities with Hávamál than with, say, the aphorisms of Benjamin Franklin.

The opening parable of Sólarljóð deals with a guest and his relationship to his host, as do the opening stanzas of Hávamál. Sólarljóð assumes a duty to assist a stranger in need, and to invite “manni til matar” (Sól. 2.3). Hávamál
expresses this same duty to provide “matar oc váđa,” (Háv. 3.4) but Hávamál is hardly revolutionary in suggesting this. One might call it a Christian duty, as suggested by Matthew 25. On the other hand, both poems also indicate that a guest should be somewhat wary of his host (or his host’s household), and that a host can never be sure who the approaching stranger actually is. In terms of the presentation of this wisdom, however, there are few points of intersection between the two Icelandic poems.

The second parable of Sólarljóð, the story of Unnarr and Sævaldi (8–9), has a parallel in the fate of Fitjung’s sons in Hávamál 78. Both poems warn that wealth is transitory. Njardvík finds a Christian answer in this example, “då den är knuten till försoning och därmed förväntade sver: engi ræðr sättum sjálftr.” 28 While I do not follow Njardvík’s argument (a confusion with the story of Sörli and Vigulf, perhaps?), there is at least a clear indication of a higher power or fate behind the loss of prosperity. Line 86, with its “engi ræðr sättum sjálftr,” adds a warning against self-reliance somewhat foreign to pagan gnomic poetry. There may be an implication that one should instead rely on God. This possible divergence from Hávamál is not so strongly stated, however, that it should be viewed as an answer to the earlier poem. Many pagan traditions would also criticize self-reliance, promoting social adhesion instead, and not necessarily reliance on God.

In the third parable (stanzas 10–14), Njardvík has found similarities with stanza 84 of Hávamál and its warning against women. He suggests, however, that the line about women having been created pure (Sól. 10.6) is a significant Christian difference, recalling the doctrine of original sin and Eve’s role in humankind’s expulsion from paradise. 29 While this is probably true, constituting yet a second warning example behind the example actually stated, there may also be a more modern Christian internalization of sin being referred to. Adam’s role is also recalled, for it was he who should just


have said “no.” The sin warned against is lust, and whatever part is actually played by women takes a secondary position in Sólarið to the sinning done by men. The pleasures of sin and their evil consequences are warned against in this example as in the others. Not only Eve, but also the individual woman is created clean—as clean, at least, as man. Her danger lies not in her own evil deeds, but in the fact that she can instill lust in men, ultimately resulting in the death of their souls. While there are definitely hints in Sólarið that the woman may be a temptress, it is certain only that she is tempting.

This perspective is quite different from that in Hávamál, which concentrates primarily on the common gnomic theme of woman’s untrustworthiness. It would not have been unexpected had Hávamál in fact taken a similar view of women posing a danger to the way men handle their own actions. Drink, for example, is not evil because of the essential nature of alcohol, but because it causes men to lose control of their wits (Háv. 11–14, 19.1–2). Yet in Hávamál women are not pertinacious because of what they make men do, but because of what they do (or don’t do) to men. Their primary failing is simply that they are fickle and never to be trusted.

Hávamál mostly warns against women indirectly, comparing the fickleness of women to the unreliability of everything else in this world:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{At qveldi scal dag leyfa,} & \quad \text{kono, er brend er,} \\
\text{mæki, er reyndr er,} & \quad \text{mey, er gefin er,} \\
\text{ís, er yfir kómr,} & \quad \text{ól, er druccit er.} - (Háv. 81)
\end{align*}
\]

Women are changeable and thus unreliable, like the events or weather of the day. In Hávamál 90, loving a false-hearted woman is compared to sailing a rudderless ship and to other other wild rides sure to end in disaster. On the other hand, stanza ninety-one describes men fickle to women, and there is later an admonition to actually follow through on fair promises made to women (Háv. 130), as though this were not always done by men. Hávamál deals fairly intensely with male-female relationships. Women are not so much evil as unreliable, and they may even do good at times.
Stanzas 104–11 of Hávamál refer to Óðin’s affair with the maiden Gunnlöð. Gunnlöð was a woman from which only good was received. She, on the other hand, does not seem to have been so well repaid. Inconstancy, or even trickery, can work both ways, and while women may be dangerous to men, men can also pose a danger to women. Woman is not the sole root of all evil in Hávamál, as in the medieval Christian icon of Eve. Hávamál might even allow for a woman as good as the Christian Mary, but it is better not to trust any woman until her life is over and her unwavering goodness can be verified.

Compared to Sólarljóð’s apparent advice to avoid women completely, Hávamál is ambivalent in its misogyny. Stanza 118 of Hávamál describes a man injured by the lies of a woman, but the fault was a false accusation rather than the exercise of feminine wiles explicitly said to be universal. The woman is specifically denoted as evil, so the warning is not necessarily against all women. The concluding verse charms of Hávamál include one against tunrīðor or witches (Háv. 155), but there is also one for the purpose of seducing women, and it is followed by a fragment probably also related to seduction (Háv. 161–2). Some women are to be repelled, but others are to be enticed. Still, none is to be trusted. Hávamál does also warn “ver thú við öl varastr / oc við annars kono,” (131.7–8) but warnings against the wives of others relate more to property rights than to the nature of women. There is always danger involved where women are concerned, but it does not always arise from any innate feminine evil.

Óðin’s courtship of Billings mey in Hávamál 96–102 obviously deals with women, but the maiden seems entirely passive in this narrative. Nonetheless, all tricks are attributed to her, though perhaps more by modern critics of Hávamál than by its compiler. The concluding stanza provides something of a moral to the story which could be seen to have universal application:

Mörg er gód máer, ef gorva kannar,
   hugbrigð við hali;
tha ec that reynda, er ith ráðspaca
   teygða ec á flæðir flióð;
háðungar hverrar leitaði mér it horsca man,
oc háða ec thess vætki vífs. (Háv. 102)

There is even some language here reminiscent of “hit horska víf” of Sólarljóð 14.5. In any event, women are false, not to be trusted, and in the end one gets nothing from them.

The twelfth stanza of Sólarljóð, one concerning the love of Sváfaðr and Skarðedinn for the same woman, has been compared to stanza ninety-seven of Hávamál, part of the narrative dealing with Billings mey.30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Héraðskis their gáðu</th>
<th>Billings mey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fyr thá hvítu mey</td>
<td>ec fann berðum á,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leiks né ljósra daga</td>
<td>sólhvíta, sofí;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>öngvan hlut</td>
<td>iarls yndi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>máttu their annan muna</td>
<td>þóttí mér ecci vera,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enn that ljósa lík</td>
<td>nema víð that líc at lífa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sól. 12)</td>
<td>(Háv. 97)</td>
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</table>

Throughout Hávamál there are individual phrases of two or three words that parallel passages in Sólarljóð. This is probably the closest parallel, for both language and content are similar. Yet the similarity is not enough to demonstrate any direct influence.

Each of the two passages refers to its woman as mey, but the alternatives are limited. Hávamál elsewhere uses man and the more general kona, while Sólarljóð also uses kona (11.5) and víf (14.5) to describe the selfsame mey. Sólarljóð seems to have aimed at variety and can hardly be said to have borrowed any one word from Hávamál. The adjective hvítr is predictable, as is the word lík, in any medieval description of feminine beauty. Sólhvítr is an interesting variation, but given the Icelandic climatic context it sounds more attractive by far than, say, snæhvítr. Hávamál is not likely to have borrowed the solar comparison from Sólarljóð. On the other hand, Sólarljóð’s ljóss in “ljósa lík” is more likely to be a near synonym of hvítr

than a concrete reference to brilliance (i.e., "fair" rather than "bright"), and its use is more likely to have been determined by "ljósa daga" in Sól. 12.3 than by sólhotr in Hávamál.

The parable of Sváfaðr and Skarðjóinn is closest to the tale of Billings mey in Hávamál in terms of content, particularly in respect of those long sleepless nights and the loss of other joy. Hjalmar Falk first made the further connection between Sólarljóð and stanza 114 of Hávamál, where the same sort of lovesickness is described. Yet lovesickness is something found even outside of Icelandic literature. The parallel, found so long ago between the Sólarljóð stanza and Gunnlaugs saga örmstunga was a closer match, since there are probably fewer lovers who kill their rivals and are killed by them in return, than there are lovers who lose sleep and appetite over love. Njarðvík pointed out that a lover's insomnia also appears at stanza ninety-two of Hávamál. He calls the inability to sleep a "symptom" of love. The disease in question was perhaps best defined in the first edition of Sólarljóð, since the Latin term used there, insania amoris, has a nice medical ring to it. Stanzas 113 and 114 of Hávamál (and perhaps Háv. 115 which also deals with love) do refer to the wiles of a witch rather than those of an ordinary woman. Nonetheless, gnomic poetry generally teaches men that women need no magical powers to bewitch their prey into a state of insania amoris.

Sólarljóð and Hávamál share the view that women are dangerous to men and capable of making them lose their wits. Sólarljóð seems to recommend a complete avoidance of women, for the mere desire of them is a sin. The harm they cause goes beyond insania amoris and results in death, at least for Sváfaðr and Skarðjóinn. There is also the danger of eternal punishment for

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33 Njórður P. Njarðvík, Solsgangen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 218.

the sins of lust and murder. Woman is the cause of danger, but the sin belongs to the men: "hon var theim til lyta lagin" (Sól. 11.6). Woman has no other function than to tempt, however pure she was created. Hávamál also warns against women, stressing their untrustworthiness. Women are capable of both good and bad, but like other things in life, women cannot be depended upon. Women are warned against, especially witches and the false of heart. They must always be treated with caution, says Hávamál. Sólarljóð would have women be avoided entirely, but its position is not so unambiguously divergent from Hávamál as to seem a reply to it. Sólarljóð contains only the one example of dealings with living, mortal women, while Hávamál has many.

The fourth parable of Sólarljóð (stanzas 15–18) is brief and warns against arrogance, pride, and self-interest, because these cause a turning away from God, with resultant punishment. Rāðny and Vēboði were rich, and lived lives of luxury and social self-sufficiency. God reversed their fate and now they suffer in hell. Gnomic poetry usually has self-interest as its purpose, so it is rather revolutionary to warn against it. This poetry of common sense generally purports to teach how to become rich and gain profit over one's neighbors. Sólarljóð may thus be giving an answer to the entire genre of wisdom literature, but there is little reference in it to anything from Hávamál one way or another.

Nonetheless, wisdom poetry does usually warn against arrogance and pride, because these set one at odds with society and thus have probable negative consequences. There may be warnings against luxury because it can diminish wealth, and wealth itself is not to be trusted because good fortune can always change. An excessive self-reliance may be something of a sin in pagan wisdom literature also, if it reduces the profits to be gained through networking. Wealth is never the only key to success, and a good reputation is always advised. Hávamál does share these more universal precepts with Sólarljóð as it does with other gnomic poetry, though Sólarljóð goes further into the realm of the purely Christian.

The admonition against pride is never as strong in Hávamál as one would expect it to have been in a more Christian work. The closest warning is
actually against boasting, and even that is restricted to boasting about one’s own wisdom (Háv. 6). Arrogance is attacked only in a warning never to mock or ridicule a traveller (Háv. 132). In fact, the interest of Hávamál is much more in preventing degradation of others than it is in preventing any promotion of the self. Hávamál goes so far as to say that “hinn er sæll, / er sér um getr / lof oc lícstafi” (Hav. 81–3). Christianity surely diverges in this respect, yet Sólarljóð gives this difference no special stress.

Hávamál, like Sólarljóð, advises that wealth is no sure blessing. Just as Ráðny and Véboði came to a bad end after having been rich, Hávamál warns that wealth can make fools of people:

Veita hinn, er vætkti veit,
margr verðr aflöðrom api;
maðr er auðigr, annarr öauðigr,
scylit thann vitta vár.—(Háv. 75)

The wise man knows that wealth is no reason for a person to feel proud. Indeed, wisdom itself can sometimes be better than wealth (Háv. 10). Hávamál does not strongly warn against a life of luxury, since it was probably never a widespread problem on Iceland. On the contrary, one is warned against being so miserly as to live in want simply to save money (Háv. 40). Stanzas twenty and twenty-one do, however, speak against the luxury of gluttony, a sin which Sólarljóð does not address.

On the whole, Hávamál takes the view that wealth is transitory, and not always the most useful gift one can possess. It is certainly not a basis for judging people, or a reason for pride or arrogance. More than in Sólarljóð, wealth is primarily a means with which to be generous. “Gefendr heilir!” is one of the chief rules of Hávamál (Hav. 2.1). Generosity is praised over stinginess in stanza forty-eight of Hávamál, while one is admonished also “get thú váloðom vel!” (Háv. 135.7). One may be generous without owning wealth (Háv. 52), but there is no particular virtue in being poor.

The crucial innovation of Sólarljóð over Hávamál’s treatment of those who live in wealth and luxury and despise those beneath them is the idea that the
proud ones have turned from God. They will also be punished in hell. Hávamál is oriented entirely towards this world and has no interest in an afterlife. In fact, Hávamál has very little concern for religion at all. Aside from some tales which are of a mythological nature, the only real reference to religion seems to advise against being overly concerned with it:

\[ 
\text{Betrø er óbedit, } \quad \text{enn sé ofblótið,} \\
\text{ey sér til gildis gið;} \\
\text{betrø er ósent, } \quad \text{enn sé ofsóit.} \quad \text{—(Háv. 145.1-5)} 
\]

Hávamál does not criticise anyone for turning away from the gods, but it does warn against turning away from one’s fellow human beings. It begins by discussing the duties of hospitality and continues with a great deal of advice about the cultivation of friends. Stanza fifty describes the totally self-reliant man. He stands alone and unloved like a single tree with no reason to live (Háv. 50). Hávamál fifty-seven stresses that a person’s own development depends on his or her social interaction.

Stanzas 119 through 121 discuss ways to keep a good friend. Hávamál thus shares with Sólarljóð the most general principles of Sólarljóð’s fourth example: do not rely on wealth; do not think yourself better than others; do not rely only on yourself. Although Hávamál and Sólarljóð share this advice on what one is not to do, the alternatives are different. The most important advice in Hávamál is to build a good reputation. One cannot rely completely on life, and can trust only in fame:

\[ 
\text{Deyr fé, } \quad \text{deyia frændr,} \\
\text{deyr siálf r it sama;} \\
\text{enn orðtirr } \quad \text{deyr aldregi,} \\
\text{hveim er sér góðan getr.} \\
\]

\[ 
\text{Deyr fé, } \quad \text{deyia frændr,} \\
\text{deyr siálf r it sama;} \\
\text{ec veit einn, } \quad \text{at aldri deyr;} \\
\text{dómur um dauðan hvern.} \quad \text{—(Háv. 76-7)} 
\]
This is probably the best known of all passages from Hávamál, and seems to summarize the philosophy of the poem. Only the fame of one’s deeds lives on. Nothing else can be relied on. If Sólarljóð had an answer to Hávamál, it would concern precisely this point. One may and must rely on God. The lesson of Sólarljóð is that one’s immortal soul does live on, and one must prepare for eternity during life. The fourth of the opening exempla in Sólarljóð is a strong reminder of this.

The fifth and last of the Sólarljóð examples (stanzas 19–24) concerns Sörli’s betrayal by Vífgúlf, who had earlier slain Sörli’s brother as well. Sörli is criticised for having trusted his bróðurbani, a term and sentiment which both appear in stanza eighty-nine of Hávamál. Hávamál recommends a limit to human faith set below the level of trusting anyone who has killed one’s own brother. Sólarljóð confirms this limit. According to the more Christian poem, one may have faith in God to right wrongs in the afterlife, but in this world one should nevertheless judge people by the example of their past actions. As far as dealings in this world, at least, Sólarljóð seems to have no answer for Hávamál.

Beyond the shared reference to a bróðurbani there is not much in the language or content of the fifth Sólarljóð example to remind one of Hávamál. The mostly narrative details of the Sólarljóð passage simply find few parallels in the mostly proverbial format of Hávamál. As one might expect, it is the more proverbial introduction to the parable that finds resonance in Hávamál:

Óvinum thínum
trúðu aldregi
thó thér fagrt mæli fyrir
góðu thú heit
gott er annars
víti hafa at varnaði.—(Sól. 19)

Hávamál, like most gnomic collections, has a great deal to say about the treatment of enemies, and about friends as well.
Njörður Njardvik finds three places in Hávamál which have some bearing on the fifth narrative of Sólarmál. Stanza forty-five of Hávamál says essentially that if one must have dealings with someone one does not trust, it is best to speak fair but be untrustworthy oneself. In other words, this passage recommends false dealing. Stanza ninety-one, on the other hand, says that hiding a false thought behind fair speech is contrary to wisdom. This time Hávamál says not to be false. Finally, in Hávamál 124, one is again warned not to be false, with the words “alt er betra, / enn sé brigðom at vera” (Háv. 124.4–5). It is this last position, with stressed end-weight, that Njardvik feels to be the one taken in the fifth allegori of Sólarmál.35

Hávamál is actually quite consistent in its view of the way enemies should be treated, and there seem to be few worse enemies in Nordic thought than the killer of one’s brother. The very first stanza of Hávamál warns to be watchful and wary against enemies. Stanza forty-five does recommend lying to enemies. Stanza 127 even advises attacking them to right wrongs. This position never changes in Hávamál. Neither Hávamál nor the fifth example from Sólarmál is attempting to make a universal statement about telling the truth. Hávamál 91 and 124 have no relevance to this part of Sólarmál. Stanza ninety-one deals with intersexual relations and suggests that honesty is the best policy in that sphere. Hávamál 124 deals with relations between friends, and suggests that one should be able to tell the unvarnished truth to a true friend. The only deceit in question is that of becoming a yes-man. There should be honesty between lovers, honesty between friends, but deceit between enemies. Hávamál makes a very clear distinction between friends and enemies, and Sólarmál appears to uphold the same distinction in the Christian context.

Hávamál's stanza forty-five is probably the closest fit of language with stanza nineteen of Sólarmál, which sums up the entire fifth example with its “Óvinum thínnum / trúðú aldregi” (Sól. 19.1–2). The Hávamál stanza is part of a section encompassing stanzas 42–46, dealing with friends and enemies and those occupying the area between. The stanza closest to Sólarmál says,

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Ef thú átt annan, thannz thú illa trúir,  
vildu af hánom thó gött geta:  
fagrt scaltu við thann mæla,  
enn flátt hyggia  
oc gialda lausung við lygi.—(Háv. 45)

Sólarrjóð repeats only “fagrt mæli” (Sól. 19.3) and the idea of deceiving an enemy. In this and the immediately surrounding stanzas Hávamál develops its rule for dealing with others, summarized in the line “glíc scolo giöld giöfom” (Háv. 46.6). This same approach of returning good for good, and evil for evil is central also to other gnomic works such as the Disticha Catonis. Sólarrjóð, despite its Christian emphasis and the more generous Golden Rule of Matt 7:12 and Luke 6:31 available to it, is still very similar to pagan gnomic traditions, and has no clear answer to Hávamál one way or another.

The seven wise counsels of Sólarrjóð stanzas twenty-five to thirty-two are closer in form to gnomic poetry as a fixed genre than are any of the other parts of the poem. One would thus expect to find the greatest parallels to Hávamál here, where Sólarrjóð utilizes a straight-forward aphoristic format to convey its wisdom. However, perhaps because these stanzas primarily advise one to pray, there is very little which might remind one of Hávamál. The greatest parallel is simply the form. Consequently, stanza thirty-two of Sólarrjóð, the one that provides a frame for the seven counsels, is the one of this section that seems most to reflect Hávamál.

Sólarrjóð’s stanza thirty-two concludes the section, explaining that seven wise counsels have just been imparted. The son is admonished to learn them and not to forget them, since they are useful. Njörður Njarðvík noted the parallel between this admonition and the Loddfáfnismál segment of Hávamál (stanzas 112–137). In that section most stanzas begin with the formula:

Ráðome thér, Loddfáfnir,  
at thú ráð nemir,  
nióta mondo, ef thú nemr,  
þér muno göð, ef thú getr.—(Háv. 112.1–4)

Here the unknown Loddfáfnir is advised to learn the advice given, just as the son in Sólarljóð is advised to learn. There is no closer parallel here. Both poems use the word ráð, of course, and both stress the profit of learning—"öll eru thar nyt at nema," says Sólarljóð (32.6).

Njarðvík does not mention the significance of this parallel, which is that both Loddfáfnismál and the seven counsels of Sólarljóð share the same gnomic framework. In each poem an authority delivers proverbial bits of wisdom to a learner for the profit of the latter. The learner is told to listen and learn, with memorization of the verse itself perhaps implied. No definite borrowing by Sólarljóð from Hávamál is indicated here. The framework goes back at least to the Proverbs of Solomon.

Among the seven counsels, Sólarljóð's stanza twenty-six does not involve any sort of Christian idea of prayer. Instead it suggests only that one not aggravate the wrongs one has committed, and instead try to make amends. This advice seems to be of such a nature that it could be universal, but there is nonetheless no corresponding advice in Hávamál. Wisdom about the squeaky wheel being the one to get oil, however, does occur in both poems. Björn Ólsen first noted that Sólarljóð's "fár hyggr thegjanda thörf" (Sól. 28.6) is quite similar to "fát gat ec thegiandi thar" from Hávamál (Hav. 104.3), though there is not much similarity in context. Within the seven counsels of Sólarljóð, this is the closest point of contact between the two poems in actual language.

Stanza twenty-nine of Sólarljóð promises delicacies in heaven, an echo of the Continental idea that heaven is the place where one gets enough to eat. Despite all the references to feasts in Hávamál, there is no vocabulary similar to Sólarljóð's "sá hefir krás er kreftr" (Sól. 29.6). Njarðvík noted an interesting parallel between Sólarljóð stanza thirty about leading a blameless life—"gott er vammalausum vera" (Sól. 30.6)—and Hávamál sixty-eight.38

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38 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Sólarljóð (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands og Menningarsjóður, 1991) 175.
Eldr er bestr med yta sonom
oc sólar syn,
heilyndi sitt, ef maðr hafa náir,
án við løst at lífa.—(Háv. 68)

Sólariðóð teaches that one need not fear death if one has lived a good and unblemished life. Hávamál likewise praises a life lived without fault. Njarðvík omitted this comparison in his translation Solsången, perhaps because the linguistic parallel is so faint. Likewise, the thought is too universal to prove any influence, but that is true of all the parallels between Hávamál and Sólariðóð. That sight of the sun is a precious gift to man certainly reminds one of the central section of Sólariðóð, which is all about seeing the sun. In its proximity to “fire,” the sight of the sun probably refers as much to warmth and life as to mere eyesight in Hávamál, too. But the sun is too common a symbol, particularly in Icelandic Christian poetry, to suggest that the Sólariðóð poet was inspired by this passage alone. Of equal insignificance is the fact that Sólariðóð compares the faithless to wolves in stanza thirty-one. Hávamál 85.2 also assumes that wolves are untrustworthy. But wolves get bad press nearly everywhere.

The influence of Hávamál diminishes after the allegories and counsels, according to Njarðvík, because in matters of life and death Sólariðóð has nothing in common with the heathen poem. Nonetheless, parallels can still be found which are no more forced than those made thus far. In stanza thirty-three of Sólariðóð, for example, the poem promises to demonstrate, among other things “hvé yta synir / verða nauðgir at nám” (33.5–6). The section which follows does demonstrate on a personal, very emotional level how hard it was for one man to die, or to become a corpse. This same reluctance to become a corpse, however, is demonstrated in Hávamál through more traditional gnomic aphorism. Stanza seventy-one, especially, stresses the value of life over death, by telling how one can live even with


infirmities. On the other hand, “nytr mangi nás” (Háv. 71). Both poems do use the image of being a corpse to express the state of being dead.

Parallels between stanza thirty-four of Sólarljóð and stanza seventy-five of Hávamál have long been noted. Sólarljóð discusses again the disadvantages of wealth, this time using the words “margan hefir auðr apat” (Sól. 34.6), which are notably close to “margr verðr aflöðrom api” in Hávamál (Háv. 75.3).

Njarðvík contrasts Sólarljóð 35 with Hávamál 56. The speaker of Sólarljóð laments not having had the foresight to see beyond the pleasures of this world (Sól. 35.3). The very purpose of Sólarljóð is, of course, to function as a reminder of death and the afterlife so that the narrator’s son and the poet’s audience will not make the same mistake of ignoring the eschatological future. Hávamál 56, however, advises limiting the knowledge one might want to attain, saying “ørlög sin / viti engi fyrr, / theim er sorgalausastr sefí” (Háv. 56.4–6). Knowing ones fate in advance makes one unhappy, says Hávamál, while Sólarljóð says not knowing ones fate makes one too attached to this world and likely to neglect one’s soul.

In fact, this difference seems rather artificial. The only linguistic connection between the two passages are the words vissa and fyrr, which hardly amount to any sort of quotation. The future spoken about in Sólarljóð is death, something about which Hávamál is not entirely silent, but something also that it takes no great gnomic revelation to predict. As for an afterlife, it is true that none is mentioned in Hávamál (unless related to the reanimation in stanza 157), but Sólarljóð also gives only the most general examples of what could be expected after death. The advance knowledge of one’s fate spoken against by Hávamál surely involves something more specific than this. Sólarljóð reminds Christians of the obvious future in death and an afterlife, but it does not say anything about what a particular individual’s afterlife will


42 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 219.
be. The narrator’s son is not told he will go to heaven rather than hell, for example. That would be a specific knowledge of one’s own future, which is more likely what Hávamál is advising against. Sólarljóð does not give this kind of information, or recommend it either. If there is a real contrast here, it is only in Hávamál’s implication that happiness is a desired end. Sólarljóð, of course, conveys a Christian mistrust of any sort of worldly pleasure or happiness. Nonetheless, Sólarljóð gives no indication of intentionally replying to Hávamál concerning this or any other matter.

Stanzas thirty-six through forty-seven of Sólarljóð deal fairly strictly with the death struggles of the paternal narrator. There is little which bears any resemblance to gnomic aphorism. Nor does the story particularly parallel anything from Norse mythology. As a consequence, there is not much similarity with Hávamál. There are not even isolated phrases recalling the older poem, perhaps because the imagery of Sólarljóð is taken either from nature or from Christian tradition, neither of which are well represented in Hávamál.

The narrator of Sólarljóð continues the story of his death and burial beyond stanza forty-seven, but with forty-eight, the aphoristic style of wisdom literature is taken up again. Once more there are reminiscences of Hávamál, but admittedly fewer than in the earlier parts of Sólarljóð. Shared in common are individual words having to do with the theme of wisdom (e.g., viti), or words used stylistically to make the sweeping pronouncements of a wiseman (e.g., opt, aldri, engi), or other stylistic elements such as the frequent use of superlatives. Not until Sólarljóð’s stanza fifty-one, with its clear references to Norse mythology, is there a particularly notable parallel.

Björn Ólsen first noted that Sólarljóð’s “Á norna stóli / sat ek nú daga” (Sól. 51.1–2) resembles “Veit ec, at ec hecc / vindgameidi á / nætr allar nío” (Háv. 138.1–3). Of course, the only real similarity here is “níu daga” compared to “nætr allar nío,” hence, the same length of time. Perhaps the Christian poem is answering the heathen “night” with its own “day” to express this same

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period. The similarities are rather like claiming a parallel between “uppi ok niðri” (Sól. 52.4) and “yfir oc undir” (Háv. 106.4), which Ólsen does actually note. Such parallels are not very convincing. Sólarljóð’s “nórna stöli” has no obvious connection to Ódinn’s vindgameiði beyond the time spent there.

A closer parallel with Sólarljóð 51 is Hávamál 111. Here there is at least talk of a stólō:

Mál er at thylia thular stóli á,  
Urðar brunni at;  
sá ec oc thagðac, sá ec oc hugðac,  
hlydda ec á manna mál;  
of rúnar heyrða ec doema, né um rádom thögodó,  
Háva höllo at, Háva höllo í;  
heyrða ec segia svá—(Háv. 111)

Of course, as Ólsen already noted, this passage reminds one even more of Sólarljóð seventy-six and “organs stóli á,” particularly if one interprets organ as a duet, as he does. In addition to the one phrase, however, there are several others here which are repeated in Sólarljóð. First, the fourth and fifth lines repeat the same “sá ek” of Sólarljóð stanzas 61–67 and 69–72. The seventh and eleventh lines share the “heyrða ek” not only of Sólarljóð 39.5 and 57.3, but of 83.6 as well. Hávamál’s mention of runes may also remind one of the runes of judgement in Sólarljóð 61, but more especially of those in Sólarljóð 79, which are runes of mystery. Finally, “Urðar brunni,” here as in Völuspá, sounds as if it might be a basis for “brunni Baugregins” (Sól. 56.6). To be sure, there is no similarity in content between Hávamál 111 and Sólarljóð, but there is a jumble of many similar sounding phrases.

Ólsen has noted other similar sounding phrases, but nothing in Sólarljóð that might be an answer to Hávamál. Hávamál has the phrase “thá varð ec villr


vega" (Háv. 47.3), which is close in language to Sólarljóð’s “their váru villir vega” (Sol. 62.3).46 Again, there is no similarity of context or even in the underlying ideas. Ólsen also first noted that Háamál mentions the famous dwarf Dvalinn (Háv. 143.3) whose name constitutes part of the name Vigdvalinn in stanza seventy-eight of Sólarljóð.47 The name seems to occur frequently in Icelandic literature.

In sum, there are many points in Sólarljóð at which one is vaguely reminded of Háamál, but there are no clear cases of quotation, much less response. As noted by Ólsen48 and Njardvík,49 most correspondences are concentrated at the beginning of poem, with much fewer later on. This discrepancy might make it seem that something other than random accident were involved in the early parallels, except that the different parts of Sólarljóð vary so much among themselves. The parts deal with different matters, or take different approaches. Ólsen suggested that Háamál was the basis for the opening exempla and the counsels, while the influence of Disticha Catonis was strongly felt in the remainder of the poem.50 Njardvík seems quite near the mark when he notes that the influence of Háamál on the early parts of the poem is most clearly noticable “i detaljer som kan anses vara av allmän natur.”51 It is in the more sweeping statements, and in the more universal examples taken from daily life that there is the greatest similarity between Háamál and Sólarljóð. It thus seems much more likely that Sólarljóð has


49 Njordur P. Njardvik, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 220.


51 Njordur P. Njardvik, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 220.
taken its message directly from the same observations of human life that formed the basis for Hávamál, rather than from the poem Hávamál as a work of literature.

As was the case with Völuspá, if Sólarljóð has borrowed from Hávamál, it has been more a reflection of general cultural influence than any clear literary citation. Sólarljóð could probably have been written without the author having known either Völuspá or Hávamál specifically. One can be certain only that the eddic tradition was known, insofar as the poet was somewhat familiar with heathen mythology and acquainted with the ljóðaháttr verse form. Ultimately, it is this verse form alone, or this verse form combined with the purpose of giving advice, which links Sólarljóð to Hávamál.

Sólarljóð is the only Christian poem written in ljóðaháttr.\textsuperscript{52} Yet while ljóðaháttr is also the verse form of Hávamál, other older poems have also used it. Hávamál, on the other hand, is not entirely consistent in its use of that meter. It therefore seems less than self-evident that precisely Hávamál should have served as the model for Sólarljóð’s meter. Nonetheless, as Hávamál is a collection of gnomic wisdom from different sources, it is evident that ljóðaháttr must often have been used for this type of poetry. Sólarljóð has surely profited by being associated through ljóðaháttr with older Icelandic traditions of wisdom, including that represented by Hávamál.

There is no evidence to suggest that the author of Sólarljóð did not know Hávamál, or Völuspá, for that matter. Sólarljóð is a more interesting and more persuasive poem because it does recall for us those two poems, or at least Icelandic eddic antiquity in general. I believe that the poet behind Sólarljóð did know those particular eddic poems. But the proof of any direct influence from them is simply inadequate in the light of the similarity of themes and treatments shared by all gnomic poetry. The historical focus on Iceland’s two best-known poems has long tended to obscure other possible influences, influences that might be capable of shedding more light on

\textsuperscript{52} Björn M. Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands og Ísl. Bókmenta 5.1 (Reikjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 66.
Sólarljóð. As important as Hávamál is gnomic poetry generally, as was shared by cosmopolitan Iceland with the rest of Christian Europe.

5.4. Disticha Catonis and European Wisdom Literature

5.4.1. Introduction

The similarity between Sólarljóð and the Disticha Catonis was first noted well over a century ago by F. W. Bergmann. Disticha Catonis, or Cato’s Distichs, was one of the best-known works of the Middle Ages. A collection of proverbs attributed to an unspecified but reputedly very wise Cato, it constituted an important part of the syllabus for those trying to master the Latin language. Anyone pretending to learning during the Middle Ages would have been familiar with its contents.

It should surprise no one that Sólarljóð may have borrowed some ideas from Disticha Catonis, considering the popularity of the Latin work. However, the relationship between the two works has never been fully explored. The connection of Sólarljóð to such a well-known Continental piece helps to contextualize the Icelandic poem. Sólarljóð is shown to be part of a pan-European interest in didactic wisdom literature as a genre.

Disticha Catonis has enjoyed many borrowers and imitators. Sólarljóð may be better understood when considered to be among their number. This is especially important if it allows one to sever the traditional connections of Sólarljóð to the poetic Edda and examine the poem afresh. Medieval Iceland was not some hermetic museum of pagan Germanic culture, and as Vigfusson and Powell once confessed, not even the Eddas themselves represent Nordic “holy books of the fourth and fifth centuries.” Particularly by the time Sólarljóð must have been composed, Iceland firmly belonged to medieval European culture and shared its literary relations. That Sólarljóð

53 F. G. Bergmann, Les Chants de Sól (Strasbourg: Treuttel, 1858) 44.
shares concerns with the *Disticha Catonis* illustrates the place of Sólarljóð in the larger scheme of European literature.

5.4.2. Cato

Cato is the name given to the unknown author of a certain third or fourth-century Latin collection of proverbs or rules to live by. The collection is usually called *Disticha Catonis*, though the title *Dicta Catonis* (the sayings of Cato) has some currency. The work was associated with Marcus Porcius Cato the Censor, the elder of the two Roman statesmen named Cato. The work has more recently been attributed to a mysterious Dionysius Cato, particularly since the edition by the sixteenth-century scholar Joseph Scaliger. In fact, however, there is little historical justification for attaching the name Cato to the *Disticha* at all.

The actual writer of the *Disticha* could have been inspired by a now-lost *Carmen de moribus* by Cato the Elder.\(^\text{55}\) In a fourth-century letter to one of the Roman emperors named Valentinian, there is a mention of an *Ethica Catonis*.\(^\text{56}\) Otherwise, there seems to be no evidence for connecting the work with anyone at all named Cato. Even some of the medieval commentaries on *Disticha Catonis* questioned its attribution to Cato.\(^\text{57}\) But who was Cato, after all? For over a millennium the answer would have been something like “the author of the distichs, and therefore a very wise man.” The work itself was certainly known much better than any person named Cato. “Cato” refers to the book more than to its author.

*Disticha Catonis*, as the name implies, consists of brief two-line Latin stanzas. These are arranged in four books of forty, thirty-one, twenty-four and forty-nine stanzas respectively. Each stanza consists of two Latin hexameters

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\(^{56}\) Geyza Némethy, ed., *Dicta Catonis* ([Budapest, 1895]) 27.

giving a piece of ethical advice, though it should be pointed out that the ethical system advocated is not particularly Christian in the absence of a Christian commentary. *Disticha Catonis* was originally a work at least as pagan as *Hávamál*.

While the four books of distichs made up the original work, prefaces were soon added to them. The distichs also soon came to be preceded by fifty-seven shorter prose *sententiae*, most consisting of only two or three words each. The distichs proper came to be known as the *Cato maior* and the shorter *sententiae* as the *Parvus Cato*. There are many variants of the original Latin text, though the actual differences between them are surprisingly small. *Hugsvinnsmál*, the oldest existing Icelandic translation of Cato, was based on Europe's most common manuscript tradition of the *Disticha*, the text known as *Vulgata*. Hence, this version had clearly been known on Iceland, though there is nothing to preclude the possibility of others having been known there as well.

The process of accretion continued beyond the text included in the *Vulgata*. By the end of the Middle Ages a manuscript of *Disticha Catonis* might also include various supplementary proverbs, quotations, or commentaries. Entirely separate works also became closely associated with Cato. The twelfth-century *Facetus* was intended as a supplement to Cato, for example, and the *Cato Novus* was a sequel. Eventually there came to be many imitators of Cato, no longer pretending to be associated with the original work. The popularity of the original Cato created a demand for other such collections.

5.4.3. The Position of Cato in Medieval Culture

*Disticha Catonis* was a clear "best seller" throughout most of the Middle Ages. The history of Cato in the West goes back as far as St. Columba. Alcuin was influential as a commentator and in promoting Cato throughout the empire of Charlemagne. *Disticha Catonis* has been associated with such important medieval scholars as Walafrid Strabo, Hincmar Laudunensus, and Notker

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Balbulus, as well as with students such as those who composed the Carmina Burana. The most important commentator on Cato was Remigius of Auxerre, who wrote a very influential Espositio super Catonem. The popularity of Cato survived the Renaissance and Reformation, with editions being made by Joseph Scaliger and even Erasmus. It was only during the Enlightenment that Cato was forgotten, with popularity dropping off drastically at the end of the eighteenth century.⁵⁹

During the Middle Ages, however, Cato was known and respected throughout all of Europe. Disticha Catonis was quoted by the First Grammarian,⁶⁰ providing direct evidence that Cato was known on Iceland from as early as the twelfth century. Furthermore, Cato is the only Latin writer quoted by the Grammarian, so the distichs must have held a special position. Cato is cited as an authority, with the clear implication that his Latin wisdom should be adequate to support the point being made.

The popularity and influence of Cato went well beyond the Latin original. Translations of Disticha Catonis have been made into many languages, ranging from Irish in the west to Rumanian and Greek in the east. There were translations into both Old English and Middle English, with at least seventy manuscripts of the latter still preserved. Of course, Icelandic was not neglected. The oldest Icelandic translation is Hugsvinnsmál, and this has been followed by two closer translations in relatively modern times.⁶¹

Yet Cato was far more than a book to be copied or translated as an entity. It influenced other literature, as is apparent not only with Sólarljóð, but even in

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the supposedly Germanic-pagan Hāvamál itself. The reader of medieval literature can scarcely avoid Cato, for the work is quoted or referred to nearly everywhere. A typical reference is that at the beginning of the Lincoln's Inn manuscript of the Middle English Kyng Alisaunnder:

For Caton seith theo gode techere
Other mon is lif is owre schewere—(ll. 17–18).63

This is, of course, precisely the point made in Sólarljóð 19.5–6: "gott er annars / víti hafa at varnaði." The two works share the common cultural wisdom of Cato, though only Alisaunnder names him. Medieval authors often named Cato as an authority to support their positions, in much the same way that they cited Hippocrates, Aristotle, Galen, or the Church fathers. Other times Cato remained unnamed and his wisdom was simply quoted as self-evident, without attribution.

For the modern reader of medieval literature it may be difficult to see how Cato could have been ranked among authorities such as Aristotle or Augustine when Cato's admonitions seem more like tired clichés than pearls of any real wisdom. The respect accorded Cato is especially remarkable considering, too, that there is nothing very Christian about either the supposed author or the ideas expressed. The key to understanding the great popularity of Cato lies in an appreciation of the use of Disticha Catonis in medieval education. As the quote from the English Kyng Alisaunnder indicates, Cato was known as a teacher, and this can be attributed partly to the Disticha being used as a school text.

During the Middle Ages, every schoolboy was well acquainted with Cato, and Cato was cited again and again precisely because he was part of a universal canon known by all educated people. Cato was also probably the one name that would occur even to the uneducated if they were to think of Latin writers


or bearers of academic wisdom generally. While medieval writers often attached famous names (e.g., Sæmund the Wise) to ideas or works they wanted to promote, when Cato was mentioned he was actually quoted, as often as not. The reason is simply that medieval writers had memorized Cato's *Distichs*.

Not a great deal is known about the earliest Icelandic education, but there was a regular school from as early as the period between 1030 and 1049. 64 The first book used in school by pupils elsewhere in Europe was generally the *Ars maior* of Donatus, and there is evidence from a later date that Donatus was also studied on Iceland. 65 After Donatus came Cato, with the *Distichs* being the first real Latin literature read. The Vulgate Bible would follow after that. Memorization of Cato was a universal requirement in the schools of Europe. 66 Cato was thus one of the foremost names on the school syllabus throughout western Christendom, and *Disticha Catonis* occupied its position as first Latin reader for over 1400 years. 67

While it is easy enough to understand how Cato was probably well known in medieval Iceland, it is harder to see why any writer should want to quote or imitate what seem to be, at least to us, such tedious old saws. Certainly no language textbook is viewed as a particular source of any universal wisdom today. Also, in an age when spiritual things mattered most, it seems especially strange that advice from a pagan Roman should have been held up as an example of high ethical principles.

Cato was given a wise, ethical context. According to Richard Hazelton, a manuscript of Cato might include grammatical explanations of the text, quotes from the Bible, from the church fathers or classical Latin authors, as

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well as philosophical discussions.⁶⁸ Cato was surrounded by and ranked with
the wisest and most holy of men. Even the late Hólar Cato was followed in
its volume by the Dicta septem sapientium Greciae of Ausonius and De
Civilitate morum by Johannes Sulpicius.⁶⁹ The name Cato became attached
to a larger body of knowledge than was included in the original distichs alone.
Cato became synonymous with academic learning itself. It was still necessary
to reinterpret Cato as a Christian, but this was done through commentary.

Disticha Catonis, because it had four books, came to be seen as a discussion of
the four cardinal virtues. While each book may sometimes have represented
its own virtue, most commentators seem to have found all four virtues
randomly in each. To further Christianize Cato, pagan passages could always
be interpreted allegorically, and there were also a few changes made in the
text itself.⁷⁰ If Cato appears cynical, pessimistic, and self serving, his sayings
are still not so very different from those found in Proverbs or Ecclesiasticus.
On the other hand, many of the values advocated in the Distichs are actually
similar to those advocated by the Church. Cato does discuss the same
fundamental virtues and vices. The Distichs reflect the same idea of purpose
in history and contempt for the world that was advocated by the Church
fathers. Both saw sloth as a main source of vices, while advocating silence, a
sense of measure, patience, and holy war. Like the medieval Church, the
Distichs preached the untrustworthiness of Fortune, and a strong
antifeminism.⁷¹ Cato’s wisdom went beyond his literal proverbs to
incorporate the basic intellectual fabric of all medieval society.

5.4.4. Cato and Medieval Advice

The main function of literature was to instruct, and Cato certainly did that,
but its orientation towards worldly rather than spiritual problems may have

⁶⁹ Halldór Hermannsson, ed., The Hólar Cato, Icelandica 39 (Ithaca NY:
Cornell UP, 1958) xxvii.
⁷⁰ Richard Hazelton, “The Christianization of ‘Cato’,” Medieval Studies 19
helped make it especially popular. The Middle Ages saw a great demand for proverbs of all types. These proverbs may have been a few hundred years fresher than than now, but they nonetheless still bore the dust of centuries. Yet even proverbs may have had a certain novelty insofar as they departed from the biblical orientation of other Latin literature. Whatever the reason, collections of proverbs and moral instructions were undeniably popular throughout Europe.

Beside Cato stood many other similar collections of proverbs, often attributed simply to "the wise man," but sometimes bearing a name, preferably but not always one as famous as that of Cato, Solomon, Alfred the Great, or the High One himself. Most collections of wisdom literature, like the Distichs, took the framework of a father's advice to his son. This parental framework is part of a literary tradition going back at least some 5000 years.\footnote{Tauno F. Mustanoja, ed., The Good Wife taught her Daughter, Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicæ B 61.2 (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1948) 30.}

While there is some instructional if not proverbial literature actually written for children, the advising parent seems mostly a literary device. Rarely is the advice given anything that would seem appropriate for children, certainly by today's standards. Cato's advice "Troco lude" (Sent. 36) seems suitable (if not morally edifying) for small children, but the warning "Aleam fuge" (Sent. 36) against gambling seems aimed at someone older. Certainly the prohibition "Meretricem fuge" (Sent. 25)\footnote{Marcus Boas and Henr. Joh. Botschuyver, eds., Disticha Catonis (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1952).} applies to an adult audience. Nevertheless, it does not seem unlikely that one might have been expected to memorize in impressionable childhood the precepts to be remembered in later adulthood.

It should be remembered, too, that the father-son relationship is not always literal. One important example of similar wisdom literature achieving great popularity was the Disciplina clericalis of Petrus Alfonsi, from the beginning
of the twelfth century. It was clearly written to instruct clerics. Another similar work almost as old and as popular as Cato was the *Secretum Secretorum*. It was supposedly written by Aristotle to Alexander the Great, while the latter was in Persia. This work seems to have come to Europe from the Arab world, and to have achieved a popularity approaching that of Cato. M. A. Manzalaoui has found fifty remaining Arabic manuscripts dating from 941 on, and about five hundred Latin manuscripts since the twelfth century. The advice of *Secretum Secretorum* is less moral than Cato's, recommending, for example, that on awaking one stretch, brush one's hair, wash one's hands, brush one's teeth and so on. The "medical" reasons for these bits of advice are included. There are practical suggestions such as advice on how to pick a scribe who won't betray one's secrets. Numerological advice explains, among other things, that large numbers tend to prevail against smaller ones, unless a mystical number is involved. This recalls the mysterious "Tvær ro eins heriar" of Hávamál 73. In the case of the *Secretum Secretorum*, the essential information is given by a teacher to his pupil, and not by a father to his natural son.

*Disticha Catonis* is only the oldest and most popular of what was a large genre of wisdom literature. The book was followed not only by supplements and sequels, but by similar yet independent books such as *How the Wise Man Taught his Son* and *The Good Wife taught her Daughter*. Perhaps the greatest evidence for the popularity and importance of Cato is the existence of parodies. The French *Biaus filz, ce dit Catons, aprens* and the German *Wie

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der meister sein sun lernet\textsuperscript{77} recommend courses of action essentially opposite to those prescribed by Cato. There does not seem to be a parody of Cato preserved in Icelandic. England also seems to lack a parody, but Chaucer humorously demonstrates the connection between Cato and wisdom in his "Miller's Tale." There he writes of the carpenter who married a much younger woman,

He knew nat Catoun, for his wit was rude,
That bad man sholde wedde his simylitute.—(CT I: 3227–8).\textsuperscript{78}

If the carpenter had been a little wiser, a little better educated, he would have read Cato and learned not to take such a young wife. This passage seems to cite Cato with tongue in cheek, however, suggesting that even knowing Cato may not be a guarantee against a rude wit. An even better joke may be that Cato never did "bad man sholde wedde his simylitute."\textsuperscript{79} Chaucer leaves us to wonder whether the Miller himself knew Cato. The advice is certainly something that sounds like advice from the Disticha Catonis, and it may, in fact, be advice from the later Cato Novus. One way or another, in the context of the "Miller's Tale," Cato is used to illustrate humorous pretensions to knowledge rather than the real thing. For the joke to be appreciated, not only the writer but also his audience must have known its Cato. Clearly the name had become synonymous with advice, and the medieval period seems to have enjoyed being advised. It is not surprising that such advice should have been in demand also on Iceland, whether in a medieval translation such as Hugsvinnsmál, a more native equivalent such as Hávamál, or included in a Christian didactic poem such as Sólarljóð.


The popularity of the *Disticha Catonis* and other Catonian advice lasted throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. Cato's prescriptions were considered to be ethical advice, but by "ethics" a system of getting along or getting ahead in society was intended. Rather than religious moral guidance, Cato offered something more akin to what we would today consider to be social etiquette. Seen in this light, *Disticha Catonis* bears a close resemblance to the more highly developed mirrors for princes or courtesy books that survived the Middle Ages on into the Renaissance. One of these books of "ethical" advice, *Enseignemens moraux* by Christine de Pisan (1363–1430) is especially important. It was addressed to the author's son Jehan de Castel, in the same way that *Disticha Catonis* is addressed to the speaker's son, except that Christine's frame described a true parent-child relationship. Nevertheless, the book was intended for a much broader readership. Christine de Pisan had no patron and was forced to sell her writing to feed her family. She may thus have been the first known professional writer in a modern sense, with the first commercial book being a collection of moral instructions along the lines of *Disticha Catonis*.

In more modern times the influence of *Disticha Catonis* and similar gnomic collections may still be detected in the well-known speech of Polonius to Laertes in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Cato's popularity is said to have ended only with the conclusion of the eighteenth century, with the Enlightenment frowning on its triviality. However, this period also marks the beginning of the end of Latin as the universal academic language, a factor that is probably more important, since triviality seems to have lost none of its popularity in the long run. In any event, *Disticha Catonis* is no longer famous, "Cato" is no longer known as a wise man, and advice must now be sought in self-help books. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that when *Sólarljóð* was written,

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Disticha Catonis and similar gnomic collections were very popular and truly thought to contain great wisdom.

5.4.5. Sólarljóð and Cato

The most important parallel between Sólarljóð and Disticha Catonis is probably the narrative framework in which a father speaks to his son. The traditional Parvus Cato had a preface, the epistola, in two parts. The elder of these parts originally explained the work’s purpose only as correcting those who had fallen into error, but the second part turned the work into a father’s advice to his son. “Nunc te, fili karissime, docebo quo pacto morem animi tui componas.”\(^{82}\) Although the part about teaching the son of the speaker is a later addition to Cato, it still predates the version known on Iceland by centuries. To be sure, the idea of a father advising his son has been used in literature for millennia, and even the Proverbs of Solomon are addressed to “my son.”\(^{83}\) Nonetheless, because of its wide popularity, Cato is the most obvious source for the idea of a father advising his son in Sólarljóð, particularly given also the very similar proverbial format of at least the seven counsels.

A second important point of similarity between the Disticha and Sólarljóð is the verse form. While Icelandic ljóðahátt is not the metrical equivalent of a Latin distich in hexameter, both have a two-part structure that seems an especially suitable medium for gnomic pronouncement. The two Latin lines correspond well to the two Icelandic helmings. The bifurcation within either form allows the presentation of a moral rule to be coupled with a reason or an example to justify that rule, or with some sort of amplification of it. In both works this same procedure is utilized, with Cato going so far as to comment on the technique itself:

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\text{Miraris versus nudis me scribere verbis?} \\
\text{hoc brevitas fecit, sensu uno iungere binos.—(IV.49)}
\]


\(^{83}\) Proverbs 1:8.
The thematic parallels between Sólarljóð and the Disticha Catonis are many. Where there are disagreements between the two (and Cato is not without its occasional internal contradiction as well), it could perhaps be said that Sólarljóð is an answer to the earlier Latin work. However, as with Völuspá and Hávamál, there is no real evidence in Sólarljóð of any desire to incorporate anything more than the same gnomic genre from the earlier work. Sólarljóð does not share either language or culture with Disticha Catonis, as it does with the eddic works, but simply because Disticha Catonis contains numerically more bits of advice than either of the other two collections, Sólarljóð shares more themes in common with the Disticha than with the Icelandic works.

Disticha Catonis contains nothing but advice. That is, it contains no narration to speak of, and, aside from in its prefaces, it makes almost no reference to events literary, mythological, or historical. As a consequence, there are large sections of Sólarljóð that have little in common with Cato. Cato has closer contacts with Hávamál, since both these works give their advice in the form of gnomes or proverbs. Sólarljóð uses a variety of techniques. However, where Sólarljóð does not give its advice in the form of proverbs, the advice can often be rephrased in such a form that parallels become clearer. There is much in Sólarljóð that is ambiguous. There is also much in Cato that is open to interpretation. In comparing the two works there is a clear possibility of either work taking on an interpretive coloration from the other. This is the sort of interpretation that made Disticha Catonis into a Christian work, and it is the sort of interpretation that also surely exaggerates the gnomic influence behind Sólarljóð. Yet if one assumes a priori a knowledge of Cato on the part of the author of Sólarljóð, an assumption surely well-justified, the resulting interpretive bias may not be so very far from authorial intent.

The framework of the two poems is the same. A father teaches his son. This imparting of wisdom is also praised and recommended within the body of each work. For Cato this may be as simple as the liberos erudi of the twenty-eighth sententia. Distich IV.48 urges that one learn, not just from books but also from life. Throughout Cato there is a clear stress on learning from books,
(Sent. 26, 38), from teachers (IV.29, IV.6), from life itself (III.1, IV.48), and from advice, whether the advice come from the exalted father or from a mere slave (III.10). Knowledge must be sought diligently (IV.27), and once found, it is important to evaluate it (III.18), understand it, and remember it (Sent. 27). Once the learning process is complete, wisdom should be passed on to others (IV.23, Sent. 40). Sólarljóð stanza eighty-one corresponds to Cato in its admonition to sing the verses among the living. The son in Sólarljóð has been instructed through the use of narrative exempla, through wise proverbs, and through visionary warnings. The son has been taught a poem, and now it is time for him to teach others (Sól. 81). Or in the words of Cato,

Disce sed a doctis, inductos ipse doceto:
propaganda etenim est rerum doctrina bonarum.—(IV.23)

The passing of wisdom via song is picked up by the more recently added frame of Sólarljóð. Stanza eighty-three speaks of one passing sublime truth on to the listener. Here, however, there is no longer the idea of this learning and transferral being a hard-earned process of education. This truth is a revealed truth, mystical, transferred in a passive dream.

Dásamligt frœði
var thér í draumi kveðit
en thú sátt í sanna
fyrða engi
var svá fróðum skapaðr
er áðr heyrdi Sólarljóðs sögu.—(Sól. 83)

The relevant passage from Cato is

Somnia ne cures; nam mens humana quod optat,
dum vigilans sperat, per somnum cernit id ipsum.—(II.31)

There is something of a disagreement with Cato in this additional last stanza, because it transforms Sólarljóð into a dream. Cato warns not to trust in dreams, because they are nothing more than projections of the hopes one holds when awake. Yet, on the other hand, it is in the context of Cato that the second helming makes the best sense. It is only he who was created wise,
who could have had such a discerning dream as Sólarljóð. The dream comes from the dreamer and not from the father. This must be lore known by the dreamer already, at least subconsciously. It is, after all, lore known in its outlines to every Christian. What would otherwise look like little more than a filling phrase to complete the stanza takes on new meaning, thanks to Cato.

The author of the eighty-third stanza is clearly not following the Cato who says “pay no attention to dreams.” Nor is a contrary answer being given to Cato. But the author does share with Cato the subject of dreams and the idea of something or other being shown in dreams. In the light of Cato, Sólarljóð’s stanza eighty-three can be given a new interpretation. It can be read as insisting that the dream comes as a result of the dreamer’s own Christian wisdom and not because of the intervention of an external ghost. What probably started out as a filler gains possible theological significance. Was the author, then, influenced by Cato? Probably not.

Likewise, the original eighty-two stanzas of Sólarljóð also share much with Cato, but nothing that could not be accidental. The opening exempla of Sólarljóð are constructed upon themes that are frequently also found in Disticha Catonis, despite Ólsen’s belief that this part of Sólarljóð is more dependent on Hávamál than on Cato. Stanza one, which introduces the deadly highwayman, demonstrates quite well the sentiment of Cato’s I.33, that life is dangerous. It certainly is from the perspective of the unwary travelers. From the other perspective, the sin of the greppr is advised against in sententia 54: “Alienum noli concupiscere.” The second stanza tells more about the greppr, how he never invited anyone to meals until the gestr came. Cato’s rule here is simply “Mutuum da,” to give, but with the expectation of something in return. On the other hand, Cato frequently warns against profligacy, but there are locations as in Sólarljóð, where miserliness is also attacked. In Cato moderation is the goal, so excesses of all kinds are forbidden somewhere within its corpus of gnomes.

In the third stanza of Sólarljóð the gestr feigns thirst, and pretends to trust the greppr. Cato’s advice to help strangers (II.1) seems apropos here, since this is what the greppr will now do for the first time. Njörður Njarðvík cites Cato’s I.1 in connection with this stanza, together with stanza 17 of Hugsvinnsmál.\textsuperscript{85} The Cato reads

\begin{quote}
Si deus est animus, nobis ut carmina dicunt,

hic tibi praecipue it pura mente colendus.—(Dist. I.1)
\end{quote}

which clearly has nothing in common with the Icelandic thematically. Only once Disticha Catonis has been translated into the Icelandic of Hugsvinnsmál are there linguistic parallels, such as Cato’s mente being seen to correspond to the word hjarta in Sólarljóð (3.3). But in the absence of shared thematic content, it makes little sense to posit parallels in language between Latin and Icelandic. Hugsvinnsmál is the essential medium between the two works, and it is such a free translation of Disticha Catonis that its relation to Sólarljóð must be treated separately. The theme of Sólarljóð’s third stanza is much closer to that of II.1 of Disticha Catonis:

\begin{quote}
Si potes, ignotis etiam prodesse memento:

utilius regno est meritis acquirere amicos.—(Dist. II.1)
\end{quote}

Sólarljóð’s fourth stanza repeats the idea of giving, and so recalls not only II.1, but also Cato’s IV.8 about giving requested aid. For Cato, giving to another is important primarily because the giver also gains thereby. This is made clear in the second line of the IV.8, “nam recte fecisse bonis in parte lucrorum est.” As a rule in the Disticha, one gives in order to gain a friend or to gain a reputation for generosity. But in Sólarljóð the generosity is solely “af heilum hug,” for the sake of Christian goodness and not for gain. To be sure, this is shown to result once more in profit for the giver, in this case a heavenly reward. Yet it is still, in a way, an answer to the Catonian emphasis on gaining personal advantage in this world. In Sólarljóð one gives up

\textsuperscript{85} Njörður P. Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 231.
advantages on earth to gain a more comfortable position in the next world. Cato's II.2,

An di sint caelumque regant, ne quaere doceri:
cum sis mortalis, quae sunt mortalia cura—(Dist. II.2),

says to ignore any thoughts of gods, but to concentrate on the worldly affairs of mortals instead. Sólarljóð clearly contradicts this view, not only in stanza four, but in the intent of the entire poem. The world is to be held in contempt, while all thoughts are to be on God and salvation.

Sólarljóð's stanza five shows a transformation of the gestr into a murderer, just as stanza four showed the transformation of a highwayman into a Christian host. Several rules of Cato could be invoked as applicable to the case. I.7 reminds one that it is appropriate for a wise man to change according to changing circumstances, but Sólarljóð seems to describe an internally motivated change of heart and the revelation of a true character previously disguised. These are not changes in response to change, and so the comparison is strained. Likewise, the greppr was killed in his sleep, and Cato I.2 warns against sleep, but Cato's feared danger is sloth rather than being murdered. Similarities are easy to find, but they rarely run parallel very long. The greppr's fatal error in the Catonian view, was that he chose the beneficiary of his conversion unwisely. Sententia 39 says "bono benefacito," or do good to the good, not to just anyone. As in Hávamál, treatment is to vary according to the case at hand, and is not necessarily to remain at all times Christ-like. But however criminal the greppr had been in the past, the gestr nonetheless violated even Cato's precept of "benefici accepti esto memor."

The final prayer to God and the transportation of the murdered man to heaven in stanzas six and seven of Sólarljóð are too Christian to much echo anything from the Disticha Catonis. Yet the idea of leading a pure afterlife with God may recall Cato I.1, "Si deus est animus" and his worship "pura mente." The general imperative "Deo supplica" (Sent. 1) is absolutely appropriate to the Sólarljóð narrative, but then there is little to which it would not apply.
Stanzas eight and nine of Sólarljóð tell how fortune is beyond the control of the individual. This is one of the primary pillars of the philosophy of Disticha Catonis, which repeats the same idea over and over in various forms, and from various perspectives. When things are good, the fickleness of fate is something to be dreaded, but when things are bad, that same fickleness is cause for hope (Dist. IV.26).

The mutability of one’s condition or fate is shown in Sólarljóð. Unnar and Sævaldi are the Sólarljóð characters who were initially well-off, but lost everything and ran like wolves into the woods. Cato’s I.18:

Cum fueris felix, quae sunt adversa caveto:
non eodem cursu respondent ultima primis—(Dist. I.18)

seems to describe Unnar and Sævaldi perfectly. The practical Disticha suggests that steps can be taken to hinder such an unhappy end. Sententiae 4 and 13 warn that wealth should be conserved, while distich I.39 warns that efforts must be made to increase wealth if it is not to diminish. Nonetheless, both Cato and Sólarljóð are in agreement that people are not in control of their fates.

For the author of Sólarljóð, one’s fate is seen to be in the hands of a God who will ensure a just disposition in the end, depending on the individual’s own sins. Therefore, one should lead a blameless life to ensure spending eternity in heaven. For the author of Cato, fate is ultimately random. One should act wisely rather than foolishly, but even that is no guarantee of well-being. Therefore, one must try to be happy with one’s fate, no matter what it might be.

Ereptis opibus noli maerere dolendo,
    sed gaude potius, tibi si contingat habere—(Dist. IV.35).

Distich III.11 says much the same thing. Be content with what things are, even if they were once much better.

If Sólarljóð stanza eight is read in the light of Cato III.11 and IV.35, a new interpretation of the Sólarljóð stanza is possible. The strange running into
the woods like wolves may not represent banishment or outlawry as usually thought, but the over-reaction to disaster by Unnar and Sævaldi themselves. They were well off originally but they lost everything. Rather than being happy as poor Christians, trusting in God for subsistence, they went wild and lost even their last connection with Christian civilization. As in Háv. 69–72, where there is life there should still be hope. Or as indicated in Disticha Catonis I.21, having begun life as a naked baby, it should not be unbearable to lose everything again. In any case, the message is that current good fortune cannot be relied upon as a gauge of the future, and in this Sólarljóð agrees with Cato, whether it actually refers to the Latin collection or not.

The story of Sváfaðr and Skartheðin, who killed each other for the sake of a woman, seems rather foreign to Cato. While Sólarljóð, like Hávamál before it, is much concerned with courtship, Disticha Catonis is more inclined to give rules on how to conduct oneself within a marriage. Nevertheless, Cato ruled on similar situations long before the writer of Sólarljóð described this one. Cato reaches a somewhat different conclusion:

Cum venere et baccho lis est et iuncta voluptas:  
quod lautom est animo complectere, sed fuge lites.—(Dist. IV.30)

Sólarljóð's response to the idea of women causing strife is to avoid women. Cato is satisfied if one simply stops before things reach a violent conclusion. Both poems are very aware that pleasures can lead to pain, but the Christian poem advises the abandonment of all worldly pleasure, while the earlier more thinly Christianized poem suggests that pleasures be enjoyed in moderation and with an eye to avoiding the pain. On the whole, Cato worries more about excess pleasures in drink than excess pleasures in love. Sólarljóð's "Munaðar ríki / hefir marga tregat" (Sól. 10.1–2) echos Cato's "morbi causa mali minima est quaecumque voluptas" (Dist. IV.24), which recommends temperate drinking.
Sólarljóð ten has been connected with the sententia “Meretricem fuge” (Sent. 25), which is not inappropriate given the misogyny of medieval Christians, if not modern critics. The writer of Sólarljóð probably made little distinction between a meretrix and any other woman. Women are spoken of generally, in the plural, as becoming pernicious even if created pure. More significantly, perhaps, women seem to provide the only pleasure that Sólarljóð condemns. Nothing is said anywhere about drink, as in the Disticha. While in Disticha Catonis even games are suspect (Sent. 37: “aleam fuge”), in Sólarljóð games are explicitly preferable to love. The narrator laments that Sváfadr and Skarthedin no longer took pleasure in games because of their obsession with this woman (Sól. 12).

The great tragedy of Sváfadr and Skarthedin is not so much that they fell in love with a woman, but that they let a woman disrupt a beautiful friendship. In the words of Cato,

Litem inferre cave, cum quo tibi gratia iuncta est:
ira odium generat, concordia nutrit amorem.—(Dist. I.36)

The Sólarljóð passage really includes very little about intersexual relationships. We are shown how the idea of a woman becomes an obsession, but it is the relationship of the friends that is actually stressed. They lose pleasure in common activities, shared sorrow kindles hate, hate becomes anger, and anger leads to violence and death. Cato, of course, is wise enough to touch upon these problems.

Against the original sleepless nights, Cato warns “quod satis est dormi” (Sent. 19). Now this was probably originally intended as a warning not to oversleep, and in any case certainly gives no practical advice on how to sleep, but as a gnome it has almost universal application. The final anger between the two friends is covered in II.4 of the Disticha, where anger is said to keep one from disputing rationally. Cato’s advice may be more appropriate to arguments in the Althing, but it applies here nonetheless. The story of Sváfadr and

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86 Njörður P. Njardvik, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 232.
Skarthedín demonstrates the evils caused not only by the sin of lust but also by the sin of anger.

The sins of pride and selfishness are illustrated by Ráðny and Vébóði in Sólarljóð stanzas fifteen through eighteen. Stanza fifteen is a general introduction and not narrative. Arrogance is there said to cause one to turn away from God. Cato also advises against pride, but only because it irritates other people (Dist. II.13). Disticha Catonis is always focussed on this world. It is the Sólarljóð stanzas sixteen through eighteen which most reflect Cato, for it is here that the idea of the well-off falling on hard times is repeated. This is one of the major themes of the Disticha. In Sólarljóð the rich are punished by God for their pride and selfishness, while in the Disticha Catonis it is the fickleness of fate one has to fear. The transformation in condition is warned about in both works, most clearly by Cato in distich I.18 (see page above). But while Cato offers practical advice on thrift and industry (e.g. II.17, II.19, III.21), Sólarljóð implies that such disaster may best be avoided by shunning the sin punished. One must not think only of one’s own welfare, be arrogant, or forget God. Sólarljóð teaches that God punishes sin. Disticha Catonis says only that God decides mankind’s fate independently of mankind’s desire (II.12).

Stanza nineteen of Sólarljóð is the one which warns against trusting enemies and advises deceit in dealings with them. While this sounds very unChristian to the modern ear, it follows the precepts of Cato quite closely. Parallels with I.26 and III.13 have already been noted, and these are thematic and not simply linguistic through Hugsvinumál. Distich I.26 advises imitating the pretended friend, thereby foiling trickery with trickery. III.13 is a general admonition to learn from what happens to others. Yet it is the Catonian idea of simply not trusting others that is most pervasive throughout the story of Sörli and Vigülf. “Nihil temere credideris” is the rule of sententia 24, and it is especially dangerous to trust in the promises of others (Dist. I.13). The narrative stanzas that follow in Sólarljóð demonstrate the consequences of ignoring Cato’s distichs.

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87 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Sólsoängen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 232.
Sólarljóð stanza twenty-one details some of the tricks used by Vígúlf to allay the fears of Sörlí. Cato’s distich I.13 can be supplemented by I.27 warning against flattery and sweet speeches used to deceive. The ride to Rygjardal described in Sólarljóð twenty-two definitely violates Cato’s sententia 6, “cum bonis ambula,” and not because Sörlí rides rather than walks. Yet Cato has messages for the evil Vígúlf as well as for the naïve Sörlí. The attempt to hide the crime was futile, as described in stanza twenty-three of Sólarljóð. In like manner, Cato’s distich II.8 warns that wrongs can be hidden at most temporarily and are made evident in the end. To be sure, Sólarljóð is speaking of an omniscient God who sees crimes committed, while Disticha Catonis probably presumes only that there is no such thing as the perfect crime. But Sólarljóð does not seem to be giving any answer to the originally pagan work. Indeed, distich IV.34 agrees with Sólarljóð that God prohibits injustice against a just man. Just as stanza twenty-four suggests an infernal punishment for Vígúlf and his comrades, distich II.23 implies that the wicked will eventually be brought low.

The Sólarljóð stanzas 25, 27, and 28 all essentially recommend prayer, thus corresponding to Cato’s first sententia, “Deo supplica.” However, Sólarljóð’s relatively great detail on how to conduct Christian prayer does not much reflect the less Christian Disticha. Cato’s emphasis on the things of this world produces a definite scepticism of all matters religious, while the cultural gulf between pagan Rome and Catholic Iceland appears to be difficult to bridge in this moralistic poetry.

Disticha Catonis advises

Ture deum placa, vitulum sine crescat aratro:
ne credas gaudere deum, cum caede litatur.—(Dist. IV.38)

The main idea, as always, is one of moderation, this time in the field of religion. One may burn incense, but should not go to the extreme of sacrificing anything useful to one’s livelihood. Sólarljóð places its emphasis on the next world instead of this one, but even in this mortal world things go better the more one devotes to God. Religion should be the primary concern of life.
For Cato prayer suggests a pagan sacrifice in order to please God. In Sólarljóð, however, prayer is a petition to God for personal benefit. If one prays to God, Sólarljóð's stanza twenty-five assures a week of getting one's way, stanza twenty-seven holds the promise of good things, and stanza twenty-eight suggests that God may furnish whatever is lacking. Stanza twenty-nine continues this idea of Christian reward, but in heaven rather than on earth. One has but to ask.

This extreme difference in point of view makes Sólarljóð very much look like an answer to paganism. Gone is the need to propitiate angry gods through animal sacrifice. The new God, creator and father, offers not only eternal life, but tangible benefits in this world as well. Prayers will be answered. All the originally pagan Cato can offer is the admonition not to ask for too much (Dist. I.31). Yet Sólarljóð says nothing here about heathen practices. The poem is exuberant in its belief in the power of prayer, but it is only we who are comparing different religious systems. As a missionary effort Sólarljóð would have failed at the first unanswered prayer. The differences here are largely cultural, with Icelandic dísir and petitionary prayer on the one side, and a Mediterranean tradition of sacrificing cattle (and not biblical lambs) on the other. But the most important difference is that Sólarljóð is primarily a religious poem and Disticha Catonis is not.

Stanza twenty-six of Sólarljóð does not deal with prayer, despite being surrounded by stanzas that do. Although it is expressed in terms of what is good for the soul, the idea here is the common gnomic rule that one should not aggravate misdeeds with more of the same. The Sólarljóð text reads

Reiðiverk
thau thú unnit hefir
bøt thú eigi illu yfir
groétan göala
skaltu með góðum hlutum
that kvéða sálu sama.—(Sól. 26)

In the usual medieval Icelandic context suggested by the sagas, this is viewed as advice to pay wergeld or other compensation for a violent act committed in
anger. Looking at Disticha Catonis, however, allows one to break away from this stereotype to see a rule that might have more universal application. Cato has a rule similar to Sólarljóð's first helming:

Litis praeteritae noli maledicta referre:
post inimicitias iram meminisse malorum est.—(Dist. II.15)

Cato calls for forgetting a past conflict and not carrying ill-will into future relations. Distich IV.40 furthermore requires one to hold oneself accountable for personal misdeeds, which might be stretched to agree with the second helming of Sól. 26. But Cato is certainly not referring to Germanic feud in any case. The important element for Cato seems to be anger, with the strife probably related to words being spoken in anger. It could well be that Sólarljóð is also primarily referring by reiðiverk to words spoken in anger. These are thus to be ameliorated rather than amplified. The feud should be stopped long before the first blow is ever struck. Sólarljóð could be advocating a simple apology here rather than wergeld.

Stanza twenty-nine moves the theme of Sólarljóð heavenwards, picking up the theme of divine benefits available from prayer. Here, however, the benefits seem to be the feasts of heaven promised to anyone professing the Christian faith. Disticha Catonis says nothing about mortals going to heaven, unless it is that we shouldn’t even think about it (Dist. II.2). But Sólarljóð’s idea of being called early and coming late has a definite Catonian ring. Salvation, like any other opportunity, is something that must be seized immediately. Any large collection of gnomic verse could be expected to say as much, and Disticha Catonis is no exception. The distich IV.45 may be most apt, but II.26 is most picturesque:

Rem tibi quam nosces aptam dimittere noli:
fronte capillata, post est Occasio calva.—(Dist. II.26)

The concept of sin is something one might well expect to be absent from a pagan work, even one slightly Christianized like Disticha Catonis. Yet the avoidance of moral faults or vice is the purpose for which at least book II was written, according to its prologue: “...ut sapiens vivas, audi quae discere
possis, per quae semotum vitiis deducitur aevum....” Sólarljóð indicates in stanza thirty that sin is the reason for one to fear death, and that one who is innocent and has done nothing evil need not fear. Disticha Catonis is in total agreement with the underlying sentiment, but approaches the problem differently. Rather than the humble Christian goal of avoiding sin or shameful actions, Cato looks at human action from a positive or active viewpoint and suggests a more classical “virtute utere” (Sent. 35). The passage in Cato most resembling an admonition against Christian sin is IV.17, which recommends fleeing shameful pleasures, but the reason is not to be able to die with a clear conscience. One must preserve a good name. Disticha Catonis simply contains no hint of any afterlife. Death is not to be feared, but simply because it represents a termination of the miseries of life (Dist. III.22). There is no fear of death for those holding life in contempt (Dist. IV.22), but that is because such a person is really losing nothing when life ends. Cato is not implying a Christian contemptus mundi whereby one avoids sin in favor of reward in the next world.

Finally, Sólarljóð compares those “sem eiga hverfan hug” (Sól. 31.3) to wolves, and promises them what appears to be hellfire. Of course Cato offers no such accusations or threats. How Cato regards a fickle mind depends on the interpretation given to the idea. To use the word “fickle” may imply a deceit covered by Cato’s “nihil mentire” (Sent. 44), or something like sexual infidelity. If the latter is meant, Disticha Catonis has no unambiguous provisions against it. The common interpretation is that treachery is the sin preached against in Sólarljóð stanza thirty-one, but Cato is strangely silent on matters touching treachery or even loyalty. Should treachery be given a Christian context and called apostacy, Cato teaches only that divine matters are beyond the ken of mortals. But if the inconstancy condemned in Sólarljóð is nothing more than the literal changeable mind, then distich I.4 is directly in point:

Sperne repugnando tibi tu contrarius esse:
conveniet nulli qui secum dissidet ipse.—(Dist. I.4)

Cato is no supporter of foolish consistency and does allow for change depending on the details of the situation (Dist. I.7). What is intended in
distich I.4 is best known through the words of the very Catonian Polonius, "to thine own self be true." While this fits the wording of Sólarljóð stanza thirty-one, the violation of such a precept nevertheless hardly seems one that should merit a path of glowing coals in hell.

With stanza thirty-two, Sólarljóð informs us that seven counsels have been imparted. In the second helming the son is told:

\[
\text{görla thau mun} \\
\text{ok glata aldregi} \\
\text{öll eru thau nyt at nema.—(Sól. 32.3–6)}
\]

This stanza provides a very useful hint at the way in which gnomic advice is to be used. The gnomes are to be learned—that is, they are to be memorized. They should then be pondered and remembered. This is standard medieval educational procedure, and it reflects the way Disticha Catonis was used to teach both morals and Latin. Cato is prefaced, "Nunc te, fili karissime, docebo quo pacto morem animi tui componas. Igitur praeeptam mea ita legito, ut intellegas. Legere enim et non intellegere neglegere est" (Dist. I, prologus). This is repeated in Sent. 27, "Quae legeris memento." The point behind all of Cato, and Sólarljóð as well, is summed up in the brief sententia "Consultus esto." Both literary sons are to learn from the advice of their fathers.

Stanza thirty-three of Sólarljóð is an introductory stanza about the joys of life and fear of death. It doesn’t really give any advice, but in the stanzas that follow, it becomes clear that life’s joys are illusory and that death is a certainty that need only be feared if one’s life has been sinful. Cato advises a similar contempt of the world in order to remove fear of death (IV.22), but the disticha are inconsistent. Distich I.22, for example, advises against spoiling the enjoyment of life through a fear of death. The more specific sins listed by Sólarljóð find parallels somewhere among the gnomes of Cato. Stanza thirty-four preaches against pleasure, pride and greed, with the last receiving the main emphasis. Cato condemns at least shameful pleasure (IV.17), as well as pride (II.13), and greed (IV.1). Although these common themes are shared,

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88 Hamlet I.3: 78.
Sólarljóð does not reflect Cato in this stanza nearly as closely as it does Hávamál. Hávamál seventy-five shares with Sólarljóð thirty-four the idea of money making men into monkeys, while the corresponding Cato simply has men reduced to beggars by their avarice (Dist. IV.1). That "ljósir aurar verða at lægnum trega" (Sól. 34.4-5) may not, however, be so far removed from Cato’s distich IV.1. That things do not end the way they seem to be in the beginning certainly does reflect a basic premise of Disticha Catonis, including the theme of distich I.18, a parallel that has been noted previously via Hugsvinnsmál.89

The distich I.18, with its threat that the end rarely brings what the beginning promises, announces the central theme of Sólarljóð’s stanza thirty-five. Life seemed happy, but only because dreadful death had not been properly anticipated. Cato was also aware that the true value of life must be seen from a perspective that holds the end of that life in view. But Disticha Catonis does not advocate a medieval Christian contemptus mundi such as Sólarljóð seems to promote. Cato says on the contrary

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Linque metum leti; nam stultum est tempore in omni,} \\
\text{dum mortem metuas, amittere gaudia vitae.—(Dist. II.3)}
\end{align*}
\]

The message of Cato is essentially carpe diem, and if Sólarljóð has Cato in mind at all, it is giving a Christian answer to that idea. The one thing that both works can agree on is that death will surely come. Sólarljóð thirty-six shows that one most desirous of living must still bend to superior force and face the fate of all mankind in death. Cato IV.37 says the same. Death follows like a shadow.

It is perhaps not surprising that Disticha Catonis would have offered advice similar to the counsels of Sólarljóð. There is great similarity among all gnomic works. With stanza thirty-seven Sólarljóð departs from its advisory nature and moves once again into a section of narrative. This time, however, the narrative does not consist of moral exempla, and so cannot be

89 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 234.
summarized in gnomes that might have parallels in wisdom literature. The father’s narrative about the events surrounding his own death has no parallels in Disticha Catonis. He sees the sun and experiences a range of personal emotions. It is not until the final border into death is crossed that Cato is again invoked by “en ek hvarf kallaðr frá kvöulum” (Sól. 45.6). That death can be a release from torments is the theme of distich III.22.

The descriptions in Sólarljóð of death and the afterlife recall Disticha Catonis primarily when there is some specific moral rule being given by Sólarljóð. A clear gnome such as Sólarljóð’s “sæll er så er gott görir” (Sól. 49.3) is likely to reflect earlier gnomes. In these cases there are clear parallels in Disticha Catonis such as the “virtute utere” of Sent. 35. Cato has examples of good works being rewarded, and evil actions being punished, but such rewards and punishments are the logical social results of the actions themselves and do not usually involve divine intervention. Heaven and hell are foreign to Disticha Catonis. The virtues and vices of Sólarljóð are often the same virtues and vices of Cato, but where the exact nature of those virtues and vices are unclear in the Icelandic poem, one cannot apply to Cato for clarification. The particularly Christian aspects of Sólarljóð, such as distinguishing “heiðnar stjörnur” (Sól. 60.4), are not to be found in Disticha Catonis at all.

Stanzas thirty-seven through sixty-eight of Sólarljóð contain very few reflections of Cato. The mysterious Vánarstjarna, which flies from the breast of the dying man of stanza forty-six, does invoke distich II.25. Cato’s “spes una hominem nec morte relinquit”—that hope alone is retained until death—could produce an image of that hope finally departing in death’s final moment. Stanza forty-nine has been compared to distich II.23 by way of Hugsvinnsmål,90 and the idea that “Sinna verka / nytr seggja hverr” (Sól. 49.1–2) is not inconsonant with “indulget Fortuna malis, ut vincere possit” (Dist. II.23.2). Sólarljóð’s stanza sixty-one shares with Cato’s distich II.13 a possible concern with envy, and stanza sixty-three echoes Cato’s rule not to covet another’s property (Sent. 54). Otherwise, the parts of Sólarljóð dealing

90 Njóður P. Njarðvík, Solsängen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 234.
with death and hell reflect only the general, rather stoic attitudes of *Disticha Catonis* regarding death and worldly fortune.

When *Sólarljóð* condemns unambiguous sins that were also frowned upon by the pagan Roman world, there is more contact with *Disticha Catonis*. In stanza sixty-six of *Sólarljóð*, pride is condemned. The distichs II.16, III.17, and IV.4 may all apply, depending upon which aspect of *Sólarljóð*'s pride is considered—overestimation of personal value, expression of pride in overly fancy dress, or simply blowing one's own horn. II.13 is the most general reference to pride in *Disticha Catonis*, and the one that best fits the idea in *Sólarljóð*. That the most general references constitute the closest parallels seems to confirm that the two poems simply share genre and that *Sólarljóð* has not intentionally borrowed from *Disticha Catonis*.

With stanza sixty-six, *Sólarljóð* once again begins to frequently repeat the advice of Cato. This stanza is not one of the natural divisions of the poem, coming somewhat before the transition to images reported from heaven. The return to Catonian ideas seems coincidental, and indeed, some of the points of contact are situations where the paternal seers seem to give opposing advice. Or, in traditional terminology, *Sólarljóð* provides an answer to *Disticha Catonis*.

Stanza sixty-seven of *Sólarljóð*, however, is indeed a close correspondence to various gnomes of Cato. It reflects Cato's "nihil mentire" (*Sent. 44* and its "foro parce," (*Sent. 5*), if that refers to avoiding popular opinion. *Sólarljóð*'s sin of having "ord á annan logit" (*Sól. 66.3*) is condemned at greater length in the *disticha* proper:

\[
\text{Rumores fuge neu studeas novus auctor haberi;}
\text{nam nulli tacuisse nocet, nocet esse locutum.—(Dist. I.12)}
\]

The same idea is viewed from the opposite perspective in III.2, which advises one to ignore the gossip of others.

In societies where personal and familial honor is valued much more highly than turning the other cheek, the significance of avoiding false tales or other inflammatory comments is probably hard to overstate. One need only think
of Njáls saga. Disticha Catonis gives an indication of the supreme importance attached to holding one's tongue when it says

\[
\text{Virtutem primam esse puto, compescere linguam: proximus ille deo est qui scit ratione tacere.—(Dist. I.3)}
\]

The teller of false tales was also warned against in stanza 118 of Hávamál, so it is not at all surprising that Sólarljóð as well should find this wisdom important.

The single most basic premise of Sólarljóð seems to be that pain always follows pleasure. Life is followed by death, and sin is repaid in hell. This is the theme of stanza sixty-eight, and it reflects Disticha Catonis IV.24, which warns that disease arises from pleasure, and IV.17, which advises that one flee the joys of life to preserve honor. The innovation of Sólarljóð is the afterlife wherein balance is restored. Cato has nothing to say about punishment in hell.

Somewhat surprisingly, thematic parallels between Disticha Catonis and Sólarljóð become somewhat more common after the sixty-ninth stanza, when Sólarljóð turns its attention to the rewards of heaven. Cato says nothing about heaven, but heaven is the place where virtue is rewarded, and Cato does speak about virtue. On the whole, Disticha Catonis is more concerned with teaching virtue than condemning vice. However, there is not always a complete correspondence between Cato and the more Christian poem when it comes to determining what constitutes virtue. To the extent of the discrepancy, Sólarljóð may again be viewed as an answer to heathendom.

Sólarljóð sixty-nine praises those “er mart höfðu / gefi at guðs lögum” (Sól. 69.2-3). Assuming this line to correctly read mart, it stands in direct opposition to Cato’s distich IV.38, which advocated burning incense rather than sacrificing oxen (see above, page ). If, however, the correct reading is mark, then Sólarljóð could possibly be following Cato’s sense of doing things as prescribed rather than going to excess. Nonetheless, it is very difficult to imagine Sólarljóð recommending any sort of restraint in worshipping God.
Stanza seventy of Sólarljóð places into heaven those who give aid to the poor. Disticha Catonis recommends giving (Sent. 16), but it always views a gift as an investment or loan. It never suggests that anything should be given to the poor, although Dist. II.1 would allow a gift to a stranger if it meant thereby winning a friend. Distich IV.8 insists that giving is profitable, and so Sólarljóð’s explanation that giving is rewarded in heaven may recall Cato. But Sólarljóð is more likely to be an answer to the earlier idea that one should only give to friends who can help one in return. Distich III.9 restricts even this generosity by suggesting that one give to ones friends only when one is rich and approaching death, and hence likely never to risk want. Distich I.40 permits giving to friends, but warns to remember oneself when giving to others. Any idea in Sólarljóð of giving specifically to the poor is definitely Christian and not Catonian.

Sólarljóð seventy-one may be yet another answer to the Disticha Catonis, insofar as it advocates severe fasting. The earlier work advised moderation in eating in distich II.28, putting its emphasis on a healthy diet. The sententia 18, “convivare raro,” is surely advising against excessive parties rather than against regular meals. Distich II.30 again refers to health, “quod primum est,” making clear that Cato would never recommend denying the needs of the body. Sólarljóð’s praise of fasting is not taken from Disticha Catonis, and could only be an answer to it, assuming Cato to have been regarded at all.

The reward promised in Sólarljóð stanza seventy-two to those feeding their mothers may reflect Cato’s sententiae two and three, calling for love of parents and kin. It seems a curious Christian virtue to single out, but given Sólarljóð’s tendency towards misogyny, this may be an incorporation of the Catonian principle in distich III.24 to treat both parents equally.

When Sólarljóð promises purgation to penitents as it does in stanza seventy-three, it seems unlikely that a self-serving collection of advice like Disticha Catonis would contain anything similar. Yet IV.40 calls for the same self-tortment reflected in Sólarljóð, though Cato is probably to be taken less literally:
Cum quid peccaris, castiga te ipse subinde:

vulnera dum sanas, dolor est medicina doloris.—(Dist. IV.40)

Likewise, the salvation of those murdered in innocence (Sól. 74) reflects Cato, even though Cato is generally concerned much more with life than with death. Distich IV.46 says not to celebrate the sudden death of an evil person, but “felices obeunt quorum sine crimine vita est.” It is the one who has lived the faultless life whose death is happy, both for Cato and Sólarljóð. Sólarljóð sends to heaven some of the same people Cato praises.

Sólarljóð continues beyond the descriptions of paradise, beginning with an invocation of the Trinity (Sól. 75), which clearly can have no roots in Disticha Catonis. The obscure stanzas that follow may or may not stem in part from the advice of Cato, since it is not very clear what they are advising. However, the possible parallels in Cato show a potentially common medieval approach to ethical problems that may help illuminate the darker passages of Sólarljóð.

Bjúgvör and Listvör sit and awaken hate with the iron gore dripping from their nostrils:

Bjúgvör ok Listvör
sitja í Herðis dyrum
organs stóli á
járna dreyri
fellr þr nösum theim
sá vekr fjón með fyrðum.—(Sól. 76)

This is generally taken as a warning against lust. That lust for women can cause hate was made clear in the story of Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn earlier in Sólarljóð. But aside from sententia 25, “meretricem fuge,” lust seems to be unknown to Disticha Catonis. A woman who causes strife is to be avoided in any event, but what makes a woman attractive is her dowry (Dist. III.12).

For Disticha Catonis, it is not lust that causes hate, but but anger:

Litem inferre cave, cum quo tibi gratia iuncta est:
ira odium generat, concordia nutrit amorem.—(Dist. I.36)
Anger is spoken against again in Dist. II.4. However, Cato does not really explain what causes anger. It generally appears to be an emotion one should be able to control (Sent. 45).

If, instead of lust, Sólarljóð is speaking against gossip in stanza seventy-six, the poem shares a major interest of the Disticha Catonis. Words can lead to strife, as explained in Dist. II.11, where one is advised not to argue with friends. An argument can escalate into anger and hate. There is a general approval of silence reflected in sententia 51, distich I.10, and distich III.19. Distich III.23. recommends silence (and avoidance of anger) even when faced with a wife’s tongue. Distich I.3 praises silence as a virtue, while distich I.12 condemns rumor. Gossip is discussed from the point of view of the recipient or the victim in the distichs I.8, I.13, I.17. and III.2. Gossip is not to be believed, so that it is never given the chance to cause anger, hate, or strife.

Stanza seventy-seven, with Óðins kván in her ship, is also usually seen as referring to lust. While Disticha Catonis worries little about lust, Sólarljóð’s image of the ship, however, does occur in Cato:

Cum sis incautus nec rem ratione gubernes,

noli Fortunam, quae non est, dicere caecam.—(Dist. IV.3)

Yet it is not the personified feminine Fortune who is at the helm of Cato’s ship. The idea of a ship not being carefully steered and so appearing to be in the hands of blind fate does not not shed much light on Sólarljóð. The strange woman of Sólarljóð is propelling rather than guiding the ship of stanza seventy-seven.

Stanza seventy-eight appears to discuss the inheritance from the father and Sólkatlía’s sons of the hart’s horn borne by Vigdvalinn. The gnome of Cato most directly in point seems to be the brief sententia 50, which says no more than to remember a gift given. But if this refers to Christ’s gift of salvation and the harrowing of hell, it is a rather pointed answer to Cato’s distich IV.14:

Cum sis ipse nocens, moritur cur victima pro te?

stultitia est morte alterius sperare salutem.—(Dist. IV.14)
Christian salvation is a gift earned by Christ through his crucifixion. Cato at first view seems to ridicule this idea. But the point of the distich is not that there cannot be such a gift, but rather that it is silly to claim this gift while continuing to sin. Christian salvation is not dependent on a mortal’s actions. It is a gift. But the suffering of Christ was nonetheless expected to be repaid by the Christian through his own works and sinless Christian life. The distich no doubt referred originally to burnt offerings, but an *interpretatio christiana* of Cato makes it a support for *Sólarljóð*, although *Sólarljóð* says nothing here about sin.

The obscure lines about the daughters of Njörðr in stanza seventy-nine are not enlightened by anything in *Disticha Catonis*. Since they carve runes (*Sól.* 79.1–2), perhaps Cato would say "litteras discere" (*Sent.* 38), but that would be a response by the older poem to the newer. Likewise, stanza eighty of *Sólarljóð* is too mysterious for any roots to be detected. If the waking of blood by Sváfr and Sváfrlogi refers to the incitement of violence, then perhaps *sententiae* forty-one or forty-five, or distiches I.36 or II.15 may be stretched to fit. But Cato says nothing about blood brotherhood if that is behind the *Sólarljóð* stanza.

At his final departure, the father from *Sólarljóð* speaks of meeting again on the day of rejoicing, and he prays for both the dead and the living (*Sól.* 82). Cato is more strictly proverbial and contains no prayers. The only theme from *Disticha Catonis* that seems applicable is that of death being joyous, for it is in death that father and son will be reunited. Distichs I.22 and IV.22 say not to fear death, III.22 considers death a release, and IV.43 considers death appropriate for some. It is only Cato’s distich IV.46 that can be read as considering death the crowning joy of a blameless life. Yet *Sólarljóð* does not seem to follow the *Disticha* even here, for the day of mankind’s rejoicing is not the day of death, but the day of the Second Resurrection when all faithful Christians will be reunited. Cato is simply not concerned with the possibility of life after death, and that is the primary interest of *Sólarljóð*. 
5.4.6. Conclusion

Cato's *Disticha Catonis de moribus* was an extremely popular book during the Middle Ages. It was a vital part of Latin education in Europe for many centuries, if not even from the time of its composition in the third or fourth century AD. It was probably memorized by all people seeking a Latin education during the Middle Ages, and it was quoted frequently in other literature. The book inspired many imitators, so that it eventually formed the backbone of an entire genre of medieval wisdom literature.

*Sólarljóð* probably did not borrow directly from *Disticha Catonis*. The themes are often parallel, and where they diverge *Sólarljóð* sometimes appears as if it is giving a Christian response to the more mundane concerns of the classical poem. Yet it is more likely that the two poems simply share many of the same underlying concerns. Both poems give advice on how to live, and the shared themes are general enough to be almost universal. Since the author of *Sólarljóð* appears to have been well educated, he or she was almost certainly familiar with *Disticha Catonis*. But he or she did not directly translate anything from it into *Sólarljóð*. The concerns of *Disticha Catonis* were common concerns of the European Middle Ages and reflected in many different collections of "Catonian" advice. Both *Disticha Catonis* and *Sólarljóð* belong to the same generic corpus of medieval wisdom literature. An examination of Cato's approach and emphasis may help explain some of the darker passages of *Sólarljóð* insofar as the two poems have similar approaches and emphases, but *Disticha Catonis* cannot be viewed as a certain source of any ideas.

*Sólarljóð* may have taken its father-son framework from Cato, but this frame was so common it need not have come from the *Disticha* unmediated. In form, the two helmings of *ljóðahátr* correspond functionally to a distich. That is, both verse forms facilitate the giving of a rule plus an example or reason. But *Sólarljóð* is not the first Icelandic poem to use *ljóðahátr*. All correspondences between the two poems are of a general nature typical of medieval wisdom poetry.
Sólarljóð corresponds more closely to Disticha Catonis in some of its sections than it does in others. Björn Ólsen noted that Sólarljóð was most similar to Hávamál in its opening narrative passages, but he thought the rest of the poem to more resemble Disticha Catonis. In fact, it is those same opening narrative passages where Sólarljóð also most resembles Disticha Catonis. It is at the beginning of Sólarljóð that the three poems are most alike, because it is there that Sólarljóð gives the same sort of practical worldly advice on the same general gnomic themes as the other two poems.

In the seven wise counsels of Sólarljóð one would expect to find closer parallels with Disticha Catonis, since here the usual gnomic form of straight advice is used rather than narrative. Because Sólarljóð mostly advises prayer, however, it has little in common with the advice of Cato. Only when the advice relates to sinning are the two poems much alike. Christian sins are not all so different from pagan vices.

The narrative structure of Sólarljóð clearly does not preclude thematic parallels with the Latin gnomes. Not only the opening exempla, but also the descriptions of pleasure in the world and the gradual movement towards death echo the Disticha. In both poems life can be viewed as a pleasant realm from which one is inevitably called by death. However, when it comes to a description of actually dying and meeting with the horrors of Hel, Disticha Catonis has nothing similar to Sólarljóð. The "Sól ek só" passages of Sólarljóð, for example, are filled with emotion, but lacking any sort of moral advice. Cato gives only advice, and doesn’t look beyond death unless in matters of preserving fame or providing for offspring.

When Sólarljóð discusses the people tormented in hell, the parallels with Disticha Catonis again become fewer, simply because the sins being punished in Sólarljóð’s hell are particularly Christian transgressions, such as breaking the Sabbath, and not crimes against people. Where the crimes do have mortal victims, as with theft or false accusation, both poems are concerned. Somewhat surprisingly, Cato refers more often to types shown by Sólarljóð to

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be rewarded after death than to those condemned there as sinners. However, *Disticha Catonis* is as likely to condemn their fanaticism as to praise their goodness.

Both poems warn against pride and admonish that pain always follows pleasure. Both focus closely on death as the ultimate end of all mortal concerns, though only *Sólarrlóð* accepts an afterlife. Both poems are concerned with passing on wisdom from father to son. *Sólarrlóð* holds many themes in common with *Disticha Catonis*, but there are no passages that resemble quotation.

5.5. **Hugsvinnsmál**

5.5.1. **Introduction**

*Hugsvinnsmál* is the oldest preserved Icelandic translation of the *Disticha Catonis*. It is often referred to as a paraphrase since it does not follow the Latin original as exactly as a careful modern translation might, but considering the requirements of verse translation generally, *Hugsvinnsmál* follows its model quite closely. There have been losses and corruptions of *Hugsvinnsmál* over time, and perhaps also additions, as can be seen from Birgitta Tuvestrand’s examination of forty-two *Hugsvinnsmál* manuscripts.\(^92\) As with *Sólarrlóð*, we do not have access to a single author’s original poem.

*Hugsvinnsmál* uses the same *ljóðaháttr* verse form as *Sólarrlóð*, and there are enough shared phrases to make it probable that there has been direct influence between the two works. Both poems have been given similar dates, with Björn Ólsen going so far as to suggest that both were written by the same author.\(^93\) While *Sólarrlóð* is generally assumed to have borrowed its language from *Hugsvinnsmál*, Njórdur Njarðvík suggests that it could be

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Hugsvinnsmál that borrowed from Sólarljóð.94 Which is the original and which the copy depends, of course, on the relative ages of the poems, something that is still not certain.

In any case, the relationship between Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð is not as close as the literature might lead one to believe. To be sure, there are stylistic similarities and several words or phrases that both poems share in common. The shared phrases, however, are more likely to invert the order of the words they encompass than to repeat them exactly, and the similar sounding passages are scattered rather randomly through the poems. The allegedly borrowed words do not correspond to borrowed themes.

5.5.2. Hugsvinnsmál and Disticha Catonis.

Hugsvinnsmál does not differ greatly in thematic content from Disticha Catonis, and so the same thematic parallels demonstrated between Cato and Sólarljóð generally hold for comparisons between Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð as well. As a translation, Hugsvinnsmál is not an exact rendering of the original. Hugsvinnsmál is more interested in transferring the moral value of its model than in rendering an Icelandic equivalent for each Latin word. Furthermore, two lines of Latin verse are usually expanded into six lines of Icelandic ljóðaháttr. Some cultural changes were made, and some of the more repetitive Latin stanzas were conflated in the Icelandic. Given these limitations, however, Hugsvinnsmál is really a surprisingly close medieval translation.

The first two stanzas of Hugsvinnsmál correspond to the epistola of Disticha Catonis. The brevis sententiae are translated in stanzas three through sixteen, although the ordering of the original is not followed. A sententia may be translated as one line or as an entire helming. Aside from some stanzas devoted to the Latin prologues, the remainder of the Icelandic poem translates the disticha proper. There is almost always a one-to-one correspondence between Latin distich and Icelandic stanza, so that one is

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tempted to assume the exceptions are due to corruptions of the text. The ordering of the stanzas also follows the Latin closely, but this tendency has been exaggerated by modern editors.

The correspondence of Icelandic translation to Latin original has been well documented by Birgitta Tuvestrand, who assigned an appropriate Latin distich to each stanza of Hugsvinnsmál, even where the similarity is not always crystal clear.95 Missing from the Icelandic are sententiae 5, 36, and 37.96 From Book II, distiches 3 and 17 are missing, Book III lacks 8, 11, and 23, and Book IV is without distiches 4, 11, 32, 36, 45, 47, and 48. Hugsvinnsmál renders distich IV.49 only in the sense that both poems have a concluding stanza. While some of the missing Latin stanzas may have provided some slight cultural challenge to the translator, not all of them would have. Any intentional omissions are likely to have been made primarily to limit the repetitiveness of the original, though a great deal of repetitiveness is still retained or even added. Most omissions probably indicate losses during transmission. The missing helming of Hugsvinnsmál's fifth stanza, for example, could conceivably account for all three of the missing sententiae. On the other hand, later lines or stanzas have almost certainly been added to the poem, perhaps displacing what had been there originally, or perhaps filling gaps left by the original translator.

The content of Hugsvinnsmál differs from that of Disticha Catonis in three important ways. First, Hugsvinnsmál supplies an additional narrative framework for its advice. Second, it speaks from a more Icelandic and less Roman point of view, inasmuch as the culture it reflects is less academic, less urban, and less well-off. Finally, and most important, Hugsvinnsmál is much more Christian than Disticha Catonis.

The introduction of *Hugsvinnsmála* begins with an appellation to a larger audience, “Heire Segger,” not found in the Latin. Thus a new framework, in which the speaker is addressing this audience of “men,” encloses the earlier frame where the advice was aimed directly at the original speaker’s son. The Icelandic poem is a narration to others, in direct discourse, of what the earlier father taught his son. Once the stage is set, the poem continues as a monologue from father to son, in second-person imperatives at least as consistent as the original Latin.

The “fili carissimo” of Cato’s prologue is now “minn einka Son” (*Hugs. 2.2e*), where affection is shown not through overt expression, but in a more reserved way characteristic of the North. The intimate familial relationship is stressed, while the affection, although still stated, is displaced to the advice given: “Astsamleg rad” (*Hugs. 2.1e*). Thus the sentiment of the Latin is retained, but in a way that seems much more Icelandic. Furthermore, there are now additional Christian overtones with the “only son” of the Catholic *credo* being recalled. *Hugsvinnsmála* has greatly Christianized Cato throughout, even though it is stressed from the very beginning that this is advice that had been given by a heathen man (*Hugs. 1.5*). Perhaps the author was unsure about Cato’s orthodoxy.

This same double framework is made visible again at the end of the poem. In the penultimate stanza the heathen wise man tells his son:

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Astsamleg rad
kenni eg thier, minn einka son,
thesi er eg kuëd hid hefe.
frædi thessi
lattu thier filgia
allt til endadags.—(*Hugs. 148(e)*),
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Hugsvinnsmál alters the Latin original here, closing off the poem with material taken from the Prologue to Book IV of the Disticha Catonis. This stanza very closely reflects the introductory framework:

Astsamleg rad  
kenni eg thier minn einka Son;  
mundu thau epter óll.  
Galæus thu verdur,  
ef thu Gleyma villt,  
thui er tharf hoskur ad hafa—(Hugs. 2(e)).

The final stanza returns to the immediate narrator and replaces the final Latin distich with a new conclusion. Here the narrator again encloses the advice of the heathen Hugsvinn to his son within the outer frame where he is relating a poem to a group of men. It is this outermost frame from which the poem’s name has been taken:

As these two manuscript versions indicate, it is not clear that the poet intended to name his work here, but the end of the poem is marked unambiguously.


Within each of its narrative frames, *Hugsvinnsmál* continues to emphasize the imparting of wisdom in the same manner as the *Disticha Catonis* did. The advice given consists to a large degree in recommendations to become wise, and not just middling wise as in *Hávamál*. However, cultural differences arise between the Latin and the Icelandic version. In *Hugsvinnsmál*, for instance, there is a notable reduction in the number of references to books. Books are not ignored completely, with *sententia* 38, "litteras disce," translated as "Bækur og runer / nem thu Blijdlega" (*Hugs*. 12). But in *Hugsvinnsmál* books play much less of a role in the process of gaining wisdom:

libros lege
quae legeris memento
liberos erudi—

Minne og Mannvit
nem thu a margann veg
oc kenn thad sijdan sonum

*(sent. 26, 27, 28).*

—(*Hugs*. 8b(e)).

Wisdom comes from many sources in *Hugsvinnsmál*, usually from wise men, either through advice or example. This advice may or may not be written. The libraries of medieval Iceland could not have matched those of Rome, and the Icelandic translator seems to have taken this into consideration. The prologue to Book II of Cato, for example, lists Vergil, Macer, Lucan and Ovid, but *Hugsvinnsmál* simply recommends books generally as one repository of knowledge:

Alsnotur madur,
er ithrotter nema vill
oc vel margt vita,
bækur hann lesi,
thær er górdu gumnar spakir
oc kendu frodleik firdum.

thuijad i flestum Bokum fornum
stendur til flestra hluta
Radafióld Ritin.—(*Hugs*. 55, 56(e))
The fragmentary stanza fifty-six is probably an alternate reading for the second helming of fifty-five, and not an original reiteration of the book theme. It is clear that at least Vergil was known in Iceland, surely by the time of Snorri, but Hugsvinnsmál names no authors.

Hugsvinnsmál seems to retreat somewhat not only from pressing the cause of books, but also from the association the original Disticha Catonis had with a scholarly environment. The Latin distich IV.48, which recommends learning from life in addition to more formal studies or booklearning is lost, or merged with other distiches in Hugsvinnsmál stanza 130. While distich IV.29 admonishes not to be ashamed to be taught, Hugsvinnsmál 132 simply recommends asking for news. In distich IV.6 Cato speaks of correction by teacher and parents, but Hugsvinnsmál 114 speaks only of parents. The master of sententia 11 does remain a teacher, but there is otherwise little indication in Hugsvinnsmál that learning is to take place in an academic environment.

On the other hand, teaching advice to others is perhaps emphasized slightly more in the Icelandic than in the Latin. Hugsvinnsmál stanza 127 combines learning with teaching as did the original distich IV.23. Distich III.1, which advocated learning throughout life, is replaced by stanzas eighty-six and eighty-seven which recommend teaching as perhaps the highest good to which one may aspire:

    Manndad meire
    getur eigi fyrer Molld ofan
    enn kenna god rad Gumnum. (Hugs. 87a (e)).

Wise advice may still come from a slave (Dist. III.10) but in translation, the thrall may be even wiser than the free man (Hugs. 95).

Cato had a four-stage program related to learning. One was to seek wisdom (Dist. IV.27), evaluate it (Dist. III.18), remember it (sent. 27), and pass it on (Dist. IV.23, sent. 40). Hugsvinnsmál changes this pattern. Evaluation of advice no longer seems to be necessary. Carolyn Larrington remarks on the alteration of the relevant distich III.18 to make it “assert the worth of poetry”
rather than challenge poetry’s veracity.\textsuperscript{99} No longer is one advised to
disbelieve the words of poets, but rather to learn them:

\begin{quote}
Gamansamleg lióð
skalltu af greppum nema
oc margfrodur vera,
thuiad agiætleg Lióð
bera fyrer ytasonu
skalld til skemtanar. (Hugs. 103(e)).
\end{quote}

The valuation of entertainment is definitely out of character with the rest of
the poem. There is still talk of banquets, to be sure, but these are gatherings
designed more for the exchange of ideas than for pleasure. The moderation
Cato generally advised has often been changed in \textit{Hugsvinnsmál} to
recommend total abstinence of a pleasure or vice. Hence stanza 103 does
stand out from the others. Larrington is surely justified in her suggestion
that “Only in one stanza do we feel that the \textit{Hugsvinnsmál}-poet speaks with
his own voice, the voice of a poet who is proud of his craft and estimates
highly its value in his own culture.”\textsuperscript{100}

Nonetheless, Stanza 103 of \textit{Hugsvinnsmál} can still be reconciled with the rest
of the translation. The oldest surviving manuscript gives the third line as
“ok maurg fræði muna” (Hugs. 103.3(A)), indicating that one can indeed learn
wisdom from these entertaining songs. This would have been the idea
behind writing a didactic poem like \textit{Hugsvinnsmál} or Sólarljóð. The old
songs would be valuable not as entertainment, but more likely despite their
being entertaining. \textit{Dist.} III.6 and Hugs. 92 both agree that difficult work
should not always be approached with a dull, serious attitude. It seems more
in character with the rest of the advice that one should learn songs in order to
gain or remember wisdom than that one should entertain. Entertainment
may indeed be the purpose of the poet, but the listener may still find words of

\textsuperscript{99} Carolyne Larrington, \textit{A Store of Common Sense} (Oxford: Clarendon,

\textsuperscript{100} Carolyne Larrington, \textit{A Store of Common Sense} (Oxford: Clarendon,
wisdom in the song. Be this as it may, the mixed message from the poet written about in Cato has shifted in Hugsvinnsmál to a message containing more truth and less deception.

In Hugsvinnsmál the evaluation of truth and deceit is not an intellectual activity but a moral one. The wisdom of a poet does not need to be sifted from among his fictions. Wisdom is found from the wise man, and the wise man is, of course, the good Christian. He is to be the model for action and the advisor to be trusted. The evil man is not to be believed, and his actions, even when they seem intellectually justified (i.e. successful), are not to be emulated (Hugs. 64). The evil man can serve only as a bad example. This leaves the problem of determining who is good and who evil, especially since an enemy is not necessarily evil. The solution seems to come through familiarity and reputation, making strangers especially dangerous. The translation of Distich I.32, which in Latin values the tried and true over the new and unknown, now emphasizes the need to test strangers and to distrust foreigners (Hugs. 47). In Hugsvinnsmál the wisdom of advice is related to the moral authority of the adviser rather than on an evaluative process carried out by the recipient of the advice, despite the poem itself being presented as the advice of a heathen man.

Both Disticha Catonis and Hugsvinnsmál advise one to seek wisdom. But while the Cato expects the knowledge gained to be intellectually evaluated, Hugsvinnsmál expects a moral evaluation of the person transmitting the wisdom. Both poems stress the importance of understanding and remembering the advice given, with Icelandic learning seeming simply to presuppose memory. Both poems also stress the importance of passing wisdom on to others through teaching or advising. Hugsvinnsmál, however, more strongly reflects an equation of wisdom with the wise moral man.

ad higgnun monnum
nem thu hoskleg rad
oc lat thier ibua.
Ørthris Rada
verdur sa alldreie,
sem gírnist margt ad muna. (Hugs. 130)
This conflation of distiches IV.23, IV.27 and IV.48 adds the idea of wisdom dwelling within the one who has learned it, (Hugs. 130.3). Wisdom is no longer a series of ad hoc principles applied by anyone who has heard them, but something which informs the moral character of the learner of wisdom. Wisdom lives within the wise man who then presumably lives in such a way as to exhibit wisdom. At least he is never without counsel, and needs no recourse to books or outsiders.

Most of the cultural variation of Hugsvinnsmál from its model is of the minor type where a shore (Dist. IV.33) becomes a fjord (Hugs. 135). Roman politics are clearly replaced by underlying Icelandic political and social structures, although there is nothing as explicit as mention of the Althing. Such cultural changes seem mostly accidental. Wine is still wine, for example (sent. 22; Hugs. 10.3), though it was probably not common on Iceland. Most cultural variation seems related to monetary matters. The rich Icelander does not seem as wealthy as his Roman counterpart. Hugsvinnsmál tends to stress the creation of wealth through physical labor and to give less attention to saving it. The Latin distich II,5 recommends generosity, but the equivalent Icelandic stanza sixty-one elaborates on the idea by adding that it is food with which one should be generous. The financial culture of Hugsvinnsmál seems much closer to mere subsistence.

The change to a Christian culture in Hugsvinnsmál is much more dramatic. Indeed, if the Icelandic seems to increase emphasis on living economically, it may partly be due to the Christian value put on poverty. Unlike its forebear, Hugsvinnsmál is unambiguously Christian. As Carolyne Larrington noted, the few plural references to gods have been removed, and even the references to Janus, Fortuna and Occasio have been deleted.\textsuperscript{101} The only possible pagan reference is to Hel in stanza thirty-five, where a more neutral daudi would not have alliterated.

The Christian viewpoint is stressed from the beginning. Sententia 1, "deo supplica," is expanded into an entire helming:

tharflatur og thacklatur
skalltu fyrer thijnum Gude,
og vammalaus vera—(*Hugs. 3.1–3(e)).

Other changes are more subtle, as when “irascere ob rem” (*sent. 30) loses its
idea of justifiable anger in favor of turning another cheek with the
admonition “hatre thu hafna” (*Hugs. 9.1), to abandon hate completely.

The first of Cato’s distiches, I.1, no longer suggests that God may not be spirit.
It has been replaced with a highly Christianized stanza recalling the Christian
first commandment of Matthew 22:37:

   Allra Rada
   tel eg thad best vera
   ad Góðga ædstann Gud.
   Med hreinu hiarta
   skalltu a hann trua
   og elska af ollum hug.—(*Hugs. 17 (e))

Likewise, in stanza fifty-seven there is a very Christian replacement for the
original prologue to Book II, which appears to make a sinless life a
prerequisite to acquiring wisdom.

*Hugsvinnsmál’s stanza fifty-nine warns not to be concerned with what God
keeps concealed from mankind, and is a Christianized version of Distich II.2.
This distich, however, had already gained a more acceptable form in the Latin
original.

   An di sint caelumque regant, ne quaere doceri:
   cum sis mortalis, quae sunt mortalis cura—(*Dist. II.2).

was altered so that the first line read:

   Mitte arcana dei caelumque inquirere quid sit—(*Dist. II.2.1).

Likewise, distich IV.38 on the preference of incense over animal sacrifice was
also monotheistic in the Latin, and not especially unchristian in theme.
Nonetheless, *Hugsvinnsmál has altered it to contain a much more Catholic
message. Stanza 138 tells us that this incense is “Reikilsis ilm, / thann er kemur af riettum sidum” (Hugs. 138.4–5 (e)). Correct moral conduct is what God wants in preference to sacrifice.

Throughout Hugsvinnsmál as a whole, the Christianization is usually subtle, even subjectively influenced by its new context. Roman faults, for example, look like Icelandic sins, although the actual words used may be ambiguous in both languages. The “luxuriam” of distich II.19.1, for example, is transformed into “lîjkams munud” (Hugs. 73.3(e)), making a secular luxury into a very Christian-sounding judgemental “pleasures of the flesh.” The second helming is an addition with clear reference to sin:

    Ordstyr hærra
    getr eingi madur
    enn hann vid syndum siae. (Hugs. 73.4–6(e)).

In stanza 116, “luxury” is rendered as a more neutral “Sæl-lijfe,” but this is said to lead to “Lîjkams lestir,” or carnal sins.

Perhaps the most interesting Christianization in Hugsvinnsmál is its rendering of Distich IV.14. This is the distich that questions the assistance one can gain through the sacrificial death of another:

    Cum sis ipse nocens, moritur cur victima pro te?
    stultitia est morte alterius sperare salutem—(Dist. IV.14).

This is rendered as

    Blot nie forner
    tharf ei til batnadar ad hafa
    fyrer afgiorder ita.
    Heimskur er sa,
    er ætlar sier til hialpar,
    tho hann sæfi smala.
    thuiad Guds Elska
    oc aldigguer sider
    bæta um gíórvan glæp—(Hugs. 119(e)).
This stanza has become a repetition of the idea in Distich IV.38, that there is no need to sacrifice animals. Lines four through six can be read as stressing the temporal foolishness of trying to benefit oneself by killing one's own livestock. The first three lines of the stanza, however, bring in the religious element, saying that one cannot compensate for sin by making sacrifices or offerings. In other words, incense and animals are all equally useless. God demands something else.

If Hugsvinnsmál 119 had ended after six lines as the verseform requires, its message would have been simply that one cannot compensate for ones transgressions by making sacrifices or offerings. The conclusion would have to have been that to please God one should not sin—a piece of advice consonant with the rest of Hugsvinnsmál. The supernumerary final helming, however, adds a very Lutheran-sounding sense of divine grace. Faith and God's love can indeed compensate for sins committed. "Guds Elska oc aldigguer sider" are made the countervalue to "Blot" and "forner." Whether Catholic or Lutheran, the third helming gives the impression of being a later addition to Hugsvinnsmál. The pre-Reformation manuscript A omits stanza 119 entirely.

5.5.3. Shared ideas of Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð.

Despite its much more Christian viewpoint vis-à-vis Disticha Catonis, Hugsvinnsmál has little additional thematic content in common with Sólarljóð. Hugsvinnsmál still shares with stanza eighty-one (and seventy-eight) of Sólarljóð the framework of a father giving advice to his son, but it continues also to discourage believing in dreams (Hugs. 85), contrary to the added stanza eighty-three of Sólarljóð.

The narrative of the greppr and the gestr contains elements about which Hugsvinnsmál offers advice, but that advice has no closer relationship to Sólarljóð's exemplum than did the advice from Cato's distiches. It is still wrong to rob in the Icelandic poem (Hugs. 15.4–5), though neither the Icelandic nor the Latin discusses murder. Life is still accepted as being dangerous (Hugs. 48). The idea of it being wrong not to invite someone to dinner (Sól. 2.3) may come through more strongly in Hugsvinnsmál,
however, since it is stated specifically that one should be generous with food (Hugs. 61). Like Disticha Catonis (II.1), Hugsvinnsmál advises helping strangers (stanza 58), but now the friend to be gained thereby sounds much more like a possible political supporter than mere companion. The sense that kind actions are to be accomplished only for personal benefit has sometimes even increased in the translation. Likewise, Hugsvinnsmál warns more strongly against trusting strangers or foreigners (Hugs. 47). Hence, if Sólarljóð has borrowed from Hugsvinnsmál, it is all the more remarkable that the greppr shows hospitality to the gestr strictly "af heilum hug" and despite thinking him dangerous (Sól. 4). On the other hand, however, Hugsvinnsmál has taken the advice of Distich IV.8 to be generous to friends and changed it to advise giving to the needy (Hugs. 113.4–6), a situation that seems to apply to the gestr. Sólarljóð is somewhat closer to Hugsvinnsmál than it is to Disticha Catonis simply because the two Icelandic poems both better reflect Christian culture.

Hugsvinnsmál (stanza 23) accepts changes as did Cato’s distich I.7, although neither version anticipates a transformation in personality such as that undergone by the greppr. Yet recommending such a change seems to be a primary purpose of Sólarljóð. Hugsvinnsmál agrees with its predecessor on matters of sleep and the proper repayment for benefits received. That the greppr paid special heed to God (Sól. 4) may have contravened the advice of Cato’s original distich II.2. That distich had placed any knowledge of gods beyond mankind, and suggested not worrying about divine matters. The relevant passage in Hugsvinnsmál, stanza fifty-nine, is unambiguous in advising only against worrying about those things God specifically keeps secret. Hence there is no longer any possible conflict. In fact, the form of heaven is the example given by Hugsvinnsmál fifty-nine as something God keeps secret, and by analogy one might suppose that the form of hell is something else He might keep secret. This accords with Sólarljóð sixty-eight, which refuses to detail all the pains of hell.

Sólarljóð stanzas six and seven tell how the good greppr is saved from his sin and transported to heaven by angels, while the evil gestr is fated to take sins upon himself. This was a moral too Christian to be found in Cato, who
makes no mention of angels or afterlife. *Hugsvinnsmál* also makes no mention of angels, but it does give a stronger sense of good and evil being rewarded than does its original. While distich IV.3 speaks of personal responsibility for one's fate using the example of a reckless ship's pilot, *Hugsvinnsmál* takes a more ethical stance:

Galaus madur
sa eir vill gott nema
kann eir vid vijte varast.
ogiæfu sinne
velldur hann eirnsaman.
Øngvum er illt skapad.—(Hugs. 111(e))

Punishment is not inevitable, because good can be learned. No one is fated to be evil, presumably not even the greppr. Given this freedom of choice, the two men of *Sólaljóð* were able to choose their own fates, to be punished or rewarded in the afterlife, regardless of the way they had lived until the critical moment. And although the gestr has taken extra sins upon himself, it is not said that he is punished for them, because he, too, may perhaps learn goodness before it is too late. As the extra lines from *Hugsvinnsmál* 119 indicated, faith can compensate for sins committed.

The eighth stanza of *Sólaljóð* is non-narrative, simply advising against relying on one's present good fortune. One related distich from Cato is IV.26, which advises that the same fate which turns a good condition into a bad condition may also improve an unfortunate condition. This idea has been changed in stanza 129 of *Hugsvinnsmál* to suggest that one strive for moderation in the accumulation of wealth. However, *Hugsvinnsmál* 34 still contains the idea of shifting fate, offering the general example of many a poor man who had once been rich. Hence, the idea (originally from distich I.18) continues to be shared with *Sólaljóð*.

Since stanza nine of *Sólaljóð* merely illustrates this reversal of good fortune through the example of Unnarr and Sævaldi, the overlap between *Sólaljóð* and *Hugsvinnsmál* continues. If the further detail that the ruined pair runs naked like wolves into the woods may be treated as an overreaction to a
changed condition, *Disticha Catonis* III.11 contained the appropriate recommendation to be satisfied even with reduced circumstances. However, this is one of the few distiches not translated at all by *Hugsvinnsmál*. The most similar idea is that of stanza ninety-six, which presumes at least something was retained that one could be thankful for. *Hugsvinnsmál* stanza thirty-seven does preserve the idea of Distich I.21, that poverty is humankind’s original state and so no tragedy, but the notion of nakedness is no longer explicit, and the tie to Unnarr and Sævaldi is thus weakened.

*Sólarljóð* then goes on to warn about another defect in the human condition. Stanza ten warns against worldly pleasure, especially sexual pleasure, and is followed by the illustrative tale of Sváfaðr and Skarðeðinn, who killed each other over a woman (stanzas eleven through fourteen). While *Hugsvinnsmál* is Christian, and therefore also opposed to pleasure generally, sexual pleasure does not seem to be a primary concern. The most dangerous pleasure of this sinful world seems to be drunkenness:

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{Odfryckiu fordast} \\
    \text{enn dryg Erfidi;} \\
    \text{so skal vid viðne varast.} \\
    \text{Ljðkams lestir} \\
    \text{tæla lijda huorn,} \\
    \text{er i Sæl-lijfe situr.―(Hugs. 116(e))}
\end{align*}
\]

*Hugsvinnsmál* combines distiches IV.10 and IV.24 of its original to condemn all womanizing and not just Cato’s expensive date, while implying that drinking is the primary danger. In a like manner Distich IV.30 has also been recast to make drunkenness the source of lust and evil.

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{ill er ofdrickia} \\
    \text{fer hun eigi einsomul,} \\
    \text{filgir henni margt til meins,} \\
    \text{Angur og thrætur} \\
    \text{oc ostillt lostasemi,} \\
    \text{Sott oc Syndafióld.―(Hugs. 133(e))}
\end{align*}
\]
Sólarrjóð is silent about the sin of drunkenness, and concerned only with lust.

The passage in Hugsvinnsmál most closely applicable to Sváfaðr and Skarðheðinn is the translation of sententia 25, "meretricem fuge." The Icelandic changes this to "illra qvenna / firr thu thig óllu Lagie" (Hugs. 12.4–5). If one accepts the traditional interpretation of the unnamed woman in the Sólarrjóð example having connived at the double murder through her own slyness, then she must surely qualify as an evil woman. Also directly in point may be the passage:

A óngvum hlut
lattu thier Elsku vera
theim er adrer eiga.—(Hugs. 109.1–3(e))

However, this is clearly a late corruption of the first line of Distich IV.1 and is not shared by all manuscripts.

Hugsvinnsmál has little to say about women. It says to love your wife (Hugs. 10.4–5) but not to believe her accusations (Hugs. 24) or her tears (Hugs. 105), and it warns that brides may be greedy (Hugs. 97). There is much talk of love and affection, but not between the sexes. Sólarrjóð does not share with Hugsvinnsmál any detailed philosophy on intersexual relationships. Yet, on the other hand, they do share a particularly male perspective, and see women as essentially outside the main sphere of action. We never learn much about the woman Sváfaðr and Skarðheðinn died for.

The remaining ideas of Sólarrjóð stanzas ten through fourteen also find little resonance in Hugsvinnsmál. The life of leisure led by Sváfaðr and Skarðheðinn when they were still close friends is reflected nowhere in Hugsvinnsmál. The sententia about playing with hoops or dice are missing. A good friend should be appreciated and loved (Hugs. 4), of course, and vengeful anger should be avoided in speech (Hugs. 140), but the Sólarrjóð poet did not likely get any ideas here.

The sort of arrogance warned about in Sólarrjóð stanza fifteen and exemplified in the parable of Ráðny and Véboði is alluded to in stanza seventy-one of Hugsvinnsmál. The original distich II.16 referred above all to
a love of empty fame, good or bad, but this has been slightly altered in the Icelandic to give a sense more of self-promotion. Closer to the theme of Sólarljóð is the second helming of Hugsvinnsmál seventy-one, in which “gloria inanis” has become “heims skraut.” Hollow glory is equated with earthly trappings in the Icelandic, indicating a thorough Christian contemptus mundi. Pride and arrogance are the sins of placing ones focus on this insignificant world, with the result that one thereby turns away from God and the more important realm of the afterlife. This is precisely the turning away from God that is warned about in Sólarljóð 15.5–6.

Stanza 16 of Sólarljóð follows this general theological principle with the more earthly example of the selfish pair who ended up losing all material possessions and human status. While the Disticha Catonis might ascribe such a loss to the general fickleness of fate, Sólarljóð clearly ascribes the reversal to divine punishment (Sol. 17.4–6; 18.4–6). Hugsvinnsmál puts little credence in fate, and declines to suggest any immediate divine retribution on earth. Slightly altering the plea for financial moderation in distich III.21, Hugsvinnsmál 106 warns that one should be careful with money in order to prevent financial ruin. This pragmatic approach might suggest that the real offence of Ráðny and Véboði was that they “höfðu gull fyr gaman” (Sól. 18.3) and simply squandered this gold through carelessness and were left impoverished. Yet the use of money clearly does have religious implications in Hugsvinnsmál as well as in Sólarljóð.

The Latin distich II.19 advised steering a path between luxury and miserliness, but this was recast by the translator to show how the use of money could be sinful. Hugsvinnsmál admonishes:

fieginre Rangri
skalltu firra thig;
liot er lijkams munud.
Ordstyr hærra
getr eini madur
enn hann vid syndum siae—(Hugs. 73(e)).
Viewed in this context, the sins of Ráðny and Véboði would be twofold. First, they were wrongly covetous in originally becoming rich. They could perhaps have desired to accumulate money for some Christian purpose, but not for becoming rich themselves. Yet once having become rich, the pair sinned grievously in spending on luxury. The problem is not simply that they failed to conserve their money. *Hugsvinnsmál* encourages giving money to the poor, for example, even if this is not expressed in an entirely altruistic context (*Hugs*. 54). But rather than giving money away where it might do some good, Ráðny and Véboði spent on luxury, something translated as “lijkams munud” or those sinful pleasures of the flesh (*Hugs*. 73.3(e)). Once again, the focus was entirely on this transitory world. Their permanent fate is to wander between frost and fire.

*Sólarljóð* seems to turn back to worldly matters in stanza nineteen with a gnomic warning against trusting ones enemies. There is even a suggested recommendation of lying to them. The example of Sörli and Vigolf, the murderer of Sörli’s brother, follows at stanzas twenty through twenty-four.

The gnomic pronouncements of *Sólarljóð* nineteen are very similar to some of the advice given in *Hugsvinnsmál*. *Sólarljóð* says,

```
Óvinum thínun
trúðú aldregi
thó thér fagrt mæli fyrir
góðu thú heit
gott er annars
víti hafa at varnaði.—(Sól. 19)
```

The opening idea is that of *Hugsvinnsmál* forty-two,

```
flarads mans orde,
tha ad fagurt mæli,
ðarthu eigi thvi ad Trua.—(*Hugs*. 42.1–3(e))
```

There is even some similarity of language between the two poems, increased if one assumes the *Sólarljóð* poet to have adapted the “Vinir thijner” from *Hugs*. 39.1 to replace the first line of *Hugs*. 42.
The "góðu thú heit" of Sólarljóð 19.4 has no close linguistic parallel in Hugsvinnsmál, unless one make an emendation to parallel the "heita godur" of Hugs. 121.3. Given the contexts of both poems, however, the idea of Sólarljóð seems to be the same as the conclusion of the Hugsvinnsmál stanza under discussion,

    glisleg ord
    lat thu i gegen koma,
    og gialld so lijkui lijkt.—(Hugs. 42.4–6(e))

Yet this is not what Sólarljóð actually says. Sólarljóð remains ambiguous on this point.

Sólarljóð does seem to suggest deceiving one's enemy. Although this idea was faithfully transferred from the Disticha Catonis by its translator, even in Hugsvinnsmál, the more traditional Christian idea seems to be that elaborated in stanza eleven:

    firer ordvm ok Eidumm        Odde og Eggiu
    hyggdv ollvm vel.            ver thu thijna Odaljórd.
    halltu thin heit uid firra.  oc ei avdtrygur ver.
    oddi ok eggiv                fyrer ordum oc Eidumm
    verdv thina odal jord.       higg thu ollum vel,
    eigi thv avdtrygur ver.      og hallt vid firda heit.

(Hugs. 11(A))                         (Hugs. 11(e))

Whatever promises are made should be kept. Sólarljóð advises only that promises be made. Whether the underlying idea is that of Hugs. 42 or of Hugs. 11, or the more general idea in Hugsvinnsmál of returning good with good and evil with evil, seems to be left to debate. But in the parable of Sörli and Vigolf that follows this Sólarljóð stanza, it is the principle of "ei
avdtrygur ver” (Hugs. 11.3(e)), from the Latin Sententia 24 (nihil temere credideris), that seems most to apply.

Before departing from stanza nineteen of Sólarljóð, however, its two concluding lines should be compared to Hugsvinnsmál. They reflect rather precisely the idea of Hugsvinnsmál 98.4–5:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{vondzt manns uiti} & \quad \text{Anars Vijte} \\
\text{lætur ser at varnadi uerda} & \quad \text{lati sier ad Varnadi} \\
\text{(Hugs. 98.4–5(A))} & \quad \text{(Hugs. 98.4–5(e)).}
\end{align*}
\]

Sólarljóð, with its “gott er annars / viti hafa at varnadi” (Sól. 19.5–6), adopts Cato’s idea of learning from an evil man’s mistakes, but appears to ignore the more important idea of following the example of good people. Stanza nineteen of Sólarljóð engages Hugsvinnsmál at various points, sharing not only ideas but even similar language. The correspondences are so close as to make it appear that parts of Hugsvinnsmál not cited by the author of Sólarljóð in stanza nineteen may indeed be incorporated by reference to the nearby Hugsvinnsmál passages that are actually quoted.

The somewhat puzzling advice of Sólarljóð nineteen is illustrated by the equally puzzling example of Sörli and Vígulf. Here, however, the material is primarily narrative, adding little more reference to the ideas of Hugsvinnsmál than were already present in the introductory stanza nineteen. In stanza twenty Sörli trusts the killer of his brother in violation of Hugs. 11.3(e) against credulity, and Hugs. 98.4–5 advising one to learn by what happens to others. In stanza twenty-one of Sólarljóð an agreement is made, with Sörli presumably being paid wergeld for the loss of his brother, but with the evil Vígulf intending to betray him. Hugsvinnsmál stanza forty-two warns against heeding the words of a deceitful man. Stanza seventy, which intensifies the warning of Cato’s Latin, admonishes one to forget past feuds and to be true to an agreed truce. Sörli indeed does this, but Vígulf does not, showing, as Hugs. 70 further suggests, the nature of a dishonest man.
Sörli is killed by Vigulf, and his body is hidden. Surely no one would expect the seeming victory of Vigulf to be any true advantage, since Hugs. 64 explains that, even with less dramatic attempts at disguising actions, treachery is always revealed in the end. The person familiar with Hugsvinnsmál might recognize the applicability of its stanza 136, which warns that anyone transgressing against a good and faithful man such as saklauss Sörli (Sól. 22.5) would have God Himself to reckon with. Indeed, the narrator of Sólarljóð does not find it necessary to tell us that Vigulf and his accomplices will be punished. The only question in Sólarljóð is one as to the degree to which they will be punished:

en sökudólgar
hygg ek söla muni
kallaðir frá kvöulum—(Sól. 24.4–6).

Vigulf is punished, but Sörli is given the reward of eternal joy with God (Sól. 24). Perhaps the idea behind the entire episode can be summarized with the Hugsvinnsmál helming:

sina uerka
skal segia hverr
lavn med leigum taka.—(Hugs. 77.4–6(A))

Although this helming is missing from the stanza in manuscript e of Hugsvinnsmál, it occurs there in stanza 102 instead. It is surely too important a principle to omit, and may have already been a universal proverb. In any event, it does not correspond to either II.23 or III.17 of Disticha Catonis. It does, however, closely parallel the central theme of Sólarljóð, that the rewards of the all-important next world should be the focus of all actions here in this transitory world.

Despite the shared Christian views of Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál, there is nothing in the latter that corresponds to the recommendations of prayer so important to the author of Sólarljóð. Hugsvinnsmál is more Christian in its attitude towards divinity than was Disticha Catonis, but it has not added much that was not in the original. Stanzas twenty-five and twenty-seven of
Sólarrlýð recommend petition through prayer. *Hugsvinnsmál* is simply silent on this point. *Sólarrlýð* stanza twenty-eight phrases its recommendation of solicitation without specifically aiming it at God. Given a general and worldly gnome such as "fár hyggr thegjanda thörf" (*Sól*. 28.6), *Hugsvinnsmál* can demonstrate a similar idea in its stanza 101, where help is to be asked for in legal proceedings. Friends do seem to be expected to help each other in the world of *Hugsvinnsmál*. Help should be rewarded (*Hugs*. 31). But, as in the original Latin (*distich* I.31), the greatest concern of *Hugsvinnsmál* seems to be that one not ask for anything inappropriate (*Hugs*. 46). Unlike *Sólarrlýð*, *Hugsvinnsmál* does not suggest making any requests to God.

The more secular stanza among those in this part of *Sólarrlýð*, stanza twenty-six, does find some slight resonance within *Hugsvinnsmál*, though there the goal is not specifically the good of the individual's soul. *Hugsvinnsmál* twenty, though not going as far as *Sólarrlýð*, does at least recommend forgetting past disagreements and not aggravating them. Transgressions may also be compensated for, according to *Hugsvinnsmál* 139, but unlike in *Sólarrlýð* twenty-six, it is the self-chastisement of Cato's distich IV.40 which is contemplated, and not a saga-style payment of reparations.

Stanza twenty-nine of *Sólarrlýð* is narrative, aside from the final "sá hefir krás er krefr" (*Sól*. 29.6) that seems to repeat the idea of petition. To the extent having come late to the supreme judge indicates something of a lost opportunity, *Disticha Catonis* IV.45 was in point by recommending acting with alacrity. *Hugsvinnsmál*, however, omits translating that particular distich.

*Sólarrlýð* stanza thirty recommends a life free from sin. It suggests that the blameless need have no fear of death. *Hugsvinnsmál* certainly also has the blameless life as its primary goal, and even uses the same "uamma laus lifa" (*Hugs*. 3.3(A)) to discuss it. Both poems share the idea of doing good and avoiding evil (e.g., *Hugs*. 4.4–5), though *Hugsvinnsmál* has a more mundane perspective on what constitutes an ethical life. *Hugsvinnsmál* further mirrors the more realistic view of Cato I.5, pointing out in its own stanza 21 that there are really very few people who do live without fault.
Nonetheless, *Hugsvinnsmál* finds that it is foolish to worry about death since it is inevitable and life is quite enough to keep one busy (*Hugs.* 38). Such unconcern for the eternal is quite opposed to the position taken by *Sólarljóð*. Stanzas 107 and 126 of *Hugsvinnsmál* seem to put life and death on an equal footing, rather than showing *Sólarljóð*’s usually clear preference for the afterlife. *Disticha Catonis* III.22 had reflected enough contempt for this mortal world that it viewed death as at least a possible boon. The translation is faithful to the original sentiment, but adds an additional helming:

\[
\text{Godum monnum} \\
\text{theim er grand varast,} \\
\text{davdi oc lijf dugier—(*Hugs.* 107.4–6(e)).}
\]

That life and death help good men who are on guard against injury can be read in the light of *Sólarljóð* to indicate that people who guard against sinning will be fortunate both in this world and in the next. This is more likely than that life and death are equal for good people who guard against being injured. *Hugsvinnsmál* again “equates” life and death in line 126.6, as a translation of *contemnere vitam* (*Disticha Catonis* IV.22). For *Sólarljóð* goodness has its reward in heaven, while in *Hugsvinnsmál* the rewards seem often to come on earth, with interest compounded eternally after death. For those who are not able to avoid sin, both Icelandic poems threaten punishment.

*Sólarljóð* thirty-one likens the faithless to wolves and promises them glowing coals to walk upon. Similarly, *Hugsvinnsmál* twenty denies self-satisfaction or any peace to the one who is inconstant. The faithlessness of *Sólarljóð* (*eiga hverfan hug*) has usually been interpreted either in terms of adultery or apostasy, while the inconstancy of *Hugsvinnsmál* (to be *ymisgjarn*) clearly has its reflex in the Shakespearean “to thine own self be true.” Once again, *Hugsvinnsmál* takes a slightly more mundane viewpoint than the more dogmatic *Sólarljóð*.

Stanza thirty-two of *Sólarljóð* informs us that we have just been presented with seven friendly counsels, all to be learned and not forgotten. *Hugsvinnsmál* gives us a great deal more than seven, but its approach is the
same. The framework of the original Disticha Catonis remains applicable. The purpose of all these gnomic poems is to condense advice into verse, so that it may easily be passed on and remembered. Stanza eighty-seven of Hugsvinnsmal explains the value of giving such advice as might save the ignorant from leading a wicked life. The Sólarljóð stanza in question, however, does little more than alert us to the fact that we are dealing with a gnomic poem—something clear from the very beginning in Hugsvinnsmal.

Sólarljóð shifts to a much more personal focus beginning with stanza thirty-three, although the first-person ek has been evident before this point. “Frá thví er at segja” gives the clue that something new is beginning, as the narrator eases into the story of his own encounter with death. Yet at the same time, the narrator continues to deliver gnomes of general application, condensing his own experience into proverbial pearls. The proverbs make the personal universal, and form a neat stylistic closure for each stanza through Sólarljóð thirty-seven.

Yet the proverbs of Sólarljóð stanzas thirty-three through thirty-seven do not give advice, at least in the sense of the imperatives of Hugsvinnsmal or Disticha Catonis. Indeed, the proverbial diction in this section surely owes as much to the style of ljóðaháttr itself as to any attempt to educate. The content of these stanzas, or rather of their concluding proverbs, appears to be somewhat closer to Hávamál than to Hugsvinnsmal. Hávamál is definitely recalled by the gnomic “... yta synir / verða nauðgir at nám” (Sól. 33.5-6) and “margan hefir auðr apat” (Sól. 34.6). “Létt er lauss at fara” (Sól. 37.6) appears to be proverbial from some unknown source, not fitting exceptionally well with the Sólarljóð context. “Frammi eru feigs götur” (Sól. 36.6) looks like an ad hoc proverb composed for Sólarljóð, while “dvalarheim / hefir dróttinn skapat / munafullan mjök” (Sól. 35.4–6) is so inelegant as to hardly qualify as a proverb at all. Nonetheless, all serve a function of simultaneously summarizing and generalizing what the poet is attempting to say.

It is the most general ideas that stanzas thirty-three through thirty-seven of Sólarljóð share with Hugsvinnsmal. That the narrator of Sólarljóð loved life invokes a topic touched upon by Hugsvinnsmal 38 and 126, which warn against becoming too attached to life. Pleasure and pride deceive in Sólarljóð
thirty-four; envy deceives in Hugsvinnsmál sixty-eight. The love of wealth, censured in three proverbial expressions in Sólarljóð thirty-four alone, is decried somewhat less in Hugsvinnsmál than in Disticha Catonis, but stanzas 22, 34, 35, 44, 73, 109(e), and 110 advise against coveting money too much, and several others deal with it in some way or other.

Stanza thirty-five of Sólarljóð summarizes the entire lesson of the poem by saying the world is a nice place, but one should look beyond it. Stanza thirty-eight of Hugsvinnsmál seems to speak against this view, by advising that one not worry about the end of life or try to flee death. While Sólarljóð tries to move attention from this world and place the focus on death, Hugsvinnsmál discourages thoughts of death by focusing on the needs of life. Hugsvinnsmál does not ignore death by any means, but prefers to let death take care of itself. The important thing is to live a good and moral life. Unlike Sólarljóð, Hugsvinnsmál is not interested in the sort of mystical spirituality where a person can be saved by calling on God with his dying breath (Sól. 6). Hugsvinnsmál expects goodness to be manifested through good works in this world. Each day should be used fully, Hugsvinnsmál says, for death can come at any time (Hugs. 48). Death is not to be feared, provided only that one live ethically (Hugs. 107).

Hugsvinnsmál never goes so far as to suggest that one ignore death or the afterlife entirely and simply seize the joys of life. Disticha Catonis II.3, which did make this suggestion, is conspicuously absent from any remaining version of Hugsvinnsmál. Hugsvinnsmál does not pretend that there is no afterlife to come, but simply places it in the realm of the future, a realm known only to God and not to mere mortals (Hugs. 67). There is no point in worrying about unknown things yet to come. The position of Hugsvinnsmál seems to be that the same moral actions that help one in life will suffice also to ensure a good afterlife, at least to the extent the Roman paganism has been colored by Icelandic Christianity:

Ørlóg sijn
vite eingi fyrer,
nie um thad önn ale.
flester thad vita,
ad mun flærdvórum
daudi oc líf duga.—(Hugs. 126(e))

Sólarljóð stanza thirty-six continues with the idea that death is inevitable. Hugsvinnsmál shares this idea, probably expressing it best in stanza 137, but the idea of human mortality is certainly not one unique to these two poems. We are reminded in Sólarljóð that God is all-powerful, and that His determinations will prevail. Hugsvinnsmál likewise insists that one should not try to oppose anyone in a stronger position (e.g., Hugs. 7), but it is certainly questionable what application this may have to theological questions.

Most of the remaining stanzas dealing with experiences at the time of the narrator’s death in Sólarljóð (37–52) are without any important parallel or shared idea in Hugsvinnsmál. It is not even possible to posit that Sólarljóð is an answer to anything said in Hugsvinnsmál. The imagery used in Sólarljóð has no more in common with Hugsvinnsmál than it did with Disticha Catonis and perhaps less. Hugsvinnsmál does not even share with Sólarljóð any expression of the common Christian emphasis on God being the creator (e.g. Sól. 48).

Within this long section of Sólarljóð, it is only stanza forty-nine that stands out as being especially gnomic, with the proverbs “Sinna verka / nytr seggja hverr” (Sól. 49.1–2), and “sæll er só er gott görir” (Sól. 49.3). To be sure, Sólarljóð has not totally given up its gnomic techniques in this section, but even a proverbial pronouncement such as “máðr er moldar samt” (Sól. 47) is too specifically biblical to sound universal. Likewise, although Hugsvinnsmál certainly favors doing good, it never uses a formulation such as “sæll er...” which so closely recalls the beatitudes. It is not Hugsvinnsmál from which Sólarljóð appears to have taken its ideas. From Hugsvinnsmál comes only the common Christian idea of being rewarded for ones works, an idea that occurs again and again, but which in stanza seventy-seven takes a form much resembling the one used in Sólarljóð forty-nine:
sina uerka
skal segia hverr
lavn med leigum taka—(Hugs. 77.4–6(A)).

Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð share the idea of being rewarded for works performed, an idea shared also, for example, with Proverbs 24:12, Matthew 16:27, and 2 Timothy 4:14.

With stanza fifty-three, Sólarljóð begins its description of worlds beyond this one. With its narrow earthly focus, it is no wonder that Hugsvinnsmál has little to say in regard to what is reported of the afterlife. Only once it has been decided what sins are punished and what virtues rewarded in the afterlife of Sólarljóð can any parallels be found with Hugsvinnsmál. If, for example, it is a clear sin such as covetousness being condemned in Sólarljóð, as is the case in stanza sixty-three, then Hugsvinnsmál can usually be cited as sharing the same idea (e.g. Hugs. 15, 44, 73). In this way, Sólarljóð sixty-one condemns envy just as does Hugsvinnsmál stanza sixty-eight. The two poems even share precisely the same vocabulary, namely, the word öfund for "envy." The popular sin of pride is punished in Sólarljóð sixty-six, and although Hugsvinnsmál advises about ways to gain social standing, it either recommends humility, or condemns pride or boasting in its stanzas 3, 15, 30, 71, and 72. Sólarljóð sixty-seven punishes liars, just as Hugsvinnsmál values veracity over mendacity in 13.6, 19.4–6, 28.4–6, 29, 47.6, and 90, even though the liar in Hugsvinnsmál may be met with lies (Hugs. 42).

Not all the horrors of hell are told us in Sólarljóð, says its stanza sixty-eight, and according to Hugsvinnsmál (stanza fifty-nine) this is how it should be. Nonetheless, we are reminded that "æ koma mein eptir munud" (Sól. 68). That at least some joys end in shame was an idea included in Disticha Catonis (IV.17), but Hugsvinnsmál neglects to mention this precise point (Cf. Hugs. 121). Sins will entrap those living a life of pleasure (Hugs. 116.4–6), but the punishment of sin is assumed rather than stated.

As Sólarljóð turns to heaven and the description of its pleasures, it is once again difficult to imagine any ideas having been taken from Hugsvinnsmál, yet at the same time easy to see how certain notions may be held in common.
Stanza sixty-nine of Sólarljóð rewards those who have given according to God's laws, or who have obeyed those laws, depending upon manuscript reading. Hugsvinnsmál essentially merges the two possible readings. Cato's all-important distich IV.38, against sacrificing cattle, was translated in Hugsvinnsmál as stanza 138. The suggested cheaper replacement by incense was changed, however, to say that God would be most pleased by the sweet smell of a good life. In other words, Hugsvinnsmál does encourage one to make large sacrifices to God, but instead of giving wealth, one should give one's own life by living it in accordance with God's laws. From the introductory first stanza of Hugsvinnsmál, the poem advises the performance of good deeds (Hugs. 1.3). "Hreinlijfur thu vert" (Hugs. 5.1), reiterates the idea of investing in a moral, clean life. Of course, all of Hugsvinnsmál deals with how to live a moral life manifested through appropriate actions, if not always good works in an immediately Christian sense.

Hugsvinnsmál does advise donating money, though there is never any specific mention of giving it to the church, making tithes, or buying candles. Of course, none of these interpretations of Sólarljóð sixty-nine has an explicit basis in that text either. However, Sólarljóð stanza seventy does unambiguously add the idea of giving to the poor. Stanza twenty-two of Hugsvinnsmál advises giving away not just harmful possessions but any surplus money. In addition to the stanzas suggesting giving money to friends or supporters, stanza fifty-four alters Cato by advising one to give money to the poor. Likewise stanza 113 promotes giving to the worthy poor. But donating money in Hugsvinnsmál can be seen as little more than a specific example of how to live a moral life. Stanza 119 actually speaks against making offerings in recompense for transgressions, but this is not the same as giving from the goodness of one's heart, or from "miklum hug" (Sól. 70.2). Hugsvinnsmál 119, which prefers faith and the love of God over giving for divine indulgence, could even be a sixteenth-century Protestant addition. Be that as it may, Hugsvinnsmál does favor giving money for Christian purposes, and Hugsvinnsmál does favor living a life in accordance with God's laws (including giving). Whichever common interpretation is given to stanza sixty-nine of Sólarljóð, Hugsvinnsmál is in agreement. Hugsvinnsmál also agrees with Sólarljóð seventy that the poor should be given help.
The strange beatification in Sólarljóð of those who have fed their mothers (Sól. 72) is not shared any more by Hugsvinnsmál than it was by Disticha Catonis. One is to love and care for father and mother (Hugs. 3.4–6), and be sure the love for each is equal (Hugs. 108). The rebukes of parents are to be borne calmly (Hugs. 114). One is supposed to be generous with food (Hugs. 61), but nothing is said about family in that connection.

The reference to food in Hugsvinnsmál sixty-one was an innovation by the translator. Food is simply an example of one sort of wealth with which one should not be overly stingy. Sólarljóð, however, promotes fasting as a particular virtue in stanza seventy-one. It praises those who have "hungri farit hörund" (Sól. 71.3), advocating the destruction of earth-bound flesh. This idea is repeated in Sólarljóð seventy-three, which seems to promote some sort of flagellantism, or at least asceticism, by beatifying those "er á mörgum degi / pína sjálfa sik" (Sól. 73). As with Disticha Catonis before it, Hugsvinnsmál recognizes that some sort of suffering may be a necessary part of self-improvement, but it is never considered a virtue for its own sake. The position of Hugsvinnsmál is described in stanza eighty-two:

Ats nie drickiu
neit thu alldri so,
ad thitt mijnkist megn.
Afl og heilsu
tharft thu vid allt ad hafa.
Lif thu ei mart ad munud.—(Hugs. 82)

Hugsvinnsmál, like Sólarljóð, is opposed to earthly desires or pleasures, as is made clear in line six. However, fasting is clearly condemned. A Catonian moderation is the goal, and not a total denial of the carnal being. The physical health of the earthly mind and body are prerequisite to profiting from the moral lessons of Hugsvinnsmál, and are not a hindrance to spiritual advancement as implied in Sólarljóð. On the other hand, "Meinlæte drijgia" (Hugs. 139.1) is recommended to those who have sinned as a way of regaining moral health. Sólarljóð simply extends this idea of self-chastisement on earth to show its spiritual parallel in the washing of the soul in heaven.
Sólarljóð seventy-four returns to the theme of the innocent man murdered. Hugsvinnsmál does hint at punishment for the murderer in such a case (stanza 136), but it says nothing about such martyrs being in any way laudable. Life is not to be preferred over death (Hugs. 38, 109, 126), but it is to be appreciated as something useful and good (Hugs. 48).

Sólarljóð seventy-five is an invocation of the Trinity that marks the end of the poem’s description of the afterlife. Once again, Sólarljóð departs entirely from any theme found in Hugsvinnsmál. Hugsvinnsmál refers to God, and clearly in a Christian context, but this God is never referred to either as the Trinity or as the Creator. There is little theological development beyond making Disticha Catonis unambiguously monotheistic.

Stanzas seventy-six through eighty of Sólarljóð contain the obscure eddic language that makes the poem so peculiar. About the first of these stanzas, only the arousal of hate is certain (Sól. 76.6). Hugsvinnsmál does say not to hate in very general terms (Hugs. 9.1). Love is valued over hatred, quarrel and strife in stanza forty-nine, while stanza sixty against arguing while angry seems equally relevant. There is a great deal in Hugsvinnsmál that speaks against the hate and anger that lead to quarrels and violence (e.g. 68, 136), but the poem adds little not found in Disticha Catonis. Only stanza 140 departs from the Latin to demonstrate a theme of hate being aroused where that theme was absent in the original. Instead of a close translation of distich IV.39, Hugsvinnsmál says

Heiptarorda
    góirst thú ei hefnisamur;
    helldur skalltu væginn vera.—(Hugs. 140.1–3(e))

If there is truth to the hypothesis that Sólarljóð stanza seventy-six is warning against gossip leading to physical strife, then this passage from Hugsvinnsmál is highly relevant. Hugsvinnsmál contains the same sorts of warnings against a loose tongue that are to be found in the original Disticha Catonis (e.g. Hugs. 74, 76), but this stanza changes the perspective. The idea here is not to prevent gossip, but to prevent gossip being allowed to incite its hearer to violent acts. In Sólarljóð, whatever the mysterious women are doing
would certainly be hard for the poem’s hearer to prevent. However, the hearer could perhaps prevent the actions from having their desired effect of awakening hatred. In this Sólarljóð shares an idea with Hugsvinnsmál.

Sólarljóð stanza seventy-seven speaks about the search for pleasure, the gratification of desire, and the focus of one’s attention on this world. Indeed, this is the primary concern of the entire poem. Hugsvinnsmál has modified its model slightly so that it conforms much more with Sólarljóð, but the two poems continue to show differences. Hugsvinnsmál continues to advocate moderation rather than self-sacrifice. It’s focus remains on life and the world, admonishing not to love them, but at the same time advising that one use them as a valuable gift. It leaves the afterlife entirely to God, and says to do good works during life. Disticha Catonis advised taking pleasure only in moderation. Hugsvinnsmál frowns somewhat on taking pleasure at all, but falls short of requiring a complete negation of life. Sólarljóð goes so far as to counsel mortification of flesh and a complete orientation towards the afterlife. The ideas of limiting pleasure and of not becoming too attached to life or the world are shared by all three poems. But these similar ideas are nonetheless treated quite differently in each poem.

Stanza seventy-eight of Sólarljóð, with the hart’s horn brought by Vígðvalin, is again too obscure for one to be able to speak with any certainty about ideas being shared or borrowed. Hugsvinnsmál says nothing about harts or horns or Vígðvalin or Sólkatla. The action taking place in the Sólarljóð stanza is the passing on of something from the wise Vígðvalin, via the father and the sons of Sólkatla, to the heir addressed in the poem. Hugsvinnsmál does include material on the appreciation and reciprocation of gifts (e.g. stanzas thirty-six and fifty), but the gift which a wise person grants to others in Hugsvinnsmál is normally wisdom. Wisdom is either passed on in the form of advice or through example.

The entire poem of Hugsvinnsmál is an admonition to learn wisdom, but it also takes the opposite perspective and recommends teaching. Stanzas eighty-six and eighty-seven specifically deal with advising and spreading wisdom further. Stanza thirteen contains the advice to give wholesome counsel, and in stanza eight advice is specifically to be passed on to one’s sons:
Minne og Mannvit
nem thu a margann veg
oc kenn thad sijdan sonum.—(Hugs. 8.4–6)

The concept of inheritance is one frequently met in Hugsvinnsmál, but no more frequently than in Disticha Catonis. The warning in stanza thirty-five, that one shouldn’t expect to profit from another’s death, probably refers primarily to the expectation of inheritance. Stanza forty-three is unambiguous, speaking of children as “Erfingia” (though not using Sólarljóð’s “Arfe”) and assuming a responsibility to provide support. Lacking money to bequeath, one should teach ones heirs skills (Hugs. 43). Sólarljóð’s stanza seventy-eight surely has nothing so mundane as financial support in mind, and must instead be talking about divine mystery, but both poems do share the idea of inheriting and of wisdom being an important gift to be passed on to the heirs.

The idea of transferring wisdom is expressed in Hugsvinnsmál most clearly in its introductory and concluding stanzas. These stanzas establish the frame of a father giving advice to his son. In the second stanza of the poem, and repeated in the second to the last stanza, is the internal narrator’s address to “minn einka Son” (Hugs. 2.2; cf. 148.2). This was an innovation over the original Disticha Catonis, but changed nothing beyond giving the passage a slightly more Christian flavor. Sólarljóð, however, instead of looking at an “only son,” changes the perspective to look at the parent, or “faðir einn” (Sól. 78.1–2). Because it seems odd to speak of an “only father,” it is tempting to seek a motivation in the somewhat similar phrase from Hugsvinnsmál and elsewhere. However, the “faðir einn” was probably intended to contrast instead with the “Sólkótu synir” in Sólarljóð 78.3, since the inheritance is received from all. The language here surely does not indicate any ideas were taken from Hugsvinnsmál.

Sólarljóð stanza seventy-nine is again highly obscure. It tells little more than that the nine daughters of Njörðr have written runes. None of the personal names from Sólarljóð appears in Hugsvinnsmál, and neither do the numbers seven or nine appear there. The only thing remaining is the phrase “Hier ero runer” (Sól. 79.1) which may be translated either as “here is wisdom,” or as
"here are runes" in the meaning of either simply normal letters or of evil heathen magical characters. If the runes of Sólarljóð refer to wisdom generally, then Hugsvinnsmál is very much like Sólarljóð in its attempt to transfer wisdom to the next generation.

If Sólarljóð's runes are mere letters, however, then the poems have little in common. Hugsvinnsmál does mention runes once, in stanza twelve. The advice is to learn "Bækur og runer" (Hugs. 12.1) as a translation of Cato's "litteras disce" (Sent. 38). Hugsvinnsmál is clearly using the term "runes" to apply to letters rather than magical symbols. Although Sólarljóð is probably not using runes in the sense of magical symbols either, it is certainly not advising one to learn to read and write, as is the case in Hugsvinnsmál. The two poems share a word, but do not seem to hold any shared ideas here.

The last of the especially obscure Sólarljóð stanzas, number eighty, is the brief tale or description of Svafr and Svafrlogi. It seems that they are prone to fighting, that they incite bloodshed, that they suck wounds, and probably that they do all this habitually. These sins are notably absent in Hugsvinnsmál. Although the Icelandic version may not be as thoroughly civilized as Disticha Catonis, bloodshed is still foreign to it. To be sure, Hugsvinnsmál speaks about strife and quarrels, discord and revenge, but one is always left with the impression that the poem really only anticipates exchanges of words. The exceptions are stanza eleven calling for defense of the homeland and stanza 107 urging the hero to fight bravely and not fear death, but these passages are hardly applicable. The brutal lifestyle of Svafr and Svafrlogi does not seem to have been anticipated in Hugsvinnsmál.

Hugsvinnsmál approaches the problem of violence by encouraging pacifism, rather than by condemning bloodshed. One should moderate one's anger so that tempers are not enflamed (Hugs. 13). Discord arisen should be smoothed over and mollified (Hugs. 49). One should simply yield rather than let quarrels escalate (Hugs. 140). Above all, one must always act peaceably (Hugs. 52, 66, 70). Hugsvinnsmál is thus against fighting and against bloodshed, but the expression of this opposition is so different from Sólarljóð's stanza eighty, that it is hard to see the common idea at all.
Nothing is said at all in Hugsvinnsmál about sucking wounds, as in Sól. 80.5. The silence about vampires, cannibals or blood-brotherhood is absolute, and nothing can be inferred either in support or opposition. However, if the line from Sólarljóð is interpreted metaphorically as it probably should be, the crime complained of is less peculiar. Alan Boucher’s translation as “blood they drew / and men drained dry”\textsuperscript{102} shows this as just another way of saying that Svafr and Svafrlogi spilled blood. Hugsvinnsmál is against such violence.

The last point made against Svafr and Svafrlogi in Sólarljóð is that their crimes were habitual. This may serve to separate their actions from extraordinary circumstances such as defense of country, or it may simply show the pair as quantifiably worse than one-time murderers. Surprisingly, Hugsvinnsmál never makes distinctions between ordinary actions and those repeated frequently. This is surprising because one might expect a gnomic poem to advise against the formation of bad habits or recommend the formation of good ones. Yet Hugsvinnsmál tends to treat all its advice as a list of \textit{ad hoc} solutions to particular problems. Only stanza ten uses the word “Sialldan” to imply that a particular action (attending parties) may be acceptable when seldom performed but culpable when done often. For Sólarljóð the distinction between habitual actions and the rare occurrence is important (e.g. the grepr’s kindness to gestr), but this idea is not shared by Hugsvinnsmál.

The conclusion of Sólarljóð does hold several ideas in common with Hugsvinnsmál. Stanza eighty-one demands that Sólarljóð itself be sung to others. Hugsvinnsmál does not require its own repetition \textit{per se}, but it does place great emphasis on spreading advice and teaching others (e.g., 43, 86, 122, 127). The crucial stanza in this regard is number eighty-seven,

\begin{quote}
Mannadad meire  
getur eigi fyrer Molld ofan  
enn kenna god rad Gumnum.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{102} Alan Boucher, trans., \textit{The Lily and Lay of the Sun} ([Reykjavík:] bóksala stuđenta, 1985) 2-43.
Odigt lijf
mundu ëtar hafa,
ëf bætte eingi yfer. —(Hugs. 87(e))

_Hugsvinnsmál_ places great weight on teaching, because only the proper correction will save people from living a wicked life. _Sólarljóð_ takes this a step further, reminding us that those living wicked lives need to be saved from eternal suffering after death. This perhaps summarizes the entire approach of the two poems.

_Sólarljóð_ continues in its stanza eighty-one by making a somewhat ambiguous claim of veracity. It is a poem "er synask munu / minst at mörgu login" (_Sól._ 82.5–6). This recalls Cato's distich III.18 and _Hugsvinnsmál_ stanza 103. The problem with a work of fiction is that it is fictitious and thus not true. For Cato this is grounds for dispensing with most of what poets say. But _Hugsvinnsmál_ praises the entertainment value of poetic songs while at the same time saying much can be learned from them. _Sólarljóð_ seems to confess to the accusation of the Latin poem. There may be some lying involved in this work. But perhaps in answer to Cato, the claim is made that this work contains essentially as much truth as is possible for a work of fiction. The idea is actually that of _Hugsvinnsmál_, that an entertaining work of fiction can still contain important truth. But while _Sólarljóð_ and _Hugsvinnsmál_ agree on the idea of fiction being able to convey truth, the claim made by _Sólarljóð_ can only have been motivated by the idea that fiction is the same as lying. This is an idea taken not from _Hugsvinnsmál_, but from *Disticha Catonis* or some other source.

The final stanza of the original _Sólarljóð_ speaks of the parting between the narrator and his listener, until they can be reunited on the day of joy. The dead are to rest in peace and the living are to be comforted. _Hugsvinnsmál_ attempts to comfort the living by showing that death is inevitable (e.g. stanzas 38, 48, 137) and by denigrating life and painting it as no better than death (e.g. 107, 126). This small offering of comfort is all that is shared here between the two poems. _Hugsvinnsmál_ contains nothing to preclude the idea of life after death, but then it says nothing at all about the dead or about an afterlife or about the Last Judgment as a day of either reunion or joy. _Hugsvinnsmál_
speaks of the last day, “endadags,” in its conclusion (Hugs. 148.6), but it is clear that this final day is simply the one on which a person dies. The translator of Hugsvinnsmál announces that his poem is over (Hugs. 149.6), but does not make explicit Sólarljóð’s idea of parting.

The additional conclusion to Sólarljóð, stanza 83, contributes the idea of the poem being a dream vision, and that one has to have been created wise in order to have visualized the truth. Hugsvinnsmál follows its Latin model to condemn dreams as meaningless (Hugs. 85). The final Sólarljóð helming, though probably no more than a filler, also seems to disagree with Hugsvinnsmál. Hugsvinnsmál teaches how to gain wisdom, and does not consider it a gift of the creator. It requires work. It also requires a teacher, and stanza eighty-seven specifically warns of the error people may be condemned to suffer if they are not taught.

Hugsvinnsmál does certainly hint at degrees of wisdom, but it is not oriented towards achieving wisdom for its own sake or to gain some philosophical truth. In the words of Hugsvinnsmál,

Ædri speki
fær madur alldri
enn hann vid Syndum siae.—(Hugs. 57.4–6(e))

In Hugsvinnsmál, as in Sólarljóð proper, wisdom is a prerequisite for leading a moral Christian life. As Hugsvinnsmál points out in stanza fifty-seven, one can never gain the highest wisdom as long as one is sinful. One must abandon sin, learn wisdom, and achieve goodness. The procedure may not be so easily linear, but the connection between wisdom and morality is firmly retained throughout Hugsvinnsmál and the first eighty-two stanzas of Sólarljóð. That Sólarljóð’s stanza eighty-three seems to equate wisdom with the ability to see a marvellous vision without mentioning ethics or even counsel, does speak somewhat against its authenticity. One may at least be sure that Sólarljóð eighty-three does not share ideas with Hugsvinnsmál.

As can be seen from the above thematic comparison of Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál, the two gnomic poems share many of the same general ideas
in some form or another. *Disticha Catonis* had a tendency to speak against competing extremes in its search for moderation, thereby providing support for just about any argument that could be made in *Sólarljóð*. *Hugsvinnsmál* is somewhat more concrete, and so less easy to interpret in such a way as to appear to be a universal source for the ideas of *Sólarljóð*. On the other hand, *Hugsvinnsmál* shares the same cultural surroundings as *Sólarljóð*, and is as thoroughly Christian as *Sólarljóð*. In short, the two Icelandic poems are genuinely promoting many of the same ideas born of the same world view. *Sólarljóð* does not follow the ideas of *Hugsvinnsmál* in any systematic way. Most likely both poems took their ideas, insofar as *Hugsvinnsmál* departs from *Disticha Catonis*, from Christian ethics and Icelandic custom.

5.5.4. **Language shared by *Sólarljóð* and *Hugsvinnsmál***

Although Bergmann had commented on the connection between *Sólarljóð* and *Disticha Catonis*, and hence the thematic connection to wisdom literature generally, it was not until much later that linguistic connections were made. Hjalmar Falk began something of a tradition by listing passages where language is shared between *Sólarljóð* and *Hugsvinnsmál*.103 Falk’s listing is quite effective, because, although none of the individual examples of common language indicates an unambiguous borrowing, the fact that the two poems touch at so many different points is much more persuasive. Falk assumed *Sólarljóð* to have borrowed this common language from *Hugsvinnsmál*.

Björn M. Ólsen expanded the list of possible linguistic influences on *Sólarljóð*.104 Apparently using Fritzner’s dictionary105 or the *Lexicon Poëticum*106 as a concordance, he noted where many words from *Sólarljóð*

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106 Sveinbjörn Egilsson *Lexicon Poëticum* (Hafniæ, 1860).
occurred elsewhere in the corpus of Icelandic literature. In this way the list of possible influences on Sólarljóð was much expanded, though of course falling far short of what a potential search using modern databases might produce. Despite Ólsen’s broadened field of possible influences, however, it remained Hugsvinnsmál which still seemed to have the most in common with Sólarljóð. Ólsen concluded from a close comparison of the language of Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál, that the two works shared not only isolated words but enough stylistic elements to prove that both works were written by the same author, although the priority of Hugsvinnsmál was still assumed.107

Carolyn Larrington was the next to make a list of passages shared by Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð, although her list is somewhat more abbreviated than Falk’s.108 She accepts the idea that Sólarljóð was influenced both by the Edda and by Hugsvinnsmál, which had itself also been influenced by the Edda.109 Ólafur Njarðvík once again lists the similar passages from Hugsvinnsmál,110 but his interest is in showing that it was Sólarljóð which influenced Hugsvinnsmál. At those points where Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð have been shown to share language, Hugsvinnsmál has departed from its model in Disticha Catonis. Njarðvík concludes that the material in Hugsvinnsmál that does not come from Disticha Catonis could have come from Sólarljóð.111

111 Ólafur P. Njarðvík, Sólarljóð (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands og Menningarsjóður, 1991) 190; Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 235.
The significance of any similarities between Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál has been greatly exaggerated, but because they are brought up again and again in the literature, they need to be put in perspective if not laid finally to rest. Finnur Jónsson did reject the idea of Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál being composed by the same author, but as was usual, he gave no reasons. As a result, the claim continues to be reported, with Halldór Hermannsson finding the claim relatively believable, and Birgitta Tuvestrand citing him with apparent approval even more recently. The claims of Njörður Njarðvík concerning the priority of Sólarljóð have also never been answered.

It cannot be denied that Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál have much in common. Both are Icelandic didactic poems with at least a mostly Christian viewpoint. Both poems seem to have been written within the same general timeframe—at least one in which neither language nor culture underwent any dramatic changes. Most important, both poems are written in the same relatively rare ljóðahátt verse form that seems to have been customarily used for gnomic poetry.

The constraints posed by language, Christian purpose, culture, and verse form have surely determined the shape of Sólarljóð to a degree at least as great as any literary work which may have served as a model. Because both Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál were written to instruct, they both use mostly plain, simple language. It is more effective. Because they reflect the same Christian culture and moral purpose, their vocabulary is limited further. For example, since both poems speak of moral faults, and do so in a Christian context, it should not be at all surprising if words meaning “sin” or words for specific sins appear in both poems. It would be far more surprising if no vocabulary were held in common. Because words are not used in isolation, but rather in phrases, a few common phases—especially if common in the language as a whole—may also occur without proving any direct borrowing. The


likelihood of two poems using some of the same common phrases is greatly increased when they both share the same rhythms and a need for alliteration. The ljóðaháttur used in both Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál ensures a very precise common rhythmic environment likely to encourage not only similar phrasal construction, but also the shared use of formulaic fillers.

Stylistic similarities between Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál will be discussed below, but before turning to common language it should be noted that both poems are actually striving for the same style. These are both sententious poems in which a father is giving crucial advice to his son. Similar diction is to be expected.

Finally, it should be remembered that no autograph manuscript exists for either Sólarljóð or Hugsvinnsmál. The original form of either is unknown. Either poem could have been supplemented or otherwise altered through influence from the other long after their original compositions. The nature of a proverb is such that it is self-contained and of universal application, and so can be easily used in any number of literary works. Hávamál, for example, is often thought of as a compilation of proverbial verses from other sources. Gnomic works have a way of attracting gnomes from other gnomic works. The Sólarljóð manuscripts are all quite similar and show only the demonstrated addition of stanza eighty-three, though the case has been made for many others. The Hugsvinnsmál manuscripts of a given tradition also tend to agree among themselves, but there are different traditions. For Hugsvinnsmál there is a group of manuscripts dating from the same time as the oldest remaining manuscripts of Sólarljóð, but there is also one manuscript nearly two hundred years older, and thought to be closer to the archetype by three removes.

Birgitta Tuvestrand’s edition of Hugsvinnsmál transcribes the oldest remaining manuscript, AM 624, 4to, from 1450–1500, denominated manuscript A. LBS 1199, 4to, manuscript e, is printed as representative of later manuscripts. Manuscript e contains several more stanzas than A, yet A is considered to more closely resemble the original archetype. Particularly given the status of Disticha Catonis as Latin textbook, it is not hard to imagine students trying their hand at making their own translations. That other
translations might be inserted to fill gaps in the original *Hugsvinnsmál*, or come to replace parts of the original through error or through perceived superiority is not surprising. It is also easy to see how some parts of *Hugsvinnsmál* may have been influenced even by other parts of the same poem. Especially for works like *Hugsvinnsmál* or *Sólarljóð*, that come from an era not sharing our conceptions of copyright or textual integrity, it can be useful to view literature as having a life of its own. These particular poems, for whatever reasons, have changed with time.

With these many caveats in mind, the question of *Hugsvinnsmál*’s influence on *Sólarljóð* can be approached wisely, following the advice of Cato’s *sententia 24, nihil temere credideris*. The following list is a compilation of those made by Falk, Olsen, Larrington and Njarðvík (see pages ff. above), updating the references where necessary to correspond with standard stanza numbering for *Sólarljóð* and to accord with the Tuvestrand edition of *Hugsvinnsmál*. Purported similarities too slight for me to perceive at all have been omitted. Both poems here stem from manuscript *LBS 1199, 40* (with expansions made silently), except where a parallel only occurs with *Hugsvinnsmál*’s manuscript A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Sólarljóð</em></th>
<th><em>Hugsvinnsmál</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hræddu hiarta</td>
<td>Med hreinu hiarta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann liest trua</td>
<td>skalltu a hann trua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—(<em>Sól. 3.4–5</em>)</td>
<td>—(*Hugs. 17.4–5(e))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theim er ädr heffde wolyndr verid</td>
<td>illt er volindum ad vera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—(<em>Sól. 3.6</em>)</td>
<td>—(*Hugs. 128.6(e))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thvi hann hugdist væligr vera</td>
<td>oc thikist voladur vera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—(<em>Sól. 4.6</em>)</td>
<td>—(*Hugs. 110.6(e))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

froðan floðu (Sól. 5.6)
unn thaw froðhugadur
—(Hugs. 3.5(e))

Aude nie heilsu
rædr eingin madr —(Sól. 8.1–2)
Alldurlægjæ sijnu
rædur eigi madur.
—(Hugs. 35.4–5(e))

margan that sæker
er minst af varer —(Sól. 8.4–5)
Sott oc daudi
kemur tha sijst varer
—(Hugs. 48.4–5(e))

opt verdur qualræde af konum
—(Sól. 10.3)
illra qvenna
firr thu thig òllu Lagie
—(Hugs. 12.4–6(e))

a marga vegu —(Sól. 18.2)
nem thu a margann veg
—(Hugs. 8.5(e))
skalltu a margann veg
—(Hugs. 34.2(e))
skaltu a margan veg
—(Hugs. 139.2(A))

Ovinum thijnun,
trudu alldre,
tho their fagurt mæle fyr thier
godu thu hejt—(Sól. 19.1–4)
flarads mans orde,
tho ad fagurt mæli,
tharftu eigi thvi ad Trua
glisleg ord
lat thu i gegen koma
—(Hugs. 42.1–5(e))

gott er annars
vijte ad hafa fyr varnade
—(Sól. 19.5–6)
Anars Vijte
lati sier ad Varnadi
—(Hugs. 98.4–5(e))

af göðum hug—(Sól. 21.2)
skalltu vid godan hug
—(Hugs. 50.2(e))
allt ad oskum ganga—(Sól. 25.6) thó gangi ad oskum allt
—(Hugs. 78.3(e))

bæt thu eie jllu yfer—(Sól. 26.3) ef bætte eingi yfer
—(Hugs. 87.6(e))

that [qveda\textsuperscript{116}] sálu sama—(Sól. 26.6) thad qveda Odiggs mans edli
—(Hugs. 70.6(e)) vel qveda diggua dugast
—(Hugs. 118.6(e))

gott er vammalausum vera og vammalaus vera—
—(Hugs. 3.3(e)) illt er volindum ad vera
—(Hugs. 128.6(e))

Vinsamleg råd Astsamleg rad
og vite bundin kenni eg thier minn einka Son
kenne eg thier sió saman mundu thau epter óll
giórla thu mun—(Sól. 32.1–4) —(Hugs. 2.1–3(e)) Astsamleg rad
kenni eg thier, minn einka son
—(Hugs. 148.1–2(e))

óll eru thau nyt ad nema—(Sól. 32.6) Ør ad kenna
skallt thu ódrum gott og so nytt ad nema
—(Hugs. 86.1–3(e))

\textsuperscript{116} Njörður P. Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 32: LBS2797, ÍBR36, LBS2298.
ljöser aurar
verda ad löngrum trega
margan hefur audur apad
—(Sól. 34.4–6)

Margur er sa Aumur,
er fyrer aurum rædur.
illt er audi ad trua—
—(Hugs. 34.4–6(e))
ef hann hefur Aurum amad.
—(Hugs. 53.6(e))
er sjinum hefur aurum amad
—(Hugs. 106.6(e))

thvi ad eg vissa fält fyr—(Sól. 35.3)
Ahiggiu bera skalltu
fyrer önguim hlut,
theim er leyner Gud Gumna.
thuiat himneska skiepnun
meiga ei höldar vita,
their er a jördubua.
—(Hugs. 59(e))
Órlög sijn
vite eingi fyrer
—(Hugs. 126.1–2(e))

huorsu alla vegu—(Sól. 38.2)
skalltu a alla vegu
—(Hugs. 40.2(e))
tharf madur a alla vegu
—(Hugs. 81.2(e))
skallt a alla vegu
—(Hugs. 123.2(e))

Sinna verka
nytr seggia huór—(Sól. 49.1–2)
sina uerka
skal segia hverr
—(Hugs. 77.4–5(A))

sæll er sa sem gott góír—(Sól. 49.3) og God verk giora
—(Hugs. 1.3(e))
If this list is taken at face value, then over seven percent of the lines in Sólarljóð can be seen to share language with Hugsvinnsmál. However, a closer examination demonstrates that the case for influence is not as strong as it might appear at first.

The first of the above examples shows the word "hjarta" as being held in common by both poems, as first noted by Hjalmar Falk. The entire noun phrases "hræddu hiarta" (Sól. 3.4) and "hreinu hiarta" (Hugs. 17.4) appear even more alike than the head nouns alone, but what similarity there actually is, is largely determined by the rules of alliteration. Significantly, the word "hiarta," and indeed the entire line, is missing in the oldest Hugsvinnsmál manuscript. Although this manuscript A may simply be defective vis à vis both original and later copies, it is more likely that the line was supplied later. "Hjarta" is not stylistically consistent with the rest of Hugsvinnsmál, which generally uses hugr for the internalization of any feelings or emotions. For example, in the same stanza is the line "og elska af ollum hug" (Hugs. 17.6), which uses "hugr" in the expression "and love [Him] with all your heart." "Hjarta" occurs nowhere else in Hugsvinnsmál, although there is a second occurrence in the much shorter Sólarljóð. It seems likely that this particular word was borrowed by Hugsvinnsmál from elsewhere—perhaps even from Sólarljóð, but more likely from common Christian vocabulary.

This same example shows also the word trúa seemingly held in common. However here the two occurrences are so different semantically that it is difficult to imagine any influence between the poems. In Sólarljóð "hann liest trua" (Sól. 3.5) refers to the traveller trusting the highwayman. The "a hann trua" of Hugsvinnsmál 17.5(e) refers to believing in God. The only way Sólarljóð's trua could have been intentionally borrowed from

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117 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 1914, No. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 57.
Hugsvinnsmál's true a with its religious sense, would be if the Sólarljóð poet were either making a linguistic pun, or a parody of the most Christian passage of Hugsvinnsmál.

On the other hand, Njarðvík's suggestion that Hugsvinnsmál has added something here to Disticha Catonis,118 should not be taken as an indication that Sólarljóð has exerted its influence on Hugsvinnsmál. What has been added is Christianity, something not unique to Sólarljóð. The addition of Christianity has been manifested primarily by the omission of language. The first line of distich I.1 was left untranslated, since it questions the existence of God as spirit. The remaining Latin line, "hic tibi praecipue sit pura mente colendus," has indeed been expanded into six in Hugsvinnsmál, and this required some extra wordiness. While the original says to worship God, there is nothing about believing in Him or loving Him. This has been added, but surely not at the inspiration of the gestr having trusted the greppr. Likewise, "Med hreinu hiarta" (Hugs. 17.4) is a close translation of the original pura mente and did not have to be borrowed from anywhere, although "med hreinu hugi" might have been more literal.

Björn Ólsen noted that the word vályndr occurs in both Sól. 3.6 and Hugs. 128.6(e), coupled with forms of the verb vera.119 Since vera 'to be' occurs rather frequently in Old Icelandic and its use is governed by alliteration, it is not a good indicator of influence. The word vályndr "pernicious" describes the early state of the greppr in Sólarljóð, before his decision to show generosity to the gestr. It is certainly appropriate. The use of vályndr in Hugsvinnsmál, however, is suspicious. The Hugsvinnsmál stanza translates Cato's distich IV.25, which says not to lightly condemn that which one has earlier praised.

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118 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Sólarljóð (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafæðistofnun Háskóla Íslands og Menningarsjóður, 1991) 185; Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 231.

illa lata
skalltu yfer onguum hlut,
theim er thu haelt hefur,
nie thad lasta,
sem thu lofad hefur.
illt er volindum ad vera.—(Hugs. 128(e)).

As a conclusion to the idea of speaking ill of something once liked, the advice
not to be vályndr or "ill-natured" seems appropriate enough. But the idea of
the Latin distich was more along the lines of "don't be wishy-washy." 
Hugsvinnsmál stanza 128 appears to be corrupted.

Finnur Jónsson emended this stanza as follows:

Illa láta
skalt yfir engum hlut,
theim er thu hælt hefir,
né that leyfa,
er thu lastat hefir:
ilt er veillyndum vera.\(^{120}\)

This emendation has generally been accepted, and was noted by Ólsen\(^{121}\). It
shows both sides of the coin in true Catonian fashion, and makes the point
against being irresolute. In the oldest manuscript of Hugsvinnsmál the last
line of the stanza does read: "illt er veillyndvm at uera" (Hugs. 128.6(A)).
Otherwise, manuscript A agrees with e in all important respects. In other
words, by the time of manuscript A, a transposition of the verbs in lines four
and five had already been made. In manuscript e, and the others of its
tradition, this stanza had been "corrected" by changing the adjective veillyndr
to vályndr, giving the stanza internal coherence, but departing from the idea
in the Latin original.

\(^{120}\) Finnur Jónsson, Den Norsk-islandske Skjaledigtning B2 (København: 
Gyldendal, 1915) stanza 127.

\(^{121}\) Björn M. Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Saín til sögu Íslands og Ísl. Bókmenta 5.1
(Reikjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 27.
The significance of this to Sólarljóð is that once again, a word that it uses has been used in a late manuscript of Hugsvinnsmál, but not in the oldest manuscript, and almost surely not in the original. If there is influence here, Sólarljóð has exerted it on Hugsvinnsmál to force a change in the way Hugsvinnsmál has been passed down. Yet even here, to say the murderously destructive greppr had been vályndr is hardly the same as warning someone not to be válynðr in a sense of expressing peevish dislike. The contexts are also different, and if a borrower from Sólarljóð to Hugsvinnsmál had been considering the greppr’s change of heart, then the Hugsvinnsmál stanza would more likely have been returned to its original state, rather than being changed further. The use of this shared word can be nothing but accidental.

Njördur Njarðvik has already rejected the parallel suggested by Falk\(^\text{122}\) between Sólarljóð’s “thvi hann hugdist væligr vera” (Sól. 4.6) and “oc thikist voladur vera” from Hugsvinnsmál (110.6(e)), because váligr ‘harmful’ and váladr ‘in distress’ have different meanings.\(^\text{123}\) Despite various manuscript spellings, the words do always remain distinct, leaving the only bases for any supposed parallel the common verb vera ‘to be’ plus alliterating adjective, and the synonyms huga and thykkja. Vera is too common a verb to prove any connection, and it is nearly essential that it alliterate with something. As for huga and thykkja, again no word has been shared or borrowed, even though these synonyms could have been interchanged within the rules of ljóðaháttur. The meaning ‘to think,’ ‘seem’ or ‘consider’ is surely too common to claim necessary borrowing, and there is nothing shared in context. In Sólarljóð the penitent greppr considers himself to have been pernicious, while in Hugsvinnsmál a rich man typically considers himself poor. The two passages have little more in common than that they were both written in the same language.

\(^{122}\) Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskапets Skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 1914, No. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 57.

\(^{123}\) Njördur P. Njarðvik, Sólarljóð (Reykjavik: Bókmenntafræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands og Menningarsjóður, 1991) 185; Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 231.
The same can be said for the next example as well, one suggested by Ólsen.124 The two poems share the root *frod-*, having to do with ‘wisdom’, even though the actual words used are not the same and the general theme of both poems is precisely about wisdom. In *Sólarljóð* the *gestr* was “frodan fioluaran” (*Sól. 5.6), that is, ‘informed’ and ‘forewarned’ about the evil grepr. In *Hugsvinnsmál* the son is told to love his parents ‘wisemindedly’: “unn thu frodhugadur” (*Hugs. 3.5(e)). Here are different words in different contexts, with only one syllable held in common. At best there is a shared sense of wisdom obtained through learning, but both poems attempt to show that one should gain wisdom from learning the lessons being taught. It would be just as enlightening and much more justified to claim that the idea of writing a didactic poem was shared by the writers both of *Sólarljóð* and of *Hugsvinnsmál*.

There is a shared line in the next of the claimed similar examples, the claim dating back to Falk.125 The first of the lines in the example really share only the initial letter *A*. No man controls riches and health (*Sólarljóð*) just as no man controls (the length of) his old age (*Hugsvinnsmál*).

Aude nie heilsu  
raedr einging madr —(*Sól. 8.1-2*)

Alldurlægie sijnu  
raedur eungi madur.  
—(*Hugs. 35.4-5(e)*)

The point of both poems is similar, illustrating that fate (or God’s will) is unknown to man and not able to be controlled. Furthermore, there is no significant variation among manuscripts as far as the language of these passages is concerned. *Sólarljóð* uses similar phrasing again in the same stanza: “einginn raedur sættum salfur” (*Sól. 8.6*), perhaps indicating a corruption or that the language is especially common. At any rate, this is the

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first passage that actually appears to be shared between Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál when examined at all critically.

Another shared phrase, this one also noted by Falk,126 is thá er minnst varir, or "when one least expects it." This phrase was probably already a cliché when Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál were composed, and each of the poems varies it slightly. Hugsvinnsmál says "Sott oc daudi / kemur tha sijst varer" (Hugs. 48.4–5(e)), with sízt replacing minnst for the sake of alliteration. Sólarljóð has eliminated the temporal aspect of the phrase, and maintains that "margan that sæker / er minst af varer" (Sól. 8.4–5). Neither poem is likely to have borrowed directly from the other, since all they really hold directly in common is the word vara. The sense is vaguely similar, inasmuch as Hugsvinnsmál is least expecting "sickness and death" while the thing that might be least expected in Sólarljóð is loss of both money and health.

A similar meaning seems also to underlie the claim of similarity found by Njarðvík127 between "opt verdur qualræde af konum" (Sól. 10.3) and "illra qvenna / firr thu thig óllu Lagie" (Hugs. 12.4–6(e)). The only real similarity is that both poems mention women, and that they do so negatively. The subject is too common to draw any conclusions. It may perhaps be strange that Hugsvinnsmál would have translated meretrix as kona (however wicked) rather than something like hörkona, but this is unlikely to have been due to any influence from Sólarljóð.

Sólarljóð's phrase "a marga vegu" (Sól. 18.2), also appears three different times in Hugsvinnsmál,128 at lines 8.5, 34.2, and 139.2, as first noted by

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126 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 1914, No. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 57.


Ólsen. 129 (It has been replaced entirely, however, in 139.2 of manuscript e). This phrase, "in many ways," can hardly be anything but a filler. It appears also as "a allu vegu" or something quite similar (Sól. 38.2; Hugs. 40.2(e), 81.2(e), 123.2(e)). The phrase adds nothing to the sense of the poetry anywhere it occurs. Nor is its use confined to the two poems discussed here. There are no common themes being shared where this phrase is used, and it is once more very difficult to believe there could be any influence between the two poems based on use of a common filler.

Likewise, "tala fagrt, en hyggja flátt" is certainly proverbial, but it is hard to determine when it may have become so. The idea can be traced back as far as Disticha Catonis 1.26, but the translation in Hugsvinnsmál is loose enough for one to suspect influence from elsewhere. That elsewhere is most likely Hávamal:

Ef thú átt annan, thannz thú illa trúir,
vildu af hánom thó gott geta:
fagrt scaltu við thann méla, enn flátt hyggia
oc gialda lausung við lygi.—(Háv. 45)

Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð share with Hávamal the idea of believing fair speech, as well as the words trúa and fagrt méla. 130

Ovinum thijnum, flarads mans orde,
trudu alldre, tho ad fagurt mæli,
tho their fagurt mæle fyr tharftu eigi thvi ad Trua
thier glisleg ord
godu thu hejt—(Sól. 19.1–4) lat thu i gegn koma
—(Hugs. 42.1–5(e))


130 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 1914, No. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 57.
Otherwise, however, the three poems are taking different approaches. Hávamál recommends telling lies when dealing with unreliable people. Hugsvinnsmál seems to be viewing this transaction from the opposite side, and saying not to believe the lies others tell, but to answer their lies with lies of ones own. Sólarljóð advises one not to believe the fair speech of enemies, but to promise them good, and does not mention lies at all. It advises only staying out of traps. Without knowing for certain the relative dates of these stanzas or of the proverbial phrase “tala fagrt, en hyggja flátt” it is difficult to be sure what sort of influence may be involved here. It is certain, however, that one cannot today read stanza nineteen of Sólarljóð without being influenced by the other poems.

Sólarljóð summarizes the lesson to be learned from the story of the fair-tongued liar with “gott er annars / vijte ad hafa fyr varnáde” (Sól. 19.5–6). The phrase, “Anars Vjité / lati sier ad Varnadi” (Hugs. 98.4–5(e)), is also proverbial and, as first observed by Falk,¹³¹ it is also found in Hugsvinnsmál. However, it is only found in later manuscripts of Hugsvinnsmál. The eldest manuscript is much closer to the sense of the original Latin distich III.13, specifying that “vondzt manns uiti / lætur ser at varnadi uerda” (Hugs. 98.4–5(A)). It would appear that once again, Sólarljóð, with its greater facility with language, has influenced later manuscripts of Hugsvinnsmál and drawn them away from their archetype. However, this still does not preclude Sólarljóð having itself been influenced by the archetype of Hugsvinnsmál.

The use in common of the phrase “with a good heart” (“af gödum hug” [Sól. 21.2]; “vid godan hug” [Hugs. 50.2(e)])¹³² tells little about either Sólarljóð or Hugsvinnsmál. The good heart or kind heart is simply referred to too commonly in Christian literature to to form the basis for showing influence. This is a characteristic of the good Christian Sörli in Sólarljóð. The phrase in Hugsvinnsmál has been added over the Latin of the original (even in manuscript A), and so could conceivably have come from Sólarljóð, but the

¹³¹ Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 1914, No. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 57.

¹³² Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 1914, No. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 57.
adjective *góðr* and the noun *hugr* are among the most common in Old Icelandic.

A perhaps somewhat less common phrase shared by the two poems is *ganga allt at óskum* 'to go according to one's wishes.'\(^{133}\) Despite the same meter being used in the two poems the phrase appears in slightly different forms, "allt ad óskum ganga," (Sól. 25.6) and "tho gangi ad óskum allt" (Hugs. 78.3(e)). There is no similarity in context, as *Sólarljóð* is advising one to pray that wishes be granted while *Hugsvinnsmál* is advising one to be prepared for disaster even when things are going well.

The next point in *Sólarljóð* for which a parallel in *Hugsvinnsmál* has been claimed is the line "bæt thu eie jllu yfer" (Sól. 26.3). This is said to correspond to "ef bætte eingi yfer" (Hugs. 87.6(e)).\(^{134}\) What these two lines have in common—beyond a negative—is the single prepositional verb *b(ta yfir* 'to redress'. *Hugsvinnsmál* threatens a bad life if no redress is made through teaching, while *Sólarljóð* says not to redress a deed done in anger with additional ill. The contexts are so different that the words hardly share the same semantic content. In the *Hugsvinnsmál* example *b(ta yfir* means 'to correct' while in the *Sólarljóð* example it means 'to repay' or even 'to aggravate'. The *b(ta in Hugsvinnsmál 139, "og bæta Synder so" (Hugs. 139.3(e))—to make recompense for sins—would have been a closer parallel to *Sólarljóð*, but there is simply nothing rare about either *b(ta or *b(ta yfir*.

The single word *kveda* seems to be the basis for the parallel alleged between "that [qveda] sálu sama" (Sól. 26.6), "thad qveda Odiggs mans edli" (Hugs. 70.6(e)), and "vel qveda diggua dugast" (Hugs. 118.6(e)).\(^{135}\) The shared article *that* only occurs in one of the two *Hugsvinnsmál* passages, so probably wasn't part of the basis for comparison. However, the word *kveda* does not actually

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\(^{134}\) Hjalmar Falk, *Sólarljóð*, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 1914, No. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 57.

appear in the Sólarljóð passage at all, being only an emendation made in printed editions.

The word kveda is used in this precise location in three of the manuscripts investigated in Njörður Njardvík's dissertation (LBS 2797 4o, ÍBR 36 4o, LBS 2298 8o) plus another two (LBS 1458 8o, LBS1692 8o) which have it in this line together with other alterations.¹³⁶ But all five of these manuscripts are from the nineteenth century and very likely to have been influenced by the editions in print. The only manuscript dating to a time before the influential Arnamagnæan edition that has anything similar to the word kveda is AM 427 fol. from 1756. It uses the synonym telja.

To be sure, the archetype for Sólarljóð could have used the word kveda in line 26.6. No editor has ever opposed it. But the reason for the nearly universal adoption of kveda as an emendation is that it is an obvious, common word to complement the sense and rhythm of the line. The modern editors did not choose this word as an emendation because it was used in Hugsvinnsmál. It is not likely that the poet of Sólarljóð would have chosen the word because of its use in Hugsvinnsmál either, assuming he or she chose it at all. Nor did the translator of Hugsvinnsmál need to look to Sólarljóð to find a common word like kveda.

Slightly more common than kveda may be the verb vera, and the next suggested parallel¹³⁷ appears again to rest at least partly on the use of vera plus an alliterating adjective:

gott er vammalausum vera        og vammalaus vera—
—(Sól. 30.6)                     —(Hugs. 3.3(e))
illt er volindum ad vera
—(Hugs. 128.6(e))

¹³⁶ Njörður P. Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 32.

¹³⁷ Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 1914, No. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 57.
Stanza thirty of Sólarljóð does share the word vammlauss ‘without blemish’ with the third stanza of Hugsvinnsmál, but vera is probably a later corruption within Hugsvinnsmál. The oldest manuscript of Hugsvinnsmál uses lífa ‘to live’ instead of vera ‘to be.’ If the latter word actually replaced the former, it was doubtless due to the pressures of alliteration rather than any borrowing from Sólarljóð. The word vammlaus is not by any means peculiar, particularly given the didactic nature of the two poems. One might expect a more exclusively Christian syndalauss ‘without sin’ in either poem, rather than the less technical vammlauss, but the latter probably corresponds to the gallalaust most common in the modern Bible.

The “gott er vammlausum vera” of Sólarljóð stanza thirty has nothing but diction and vera in common with “illt er volindum ad vera” (Hugs. 128.6(e)). Both Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál are extremely sententious poems written in the same meter, so it is not surprising that they should make their pronouncements in a similar way. It is surprising that the formula “it is good/bad to be ...” occurs only the once in Sólarljóð, except that so much of the poem is devoted to narrative rather than gnomic pronouncement. This type of construction is used another four times (34.6(e), 91.6(e), 113(A), 142.6(e)) in the more proverbial Hugsvinnsmál.

Nearly the whole of Sólarljóð stanza thirty-two has been compared to passages from Hugsvinnsmál.138 The Sólarljóð stanza is the conclusion to the seven proverbial stanzas most like Hugsvinnsmál in form (though surprisingly not in content). The corresponding stanzas from Hugsvinnsmál are also either introductory or conclusory, and since they deal with the advisability of teaching and learning advice, the underlying ideas are shared. Sólarljóð has “Vinsamleg ræd”. (Sól. 32.1) while Hugsvinnsmál has “Astaðamleg ræd” (Hugs. 2.1(e); 148.1(e)), but the suffix is rare enough to see a parallel given the similar context. In both poems advice is said to be taught using the verb kenna, rather than ræða, læra, gefa or some other common word. Sólarljóð says “kenne eg thier” (Sól. 32.3) while Hugsvinnsmál uses

the same phrase, "kenni eg thier" in its second stanza (Hugs. 2.2(e)) and seems to have adopted it later into stanza 148 as well (Hugs. 148.2(e)).

Once again, the manuscript traditions of Hugsvinnsmál diverge. In manuscript A this passage reads

\[
\text{Ástsamlig rad} \\
\text{mun thu einka son,} \\
\text{thav er ec hefi j kuædi kennt.--(Hugs. 148.1–3(A))}
\]

Hence, the manuscript which is oldest and genetically closest to the archetype is less like Sólarljóð than are later manuscripts. Nonetheless, the ástsalig ráð and kennu are still present in 148(A), and (assuming it is e which departs further from the archetype and not A) if Hugsvinnsmál borrowed language in later manuscripts this was surely taken from its own second stanza and not from another poem like Sólarljóð. The Hugsvinnsmál manuscripts diverge again in stanza eighty-six, but both main traditions still end their respective first helming with the same "nyt ad nema" that concludes Sólarljóð stanza thirty-two. The poems agree that the advice they impart is useful to learn or good to know.

The next suggested parallel between Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál is another that seems to me to be entirely illusory. Björn Ólsen noted the following similarities:  

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ljöser aurar
verda ad lóngum trega
margan hefur audur apad
—(Sól. 34.4–6)
Margur er sa Aumur,
er fyrer aurum rædur.
illt er audi ad trua—
—(Hugs. 34.4–6(e))
ef hann hefur Aurum amad.
—(Hugs. 53.6(e))
er sijnum hefur aurum amad
—(Hugs. 106.6(e))

Here the only correspondence is that both poems speak against the pursuit of
wealth using the common words eyrir ‘money, silver’ and auðr ‘wealth’.
Margr ‘many’ also appears in both poems. Neither the words used nor the ideas behind them are the least bit unusual. Ólsen also notes the Sólarljóð
connection to Hávamál, which is much stronger. There the words auðr
and the probably less-common word apa both appear together in the same
stanza (Háv. 75).

It is Hugsvinnsmál which most succinctly pronounces the typical gnome,
“Ǫrlög sijn / vite eingi fyrer” (Hugs. 126.1–2(e)). Björn Ólsen first
commented on the parallel between this and the “thvi ad eg vissa fátt fyr” of
Sólarljóð 35.3, as well as the lengthier equivalent occupying the entire stanza
of Hugsvinnsmál fifty-nine. This is a rare example of Sólarljóð
responding to Hugsvinnsmál both in idea and in language. However, the
correspondence is very rough at best. The Hugsvinnsmál passages are here
faithful to the idea of their Latin model, that one should not know ones
future in advance. The speaker in Sólarljóð, however, is actually
complaining that he had not known more about his future.

Sólarljóð does agree with Hugsvinnsmál that a man is happier not knowing
the future, but human happiness on earth is not the goal of Sólarljóð.

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140 Björn M. Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands og Ísl. Bókmenta 5.1
(Reikjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 40.

141 Björn M. Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands og Ísl. Bókmenta 5.1
(Reikjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 40.
Sólarljóð preaches that transitory human happiness should be sacrificed for the eternal benefit of the soul. It is the future after death that is most important for one to focus upon, not the present. Although Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál both speak on the same theme, they take different positions. But because they speak on the same theme, they also use similar language. All three stanzas use forms of vita 'to know' and fyrir 'beforehand'. Yet since they all discuss knowing things beforehand, this common vocabulary does not seem terribly significant. There is nowhere an entire line held in common.

Hjalmar Falk did note the entire phrase "alla vegu" used both in Sólarljóð 38.2 and in Hugsvinnsmál, as distinct from the phrase "marga vegu."142 In fact, the former phrase is used three different times in Hugsvinnsmál, at lines 40.2, 81.2, and 123.2. Stanza 123 does not appear in manuscript A, but there is otherwise no important variation between the manuscript traditions. As was the case with "marga vegu" (see page above) there is no common theme shared in the locations where "alla vegu" occurs. In fact, the phrase would probably have to be translated somewhat differently in each of the various places where it occurs—as "all sides," or "all directions"—and not as a universal "all ways," for example. Since this phrase does not function as an entire line of verse that can be inserted interchangeably anywhere within the two poems, it is somewhat more difficult to dismiss "alla vegu" as a set phrase. Nonetheless, it never contributes so much semantic content that it could not be omitted without changing the sense of the poetry. It seems very unlikely that either poem borrowed this phrase from the other.

The final common passage mentioned by Falk in his original list of similarities between Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál143 was

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142 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 1914, No. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 57.

143 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 1914, No. 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 57.
Sinna verka
nytr seggia huór—(Sól. 49.1–2)
sina uerka
skal segia hverr
lavn med leigum taka.
—(Hugs. 77.4–5(A))

The idea of work being rewarded must surely be proverbial. This Hugsvinnsmál passage occurs only in the tradition of manuscript A, while the entire helming is missing from e. However, in e almost precisely the same lines do occur at stanza 102.4–5, a stanza missing from A. It appears that the Hugsvinnsmál helming is able to float within the poem, and hence possibly to connect itself with ljóðaháttr of other poems, though that has not happened with Sólarljóð.

Sólarljóð has not borrowed the entire helming from Hugsvinnsmál. It is only the two connected phrases seggia hverr ‘each man’ and sinna verka ‘his works’ that the two poems have in common. The Hugsvinnsmál helming provides a satisfactory conclusion to each of the stanzas where it occurs, but it does not correspond to anything in Cato’s distiches II.23 or III.17, which the Icelandic purports to translate. It is an idea come from elsewhere. An obvious common influence for both Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð might be the Bible, perhaps Matthew 16:27 or 2 Timothy 4:14. The idea is a common one. The words, too, are common enough, but they are shared when a multitude of synonyms were available.

Björn Ólsen observed that both Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð favored doing good works in the similar passages “sæll er sa sem goti gíörir” (Sól. 49.3) and “og God verk giora” (Hugs. 1.3(e)). However, the performance of good works was a primary goal of Catholicism, even if Luther might later be somewhat less enthusiastic. It is the Bible which appears to have most influenced Sólarljóð at this point, with its “sæll er” so resembling the “sælit eru” of the beatitudes (Matt 5:3–11). Hugsvinnsmál has not followed its Latin model in this introductory stanza, but it is not following Sólarljóð either.

Both Sólarljóð and Hugsvinsmál incorporate the widespread Christian idea of doing good, something easiest expressed using the verb gera 'to do' and the adjective góðr 'good'. There is no strong evidence here of any borrowing.

It was again Björn M. Ólsen who first noted that Sólarljóð speaks about one having desired "annars eigu" (Sól. 63.3) just as Hugsvinsmál speaks about "Annars Eign" (Hugs. 15.4(e), 44.4(e)) in a similar context of covetousness.\(^{145}\) Cato's sententia fifty-four, alienum noli concupiscere, is the most concise formulation of this idea, translated closely in Hugsvinsmál fifteen. The later occurrence in stanza forty-four has no basis in the earlier Latin, but in any Christian context the idea of discouraging one from desiring "another's property" looks most like an abbreviated form of the biblical commandment against coveting a neighbor's house, wife, servant, ox, or ass.\(^{146}\) There is no need for Sólarljóð to have borrowed here from Hugsvinsmál, or vice versa.

Other parallel passages have been noted between Sólarljóð and Hugsvinsmál, but as is the case with Sól. 73.3–6 and Hugs. 139.1–3(e),\(^ {147}\) these are generally thematic parallels, as discussed here earlier, and are not based on actual common language. Any influence between the two poems would be much clearer if both language and ideas overlapped. This is almost never the case.

The one thing that Sólarljóð does incontrovertibly share with Hugsvinsmál is the ljóðahátt verse form. This means that there are shared patterns of rhythm and alliteration that tend to make the two poems look more similar than they really are. If the poems have a word in common, they probably also have some other nearby word that also seems somehow similar, simply because this word alliterates with the word that really is shared. Most similarities are thus illusory.


\(^{146}\) Exod. 20:17.

\(^{147}\) Björn M. Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Sáfn til sögu Íslands og Ísl. Bókmenta 5.1 (Reikjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 57.
Björn Ólsen\textsuperscript{148} listed nearly every word held in common by \textit{Sólarljóð} and \textit{Hugsvinnsmál}, because he was interested in showing a common authorial style, rather than demonstrating actual influence from one poem to the other. As one might normally expect, most of these shared words are among the most common in the Icelandic language, and thus likely to be common to a great number of works. These are words such as \textit{hjarta}, \textit{trua} (ā), \textit{vera}, \textit{kenna}, and \textit{kveða}, plus a few that are perhaps not among the most common, but which are still far from rare, such as \textit{vályndr}, \textit{b(ta yfir}, or the root \textit{froð-}. These words are not distinctive enough to demonstrate either style or influence.

Beyond individual words, certain shared combinations of two or more words have been noted, such as \textit{trua + jagurt mæla, godum hug, eyrir + aðr, vita + fyrir, gott + gøra}, or even longer combinations such as \textit{sinna verka + seggia huor}. Although as few as two words may be actually held in common, it is often made to appear that there is an entire shared helming or stanza, should these words not occur in the same line. After all, the similar rhythm and alliterative patterns will insure that larger groupings somehow seem similar, especially if there is also a similar meaning. But the meanings are not often particularly similar within the corresponding stanzas of the two respective poems. If one looks simply at specific words held in common rather than at all the disparate material between sets of shared words, \textit{Sólarljóð} and \textit{Hugsvinnsmál} have far fewer points in common, certainly not seven percent of the lines of the shorter poem. When the two poems do discuss similar ideas, it is more likely that similar words should be used, as in the case of the phrase “annars eign” (another’s possessions) used where both poems tell not to covet another’s goods. Yet there are many more common ideas than common phrases.

The only common language that really makes it appear that something could have been borrowed by \textit{Sólarljóð} is found in the longer, more self-contained phrases that constitute nearly a complete line or even two. There are no

complete helmings held in common. I find the most convincing points of contact between Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnumál to be the following:

rædr eingen madr—(Sól. 8.2)  
rædur einki madur—(Hugs. 35.5(e))

a marga vegu—(Sól. 18.2)  
a margann veg—(Hugs. 8.5(e), 34.2(e), 139.2(A)).

allt ad oskum ganga—(Sól. 25.6)  
 three gangi ad oskum allt  
 —(Hugs. 78.3(e))

óll eru thau nyt ad nema—(Sól. 32.6)  
 og so nytt ad nema  
 —(Hugs. 86.3(e))

To these I would add “er minst af varer” (Sól. 8.4) and “kemur tha sijst varer” (Hugs. 48.5(e)) because I believe both to be similar forms of a common idea of *thá er minst varir*, ‘when one least expects it’. Likewise, the phrases “gott er annars / vijte ad hafa fyr varnade” (Sól. 19.5–6) and “Anars Vijte / lati sier ad Varnadi” (Hugs. 98.4–5(e)) are very close because they not only share the important words, but also express the same idea. Yet despite all these quite similar passages, the evidence that one poem borrowed from the other is not convincing.

The “a marga vegu” (Sól. 18.2) and “a margann veg” (Hugs. 8.5(e), 34.2(e), 139.2(A)) pairing is clearly a verse filler, adding nothing to the meaning of either poem. More meaningful, perhaps, but similarly universal is the “alla vegu” (Sól. 38.2) and “a alla vegu” (Hugs. 40.2(e), 81.2(e), 123.2(e)) phrase repeated in both poems. It can be said that using the word *vegr* belongs to the vocabulary or style of the author or authors of the poems, but hardly that there has been any borrowing.

What is remarkable about all these common phrases is just how common they are. They correspond closely to the English clichés:
No man controls [his destiny]
in many ways
on all sides
to go according to plan
good to know
when one least expects it
to learn from another’s mistakes.

To be sure, no phrase began as a cliché, and in Icelandic it is Sólarljóð usually listed as the oldest source for clearly proverbial phrases it contains. Yet it is likely that these phrases preceded either Sólarljóð or Hugsvinnsmál.

Stylistic elements shared by Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð are many, but not enough to prove that both poems were written by the same author. To a large extent, style is determined by the common verse form. Both poems use alliteration, and both share the same rhythm patterns. This accounts for much of the similarity in diction that has been noted. Björn Ólsen, for example, thought that the phrase “manna hverr,” with all the various synonyms used for madhr in both poems, indicated a special personal style, presumably over the possible “hverr manna.”149 The various phrases are not interchangeable, however, because of the radical difference in stress. All the synonyms of madhr cited have two syllables, and since the first of them is always stressed, postponing the hverr prevents two stressed syllables occurring next to each other. Such a consideration would certainly be important to any poet writing in ljóðaháttr without necessarily indicating a personal style.

Ólsen’s primary reason for suggesting that Sólarljóð was written by the translator of Hugsvinnsmál was the frequent use in both poems of adjectives ending in -liga, usually at the end of a line.150 He found that such constructions were rare in other examples of ljóðaháttr, primarily those taken

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from the Edda. It is striking that such constructions come most often at the end of the line. In Sólarljóð the ratio is twelve to five, and the five not line-final are mostly close to the end. Nonetheless, the listed occurrences of words in -liga towards the beginnings of lines elsewhere is not long either. The end position is perhaps much less surprising when one considers that these so-called adjectives are being used adverbially, and so require no following head noun. Ole Widding has made a study of the suffix -ligr as a stylistic element. He concludes that it is characteristic of what he calls the "florissante stil," a type of florid learned writing not confined to Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál. This particular element of style may perhaps be used to place Sólarljóð within a specific literary tradition, but it cannot be used to trace an individual writer.

Another very important stylistic consideration to keep in mind is that both poems share the fiction that a father is conveying supremely wise advice to his son. Both poems are striving for the same style. There is also a certain universal style associated with proverbs. Sweeping phrases such as Ólsen's "manna hverrar," or the converse "engi maðr" are to be expected, together with words like opt and alðri and forms of the verb skulu. Proverbial pronouncements need a vocabulary that will generalize the advice, showing it to have wide application or to be based on broad observation. At the same time, a very elevated style is needed to make common sense sound like uncommonly wise advice. This is the sort of style shared by Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál, and, indeed, by Hávamál as well.

More specific stylistic elements, such as the use of -liga and of participial verbs in imitation of Latin, do place both Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál within a certain tradition of learned writing. The choice of ljóðaháttr as a verse form for Christian didactic poetry may also indicate a shared tradition of using old forms for new material. The frequent use in both poems of colloquial-

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sounding phrases such as “marga vegu,” or “alla vegu” does indicate some shared modes of expression. Likewise, the phrase “mörgum hlutum” is held in common by both poems (Sól. 63.2, Hugs. 113/109), with formulations containing hlutr occurring a total of five times in Sólarljóð and a roughly proportional eight times in Hugsvinnsmál. Some of the same vocabulary may thus have been seized upon by the writers of both poems. Moreover, a literary environment of Latin learning is clear in Hugsvinnsmál, a translation from Latin. Classical literary techniques such as anaphora are clearly evidenced in Sólarljóð, though there is nothing that could not also be a native development. Sólarljóð may even be constructed according to some academic rule of rhetoric, with its divisions into “genres” of exempla, sententiae, and the like, though any specific rhetorical model is as yet unknown. It is clear that Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð were each written by an educated Icelander in a style used after the composition of the Poetic Edda and before the coming of the Reformation, but it is going much too far to say this is the style of one individual writer.

Finnur Jónsson dismissed the idea of common authorship for Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál out of hand. Because he felt the idea too absurd to deserve extensive argument, it has continued to be given at least partial credence. The poems do have much in common, but a claim that both were written by the same person requires a much heavier burden of proof to be met. A shared verse form and a few extremely common shared words are not enough.

The comparison of Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál is complicated by questions of transmission. Neither original archetype exists. Younger copies of Hugsvinnsmál contain more language similar to Sólarljóð than does the eldest. While it is not impossible that the later Hugsvinnsmál manuscripts could have been influenced by Sólarljóð, it is more likely that certain phrases have simply been in common use in the Icelandic language, and have found their way into the poems at various locations to replace lines less memorable. There is a good deal of repetition even within Hugsvinnsmál itself.

The manuscript tradition of Hugsvinnsmál closest to Sólarljóð is that represented by manuscript e, LBS 1199, 4o. While Birgitta Tuvestrand found no direct support for the idea that the other manuscripts of the tradition descended from this one copy, neither was it argued that such a relationship was impossible. This manuscript is said to have been written by Hákon Ormsson in around 1646. The oldest copy of Sólarljóð is also found in this same LBS 1199, 4o, and is furthermore said also to be in the hand of Hákon Ormsson. If the same man copied both poems, he could be responsible for many of the similarities between them. It is clear that manuscript e is more like Sólarljóð than is manuscript A, which was written long before the days of Hákon. Perhaps this copyist was influenced by Sólarljóð and altered some passages of Hugsvinnsmál as he was copying the latter. Perhaps in other places it was memories of Hugsvinnsmál that caused Sólarljóð to be altered. There are no older copies of Sólarljóð to which one can turn for comparison.

It is quite unlikely, however, that all other copies of Sólarljóð descended from LBS 1199, 4o. The current form of Sólarljóð was probably not determined by Hákon Ormsson. The famous AM 166b, 8o in particular seems to be independent of his manuscript, though still varying little. Yet there was clearly an ancestor of the oldest Sólarljóð available to Hákon Ormsson, and all later copies could easily have descended from this one ancestor. Likewise, an ancestor of Hugsvinnsmál e (called ( by Tuvestrand) was necessarily also available to Hákon. Thus at least one copy each of Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð were present in roughly the same place during the seventeenth century. The two poems could have circulated together for centuries, becoming more and more like each other with each copying.

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156 Njörður P. Njarðvík, Sólarljóð (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafráðistofnun Háskóla Íslands og Menningarsjóður, 1991) 228. Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet Institutionen för svenska språket, 1993) 5 is in error.
In fact, this scenario probably did not take place, but it does illustrate the folly of presuming these two poems to have had the same author on the basis of the limited evidence available. The points of contact between Hugsvinnsmál and Sólarljóð actually look much more like winged words or phrases floating through the Icelandic vocabulary as a whole than they do examples of any direct influence or imitation of one poem by another. By the sheer power of their cultural authority, Hávamál and Völuspá as well may have exerted a sort of influence on the language of Sólarljóð without its original author even having known the eddic poems first-hand. That Sólarljóð shares language with other Icelandic poems—whether from authorial intent or accidents of transmission—is not to be wondered at. But neither can any conclusions be safely drawn from apparent similarities.

If Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál were not written by the same author, then less is known about the writer of Sólarljóð than has been assumed. It is only the tacit assumption of common authorship that places the two works within the same generation or even century. Sólarljóð looks like it was written about the same time as Hugsvinnsmál because many of the manuscripts come from the same (late) period, and because both works have traditionally been normalized according to similar principles. Both poems have been considered to be more recent than the Poetic Edda, because both are clearly Christian, while the Edda has been thought to predate the Conversion. Hugsvinnsmál has an incontrovertibly old feature (though how old is controvertial) in its negation particle -a(t). This particle is missing in Sólarljóð, but then it is also missing from the Hugsvinnsmál manuscripts contemporary with those preserved of Sólarljóð.

The translator of Hugsvinnsmál clearly knew Latin. The writer of Sólarljóð was apparently well educated, but there is no proof that he or she was literate in Latin. Latin may not have been an absolute prerequisite for learning in Iceland,¹⁵⁷ and the Latin sources supposed for Sólarljóð are not convincing. What little Biblical influence is felt did not necessarily come directly from the

Vulgate. In Sólarljóð there are no themes from Disticha Catonis that are not also in Hugsvinnsmál, unless one accepts my idea that the fate of Unnar and Sævaldi, who run like wolves into the woods, reflects the idea of distich III.11, that one should be satisfied with what one has, even if it is less than before. Even so, this idea could come from elsewhere.

The relationship between Sólarljóð and Hugsvinnsmál is unclear. The two poems share a few words and phrases, but nothing that couldn’t be a more or less accidental adoption of common clichés. Both are written in ljóðaháttur, but this is a common meter for gnomic poetry and no proof that one poem borrowed the idea from the other. However, the common purpose and verse form make the poems look more alike than they are. Manuscript versions of Hugsvinnsmál have come to look more like Sólarljóð over time. The two poems share many ideas, but none of these ideas is unique to these poems. The two poems were probably not written by the same author.
6. **AN INTERPRETATION OF Sólarljóð**

*Sólarljóð* has always been viewed in something of the same manner in which the blind men examined the elephant. First, because of the obscure verses where pagan gods are mentioned, *Sólarljóð* was viewed as part of the Edda. Alas, its obvious Christianity put it at odds with the pagan mythology of the other poems in eddic manuscripts. *Sólarljóð* must, then, be a mixture of ideas from the time of Conversion, and not a proper part of the Edda.

Next, *Sólarljóð* was looked upon as a vision or dream, much like *Draumkvæde* or Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The difficulty with this view was that most of the poem had nothing at all to do with dreams or any tour of heaven or hell. As a result, and because it corresponded to scholarly trends of the time, the stanzas which were not visionary were severed from those that were. *Sólarljóð* came to be viewed as a series of unrelated verses combined mostly by scribal accident.

The next view of *Sólarljóð* was one which sought to reunite the poem as Christian allegory. The passages that had been so hard to understand were explained not as accidental interpolations of separate pagan poems, but as complex allegorical figures. The opening narratives were parables, or exempla such as might be found in Christian hagiography. *Sólarljóð* was united by its Christian purpose, though it was never made very clear exactly what this purpose was. For the most part there seems to have been a return to the idea of Christianity and paganism being mixed, but now with *Sólarljóð* having been written as a Christian answer to Icelandic paganism. *Sólarljóð* was no longer thought to have been written on a cusp between Christianity and paganism at the time of Conversion, but during an extended period of religious synchronism lasting for centuries. Unfortunately, there has been little said about what Christian *Sólarljóð*’s answer to paganism might actually be. The pagan gods do seem to be shown as mysterious and frightening, but there is no clear polemic against them.

The most recent view of *Sólarljóð* has placed it among works of wisdom literature. The poem is certainly didactic throughout, and parts of it consist of
precisely the sort of proverbial statements typical of gnomic literature. Yet Snólárliðað is seen to fit into even this genre rather uncomfortably. This genre has been suggested simply as the best of known alternatives.

The primary reason Snólárliðað does not fit well into any common genre of Icelandic poetry is simply that it is a unique composition. As in the case of the blind men and the elephant, each analysis has been more or less correct as far as it goes. Like an elephant, Snólárliðað is a combination of unlike but recognizable parts, yet at the same time a very unique creation with a form and function all its own.

The genre of Snólárliðað is no mystery to anyone who steps back and looks at the whole. Snólárliðað is verse—a poem. It fits neither of the two traditional Old Icelandic subgenres well. It is not exactly eddic poetry and it is certainly not skaldic poetry either. Yet the form is clearly that of ljóðaháttur, and the function is clearly that of a Christian didactic poem. Furthermore, it seems safe to say that Snólárliðað is narrative poetry. Beyond this, Snólárliðað is unique, and can be described only in terms of partial resemblance to other poems. But the question to be asked about Snólárliðað is not “what is it?” but rather “what is it about?”

Snólárliðað combines a series of narratives, so any discussion of what happens within the poem becomes surprisingly complex. This is no mere tour of heaven and hell, yet also no random pasting together of unrelated verse. There is one simple theme behind everything that happens. The answer to the question “what is Snólárliðað about?” is quite simple and can be answered with one word. Snólárliðað is about death.

Death is the red thread running through the whole of Snólárliðað and combining all its parts. The theme is memento mori, though the treatment in Snólárliðað is too unlike that of other poems to posit this as a genre. Yet the idea is the same and may account for Snólárliðað’s rediscovery and popularity in the seventeenth century. It is not surprising that Snólárliðað is quoted during funeral services. This is a poem that works more on the emotions than on the intellect, and death is made to be felt more than understood. There is
little actual sermonizing about death, but Sólarrjóð is carefully crafted so that the theme is met at every turn.

Death is clearly the interest of the central segment of the poem, which is the most emotional, the most carefully constructed rhetorically, and the most memorable. Death is the pivotal point between the first third of the poem which deals with the uncertainties of life, and the last third which deals with the rewards of eternity. Fidjestøl demonstrated that Sólarrjóð is composed of triple segments of roughly equal weight,¹ but it is always the central section of each tripartite pattern used that seems to carry the most important message or climactic narrative action. In the largest of these patterns, death is at the center.

The theme of the central part of Sólarrjóð is outlined in stanza thirty-three:

Frá thví er at segja
hve sæll ek var
yndisheimi í,
ok hinum ôðru
hve íta synir
verða nauðgir at námi.

The speaker tells how happy he was to be in the world of delights, and about how reluctant people are to become corpses. The joys of life are compared to the inevitability of death. This traditional reading, following manuscripts with at nám, predates even the first 1787 Edda edition. It accounts for the descriptions of the struggle against death which follow. Following Njarðvík, this passage does not refer to how reluctant people are to die, but to how reluctant they are to learn.² Insofar as the message of Sólarrjóð is one of memento mori, the lesson to be learned is that death is inevitable, and so the two readings ultimately produce the same interpretation. It is the futility of the struggles against death that is being taught here.

¹ Bjarne Fidjestøl, Sólarrjóð (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 19.
² Njörður Njarðvík, Solsângen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 114.
Sólarljóð is above all a poem, a work of art, and it is part of the nature of poetry to be ambiguous. The inevitability of death is not the only thing being taught. Perhaps the most serious mistake of the blind men in identifying the elephant was that they disregarded the discoveries made by their colleagues. No doubt many interpretations of Sólarljóð are possible. There are unquestionably certain very specific sins against which Sólarljóð speaks. The poem’s author may indeed have incorporated multiple levels of complex Christian allegory or anagoge. My purpose here is not to replace other interpretations of Sólarljóð, but simply to propose the least complex explanation for all parts of the poem. The power of Sólarljóð surely lies partly in an ambiguity that allows it to be adapted by each person to fit personal needs. But there remains one theme tying it all together, and that theme is death.

To trace the theme of death through the poem Sólarljóð, I follow the tradition of viewing the work one stanza at a time. However, before even the first stanza, the poem’s framework must be dealt with. There is also the possibility that there may have once been introductory material that has been lost.

6.1. Framework and introduction

The traditional view of the framework surrounding Sólarljóð is that a father appears to his son in a dream and relates the poem. The idea of the dream, however, appears only in stanza eighty-three, one recognized as being a recent addition. Despite the discrediting of this sole reference to a dream, there has nonetheless been a general unwillingness to abandon the idea. Although a visitation in dream is not impossible, it must be stressed that this is an idea of later interpreters, and that there is no basis at all for it in the text.

Sólarljóð itself begins in the first stanza with a third-person narration. By the fifteenth stanza the narrator has intruded into the story with a personal observation in the first person: “that hefik sannliga sét” (Sól 15.3). In stanza nineteen the audience is addressed for the first time in the second person singular, “Óvinum thínun / trúðú aldregi” (Sól. 19.1–2). This I-thou relationship continues through advice often delivered in the form of imperatives, and with an extremely personal first-person story about dying. It
very gradually becomes evident that this poem is being narrated by a person who has actually died. Not until stanza seventy-eight is it first explained that the characters of the poem are father and son, and even then there is some ambiguity:

Arfe fader eirn,
egc rā[dit] hefe,
og their sölkóltusyner:
hiartarhorn
er vor hauge b[ar]
hinn vitre Vygdan linn:

It is generally assumed that Árfr ‘heir’ is addressed here in the vocative, and that faðir einn ‘[your] father alone’ is the subject of the sentence. (The ec is sometimes replaced or joined in the manuscripts by thér.) The narrator is thus a father speaking to his heir, but is not absolutely clear that this heir is actually a son. Árfr could conceivably be a daughter, since the word is feminine as well as masculine. As is clear from the immediate context, and as Larrington noted most recently,3 Árfr could also be any spiritual heir. Although a father-son relationship is expected on the pattern of Hugsvinnsmál and Disticha Catonis, it should be remembered that the Disciplina clericalis of Petrus Alfonsi was not only known on Iceland, but was translated into Icelandic by the mid-fourteenth century. The gnomic advice and exempla of that work were aimed at the clergy. Nonetheless, the narrator and addressee of Sólarljóð seem to be on such an intimate footing that a true filial relationship is by far the most likely.

By stanza eighty-one it is fairly clear that the narrator has not awakened from a dream of his own, or returned from the dead. It is the addressee who is commanded to repeat the poem for the living. The original concluding stanza makes it quite obvious that the speaker will leave the mortal world and not return. There is a parting expected to last until the final resurrection.

The details of the framework are learned only gradually. This may be one of the reasons why it has so often been thought that some stanzas are missing from the beginning of the Sólarrjóð we have received. Carolyne Larrington has suggested that an audience may have understood there to be a father–son framework from the very beginning, simply because of traditional expectations associated with instructional poetry. However, there are too many examples of teachers, wise men, corpses (parental or otherwise) and even gods giving literary advice for this to have been very likely. Larrington’s alternate explanation seems much more probable. By delaying the frame until later in the poem, the author of Sólarrjóð may have intentionally tried to intrigue the audience, to draw it into the narration and stimulate attention. This conforms very much to the author’s apparent way of doing things.

There is no formal framing mechanism at the end of Sólarrjóð as one finds, for example, in Hugsvinnsmál. In Hugsvinnsmál there are, of course, two frames, and the outer of these is quite formal and wooden. In the last stanza we are told that it is the advice of the wise man (the heathen father of the first stanza) which has been related. The final line actually says “the poem is now completed” (Hugs. 149.6). The penultimate stanza concludes a frame in the father’s own voice, wherein he says, essentially, “I have taught you affectionate advice, my son.” In Hugsvinnsmál the total framework is that of unimaginative teachers everywhere: it says what will be taught, it teaches, and then it says what has been taught. Sólarrjóð is much more subtle.

The conclusion of Sólarrjóð, stanzas eighty-one and eighty-two, mentions neither of the parties, neither father nor heir. It is not said overtly that advice has been given or that anything was taught in the poem. That much is assumed. It is said only that a poem was taught, and even this is done indirectly: “Kvæði thetta / er ek thér kent hefi / skaltu fy: kvikum kvæða” (Sól. 81.1–3). It says, in short, “teach the poem I taught you to the living.” The emphasis is entirely on the heir doing the teaching. The mention of the

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poem being taught to the heir is merely incidental. Sólarljóð assumes some perceptive powers on the part of its audience.

The end of Sólarljóð is clearly marked, but without any blunt "the poem is over." The father says "Hér vít skiljumk" (Sól. 82.1), an obvious end, but the end of a conversation and not particularly of a poem. "Here we part," he says, as one might say today, "I've got to go now." This is not the formal conclusion of a poem; it is a natural end of the conversation within the poem. The audience is reminded, however, that this is no natural conversation. The "until we meet again" is given in terms of eternity—"á fæginsdegi fíra" (Sól. 82.3). This is a dead man speaking, and he will not be met again before doomsday. His last words are an invocation of God, and in this a typical formal poetic conclusion is merged with a medieval father's blessing.

The author of Sólarljóð has written a conclusion that reminds the audience that something has been taught. It reestablishes the frame of the poem as speech delivered between vít or 'we two' (Sól. 82.1). The references to the quick and the dead and the day of men's rejoicing remind the audience that it is a dead father speaking to a living son. The poem is ended with a formal invocation of God. In short, Sólarljóð has all the formal elements one could wish for in the conclusion of such a poem. It gives all the information found in the conclusion of Hugsvinnsmál, plus the Christian benediction. Yet all these elements are thoroughly integrated into narrative art without any blunt statement like "this is the advice given by the dead father to his heir and the poem is over."

Sólarljóð relies on the reasoning powers of its audience to close the narrative frame in its conclusion. The crucial information about the poem's frame cannot be found in the conclusion alone, as a direct restatement. This information needs to have been gleaned from the narrative as a whole. The framework of Sólarljóð is developed slowly as the poem progresses, and when the conclusion is reached, that information is merely recalled and reinforced. There is not a clear restatement, a self-contained explanation, as in a poem like Hugsvinnsmál.
Because there is no self-contained statement of the framework at the end of Sólarljóð, it is less surprising than it might otherwise be to find no statement of a framework at the beginning of the work either. The poem begins abruptly with the first narrative. The audience learns about the father-heir framework gradually, but since the poem begins with a narrative and not with naked proverbs, there is no need for a framework to hold attention.

Nonetheless, to begin a didactic Christian poem with no introduction at all is unusual. Sólarljóð does end with a benediction, even if it is well worked into the fabric of the internal narration. One therefore expects an invocation of God at the beginning as well. Such invocations can be quite elaborate and extensive elsewhere in medieval Icelandic poetry, as in Harm sól or Lilja, where they extend for several stanzas. Unlike these other poems, however, Sólarljóð is no panegyric praising the divine. The narrator in Sólarljóð is concerned with death, and how mortal life is to be lived in view of that ultimate death. The focus is on mankind rather than on God or Mary, so there is less need to attract divine attention. The relationship in Sólarljóð is one between a father and a son, and not one between a mortal and God. It is not heaven that is being addressed here.

The divine invocation is, of course, mostly a traditional literary device unrelated to the actual addressee of a poem. It is a common part of epic poetry long preceding Christianity. The poet generally invokes God or gods for the specific purpose of gaining inspiration. But the speaker in Sólarljóð is not a typical mortal poet in need of divine inspiration for his work. That inspiration has already been received. The narrator was obviously highly motivated through the events of his own death, his view of the sinking sun, and his experience of the afterlife. This inspiration can be felt in the emotion conveyed through the central part of the poem. God has already granted His inspiration to the narrator and has presumably also set him the task of relating the story, else there would have been no return from the dead. At most the dead man could pray for the power to speak convincingly, assuming dead men can pray at all. From the point of view of the actual author of Sólarljóð, the poem is surely more effective without an introductory invocation of God.
Much more striking than the absence of an invocation is the absence of any appellation on an audience. *Hugsvinnsmál* adopted a "heyri seggir" (*Hugs. 1.1*), much like the openings used in early Latin homilies. *Völuspá* also used a very similar "Hlióðs bið ec allar—hegar kindir, / meiri oc minni, —mögo Heimdalars" (*Vsp. 1.1–2*), where beings both mortal and divine are asked to listen. *Sólarljóð* asks no one to listen, and begins directly with the narration of its story. Although an opening phrase that says little more than "listen up!" adds nothing much to the artistic value of a poem, it probably did serve a greater function than just serving as a traditional beginning. In a day when reading a poem was every bit as much of an oral performance as singing one from memory or composing one extemporaneously, such an audible incipit must have marked the clear beginning of a performance to separate it from regular conversation. More important, it must have been a signal for conversation to cease, and for attention to be given to the poem about to be presented. A poem such as *Sólarljóð*, with its obviously didactic purpose, was surely intended to be presented to as large a crowd of listeners as possible. Whatever complex anagogic symbolism it may or may not contain, *Sólarljóð*'s mundane images and its address to raw human emotion apply to uneducated audiences as effectively as to the educated. *Sólarljóð* was probably not written to be delivered in a silent environment, yet an overt opening call for silence is missing.

Also missing from the beginning of *Sólarljóð* are the names of the two characters in the opening parable. This is the point which has most disturbed scholars historically, and led them to suppose that part of the poem is missing. Björn Ólsen found it necessary to make *Greppr* and *Gestr* into proper names to supply the supposed lack of named persons. The other parables do provide names for the primary pair of characters in each of them. The first narrative should therefore also have named characters, it has been thought, simply for the sake of symmetry.

Of course symmetry is not a primary characteristic of medieval literature generally. The perceived need for the characters to be named probably arose to a great extent from the idea that the names of the characters in the other exempla had allegorical significance. *Sævalldi*, for example, must have had
something to do with seafaring, even if he wasn’t a personification of the power of the sea itself. If the names are all allegorical, then the first allegory is defective in lacking these names, quite apart from any question of stylistic symmetry.

Another reason why the lack of names in the first narrative is suspicious is that it does depart from the author’s literary style. He is in the habit of naming his characters. Furthermore, the habit of naming characters is quite pervasive even outside Sólarljóð. Sagas usually begin with the naming of the introductory character, delayed only in a few cases where the time or place are first established instead. Even the Icelandic translation of the Disciplinus clericalis, exactly following its Latin forebear, begins “Enoch hét maðr.” ⁵ A naming is to be expected in a narrative introduction.

Sólarljóð has no clear introduction. There is no establishment of the narrative frame. There is no invocation of God. There is no calling on an audience to mark a poetic beginning. There is no naming of the characters who appear first in the narrative. In short, there is good reason to believe something is missing from the beginning of Sólarljóð.

It is very easy to see how an opening stanza or stanzas could have been lost. A copyist could have begun copying at the wrong location, perhaps mistaking the abbreviation of Fé (written as runic f) as an illuminated initial. More likely, the first folio of a quire, or the last gathering of a codex could have somehow become detached from the rest. Even obvious defect or damage would not necessarily have been indicated in any way by subsequent copyists. The manuscript JS 36, 40, which begins only with stanza twenty-five, still bears the heading: “Hier skriðfast Solar Liod Sæmundar Fröða,” although it does not actually make any explicit claim about it beginning there.

Although there are good reasons for supposing Sólarljóð to have lost an introduction, the poem is quite complete without it. It makes little sense to discuss possible parts of the poem for which there is no evidence. The only

Sólarljód is the Sólarljóð we actually possess, and this begins with "Fé ok fjörvi" in the stanza usually numbered one. This beginning is extremely effective. Whether or not it is in the form intended by its author, Sólarljóð is a poem that functions well. It is a highly effective work of literature. The gradual development of the narrative framework gives the poem a certain amount of suspense that improves it as a work of art. The lack of invocation suits well the idea of a dead man relating the poem, while also allowing the poet to get to the point immediately. The opening exemplum is no less clear for the characters not bearing names. In short, the first stanza of the existing Sólarljóð works as a beginning to the poem, and it remains only to examine how it works.

6.2. The First narrative—the greppr and the gestr

Stanza 1

Fie og fiórve          Fé ok fjörvi          Lucre and life
rænte firdakynd,      rænti fyrda kind          from the race of men
sa hinn grimme greppur,  sá hinn grimmi grepr.  he, the fierce fighter, plundered.
yfer tha gotu          Yfir thá götu          Over the roadway
er hann vardade,        er hann varðaði          which he guarded
naade eingen kvikr komast:  náði engi kvikr komast.  none was allowed to pass living.

[note by JW: evidently the basis of the three versions of each stanza is as follows: the first form of each stanza follows the oldest manuscript, Lbs 1199 4to (as stated above on p. 129); the second, normalized, version follows Njarðvík's Swedish dissertation, Solsången; the third is Kurt Sager's own semi-poetical English translation.]

Your money or your life! With just such dramatic phrasing Sólarljóð begins. The poem’s start is a cliché, but one likely to demand attention. There is no further need here for a special formula telling people to listen. The powerful alliteration, the simplicity of the phrase, and even its sheer familiarity would all combine to attract and secure the concentration of any audience to which Sólarljóð might be delivered.
The formula *fé ok fjörvi* 'money and life' was a legal phrase of wide currency and great antiquity. The ninth-century *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* uses the Old English equivalent, *feoh ond feorh*, in its entry for the year 755. A Frisian analogue has also been proposed, indicating a wide distribution of this phrase throughout Germanic Northern Europe. In Iceland, the phrase is common in literature both proverbial and legal. Geir Zoëga lists an example of each type in his dictionary: *fyrirgara fé ok fjörvi* 'to forfeit property and life,' and the proverb *fé er fjörvi fírr* 'life is dearer than money.' This is a popular combination of words. Indeed, even within Sólarljóð the phrase occurs a second time, in stanza sixty-four. The poet is not demonstrating any striking originality in the use of this opening.

As the opening of a poem, the familiar line *fé ok fjörvi* would, of course, gain immediate recognition among the members of an audience. Yet as commonplace as this cliché may have been, it is still able to retain the drama of its subject, just as with the English phrase, 'your money or your life.' With 'money' and 'life,' Sólarljóð begins by addressing precisely those things generally held dearest by all mankind. Few subjects could be more interesting. The poet has attracted our attention, and in that way told us to listen. Moreover, the subject of the poem has been announced, and it is a subject most would find enticing.

Sólarljóð is a poem which deals with life and property, those things people love most. As with the cruder, more direct introduction of *Hugsvinnsmál*, the beginning of Sólarljóð also states just what it is the poem will teach about. In this case it is *fé ok fjörvi*. And yet, if we do not go beyond the idea of life and possessions, we are misled. For Sólarljóð is above all a poem about death, the death that ultimately destroys the money and life we hold dear. Money and life are held out to us at the beginning of the poem as an enticement, just

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as they are held out in our mortal existence. But from this point we will be led further to see the vanity of earthly life and pleasures, as death inexorably comes to destroy both. It is only through death that eternal life can be achieved, and it is the afterlife which must guide our lives on earth. The true focus of Sólarljóð is on death.

By the second line of Sólarljóð, with the first verb of the poem, the proverbial money and life have both been snatched away. That grim greppr deprives humankind of money and life, just as surely as does the Grim Reaper. Unlike the Grim Reaper, however, the greppr is no universal personification of death. He will soon die himself, for greppr means nothing more than ‘man’, and we know death is the end of all men. Nevertheless, it is the greppr who is the agent of death in this first stanza, and the much delayed, end-weighted subject of the first sentence, pointed out to us with the double demonstrative sá hinn. He is more significant than those pleasant things that first caught our eye.

The greppr is not named. The word itself is not enlightening, a poetic term with connotations perhaps slightly more positive than otherwise. But we see his profession as that of highwayman, as he clearly watches over roads, robs people, and kills them. We are told that he is grimmr ‘grim’, and it is this one adjective that informs his entire character. The alliteration may make a further connotative link to grípa ‘to seize’ as this suits both a robber and the greedy man we see him to be in the second stanza. Hence, the man is felt to be a grim grabber or grasper, though this is never actually stated in the poem. What is stated is that he is an inescapable killer. He allows no one to pass living over the road he watches.

The second character in the first stanza is the direct object of the first sentence, fyrra kind. This term, meaning ‘sons of men’, or ‘race of man’ seems a rather pompous way of saying ‘people’. It recalls the Edda, with its “helgar kindir” (Vsp. 1.2) or even the “son of man” of the Bible. Yet this elevated poetic diction also reflects the high opinion in which “man-kind” or the “human race” holds itself, so perhaps not too much should be read into the expression. In any event, the death-dealing greppr has as his defeated opponent all of
humanity. One man deprives all humankind of precious life and property, at least should any representatives of such humankind venture onto his road.

The broad generality of the first helming is striking. A highwayman attacks everybody, not only robbing them but killing them as well. We aren’t told who he is, where he comes from, his family background or what his motivations may be beyond theft. We don’t get a single detail about the victims either. Nonetheless, nothing is missing. We have subject, verb, object, direct object, all clear and with no antecedents indicated. Furthermore, we have these grammatical categories filled out with information in roughly the reverse order from what might be expected. We are not told simply that a man deprived men of money and life. Instead we are led into the story with a promise of money and life, then told this is robbed from men, and only lastly find out that a man has done this. We are left to wonder what sort of man this might be.

The first helming of Sólarljóð is constructed in a way that maximizes suspense. Throughout the poem we are first given some sort of enticing bait, but the most important information is delayed as long as possible. In part this is a product of ljóðaháttr, which puts a great weight on the last line of each helming. As Paasche said of the meter, “det løper raskt frem gjennem to linjer for å hvile tungt og med eftertanke på en tredje.”9 The final line can resound like that of a Sapphic ode, and the poet of Sólarljóð knows how to use this feature to its best effect. Hence, it is the last line that will usually be important vis-à-vis the two preceding it. But it is not only at the level of meter that information is withheld for the sake of suspense. Curiosity consistently draws us further into the work, until only at the very last we discover a poem named Sólarljóð has been told by a dead man to his heir.

In the first stanza of Sólarljóð relatively little of the whole poem is made known. The second helming mostly repeats the same information as the first helming, but it gradually adds detail. We discover the robbery occurs on a road, and the method of attack is a watchful ambush. The watching, or even guarding of the road seems to add a determination to the earlier adjective

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9 Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 171.
grimmr (from the first helming) that had before been ambiguous at most. Here is a man very much in control of the situation. No one can get by him, as the last line states, with the reading náði preferred over the matti of even the most popular manuscript AM 166b, 80. While these two modals are not vastly different in meaning, ná expresses the permission only the greppr is in a position to grant, while mega expresses ability on the part of people who might travel along the road. Clearly those travelers lack any ability to determine their fate. Only the greppr is in the position to grant permission to pass.

The second helming of the stanza is less dense than the first. It introduces no new parties, and repeats the earlier action, refining it only slightly. In a poem with heavy end weight, it is not surprising that more should be sought here. We learn only that the death-dealing highwayman allows no one to pass over the road alive. Is this not perhaps an allegory of the human condition? Are we not all fated to meet with death at some point along the road we travel through life? The lament of all mortals could well be, “I’ll never get out of this world alive,”10 for Death permits no one to pass.

Whatever allegorical meanings may be found in Sólarijóð, the poem may still be approached as simple narrative. After a first exposure to only the first stanza, an audience would not likely have been so concerned with getting higher levels of meaning from the exemplum as with simply finding out what happens next. The first stanza has set a scene, and something more is sure to occur. In search of this something more, the audience is drawn into the next stanza.

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Stanza 2

Einn hann át   Einn hann át   Alone he ate
opt harla;    opt harðla;    most often;
aldri baud hann manne til    aldri baud hann manni til    never bade he a man to meat
matar,     matar,     until a tired
áðr einn modur    áðr en móðr    and might-minor guest
og meigin lyttill    ok meginlitill    wandering came from the
Gestr Gangande af götu kom,      gestr gangandi af götu kom.      road way.

That the greppr eats alone may not at first glance seem unusual, as a criminal
generally can’t afford to mix overly much with people. Yet this isolation
appears to put the man without even an armed following. It seems that the
one man alone had been keeping all humankind at bay. Still, he must have
sometimes shared meals with someone if his solitary dining was only opt
harðla ‘very often’ and not always. Because this second line looks
suspiciously like an empty filler, however, it is best not to place too much
reliance on anything it might imply. It is the final line of the first helming
that makes the bold statement, “aldri baud hann manni til matar,” declaring
this crime much more emphatically than the theft and murder we already
associate with the greppr.

This greppr is now exposed as a truly asocial character. We see he really is a
man, a mortal who must eat, and not a true personification of death. But at
the same time we also learn that this man is genuinely evil, cut off from
society and alone. He is someone who fails to perform what was perceived as
the most basic human duty, the duty to render food and shelter to those in
need. His refusal is absolute. He offers food aldri, absolutely never. The
grepppr, then, is not some romantic land-based Viking type who just happens
to murder and rob for a living. He is no Hāgar the Horrible prototype. The
greppr is stingy and hard-hearted, a man with severe moral defects.

It is surely significant that Sólarrljóð 2.3 uses “bjóða til matar” rather than the
more or less synonymous and internally alliterative “bjóða til bods.” As in
the first line of the stanza, the emphasis is strictly on eating—on food. The
meanness of the greppr is not a mere lack of largess in throwing parties or a
rude failure to invite people to banquets. Such a major undertaking and expenditure is not implied. Likewise, despite the action that follows, the focus is not on the possibly dangerous duty of inviting a stranger into one’s home. All that seems to be asked is the simple rule, known from Hugsvinnsmdl 61.3, of being generous with food. The grepr is so stingy that he will not invite a stranger to table. Never will he make an offer of food, not even, one assumes, to save a man from starving.

The grepr lives like a true outlaw, whether he has actually been outlawed or not. He cares nothing for other people. His only contact with them is through robbery and murder. By all indications, he wouldn’t even throw a starving man a crumb of bread. The grepr lives entirely isolated from mankind, recognizing no human duties, and it is really this that seems to most clearly brand him as sinful. After two and one-half stanzas, we still don’t have a name for this grepr, but we know his character very thoroughly.

That most damning character trait of stinginess with food falls in the heavy third line of the helming, emphasizing it and rounding off the character’s introduction as completed. Yet the sentence continues beyond this natural rhythmic period with an adr en, or ‘until that time’. Our interest is drawn further into the narrative, for it is made obvious that something new is about to happen. The situation is about to change.

A new character is introduced via his most immediately salient characteristics. He is mōdr, ‘tired’, weary, exhausted from his journey. He is meginnlīstill, ‘weak’, whether from overexertion, hunger, or natural incapacity. This compound adjective “little of might” may connote a small physical stature, an absence of any threatening strength, and indeed an insignificance so humble as to not seem worth robbing. Only with the last line of the helming do we reach the head noun, gestr. This weak, tired person is a guest! Is this a guest to be invited in, fed, and treated according to the laws of hospitality? Or is this just another of many potential guests that have traveled this way only to meet their deaths at the hand of the grepr? We do know to expect a change at this point. The suspense is so great that one is
drawn into the next stanza before exhausting the information still to be
gleaned from this one.

But more is said here. There is more information about the *gestr*. He comes
*gangandi*, or walking. Here is surely a motivation for his exhaustion, at least.
Further, we see he is not a rich man, or he would certainly be mounted. He is
probably no formidable warrior. He is simply an unknown wanderer, with
*gestr* probably better translated as an etymological ‘stranger’ than as a guest.
For despite the information given, the *gestr* is above all an enigmatic alien, a
mystery. Could this not even be Oðinn, who the audience would know often
traveled as a *gestr gangandi*? Perhaps the word *gangandi* was even inserted
here, despite rhythmic considerations, by later copyists making just this
connection.

If this *gestr* were Oðinn, the Evil One himself, it might explain how he
managed to arrive without being first seen and attacked by the watchful
*greppr*. For this *gestr* does not come along the road, but off of it. He has
already arrived and apparently approaches the house. He comes *af götu*, from
the road, and perhaps not a little *afvega* or ‘astray’. He is surely not going
along the usual proper path. The *gestr*, with his suggested associations with
Oðinn, is left just as ambiguous as was first the *greppr*, who seemed to
embody death.

**Stanza 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drycks of thurfe,</th>
<th>Drykks of thurfi</th>
<th>To require a drink</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>liest himn dæste madur</td>
<td>lézt himn dæsti maðr</td>
<td>claimed the weary man,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>og vanmaattur vera:</td>
<td>ok vanmettr vera.</td>
<td>and to be hungry as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hræddu hjarta</td>
<td>Hræddu hjarta</td>
<td>With frightened heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann liest trua</td>
<td>hann lézt trúa</td>
<td>he feigned to have faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theim er ádr heffde</td>
<td>theim er ádr hafði vályndr</td>
<td>in the one who before had</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolyndr verid,</td>
<td>verit</td>
<td>been baneful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *gestr* having been introduced, stanza three continues by moving the plot
action forward. A drink is the first thing needed and the first word of the
stanza, like a thirsting man’s cry for water. We are told again about the
exhaustion of the *gestr*. He is *daestr*, a man understandably worn out from his journey. Manuscript *LBS 1199, 40*, elaborates on this, indicating that his strength is failing, even to the point of illness. The word used is *vanmátrr*, a contraction, perhaps, of the adjective *vanmáttigr*, but a less likely reading than the *vanmettr* found elsewhere. The majority reading, meaning ‘hungry’, suits the narrative better. The helming begins with a need for drink and ends with a lack of food. The *gestr* is thus a man in precisely the position of those never helped by the *greppr*. He needs to be invited to eat.

The *gestr* holds himself out as being hungry and thirsty. That is all we know; we are not made sure this is true. The whole encounter could, after all, be another trick played by Óðinn. We’ve suspected from the beginning that this is going to be a pivotal, fatal meeting in one way or another. At the very least the *greppr* may change, for he has not waylaid the *gestr* before now. Will there be a fight or a feeding?

It is interesting that no specific request for food is made, though this may be simply a feature of the poem’s economy of expression. The *gestr* appears to be hungry and thirsty, and this is enough to make the duty of hospitality clear. He places himself in the hands of the host, and can only hope for the best. This is apparently something not so easy to do. Despite the apparent alternative of dying on the road of hunger or thirst (unless these are simply feigned), or of exposure, it takes a certain amount of courage to place any trust in the *greppr*. One can assume that the *greppr* has gained a reputation appropriate to his past actions. Perhaps the *greppr* had indeed been outlawed. The *gestr* may have especially good reason to fear him.

The *gestr* approaches his host *hræddu hjarta*, with ‘fearful heart’ or in uttermost dread. By placing himself in the hands of the *greppr* he pretends to trust him, but inside he nonetheless feels terror. We can be sure the *gestr* is a mortal man, at least, and not Óðinn. He can feel mortal fear, and his fear is justified. Though not truly trusting, he necessarily places his fate in the hands of the unnamed *greppr*, a man he apparently knows as we do, simply as one who “áðr hafði vályndr verít” (*Sól. 3.6*). A change is clearly indicated, inasmuch as it is said only that the *greppr* had been ill-willed before. We
don’t know what this person will do now, and so the suspense is maintained. The gestr seems to be in the same suspense as the audience.

Stanza 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mat og drick</th>
<th>Mat ok drykk</th>
<th>Food and drink</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>veitte hann theim er mödur var,</td>
<td>veitti hann theim, er mödr var,</td>
<td>he granted him who was weary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allt af heilum hug,</td>
<td>allt af heilum hug,</td>
<td>all from the good of his heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gudz hann gáðe,</td>
<td>Góðs hann gáði,</td>
<td>God he heeded,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Góðu hvinn bejnde,</td>
<td>góðu hinum beindi,</td>
<td>goods gave the other,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thví hann hugdist væligr vera:</td>
<td>thví hann hugðisk váliğr vera.</td>
<td>For he thought himself to be hurtful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perhaps not too surprisingly, for we have been prepared for it, the gestr gets his meal. The weary gestr is extended hospitality, given not only his food and drink, but presumably offered a place to sleep as well. At least his tiredness is still being focused upon, and stanza five will set the stage for sleep. But what is important here is not the sudden change in the habits of the greppr, but rather his motivation for changing. In the final line of the helming, we are told that the new generosity of the greppr is “allt af heilum hug” (Sól. 4.3). The help is given sincerely. At the very least, there is no hidden plan to take advantage of the gestr. There may even be a feeling of true pity for the traveler. The change in the greppr is a character change, and not simply a shift in external manifestation of habit. He has opened his heart to a generous feeling.

‘God’ is the first word of the second helming, a new factor to be introduced into the narrative. The greppr changes because he heeds God. It is God who presumably has inspired him to feel this rare generosity and desire to help. Suddenly he is motivated to follow the laws and customs of divine Christianity, laws he must have known before, but for which he has shown utter disregard or contempt. The change is profound, and at this point one could perhaps say that the greppr has been born again.
The greppr gradually takes his first steps towards living a Christian life. He helps the gestr, offering him good things and performing thereby (one presumes) his first Christian good work. The ultimate motivation is remarkable. The final line of the stanza explains that the greppr realizes himself to be reprobate. He has been harmful to the travelers passing along the road, but worse, he has been harmful to his own soul. He is an evil man, and he seems to realize this now for the first time. The external steps are taken with the reformation of his relationship to humanity as represented by the gestr. On a spiritual level we see a realization of guilt and apparent remorse for it. The greppr has taken the steps of penitence and repentance and seems to be well on the way towards becoming a good Christian.

This fourth stanza lies at the center of the opening narrative with its seven stanzas. As Bjarne Fidjestøl demonstrated, Sólarljóð tends to place its most important events in central locations. The spiritual importance of this stanza is clear, because it marks a sort of Christian conversion for the greppr. However, it could also have a central meaning for the audience as well. Here we see for the first time the idea of a life being lived on the standards of worldly advantage contrasted with a life reformed to accord to God’s laws. The greppr thinks on his own ill nature and is motivated to change. We still have not been informed why knowing oneself to be evil is motivation for ceasing to be evil. For that we must continue with the poem. But surely the Christian audience is already aware that a life lived otherwise than in accord with God’s laws can lead to eternal damnation. Sólarljóð is but a reminder.

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Stanza 5

Vpp hann stôd,  Upp hann stôð,  Up he stood
jîlt hann hugde,  iîlt hann hugði  ill he intended
ei var tharfsamlega thvigð:  eigi var tharfsamliga thegit.  nor gratefully was received.
Synd hans svall,  synd hans svall,  His sin it swelled;
sofandi myrði  he murdered sleeping
froðan fjöluaran:  fróðan, fjölvaran.  the one wise and watchful.

With the conversion of the greppr well underway, the fifth stanza returns to physical action. In fact, it returns rather too abruptly. Hospitality had been granted in stanza four, but stanza five apparently finds the two characters already sleeping. The poet of Sólarljóð is not one to waste words, and so it is hard to imagine an entire missing stanza saying nothing more than that the greppr and the gestr go to sleep. It would not require an entire stanza even with some additional spiritual discussion added. Furthermore, it is very much the style of the author to concentrate on action and fill in details only later. Nevertheless, there are problems with the fifth stanza that probably do result from imperfect transmission.

Suddenly a man jumps up. “Upp hann stóð” (Sól. 5.1), or “Up he stood.” The promotion of the particle upp to the beginning gives us the impression that he sprang up very suddenly, without the slightest warning. To be sure, this expression fits the meter slightly better than “hann stóð upp” would have, but either is possible. The juxtaposition with the second line, however, with its parallel construction “îlt hann hugði,” makes for a very rapid and abrupt opening. One is carried away by the aggressive rhythm and the action it implies, so that it is not essential even to know who “hann” is. This is the part in the mystery where the lights go out, there is the sound of a scuffle, and the proverbial shot rings out. The only real surprise here is the verb hyggja ‘to cogitate’, where something like höggja ‘to hew’ would seem more apt. We have here someone who jumps up and contemplates evil, rather than someone who jumps up and strikes evilly. The circumstances of the stanza as a whole seem to require a stealthy sneaking out of bed so as not to awake the intended victim. Perhaps the author has simply preferred drama to consistency here.
That ever-important last line of the helming does tell who the evil “hann” is, at least by implication. “Eigi var tharfsamliga thegit”—something was not accepted gratefully, or given its due. Since it was the gestr who had received hospitality and who would be expected to be thankful for it, it must be the gestr who has stood up and is planning something bad. Manuscript AM 166b, 8o, makes this clear from the very beginning. Stanza four had discussed the greppr and his conversion, so the first line of stanza five in this manuscript supplies hinn ‘the other one’ (replacing the hann ‘he’ in other manuscripts) to make a clear contrast with the greppr. The active person here is the gestr.

Continuing with this standard reading of the stanza, the second helming tells that the sin of the gestr swells. He has not been presented before now as especially sinful, but he surely bears the guilt of original sin at the very least. Beyond that, we have seen his deceit in pretending to trust a man who terrifies him. There is no evidence that he has come with the sole sinful purpose of attacking the greppr. Like any human, the gestr no doubt bears his share of sinfulness. The sin that matters here is the evil intent we learned about in the first helming of the stanza. It is this particular sin that swells to the point where the intent is replaced by action: sleeping he murders the wise and wary one.

The first edition of Sól managed to clarify this passage through Guðmundur Magnússon’s translation. The translation “Dormientem interemit / Callidum, in multis cautum (providum)” (5.5–6)\textsuperscript{12} at least makes it clear that it is not the murderer who is asleep, but rather the victim. A century later Falk made the equivalent emendation to the Icelandic, and was followed by Fidjestøl and Njarðvík, so that the present participle sofandi of the manuscripts is now declined as an oblique sofanda. It is not likely that the gestr is a sleep-walker in any event. The subject of this sentence remains unexpressed, unless assumed from the earlier clauses from the first helming.

The verb in this second helming is myrði, precisely the one expected in a context of highwayman, terrified traveler and evil intent. However, the old

\textsuperscript{12} Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniae, 1787) I:352.
fragment AM 750, 4o, has a peculiar myndi instead of myrði, while the old and usually reliable AM 738, 4o, has, according to Njarðvík, sofandi (briosti). It would not be beyond belief to imagine a copyist missing a line or two and jumping in the text from myndi to myrði, or vice versa. Where brjostí fits into any of this is extremely curious, but perhaps it comes from somewhere in the hypothetically missing lines. Be that as it may, speculation about possible defects in transmission has been extremely counterproductive historically. The Sólarljóð to examine is the Sólarljóð that has been preserved, no matter what problems it offers interpretation.

The oldest manuscript, LBS 1199, 4o, has attempted to solve some of the problems of this stanza in an unusual way. It interprets the murderer as being the greppr and not the gestr. Only line three has been changed, reading “ei var thorftsamlega thvígíð.” The difference between thegit and thvígíð is small enough to have been overlooked as a variant in Njarðvík’s edition. However, if thvígíð is viewed not as an orthographic variation, but as a form of the verb thvá ‘to wash’, then there is a motivation for the greppr planning to murder the gestr. The apparent conversion of the previous stanza was simply inadequate, and further purgation of past sin would have been necessary. The greppr was not properly cleansed of his sin, which then grows again and makes him once more into a murderer. The victim is the gestr, who is fróðan perhaps not exactly in the sense of being ‘wise’, but in having been ‘well informed’, and fjöluvaran in having been ‘multiply forewarned’. The first helming of the third stanza made it fairly clear that the gestr had a good idea of whom he was dealing with from the very beginning. He became a victim despite all his earthly knowledge. The remainder of the exemplum works without difficulty, with the gestr taking the part of the one murdered and saved, while the greppr adds just one more sin to his already heavy burden.

Given the appearance of angels coming down from heaven in stanza seven, I believe one is safe in assuming a miracle behind this entire episode. The

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13 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 11.

14 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 11.
majority manuscript reading and usual interpretation must be correct. It was the *gestr* who murdered the *grepr*. The *gestr* stood up from his sleep, and motivated by the fearful heart we learned about in the previous stanza, he contemplated the sin of murder. A murder motivated by fear is well within the realm of human nature. But in surrendering to fear, the *gestr* did not act with the thankfulness due to a host, and he did not act with the thankfulness due to the God who must ultimately have been behind the *grepr*’s seemingly miraculous conversion to good. He had only pretended faith in the *grepr*, and we see that he is lacking also in his faith in God. The *gestr* is sinful like all mortals. He is also sinfully lacking in faith. Most important, he is shown sinfully contemplating murder, and this sin increases to the point where he takes action. He murders the *grepr* as the *grepr* sleeps.

The person murdered is called *fródan*, *fjóltaran*, or wise and watchful. How can a man who sleeps in the presence of his murderer be called either wise or watchful? This problem is usually explained away by simply saying that this describes the *grepr*’s past. This is a man “who wise and wary was else,”15 but who has suffered an atypical lapse. It is true that we know the *grepr* to have been watchful. This seems to have been a habitual trait, part of his professional activities in watching the road for robbery victims (Sól. 1.4–5). To call this man wise on the basis of his past seems more than a little difficult, however. At best one could shrug it off as a conveniently alliterating word not to be taken too seriously.

The answer, I believe, is to be found in Sólarljóð as a whole, as a poem about death. The *grepr* is wise because he has reformed. He has given up his evil ways. The reason he has wisely decided to reform is that he has heeded God (Sól. 4.4) and known himself to be evil, reprobate (Sól. 4.6). He has given forethought to God’s punishment of sin. Presumably, he has remembered his own inevitable mortality, but unlike the fearful *gestr*, has accepted it and decided to do something about it. He has decided to become a good man, looking forward to his eternal reward. In line with this interpretation, my translation of *fródan*, *fjóltaran* would be ‘the prudent and prescient one.’

The *greppr* is watchful of death, expectant not necessarily of immediate murder, but of an eventual afterlife.

This expectation of eternity is not explicitly made clear at this point. First comes the action, the exemplum, and only later the motivation or explanation. This is entirely in accord with the usual method of presentation in *Sólarljóð*. Eternity is first made clear at the end of the seventh stanza, and the details of what might be expected there only over the course of the entire poem. Stanza five concludes with the murder by the *gestr* of a forward-looking *greppr* who is wiser than he might have appeared if judged by worldly criteria.

**Stanza 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Himna Gud</th>
<th>Himna guð</th>
<th>God of heaven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bad hann hjálpa sier,</td>
<td>bad hann hjálpa sér</td>
<td>he prayed him help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tha hann veggin vaknaði</td>
<td>thá hann veginn vaknaði</td>
<td>when he awakened slain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enu sa gat</td>
<td>en sá gat</td>
<td>and so he came</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vid Syndum taka,</td>
<td>vid syndum taka,</td>
<td>to receive the sins,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er hann heffðe saklausan</td>
<td>er hann hafði saklausan</td>
<td>he who betrayed the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suikid:</td>
<td>svikit.</td>
<td>blameless.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are never actually given any details concerning how the *gestr* commits his murder. We know only that he stood up beforehand, and that he murdered with premeditation. Someone was sleeping, almost certainly the victim. In stanza six we do have confirmation that the victim was asleep, because we see him awaken (*Sól. 6.3*). It is only because of the mystical, Eddic associations with *Sólarljóð* that there would ever be any question about who was asleep and who awake, but after all, this is a story told by a dead man, so things do not necessarily accord with daily experience. The victim's sleep is important, however, because it establishes the victim's innocence, and stanza six is all about the apportionment of guilt.

Stanza six begins with God. It is *Himna Guð*, the 'God of heaven', indicating the upward focus of thought in this stanza. The *greppr* has his sights on heaven, and the audience is reminded here of heaven as a goal. *Sólarljóð*
refers to God in various ways, but He is most commonly referred to as Almighty God. God appears in the sixth stanza not as a mighty force who will affect the immediate outcome of the earthly struggle in progress, but as a God located in heaven, far above the immediate concerns of earth. Yet for mortals on earth, God holds the promise of heaven.

In the next line, the greppr cries out, asking for help. This is a prayer, a plea to God for salvation. Yet this is no elaborate religious ritual; it is the brief prayer of a man suddenly wakened from sleep, and the last gasp of a dying man. We know it can barely consist of a single word—the name of God or a simple cry for help. The situation describes an extremely earthy act, very easy to picture. We can see the greppr crying out in surprise, terror, and pain. He has no time for any considered action, but only the unthinking reflex cry from a state of extreme distress. He invokes the name of God, or directs another cry to God, and in so doing dies with a prayer on his lips.

The theological value of this prayer is surely as great as the value of any other, and we do soon see the greppr transported to heaven. The prayer definitely marks his reformation as genuine and lasting under the circumstances. Its reflex nature seems to show again the upright heart we first learned about in 4.3. Deep inside, this murderous highwayman was perhaps always a Christian, and he certainly is one at death. It is shown most clearly that the reformation of the greppr is not due simply to pity or a desire to face abstract social responsibilities. The greppr has decided to start acting like a Christian.

One may assume that the final deathbed prayer was answered by God. The greppr is indeed saved, though not saved by almighty God from mundane murder. He is saved instead by a heavenly God from damnation and eternal death. The idea of declaring one's Christianity by means of prayer, and of trusting in God's grace to be granted salvation, is, of course, very Protestant. Such ideas may account for part of the apparent popularity of Sólarljóð on Lutheran Iceland. Yet the real reason for the greppr's salvation has yet to be made clear in the poem.
Once again, the author of Sólarljóð has put the more dramatic action in the first two lines of the helming and has saved the last line for the explanatory details. Once again the deeper spiritual significance is found in the last line. If it had not been clear before, the last line makes it obvious that the greppr was asleep at the time of the murder. He receives a mortal blow (or is in some way mortally injured) by the gestr, and only afterwards wakes up to make his prayer to God. The spiritually significant point is that the greppr was asleep. This absolves him of any possible guilt. Whatever may have happened in the past, the present slaying is a clear case of murder, and the victim is clearly innocent.

The second helming carefully distributes the blame incurred in this first exemplum. The gestr, because of his murder, because he attacked someone without cause, assumes sins. It appears very much as though the murderer has taken upon himself the sins of the man he murdered. The idea that a murderer is responsible for whatever sins his or her victim may have committed previously looks like a novel theological idea. But in this case, the gestr has indeed assumed the sins of his victim the highwayman, by becoming a murderer himself. The two parties have changed position in earthly fact, and not only in some abstract spiritual sense.

It must be made clear, however, that there is nothing in this helming that actually says the gestr assumed the sins of the greppr. It says only that he—the one who killed the innocent man—took upon himself sins. Plural sins are involved, as opposed to a single one-time sin of murder, simply because this seems to be the preferred way of the poet to generalize the abstract concept of sin. The gestr is now a murderer and a sinner, and this said, the narrative has nothing more to tell us about him. Sólarljóð will show us the fate of murderers later, but the concern here is still with the greppr.

In the critical final Vollzeile of the sixth stanza the greppr is referred to as being innocent. We know the greppr is not innocent in the sense of never having sinned. He is innocent only in the sense of having been killed without cause, or saklaus. Yet in the theology of Sólarljóð, it may be better to be killed without cause than even to have lived without sin. In part, there may be a confusion with martyrdom. Medieval Catholicism tended to view
martyrdom as a Christian’s highest end, a death bringing eternal life. While Church dogma allowed martyrs a special holiness through their faith, a faith for which they were willing to die, the average Christian probably focused only on the death. Martyrs were holy because they, though innocent, were killed for their beliefs. From this point, however, it is but a short jump to beatifying someone who was simply killed though innocent.

The thirteenth-century German mystic Mechthild von Magdeburg did not confuse martyrs with those murdered in innocence, but she still grants both groups, together with virgins, their place in heaven. Innocence is the key to heaven, and blood shed in innocence has the ability to purge one of sin. She pictures the Last Judgment as a test wherein the blood of mortals is weighed in a balance against the blood of Christ.

An dem jungsten tage so wil Christus Jesus vor sinem vatter uf haben ein herliche wage, da sol sin helig arbeit und sin unschuldige pine ufligen und da ioe und dabí allú dú vnschuldigú pine, smacheit und herzeleit, das je dur Christi liebin von menschen wart gelitten. Ja so gat es an die rehte wage, so vröwent sich die allermeiste, die da ioe vil habent. Der megde bluot von nature, der martrer bluot dur den cristanen gelöben und ander man mansclahtige bluot, das ane schult geschihet in rehter not, das wil der helige gotz sun mit sinem bluote wegen, wan es ist in warer vnschult vs geben. Dc rehte bluot wegen, wan es ist in warer vnschult vs geben. Dc rehte bluot kunt nit in die wage? Warvmbé? Es ist vor bewollen, aber es löschet dieselben sünden, die da kunt von des vleisches künde.16

It is the blood itself of the person killed while innocent which is special, simply because it was shed without sin. This is the miracle that transforms a murderous, thieving highwayman into someone worthy of heaven. It is probably not his one final good Christian deed, or his last deathbed prayer that

gains salvation for the greppr. It is his own innocent blood that washes away his past sins. The reformation of the greppr was probably necessary to establish his credentials as a Christian, and his prayer may have been necessary to confirm the grace of God shown in this entire incident. But it is the blood the greppr loses innocently that miraculously ensures him a place in heaven. It is the innocent blood that will be referred to again in Sólarljóð.

Stanza 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helger Einglar</th>
<th>Helgir englar</th>
<th>Holy angels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kómu ór himnum ofan,</td>
<td>komu or himnum ofan</td>
<td>came from heaven above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>og tóku Sál hans’ til sín</td>
<td>ok tóku sál hans til sín.Í</td>
<td>and took his soul to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i hreinu lifi</td>
<td>hreinu lifi</td>
<td>In pure life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hun skal æ lifa,</td>
<td>hon skal æ lifa</td>
<td>it will live forever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>med allmáttkum Gude:</td>
<td>med allmáttkum Guði.</td>
<td>with almighty God.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stanza seven completes the first narrative, and as the concluding part it is, as usual, also the most important. The fact that this is the seventh stanza does argue on the basis of numerology for there being nothing missing in the exemplum. A stanza missing at the beginning, and one missing through contraction in stanza five would result in an equally mystical number nine, but as has been noted, Sólarljóð does seem to prefer the number seven for heavenly events and nine for those more negative.17 This stanza certainly does describe a highly regarded, holy Christian event, the conspicuous granting of the eternal life which is the ultimate goal of Christianity.

For the modern reader this can be a rather dull stanza. Even for the original audience the images here were certainly just as hackneyed. But for anyone encountering Sólarljóð for the first time there is nonetheless a definite element of surprise involved. Until now we have been in the presumably lowly dwelling of an outlaw. We have been dealing with a professional criminal, and a stranger who suddenly turns out to be a murderer. Even if

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17 Anker Teiligard Laugesen, Syv-Ni-Tolv, Studier fra Sprog- og Oldtidsforskning 237 (København: Gads, 1959) 15.
one is aware of the purging qualities of innocent blood, it would be difficult to anticipate the sudden arrival of angels from heaven.

Holy angels suddenly appear, coming down out of heaven, down from the same heaven where God was located in the previous stanza. This would unquestionably be a dramatic scene in a modern film, but the author of Sólartjóð says nothing about heavenly trumpets or glowing halos or rays of light bursting through the Icelandic cloud cover. It is enough to say that angels come, and the rest can be left to the imagination.

Immediately upon the death of the greppr, these angels collect his soul, taking it among themselves into a pure life. Despite the quickness of their appearance, there is nothing said about the holy angels having beaten unholy angels in a race for the soul. The angels take the soul to themselves, but there is nothing indicating that the soul becomes angelic as is so often the case in the popular imagination today. Nonetheless, the soul is clearly personified. In line four it is referred to with the personal pronoun hon ‘she’ rather than with the demonstrative pronoun. More telling, it is taken into a new life, where it will live eternally with God. It is animate at the very least. The poet makes it clear that it is not the greppr taken bodily into heaven, but only his soul. The pronoun is marked with the feminine grammatical gender of the soul rather than there being used a natural masculine pronoun referring back to the greppr.

This last stanza shows the greppr’s soul rewarded with eternal life. Since the stanza demonstrates the ultimate reward, the justification for all that has transpired in the narrative, it deserves the final position for reasons of stress as well as of chronology. Within the stanza, the final line describes the greatest joy of heaven. Better than mere eternal life is the fact that it will be spent with almighty God Himself. Bugge emended this final line to read “æ með almátkum guði,” adding here the æ from the previous line. His reasoning was that the line lacks alliteration, með not alliterating with the m of allmáttkum, which can only alliterate on a. The idea of eternal life seems so important that one would expect reference to it in the Vollzeile, where

18 Sofus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 358.
Sólarljóð puts its most important ideas. Hence, there may be some literary support for Bugge's emendation. However, the history of Sólarljóð scholarship demonstrates that it is better not to try to second-guess the received text.

Stanza seven concludes the first narrative of the poem and shows the first glimpse of the afterlife offered in Sólarljóð. It is demonstrated here that death need not be final, but can mark the beginning of a new existence lasting eternally in the presence of almighty God. The first narrative is missing nothing essential in the tale it tells. There is a dangerous greppr who robs and kills travelers, but who, because of an upright heart, reforms and offers hospitality to a certain gestr. The poem thus teaches that the most evil of people can change their ways and become good. When the gestr, an insignificant and exhausted traveler, is able to suddenly kill the greppr in the latter's sleep, the audience is reminded about how swiftly death can come from the least expected quarter. The gestr is explicitly given a burden of sin, but his fate is not followed further by the narrative. The greppr, because he was utterly innocent in this one of his many presumed conflicts, is cleansed of all sin. Pure at the last, he is transported into heaven to live eternally in a pure life with God. Death is not the end, but only a transitional point in eternity for those who are without sin.

6.3. The Second Narrative—Unnar and Sævaldi

Stanza 8

Aude nie heilsu  Audí né heilsu  Neither wealth nor health  
rædr eingin madur  rædr engi madr,  does any man direct,  
þo hinn gange greitt;  thó hinum gangi greitt.  though all go smoothly for him.  
Margan that sæker  Margan that sækir,  That happens to many  
er minst of varer;  er minnst of varir;  which least is foreseen;  
Einginn Rædur Sættum  engí rædr sættum sjálfr.  no one effects his own schemes.  
sialfur:

Stanza eight begins with a proverbial statement that seems to apply to the story of the greppr and the gestr, providing a neat moral. No one is in control
of his own fate, even should no special obstacles be put in his path. This was shown by the death of the grepr, a man who lost not only his earthly riches and his health, but life itself. He was not overcome by any predictably superior force, but simply by an insignificant traveler who struck while he was sleeping. There was no resistance that could have been offered.

The second helming is perhaps even more in point than the first, for it does befall not just to many, but to everyone, that sooner or later the unexpected occurs. This happened to gestr and grepr alike. No matter what plans were made, the determining factors, as almost always, were ultimately beyond the control of either. The grepr seemed to have reformed, and showed indications that he planned to live a Christian life. But whatever plans he had were cut short even as he slept. He clearly had no expectation of being murdered immediately, even if he does seem to have taken some thought as to the ultimate disposition of his soul. He must have forseen death, but not so soon, and not at the hand of the gestr. There appears to have been a distinct element of surprise. Likewise, the timid gestr, driven by his own fear, could hardly have forseen becoming a sinful murderer. Far less could he have forseen sending the grepr to heavenly paradise. One wonders if he could see the angels come down to take the soul of his victim.

What is unexpected for the audience of Sólarljóð is that this stanza is not so much a conclusion for the first narrative as it is an introduction to the second. In fact, this proverb-filled stanza is probably not aimed at the story of the grepr and the gestr at all. Nevertheless, its moral does apply to them, just as it applies to everyone. It is precisely this universal application of proverbs that gives them their truth and makes them seem wise. The universal application may also make one think of specific instances in literature, in history or in one's own life that are confirmed by the truth of the platitude. Hence, a proverb can unify different examples of known truths, joining them in very few words.

Sólarljóð joins different examples of its truth in this stanza. The proverbs are used to link the first narrative exemple together with the second, to provide a relatively smooth transition between the two independent narrative passages. This part of the poem is not an entirely random mixing of proverbs with
narrative exempla under an umbrella heading of "advice." The stanza of proverbs constitutes a literary device for joining disparate narratives. This technique is one that had also been used in the popular medieval Disciplina Clericalis, and is thus not unique to Sólarljóð.

In actual content, this stanza states an argument. The argument is based partly on the narrative of the greppr and the gestr, and partly on basic human experience. The proof of the argument will be demonstrated by means of the following example, the narrative in stanza nine. This stanza argues that the life of mankind is controlled by fate. This fate is not a specific power, as though people's futures were decreed by the Norns or Fortuna. Not even God is mentioned in this connection. Life is simply beyond human control, something fickle and unreliable that should not be trusted. The things treasured in this life are all transitory. Even if one has been fortunate enough to be able to accumulate riches, and even if one presently enjoys good health and good fortune, an element of chance is involved. "Auði né heilsu ræðr engi mæðr," no one can control wealth or weal. Either may vanish overnight. We all know life is difficult, and it takes but a single storm to destroy the crop or sink the ship upon which wealth, and even life may depend. Yet the final line of the first helming makes it clear that not even a major calamity is required. Even when no obstacles are placed in one's way, when nothing unusual occurs, one's welfare remains always insecure.

The second helming deals less specifically with attempts to preserve the good fortune one already has than with not trusting to one's own plans for the future. As Robert Burns wrote, "The best-laid schemes o' mice an men / Gang aft agley." 19 Unforeseen things do happen, and they are rarely beneficial. It is simply beyond the power of mankind to determine one's own fate, so all one can do is trust in God and hope for a better condition in the next world. The critical final Vollzeile is perhaps best translated with its own proverb, such as "man proposes, God disposes." For nothing is agreed by a single party, and no one can foresee what was settled on will be carried out.

The message is very familiar from Hugsvinnsmál, Hávamál, and the Disticha Catonis. Life is simply not to be trusted.

Stanza 9

Ecke their hugdu,  Ekki their hugðu,  Never did they think,  Unnar og Sævalld,  Unnarr ok Sævaldi,  Unnar and Sævaldi,  ad theim munde heill hrapa:  at theim mundi heill hrapa.  that luck would pass them by.  Nakter their urðu,  Naktir their urðu,  Bare they became  og næmer huervetna,  ok næmir hvervetna,  and everywhere bereft,  og runnu sem vargar til vidar:  ok runnu sem vargar til vidar.  and as outlaws fled to the woods.

Stanza nine gives us the example of Unnar and Sævaldi, two men who exemplify the advice provided in the previous stanza. Actually, so little information is given about these characters that they can hardly serve as examples of anything. It is really only the a priori accepted validity of the proverbial statements that makes their situation at all convincing or clear.

Unnar and Sævaldi are presented as two familiar characters that we should know by name. Much effort has been expended in trying to locate the story of these men elsewhere in Icelandic literature. Large quantities of time and ink have been invested in attempting to find allegorical meanings for the names themselves. But everything one needs to know about Unnar and Sævaldi can be found in this one stanza, certainly if also read in the light of the stanza preceding it.

Unnar and Sævaldi are two people of the most generic kind. These are the sort of people about whom proverbs are written. They represent anyone and everyone. Unnar and Sævaldi are a pair of the proverbial characters usually referred to by indefinite pronouns, but here they are made more personal and familiar to us through the use of actual names. These are Pat and Mike or Sven and Ole, except that the names are not marked even for nationality beyond not being foreign. The names themselves are linguistically plausible, but not regularly used, so these characters are not likely to have been confused with anyone specific. Any discovery of allegorical truth in these
names or in their etymological components would probably have been welcomed by the author of Sólaljóð, but the narrative is clear enough with Unnar and Sævaldi viewed only generically as two human beings.

Unnar and Sævaldi are examples of the proverbial truth that earthly fortune cannot be relied upon. We are told nothing about the pair initially that would separate them from the mass of average men. We can only assume their wealth and health were average, and that they had the usual common dreams shared by most of mankind. But such dreams can be deceptive. These men never dreamed that their fortune would fail, we are told, with the clear implication that it did. The first helming gives us no clearer information than that. Following human nature, Unnar and Sævaldi must have expected always to be as well-off as they were in the beginning. Perhaps they expected things to improve. We are not given any information about what actually happened to them, or what they may have done to cause or aggravate their own misfortune. Any such information might have limited the applicability of the example.

The imagination can invent literally countless reasons for the unhappiness of Unnar and Sævaldi. That is precisely the point. There are countless things that can come between a human being and his or her happiness. A specific misfortune can sometimes be guarded against, but there is always some other possible misfortune that remains unforeseen. The audience is invited to contemplate a wide range of potential problems. The example is stronger for not being limited by detail.

The second helming is much more specific. It still says nothing about what sort of misfortune occurred originally, but it shows very clearly the results. The two men have become naked—destitute and utterly vulnerable. Whatever they may have had in life they have lost, and they are now totally at the mercy of others. Alas, no aid is forthcoming even from fellow human beings. Everywhere they turn they are further deprived, so that banished as outlaws they must run like wolves into the woods.

Nothing is said about what if any crime Unnar and Sævaldi may have committed to deserve outlawry. The important underlying cause is clearly
misfortune, and not any specific turpitude condemned by the author. The presentation is neutral. It is not made clear whether Unnar and Sævaldi were condemned justly or unjustly. Sólarljóð does not treat the pair with any extreme sympathy, but it accuses them of no crime other than having trusted to fate. The only transgression for which they are being blamed is worldliness, but in Sólarljóð this is the sin behind all other sins.

The narrative of Unnar and Sævaldi is probably the only one in Sólarljóð that does not lead to death. To be sure, outlawry was the equivalent of a death sentence, and the image of two literally naked men in an Icelandic forest does not encourage any hopes for an extended survival of the protagonists. Sólarljóð has not strayed far from the idea of death. It is Unnar and Sævaldi themselves who gave no thought to death, simply assuming they could trust in life, if not to be eternal, then at least to continue to be a pleasant realm beyond which there was no need to look. They were mistaken.

Life is not something upon which one can depend. The only certainty is death and what lies beyond it. By never thinking that the fortunes of life would change, Unnar and Sævaldi did not consider the health of their souls. They were led astray by an untrustworthy world. In the end we see them still in that world, but running like wolves in the wild. Sólarljóð uses the word vargar, primarily meaning ‘wolves’, rather than the less picturesque útlagar to denote ‘outlaws’. The choice stresses that no possibility of legal settlement is left; the condemned men are utterly cast out of human society. They are as wolves to be hunted down and killed by anyone who meets them. Unnar and Sævaldi are still alive, but no longer depicted even as human. In the end, they must be living in constant contemplation of death, if not actually looking forward to it.
6.4. The Third Narrative—Sváfaðr and Skarðeðinn

Stanza 10

Munadar Ryke  Munaðar ríki  The power of pleasure
hefur margan tregad, hefir margan tregat brings many to misery.
opt verdur qualráedi af  Torments often take place
konum, konum thanks to women.
Meingar thær vrðu, meingar thær urðu They become baneful
thó hinn mátke Guð, thó hinn mátthki guð although mighty
Skapade Skyrlega: skapaði skírliga. Godcreated cleanly.

The third narrative begins, as did the second, with a string of proverbial-sounding phrases. This time there is no strong link between the gnomes and what has been described before. However, the stanza does mark a clear transition between two separate narratives, so that no attempt is made to work the new characters Sváfaðr and Skarðeðinn into the plot of the earlier story of Unnar and Sævaldi. At the same time, the proverbs also help to unite both narratives under the general theme of gnomic wisdom.

The narrative of the characters Sváfaðr and Skarðeðinn deals with lust, the one sin that has been stressed above all others by recent critics of Sólarljóð. Sólarljóð itself does not seem to concentrate nearly so singlemindedly upon this one particular sin, though the author would surely still have ranked it among the seven deadliest. Stanza ten begins by introducing the general theme of pleasure, and not sexual pleasure per se. In fact, what Sólarljóð talks about here is “Munaðar ríki,” the power of pleasure, or even the dominion of pleasure. The poem will later speak of Earth itself as yndisheimr (Sól. 33.3), the ‘world of pleasure’, so something very broad is probably at issue here.

That the force of pleasure has brought many to grief in this world is nothing new. Unnar and Sævaldi indeed constituted an example of how concentration on earthly pleasures, even if only the simple pleasures of enjoying reasonably good fortune, can have tragic results. Other pleasures and other sins will be dealt with later in the poem. Sólarljóð is opposed to all carnal pleasures, of which lust is only one. The pleasures of the flesh end
with the death of the body, if not, as with Unnar and Sævaldi, even before. Sólarljóð continually points to death as its way of advocating the use of carnal life on earth to prepare the soul for eternal spiritual pleasure in heaven. The joys of this world can easily mislead a person from the true purpose of life, which is to gain a place in heaven.

Having made a general statement about all worldly pleasure, however, Sólarljóð does then turn in the ever-important Vollzeile to the specific sin of lust: “opt verðr kvalræði af konum.” This is a strangely passive way of saying that women can often cause torment. The torture occurs on account of them, or by means of them. They are clearly instruments and not agents. After all, they do represent an earthly pleasure for the author of Sólarljóð, and it is only after death that a man can expect to encounter eternal tortures because of his lust for them. Whatever pains a man may suffer from woman are not physically administered by her.

The second helming appears to be a rather curious apology. Women do become noxious inasmuch as they can be responsible for the death not only of a man but of a man’s very soul. Yet it is not said that all women are evil by nature. They become deadly in the same way that Eve became the cause of all human death. The transformation to sinfulness may or may not be inevitable. It is not clear at this point in Sólarljóð. Yet the apology really seems not to be for women so much as for God. It was he who created women, and he surely cannot have intended them to corrupt men. Sólarljóð says God created purely, using an adverb rather than an adjective. Viewed strictly, the purity refers to his act of creation rather than to the creature created.

F. W. Petersson explained that skírliga is an adverb simply used as a predicate adjective,²⁰ and aside from Larrington,²¹ no translator has retained the adverb in English. This feature is generally ignored, with a pronoun supplied

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²⁰ Fredrik Wilhelm Petersson, Solsången, diss. Lund (Köpenhamn: Schultz, 1862) 17.

to refer to woman. In any event, Sólarljóð seems here to be posing a question about the sinfulness of woman. More important to the masculine perspective of the poem would seem to be the question of original sin generally. Would one who never turned to sin be guaranteed reward in heaven after death? In any case, God cannot have created sin, for such an idea is blasphemous. The proverbs of this stanza have opened more questions than they have answered, and it is necessary to turn to the narrative example in hope of clarification.

Stanza 11

Sætter their vrðu
Svafðor og Skarthiedinn,
huorge matte annars án vera,
fyrr enn their æddust
fyrr einni konu,
hun var theim til lyta lagnin:
Agreed were they always,
Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn,
Hvárgi máttí annars án vera,
fyrr en their øeddust
fyrr einni konu.
Hón var theim til lyta lagnin.

Stanza eleven is an introduction to the narrative action of the third narrative. It already contains all the most important information to be included in the entire example. Once again, the subsequent narrative will mostly elaborate on what is made known at the beginning. The protagonists are again identified by name, but are not formally introduced as might be characters about which nothing were known. However, this time a clear relationship between the two is established, and there is less of a feeling that these are people or types we should know from personal experience. We learn that they are close friends, of one mind and inseparable. The names seem unimportant, and are given only parenthetically, as if for those who always insist that the characters of a story be identified. It is the degree of friendship that is stressed, its concord, and particularly—in the Vollzeile—that neither of the friends could ever be without the other. The stage is definitely set for something to come between poor Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn.
One need wait no longer than the second helming to discover it is a woman who comes between them, if that was not already foreseen from the proverbs of stanza ten. It is said here of Sváfaðr and Skarðheiminn that “their œeddust,” that they were driven into a true frenzy, because of a woman. The woman herself is not named, which helps to keep attention focussed on the two male protagonists. She was made to disgrace them, concludes the final line, and that is indeed her sole purpose in this narrative. Yet even here at this point she is secondary. The important information of the line is the “lyta lágin”—made to mar—marked through both end weight and alliteration. We learn from this that Sváfaðr and Skarðheiminn are going to come to a bad end. Our interest is aroused as we are left in suspense about what form that end will take. It is not yet clear that the story will end in the death of both Sváfaðr and Skarðheiminn, but it is nearly certain that they will be besmirched with sin, and thus face death of the soul.

The concluding Vollzeile presents us with something of a paradox in Sólarljóð’s view of women. The woman of this narrative has no other purpose than to bewitch Sváfaðr and Skarðheiminn. That is what she was born for, or more accurately translated, what she was made for. She seems to have been intended for their perdition. And yet we know from the previous stanza that God created purely. It is as if the earlier proverbial stanza were added later to apologize for this one. At this point, at least, there is no hint of a resolution. The focus of the narrative remains in any event very firmly on the two male protagonists, the dear friends Sváfaðr and Skarðheiminn.

**Stanza 12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Huorskis their gádu</th>
<th>Hvárskis their gádu,</th>
<th>About neither they cared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fyr thá hvítu mey</td>
<td>fyr thá hvítu mey,</td>
<td>(because of that white maiden),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leiks nie ljosra daga,</td>
<td>leiks né ljósra daga.</td>
<td>not for games nor bright days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Óngvan hlut</td>
<td>Óngvan hlut</td>
<td>Not a thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>máttu their annanu muna</td>
<td>máttu their annanu muna</td>
<td>could they remember else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enn thad liósa lijk:</td>
<td>en that ljósa lík.</td>
<td>besides that brilliant body.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The twelfth and thirteenth stanzas provide a good description of the plight of lovers, portraying in very few words the passionate psychological obsession
Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn develop for the unnamed girl who comes between them. First they lose interest in the normal, wholesome joys of life. They no longer care about the amusements they shared before. They no longer care even about light, bright days. This is truly a striking image, for in an area where the sun shines only briefly for half the year and is usually hidden by clouds the other half, nothing is as rare and precious as a sunny day. Even today Nordic life tends to be put on hold during the warm month, so that people can simply enjoy the weather. But this great and joyous aspect of God’s creation comes to be ignored by Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn.

Amusement and bright days are stressed in the first Vollzeile of stanza twelve, to give way to the beautiful body stressed in the second. But even in the first helming we see the seductive woman starting to come between her two victims and the life they had shared only with each other. She is the motive, as stated in the second line, for the split between the characters referred to in line one and the former joys referred to in line three. She has been interposed even within the grammatical and poetic structures of the verse.

The second helming leaves the remaining world behind and concentrates on the object of desire. Everything else evaporates and so needs no specific mention. Thoughts of the woman force out any other thoughts, and it is the beauty of her body that most enchants. Yet the bewitched men are not even dealing with thoughts so much as with memories. The verb used is muna, ‘to remember’. The woman is apparently not with them, not in sight. Unless she is actually practicing some sort of magic, she can hardly be blamed for any concentrated effort at seduction. On the other hand, she certainly has been able to stay within the memories of Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn, and any earlier enticement has been highly successful. What is remembered is her body, the object of all lust. Perhaps she has even shared it, adding the sin of fornication to already deadly lust. There is no clear evidence.

The woman herself is a rather mysterious personage. She is described as a hvít ðrækr, a ‘pale girl’ or even a ‘white virgin’. The one adjective most used in the Middle Ages to describe feminine beauty must be ‘white’, as employed here, and we are otherwise informed of little more than that she is nubile.
She does have a ljósa lík, yet this really only emphasizes the light coloration we were already told about. However, it does seem to make her blaze with beauty. She is surely attractive. The entire passage is highly charged with eroticism, but not because the woman’s attractiveness is described. It is erotic because we see the effect of this woman’s attractiveness on those attracted by her. “Hón var theim til lyta lagnin,” we remember (Sól. 11.6), and she doesn’t seem to have to do anything herself to have the deleterious effect. Women can be pernicious though purely created (Sól. 10.3–6), simply because their looks can kill.

**Stanza 13**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daprar theim vrodu</th>
<th>Daprar theim urðu</th>
<th>Dismal to them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hinar dynnur Naetur,</td>
<td>hinar dimmu nætur</td>
<td>became the dark nights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ònguan dimu their sofa</td>
<td>òngvan máttu their sætan</td>
<td>No way could they sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sætan sofa</td>
<td>sofa</td>
<td>sweetly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enn af theim harme</td>
<td>en af theim harmi</td>
<td>And from the anguish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rann heipt saman,</td>
<td>rann heipt saman</td>
<td>hatred arose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>millumvirtra vina,</td>
<td>millum virkta vina</td>
<td>between the bosom buddies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deepest depression falls upon Sváfar and Skartheinn because of their desire for the fatal woman. One can easily picture the long gloomy nights of tossing and turning, neither of the men being able to sleep for thoughts of their beloved and for the effects of their resultant depression. The expression sætan sofa ‘to sleep sweetly’ sounds itself too sweet to seem credible in the context of such suffering. This makes sleep seem a very distant goal indeed.

The grief that has developed from this situation, perhaps combined with the effects of sleep deprivation, makes Sváfar and Skartheinn begin to hate each other. It is easy to see how each would begin to think of the other primarily as a rival. The once intimate friends gradually become the bitterest of enemies through their competition for the unnamed woman. Whether she is actually aware of the existence of either of them is still not clear.
Stanza 14

fadæme verda
i flestum stóðum,
[goldin grimnlega 22]
A holm their geingu
fyr hid hoska vífl,
og feingu báðir Bana:

Fáðæmi verða,
i flestum stóðum,
goldin grimnliga.
Á hólm their gengu
fyr hit horska vífl,
ok fengu báðir bana.

The monstrous will be
in most milieux
savagely rewarded.
They warred in a duel
for that wise woman
and both of them found their — bane.

With Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn now the most bitter of enemies, the resolution of the narrative is predictable. They will kill each other. Sólarljóð attempts a generalizing proverb to begin stanza fourteen. It is above all the second line, “i flestum stóðum,” that gives this passage its gnomic appearance by stating that the message can be applied with near universality, “in most cases.” Unfortunately, this is also just the sort of convenient phrase that can be inserted nearly anywhere to replace a forgotten line. It may signal a suspect passage, though no one has pointed to a possible corruption here.

The attempt to create a proverbial truth in the first helming of stanza fourteen fails due to problems one encounters in interpreting the word fáðæmi ‘exceptional things’. There is no agreement on what exactly is meant here, and so the idea can hardly be taken as universal proverbial wisdom. Or conversely, the wisdom is not so universal that the maxim can immediately be seen to apply to the case at hand.

Some later manuscripts have altered the first line of the stanza to begin with forn dæmi, 23 to neatly suggest that in ‘old stories’ things can be harshly rewarded. This clarifies the meaning vis-à-vis the events of the stanza, but it dilutes any message in this part of the poem. The first Edda edition retained the usual manuscript reading, giving the word as fá-dæmi, and translating it as “Insolentia [vitiorum] exempla” (Sól. 14.1). 24 The most common

22 The line was added to the manuscript in a later hand.


24 Edda Sæmundar hinns fróða. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havníæ, 1787) 1:357.
interpretation seems to have followed this general line of interpretation to assume that it is exceptionally atrocious, outrageous or unheard-of sins being punished—in the words of Lee Hollander, “monstrous things.” Others, most notably Falk, have interpreted fáðæmi as exceptional in the sense of ‘excessive’, either excessive passion or excessive folly. The oldest English translation follows this second interpretation:

    Passions of strange excess
    Beget severe distress,
    And punishment of keenest woe.
    The single fight they tried,
    For that delightful bride,
    And each received the fatal blow.

The most recent English translation also returns to this idea:

    Too fierce a fire
    of passion’s fever
    reaps a hard reward;
    on the holm they fought
    for the fair dame
    where each his death did earn.


Björn Ólsen\textsuperscript{29} equated the word \textit{fáðæmi} with \textit{fáðæmaverk}, citing Sveinbjörn Egilsson,\textsuperscript{30} or with \textit{óðæmaverk}, citing Fritzner.\textsuperscript{31} This seems to shift the emphasis to actual deeds committed, something not clearly done in either source cited. While such a philological solution has been followed by many since, it fails to account for the fact that previous to the eventual killings, no actual deeds are told about. Surely nothing really extraordinary or outrageous occurs in the way of a specific action before the \textit{holmgang}.

A third possibility might more or less ignore the word \textit{fáðæmi} and base its approach on what has happened before. Good friends have become obsessed with lust for a woman. They no longer sleep; they no longer take pleasure in shared activities. They begin to see each other as rivals and start to hate each other. Given human nature, one can expect minor irritations that will be exaggerated by the two men until violent conflict eventually breaks out. This is probably what Benjamin Thorpe had in mind when he wrote about "hostile deeds" being "fiercely avenged."\textsuperscript{32} One can imagine exceptionally small or exceptionally trivial things leading to an ultimate harsh reward in violence and death. Unfortunately for this approach, however, \textit{fáðæmi} are not considered trivial.

Although it is clear that Sváfaðr and Skarðheðinn are going to come to a bad end, and although our experience with life and literature would suggest that this end will be fatal for at least one of the characters, Sólaljóð does not say anything about an ultimate fight until the last helming of stanza fourteen. The gnomic first helming is attempting to pave our way to the resolution of the conflict in the second helming, and not to pronounce judgment on it as a known fact. The dual death of Sváfaðr and Skarðheðinn is something we haven't yet been told about. Whatever exceptional thing the first helming
refers to has to have been told about previously; the duel is clearly the payment that will be made for it, as the proverb tells us.

From all the previous stanzas of this narrative, the moral of the story would seem to be “do not lust.” A more secular rule would be “avoid women,” for we see they can cause any number of problems. The difficulty here is that lust does not seem to be particularly exceptional, heinous or monstrous to the modern reader. That a love leading to death is excessive, however, accords more with current beliefs. The problem here seems to be more cultural than linguistic. We live in a lustful age. On the other hand, excess is spoken against often in gnomic literature, with a golden mean the usual goal. Yet the main purpose of Sólarljóð is to teach Christian morality rather than classical moderation. Any lust is sinful, and thus excessive. If medieval Iceland was not generally renowned for its chastity, then what better reason to devote so much space to the sin of lust, and stress that as a particularly portentous crime?

If, as we know, lust is a sin, and Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn have lusted so intensely as to have forgotten everything else in God’s creation and to have become mortal enemies because of it, then this particular sin is indeed extraordinary. The especially bad case of any crime is punished especially harshly, concludes the first helming of stanza fourteen.

The second helming demonstrates the punishment for lust. Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn go to a holm to fight a duel over the unnamed woman, and they kill each other. The penalty for such obsessive lust is death, just as we know the ultimate penalty for deadly sins will be the death of the soul. Nor should the connection of a holmgang to divine judgment be overlooked. In this ordeal God condemns both parties.

The idea of two men engaged in a holmgang over a woman is well known in Icelandic literature from Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu, where Gunnarr and Hrafn both die in a duel fought over Helga. However, the story of Gunnarr and Hrafn has nothing in common with Sólarljóð other than the barest fact of a holmgang fought for a woman being fatal to both the men. The idea is nothing rare. Inger Boberg recorded a long list of Icelandic literary examples
of duels fought for the sake of a woman as her motif H217.2,\textsuperscript{33} though these duels are not always fatal for both parties.

Carolyne Larrington noted another specific parallel in the story of Palamon and Arcite.\textsuperscript{34} Although little more than the fact of a connection was mentioned by her, Chaucer’s treatment of the lovers’ triangle which ends in double death is worthy of a closer look. First, it not only provides an apt alternative to the overworked parallel with Gunnlaugs saga, but also to the parallel with the description of Billings mar in Hávamál. Although one would be hard pressed to find a description of first-rate feminine beauty anywhere in medieval literature that did not use many of the same terms, particularly ‘white’, the woman over whom Palamon and Arcite fight is referred to as “Emelye the brighte” (Knight’s Tale, 1737).\textsuperscript{35} This surely corresponds to the ljósa lik of the unknown beloved of Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn (Sól. 12.6).

Much more important to an understanding of Sólarljóð is the view the Chaucerian lovers have have of death. By the time Palamon and Arcite fight each other, death has become something welcome:

Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,  
That been encombred of oure owene lyves (Knight’s Tale, 1717–8).\textsuperscript{36}

Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn make no such statement, or any other, for that matter, but it is easy to imagine such words coming from them. Totally depressed and taking joy in nothing that formerly pleased them, life has surely become unattractive. The death they suffer at the end is, then, hardly a

\textsuperscript{33} Inger M. Boberg, Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 27 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1966) 150.
\textsuperscript{34} Carolyne Larrington, Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry (diss. Oxford, 1988) 280.
\textsuperscript{35} Geoffrey Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, A. C. Cawley, ed. Everyman’s Library (Rutland: Tuttle, 1992) 67.
\textsuperscript{36} Geoffrey Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, A. C. Cawley, ed. Everyman’s Library (Rutland: Tuttle, 1992) 67.
punishment for their obsessive lust so much as a release from its tortures. The punishment of the sin is contained within the sin itself, and is not something administered through external agency.

Sváfadr and Skartheðinn suffer three separate levels of punishment for having become involved with a woman. First, life becomes bitter for them. Then they are killed, losing any opportunity for reform. Finally, they will be punished in the hereafter. In this narrative, as in the one before it, there is no mention of any sort of life after death. The punishment in the hereafter is left entirely to the imagination, but lest one forget to consider it, there will later be a tour of hell where the lustful can be perceived. This narrative provides ample opportunity for a discussion of life, death, and the hereafter.

The final contribution of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* to a discussion of the example of Sváfadr and Skartheðinn is its romantic view of love. This view is in sharp contrast to the views held in *Sólarljód*. Sváfadr and Skartheðinn are sympathetic characters, to be sure, but though their passion may be seen by us today as virtuous love that has simply gone too far, the author of *Sólarljód* clearly classifies it as nothing other than the deadly sin of lust. Palamon and Arcite were rescued from their first attempt at killing each other by ladies of the court who were enchanted by the exhibition of love worth dying for. Love was a reason in Chaucer for forgiving a multitude of other crimes the lovers had committed. *Sólarljód* is not a part of this chivalric world of courtly love, but belongs instead to a severely Christian world that would not countenance the idea of service being rendered to Venus. The treatment of lovers may help establish a context for *Sólarljód*. It is clearly not romance.

The *Sólarljód* stanza ends with the death of both Sváfadr and Skartheðinn. The final word, in fact, is 'death'. This is clearly the point emphasized, "for the wages of sin is death," according to the Bible (Rom 6:23). The eternal life promised as the gift of God by this same Biblical verse is available only through Jesus Christ. Sváfadr and Skartheðinn turned away from God and thought only of the sin of lust. The object of their desire has no importance in the story. She is not named, and seems to care just as little about the two men as Emelye cared for her admirers, whose love was made known to her only through a chance interruption of their duel.
Stanza fourteen speaks of the beloved as "hit horska víf," the word horska ‘wise’ having posed interpretive problems. Wisdom is simply not an attribute traditionally referred to in describing an object of lust. The first edition translated the line "Ob elegantem illam feminam," just as the above-cited English translations (p. 458) used the more common generic adjectives ‘delightful’ and ‘fair’ so often applied to the female bimbo. Translations of Sólarljóð, regardless of language, have almost without exception either ignored the word horska, or have rendered it as some feminine quality irrelevant to wisdom. Only Larrington has suggested that wisdom might be a characteristic appreciated by the author of Sólarljóð in contradiction of the customary misogyny of the medieval Church. After all, Erna of Rigsmál 39 is both "hvita ok horska."

A second view of the woman in this narrative rests on the interpretation of horska as a negative term. Previously we have come to expect "kvalraði af konum" (Sól. 10.3), and we know the one in question was "theim til lyta lagin" (Sól. 11.6). It is not surprising that horska has been read (probably under the influence of the modern Scandinavian languages) in the sense of klóka, meaning ‘cunning, clever, sly, or devious’. The unnamed woman could even be wise as in a ‘wise woman’, meaning a witch. This interpretation leaves the woman at the end gloating over her victory in having seduced or bewitched the two men and causing their death.

As dangerous as Sólarljóð holds women to be, a view of them as so irredeemably evil hardly accords with God’s creation having been pure, as the poet said earlier (Sól. 10.5–6). Although God presumably did also create

37 Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787) 1:357.
41 Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 147.
Satan, Sólarljóð can hardly be putting woman on the level of Satan himself. Not even the evil Eve was willfully wishing destruction when she caused the expulsion of mankind from paradise. Women may cause a great deal of mischief in the world, but it is hard to imagine them being portrayed here as so unregenerately evil. At the least, Sólarljóð should provide this woman with a name to let us know that some particular women are so evil, without through anonymity painting all femininity so black. After all, it is viewed as a virtue to feed one’s mother (Sól. 72).

The woman in this example remains mysterious. She is beautiful, she is wise, and her qualities are such that she can cause two of the closest male friends to kill each other. She herself is unnamed. There is no indication of her doing anything beyond existing. She is only the way she was made. By all appearances her great wisdom comes from remaining entirely uninvolved in the passions of Sváfadr and Skarðídrinn. The two men have been condemned to death because of their lust. The wise woman has not lusted and pursues her own way to God.

6.5. The Fourth Narrative—Ráðny and Vébdí

Stanza 15

Ofmetnad drygja
skylde einginn madur,
thad hef eg sanlega sied;
þuijad their huerfa
er hánum filgia,
flestir fra Gude:

Ofmetnad drygja
skyldi engi maðr—
that hefik sanliga sét—
því at their hverfa
er hánum fylgia
flestir frá guði.42

Arrogant pride
no man should practice—
that I have truly
perceived—
for most of those people
who pursue pride
wend away from God.

If stanza fourteen is viewed as closing with the wise woman remaining aloof from the carnage she has caused, then it seems very natural to turn next to the sin of pride. The woman seems to have reason to be proud, whether because her evil scheme was so successful, because she was wise enough to

42 The reading taken from AM166b 80, “flestir guði frá,” is preferable from the standpoint of alliteration.
stay out of the conflict, or because she remained chaste and virtuous throughout such sinful events. Nothing is said about her being proud, but one can easily imagine her standing above the dead bodies in a moral as well as a physical sense. She was not punished with death, while others were.

Stanza fifteen does not deal with the characters of the preceding narrative, of course, but as a transitional passage it forms something of a bridge. Once again the transition is formed of proverbs serving to mark the new narrative and give it a moral grounding. No man should be proud, Sólarljóð states—as sweeping a statement as medieval sexism will allow. Not resting on the authority of universal wisdom as expressed by a gnome, the author adds personal testimony. The narrator intrudes into the story here to point out that he or she has actually seen the evidence to support the claim made. This seems like an unusually rational approach to medieval argumentation. Yet the helming’s stress on perception is an encouragement to the audience to look and see the truth themselves in the actions of humanity. Throughout the section of narrative exempla, it is common knowledge based on frequent perception that always forms the basis of argument. Sólarljóð says nothing surprising, nothing that the average person would not know beforehand about mankind or Christianity. Yet Sólarljóð does challenge its audience to reconsider known facts and to apply what is known to the problems of life and to interpretive riddles within the poem itself.

The second helming gives the reasoning behind the prohibition that was enunciated in the first helming. Once again, the statement is made proverbial by giving it a general, nearly universal application. “Flestir their,” or almost all those who follow the sin of pride, turn from God. It is interesting that an implied possibility is allowed for a prideful person to not turn away from God. It is most, and not all, of the prideful who fall. To be sure, this escape clause is almost certainly due to little more than the compositional desirability for an alliterating word in this line, but it does also invite a consideration of how a prideful person may remain God’s friend. For pride, after all, is the most deadly of all the sins.

The reason for pride being a deadly sin is precisely that it makes one turn away from God. It is only with God that one can enjoy eternal life. This well-
known Christian dogma was already referred to in stanza seven, with the added implication that heaven actually consists of being in God’s presence. To turn away from God is thus to turn away from eternal life. To turn away from God is thus to die. The prideful person, thinking only of her or himself, forgets God. God is excluded from the mortal’s life, and beyond this world the mortal is eternally excluded from God’s presence in paradise. The only way for the prideful person not to turn away from God probably consists in turning back before it is too late. The case of the greppr demonstrated, among other things, that it is never to late to repent and give up sin. The prideful turn away from God unless they stop being prideful. As life demonstrates, most never reform, and thus follow a path away from God. They follow a path to hell and eternal death.

**Stanza 16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rijk voru thau</th>
<th>Rük váru thau</th>
<th>Rich they were,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rädny og Vjebode,</td>
<td>Rädny ok Vēboði</td>
<td>Rädny and Vēboði,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>og hugdust gott eitt giora</td>
<td>ok hugōust gott eitt göra</td>
<td>and thought they did but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nu thaug sitia</td>
<td>nú thau sitiō</td>
<td>good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>og sārum snu</td>
<td>ok sārum snúa</td>
<td>Now they sit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ymsum Ellde til,</td>
<td>ymsum elda til.</td>
<td>and turn their wounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to various different fires.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The example we are given of pride is the story of Rāðny and Vēboði. Again, two specific names are used, giving the stanza a very definite application in contrast to the generalized universality of the proverbial introductory stanza. Here are two concrete people, called by name, regardless of the fact that the names have been invented. Rāðny is feminine and Vēboði is masculine, although even that is probably more than we really need to know.

They were powerful, these two, and obviously had the means to effect good. As a practical matter their might probably lay more in wealth than in more physical manifestations of power, but the exact nature of their authority is not important. We have been told in the previous stanza to observe proud

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43 From AM166b 80, the reading is “Rūk thau urdu.”
people, and here are two being presented to us. We see two important things. These proud people are powerful, and they think they do nothing but good. This does indeed seem to describe a large number of proud people even many years after the composition of Sólarljóð.

The mere possession of power shows that Ráðny and Véboði have a motive for being proud. Power and wealth are always regarded as important assets lending prestige to those who hold them. Some Sólarljóð manuscripts, notably AM 166b, do, say that Ráðny and Véboði became rich, using the verb verða rather than vera. This gives the couple the pride of accomplishment, and the knowledge that they could become rich when most people cannot. On the other hand, having always been in possession of wealth and power might be a sign of nobility giving much greater cause for pride, especially in a medieval context. What is certain is that Ráðny and Véboði are in a position that can only be envied by the majority of mortals. To be superior to everyone else in power is quite likely to lead to pride.

That Ráðny and Véboði think themselves only to do good shows first and foremost that they are not aware of being sinners. They do not consider their own pride. These people are highly unlikely to repent of a sin they are not aware they have committed, and so they are not likely to turn to God. But there is also an implication here that Ráðny and Véboði may otherwise live Christian lives. They probably perform some sort of charitable acts they and perhaps everyone can designate as “doing good.” But good works, however Christian, are not enough. It is not easy for the rich to enter heaven.

The second helming of the stanza indicates that Ráðny and Véboði were not, in fact, fortunate enough to enter heaven. They were not fortunate enough to retain their former position. Although the narrative examples of Sólarljóð are related in the narrative past tense, the poem switches here to a glimpse of the present. Now Ráðny and Véboði are no longer powerful, and presumably no longer proud. At least they have nothing left to be proud of. Their condition is much reduced, although it is not at all clear that they are now burning in hell or purgatory.
It seems a quite valid interpretation of this helming to translate it as "now they sit and turn their sores to various hearths." Like Unnar and Sævaldi, who lost everything and ran to the woods, Ráðny and Véboði have definitely lost the wealth and power they once possessed. Ráðny and Véboði may have been better off in the beginning than were Unnar and Sævaldi (though this is only conjecture) but both pairs eventually lose all their earthly possessions. Unnar and Sævaldi lost even the clothes from their backs, and were banished from human society. Ráðny and Véboði may have fared somewhat better. They have been impoverished and wounded, but they are at least able to warm themselves by some fire from time to time as they wander from place to place in search of charity.

Although such an interpretation is possible, it seems less likely than one that places the protagonists in an otherworldly place of torment. First, the shift from the narrative past to the present is necessary only if the condition of Ráðny and Véboði is eternal, or lasting at least from a narrative "one upon a time" to the real present. The final dispositions of the other examples were still explained in the past tense, aside from the eternally living soul of stanza seven. Second, the turning (snúa) from fire to fire also recalls the turning (hverfa) from God. Failure to consistently and single-mindedly follow the path to God leads to punishment after death. This punishment seems to consist not only of the loss of everything held in life, but in the further administration of wounds, and a desperate turning from fire to fire, in every direction that doesn't lead to God. For it is too late to turn back to God after death.

The narrative examples seem to retain an intentional ambiguity concerning whether divine punishment occurs before or after death. In part, the examples resemble the gnomic world of Hugsvinnsmál and Disticha Catonis where it is always warned that fate is fickle and life is not to be trusted. An attitude of contemptus mundi is promoted there because nothing in this world is sure but death. The Christian idea of contemptus mundi, however, is based on the idea that this life is short, but will be followed by an eternity in

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which one's acts in this life will find their lasting reward. Sólarljóð definitely bases its system of morality on divine reward, but seems to vacillate in its depiction of whether that reward occurs on earth or in an afterlife.

The problem may be partly real. People do often seem to get their proper comeuppance later in life, yet few Christians would dare to suggest that every misfortune was punishment from God. An eternal reward, on the other hand, is Church dogma. Sólarljóð certainly leaves no doubts about its belief in an eternal reward after death. Reward during life is much less sure, but it has been seen to happen. Sólarljóð certainly might hesitate to suggest that God never takes a hand in the retribution perceived on earth.

The more likely reason for the locus of punishment waver in Sólarljóð's narrative examples is the desire to give the audience concrete examples visible from earthly experience. These stories not only exemplify the rules the poem states in maxims, but they also serve as earthly examples of what happens after death. They show what cannot be seen.

In the first part of Sólarljóð the poet shows the audience how sins are punished on earth. To place reward and punishment entirely in the afterlife would vitiate the value of these narratives as examples. Cause and effect must both be somehow made visible. Later the poem will turn to more supernatural means of showing divine retribution. In the first section the poem tries to concentrate on the visible, as far as is possible, as a means of showing us the invisible. Sólarljóð could perhaps have achieved this goal more easily by presenting these examples as parables or visible allegories to represent the invisible divine mystery. But instead, Sólarljóð seems to be using the ambiguities and shifts between life and afterlife to blot the distinctions between them. We mortals can thus understand from this life how God punishes sin in the next.
Stanza 17

a sig thaug trudu  Á sik thau trúðu  In themselves they believed
go thottust ein  ok thóttust ein vera 46  and thought they alone
allre thiöd yfer,  allri thjóð yfir  were above all of the people.
Enn leitzt tho 45  en thó leizt  Nonetheless, their character
theirra hagr annan veg,  theirra hagr annan veg  was considered otherwise
Almátkum Guðe:  almátkum guði  47  by omnipotent God.

Stanza seventeen fills in more details of the information already given in sixteen, without adding anything very significant. The new stanza primarily gives something of a definition of pride. First, Ráðny and Véboði are accused of having trusted in themselves, as if they believed themselves to be entirely self-sufficient and not in need of God. In this way it can easily be seen how proud people might indeed be likely to turn away from God. They would perceive no great reason to make any special effort to follow God or God’s commandments. Yet it also seems significant that Sólarljóð uses the words trúð á ‘to believe in’, the exact phrasing used to express credence in the Divinity. In other words, these proud people have set themselves up in God’s place. They believe in and almost worship themselves, rather than the Christian trinity. It is no wonder that Christianity considers pride the worst of all sins.

Ráðny and Véboði did not live in an isolated world all to themselves, however. They were aware of their fellow human beings but treated them arrogantly. They considered themselves to be superior to all others of their own kind. This secular sort of pride is perhaps more familiar. Sólarljóð has little to say about it here, but the final helming indicates that God will change this relationship. For this reason, one can assume a temporal fall from power to poverty, with the mass of people made superior to Ráðny and Véboði.

45 Leitzt has a superior b and tho an a above it, probably in a later hand, to indicate transposition of the words.
46 Vera added from AM166b 8o.
47 AM166b 8o, breaks line 5 after hagr, so that the final line reads “annan veg almátkum guði.”
the other hand, however, a fall into hell increases the disparity in positions, for even the poorest person on earth would be far superior to any soul being eternally tortured in hell.

Viewing the pride of Ráðny and Véboði as a sin with two aspects, a religious contumacy and a social arrogance, paves the way to imagining a double punishment. It seems especially just that the couple be punished for their earthly haughtiness by being made paupers forced to depend on the charity of precisely those people they had disdained. After death, however, comes an analogous punishment for the parallel but mortal sin of pride against God. This more serious aspect of pride, the turning away from God, results in eternal damnation. The punishment itself is described in the immediately preceding and following stanzas.

**Stanza 18**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>munadljíf thau drygðu</th>
<th>Munúðlíffi⁴⁸ thau drygðu</th>
<th>Pleasure they practiced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a marga vegu:</td>
<td>á marga vegu</td>
<td>in many respects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>og hófðu Gull fyr Gaman:</td>
<td>ok hófðu gull fyr gaman.</td>
<td>and they had gold for grins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nu er theim goldit</td>
<td>Nú er theim goldit,</td>
<td>Now they're rewarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ad thau göng skulu,</td>
<td>æt⁴⁹ thau göng skulu</td>
<td>so they must wander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mille frosts og funa:</td>
<td>milli frosts og funa.</td>
<td>between the frost and the flame.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stanza eighteen seems suddenly to turn away from the sin of pride that had until now been the theme of the narrative of Ráðny and Véboði. In this new stanza, it is pleasure which is being criticized, much as it was in the example of Sváfaðr and Skarðheðinn in stanza ten. Here, however, although similar vocabulary is still being used, the pleasure does not seem to be sexual. We are clearly dealing with a mixed couple, since Ráðny and Véboði continue to be referred to with the neuter plural pronoun, but lust does not seem to be their particular sin. In fact, the second line makes it clear that many, presumably different, pleasures are involved. The convenient filler phrase “á marga vegu” shows that pleasure is being taken in more than one manner, while at

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⁴⁸ *Munad* from *AM166b* 80.
⁴⁹ *AM166b*, 80, reads *er*.
the same time reintroducing the word vegr 'way' to continue the imagery of following various paths. Divers paths are taken to pleasure just as different paths are later walked as punishment.

Besides pleasure, the theme of wealth is also picked up again, this time from stanza sixteen. There Ráðny and Véboði were described as rík, which is seen in stanza eighteen to clearly include having plenty of gold. Now we are told, however, that this gold was used particularly for pleasure. It was applied toward amusement and fun, despite the impression shared by Ráðny and Véboði themselves, that they did only good (Sól. 16.3). If it is not a sin simply to be rich, it is certainly sinful to use wealth for the promotion of pleasure.

The second helming of stanza eighteen turns to the eventual punishment of sin. As with the characters in all the other examples, Ráðny and Véboði are repaid for their actions. Here the penalty for their sins is to walk between frost and flame. This is something not quite the same as turning wounds to various fires as stated in stanza sixteen. There is no mention of wounds, for one thing. More important is the addition of frost in contrast to the fire or flame. This makes the punishment appear notably more extreme. Such a dramatic image seems truly supernatural and infernal. If the earlier reference to moving from fire to fire (Sól. 16.5) was indeed merely an earthly punishment of poverty with the necessity of going from hearth to hearth begging, this would seem to be the eternal equivalent to be suffered after death. In other words, we see here how parallel forms of punishment might be carried out in hell as they are on earth.

If such a parallel set of punishments were clear, the author of Sóiarljóð would truly have succeeded in using temporal rewards to demonstrate the rewards to come after death. Unfortunately, however, both passages remain equally ambiguous. Frost and flames are both surely as common on earthly Iceland as are various fires. The northern climate is such that between warm houses any beggar would be likely to encounter frost. Such a contrast does not actually require an otherworld. On Iceland, there may be fire and frost without even the presence of any human hearth. Such extremes could easily be encountered during life. On the other hand, it seems most likely that both
the frost and flames, and the turning to various fires refer to punishment after and not before death. Various interpretations are possible.

In this final stanza of the narrative of Ráðny and Véboði, pride is not referred to at all, although that seemed to be the couple’s primary iniquity, and the one that distinguished them from the characters in the other narratives. Instead, it is pleasure and the consumption of wealth that are criticized in this particular stanza. It seems as if pride and arrogance have been abandoned by Sólarljóð, and that this stanza is joined to the rest of the narrative of Ráðny and Véboði only by the parallel punishments of turning from fire to fire and going between frost and flame. However, pleasure and luxury have surely been added to the pride and arrogance rather than replacing them as characteristic sins of Ráðny and Véboði.

It is said in Sól. 18.1 that Ráðny and Véboði committed (drygðu) pleasure (Munúðlíf or munúð, depending on manuscript). Pleasure is clearly seen as a crime or a sin of its own. Pleasure is not enjoyed, but perpetrated. Pleasure had previously been demonstrated in Sólarljóð through the sin of lust attributed to Sváfaðr and Skartheðinn. Now it is clearer that lust is not the only form of pleasure the poem finds invidious. In stanza eighteen pleasure is more closely associated with the sin of luxury. There are thus different forms of sinful pleasure. It is apparently not Sólarljóð’s purpose to delineate between specific sins and constitute any ordered catalogue of them. Stanza eighteen probably does not, in fact, turn away from the narrative’s concentration on pride, but instead simply adds some of the other sins that make people turn away from God.

Pleasure is sinful because it means concentrating on this world rather than on the world to come after death. Pride is especially striking because it makes one turn from God to self, but pleasure is quite similar because it makes one turn from God and heaven to things that happen in this transitory world. To live a life of pleasure is the direct opposite of practicing a Christian contempt of this world. The manuscript development was probably from an original reading of munúð, meaning simply ‘pleasure’ to munúðlíf or a ‘life of pleasure’. The transition is natural. There are many different pleasures. It is not important to assign them names such as lust or luxury, pride or
arrogance. Sólarljóð shows particular sins more through physical examples and psychological developments than through theological taxonomy. It is shown very clearly that pleasure becomes a way of life, and that it makes one look to this life as though there were nothing beyond it.

Even the gnomic poetry of pre-Christian times, as exemplified by Disticha Catonis or Hávamál, warned against excessive pleasure. While excess of any kind was to be avoided, pleasures were also warned against because they could make one forget that fortune is fickle and life is short. For Christianity the concentration on life is much more serious, because it can mean forgetting about the eternal reward after death, and losing heaven.

The example of Ráðny and Véboði shows the sin of pride—self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency—making people turn away from God as though he were unnecessary. Wealth and power are equated with comfort and the attention to transitory earthly well-being and luxury. All these sins are focussed on the self and the world, and make a person concentrate on matters other than eternal salvation. Arrogance puts Ráðny and Véboði above other people in their own eyes, but they are mortal and therefore blind to the larger truth. God is the true judge, the true king, and it is his kingdom that must be sought. It is God who determines the fortunes of human beings. The attention to pride, pleasure and luxury is repaid, presumably eternally, by wounds, a restless turning from fire to fire, and being cast down lower than others to a fate of alternate exposure to frost and flames.
6.6. The Fifth Narrative—Sörli and Vígúlf

Stanza 19

Ovinum thínun,  
trú thú aldrí  
thó their fagert mæli fyrr  
óvinum thínúm  
trú thú aldrí  
thó their fagert mæli fyrr  
théir  
Góðu thú heit.  
Gott er annað  
víti ad hafa fyrr varnade,  
Gott er annars  
víti at hafa fyrr varnáði  
Your enemies  
ever you trust,  
though they address you  
fair.  
Promise good.  
It's good another’s  
doom to have as warning.

Stanza nineteen explicitly confirms that the narratives given thus far have been examples presented for didactic purposes. The audience is admonished to take the fates of others, such as Ráðny and Véboði or Sváfaðr and Skarðháfn, as a warning (Sól. 19.5–6). Such unfortunate ends are likely to be met by anyone who practices sin. With this minimal link to what has gone before, stanza nineteen proceeds to introduce the following and final narrative example with the usual gnomic interlude.

The primary maxim preached here is “never trust your enemies.” While this seems a sensible piece of advice, it hardly corresponds to any common Christian precept, and its violation certainly does not normally constitute sin. By this point in the poem, however, it should be clear to most audiences that Sólarljóð is speaking in a Christian context, and a Christian reading of the passage is likely to be sought by such an audience. Fidjestøl suggested that the advice of this stanza may have been somehow meant ironically, or as a quotation of other proverbs and not to be taken as the truth intended. A simpler approach, and the one thus more likely to have been taken by a contemporary audience, would have been to find a Christian context for the advice as given.

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50 AM166b, 80 omits their.
51 AM166b, 80: víti hafa at varnáði.
52 Bjarne Fidjestøl, Sólarljóð (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 41.
Medieval Christianity, perhaps more than Christianity before or after, preached a highly adversarial world view. There was a very real counterpart to God in the person of the devil. Having just left Ráðny and Véboði wandering between frost and infernal fire, who is more likely next to be encountered in the poem than that arch-fiend himself, Satan? And yet it is not the devil we meet, but our very own enemies. Sólarljóð recoils from utilizing the word fjándi ‘fiend’ and employs a less severe, and probably less common word for ‘enemy’, óvinr. The word is also used here only in the plural. It is therefore clear we are not dealing with the devil himself, but to the degree his appearance was expected, we are likely to see the enemies spoken of here as the devil’s minions. We are dealing with people who have the destruction of Christians in mind, and the worst destruction is that of the soul, caused when our enemies seduce us into sinning.

Sólarljóð says not to trust enemies, even though they speak fair words and offer flattery. Appearances are not to be trusted. Christ himself refers to the devil as a liar (John 8:44). Deceit can be used not only to tempt a person into sin, but also to prevent God’s truth from being believed. The devil has been tricking mankind since the days of Eve. The narrative of Sörli and Vigúlfur that follows this stanza is a worldly, saga-like example of an enemy’s deceit and treachery, but it parallels the deceitful acts of the devil, who is in pursuit of our souls.

Instead of trusting an enemy, Sólarljóð says, “góðu þú heit” (Sól. 19.4). This means nothing more than “promise good,” which I would interpret simply as “wish them well,” perhaps with an implied prayer for their reformation. Particularly in the light of the following two lines, the poem seems to say to turn the other cheek (without, however, being deceived) and appreciate that there is a place in the world even for those who wish evil, for their bad example helps keep the Christian on track. The stanza does little more than warn the Christian to be careful in a dangerous world, as Frederic Amory says, quoting from Matthew 10:16.53

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The difficulty with the commandment to promise good is that it implies a simultaneous command to deliver evil instead of the good promised. This implication is perhaps not so clear from the words themselves, but it is almost unavoidable given the literary context. Hávamál, speaking of an untrustworthy friend, says “fagrt scaltu við thann mæla, / enn flátt hyggia / oc gialda lausung við lygi” (Háv. 45.4–6), or speak fair, think false, repay falsehood with lie. Hugsvinnsmál combines the same idea of repaying lie with lie with Sólarljóð’s warning not to believe the deceitful:

flarads mans orde,
tho ad fagurt mæli,
thatfu eigi thvi ad Trua.
glisleg ord
lat thu i gegen koma,
og gialld so liju lijkt—(Hugs. 42(e)).

The audience of Sólarljóð must have been familiar with the admonition to lie to liars, if not from Hávamál or Hugsvinnsmál, then probably from some other source of similar popular proverbs. Against such a background it is difficult indeed to overlook an implied advocacy of deceit in Sólarljóð.

To be sure, the closer any passage of Sólarljóð comes to part of another poem, the more likely it may be that the similar passages have influenced each other sometime during transmission. Yet while the “góðu thú heit” of Sól. 19.4 may be read as containing an idea similar to that of Hugsvinnsmál 42 or Hávmál 45, the actual wording is without parallel. There is neither ground nor basis for emending the text of Sólarljóð. And as far as the language itself, the implication of deceit also remains at most an implication. Perhaps Fidjestøl was correct after all, and this passage was indeed meant ironically.54 Perhaps this one particular line was meant to demonstrate the difference between denotation and connotation in a didactic message. Perhaps this was designed to show by example how one can be tricked by the lies of pagan poetry into inferring false doctrine from true Christian teaching.

54 Bjarne Fidjestøl, Sólarljóð (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 41.
Promise good to your enemies. Sólarljóð actually says no more than this. There is no reason this line should imply anything less Christian than Paul’s imperative, “be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21). Sólarljóð continues in the next two lines to actually give a reason for appreciating an enemy of the good. By seeing how evil people are punished, others are warned not to sin. This follows closely the idea of Hugsvinnsmál (and Disticha Catonis) to follow the example of the good man, but “Anars Vijte / lati sier ad Varnadi” (Hugs. 98.4–5(e)). This was a popular gnome, and Carolyne Larrington has enumerated several other parallels to this wisdom found in Icelandic literature.55 The gnome shows that one may even have reason to be thankful to an evil person. The important thing is simply not to believe the flattery and lies of evil enemies, or to allow oneself to be led away from God and into a life of sin. With the final admonition to take another’s punishment as warning, stanza nineteen leads into a new narrative example.

Stanza 20

So hánunm gafst  
sorla hinun gödráda,  
tha er hann lagde a valld  
hans Vigvylf,  
Trygglega hann trude,  
enn hin ad táulum vard:  
sínum Brödur Bana:

Svá hánunm gafst,  
Sórla hinun gödráda,  
ðá er hann lagði á vald  
hans Vigúlfis:  
tryggliga hann trúði,  
en hin at táulum vard,  
sínun bróðurbana.

Thus it was for him,  
the well-warned Sórlí,  
when he lay in the power of  
Vigúlf:  
He relied without worry  
in his kinsman’s killer,  
but that one played him false.

“Svá hánunm gafst”—so it turned out for Sórlí—begins stanza twenty, as if Sórlí had taken the advice of the nineteenth stanza to mistrust enemies and learn from the way they are punished. However, it is quickly shown that Sórlí has not followed any such advice and is himself punished as a result. To find out what befell Sórlí, it is necessary to see what follows in Sólarljóð. The narrative is summarized in the first stanza, so it becomes almost immediately clear that Sórlí’s is the bad example which we should learn to avoid ourselves.

Sörli is called göðráða ‘giving good counsel’ but the context shows it is he who is the ‘well-advised’, having had the clear example of a murdered brother to learn from. Alas, Sörli does not learn from this example, or take the advice anyone else might have given him after seeing the example of his brother. Sörli finds himself in the power of Vigúlfur, quite probably having put himself there by his own actions, since he certainly seems not to worry at all about the situation. In fact, the second helming begins by telling that the trust put in Vigúlfur was absolutely sincere. Sörli trusted without apprehension.

The final helming of stanza twenty contains another peculiar inversion of syntax, with the relative clause “en hinn at tálum varð” inserted between the verb and its object. This inversion serves to shift the phrase “sínnum bróðurbana” to the Vollzeile where it receives additional emphasis. The most important thing in this narrative is that Sörli is dealing with the murderer of his brother, the worst enemy one could have shor: of the devil himself. Sólarljóð stresses this one fact about Vigúlfur, because it alone is enough to explain everything that happens. It is no surprise that Sörli was deceived and led into a trap. The same person killed his brother, too. Sörli’s mistake was in trusting a known enemy.

**Stanza 21**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grid hann theim seldi</th>
<th>Grid hann theim seldi</th>
<th>He proffered them pardon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>af göðum hug.</td>
<td>af göðum hug.</td>
<td>from his kind heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En their hétu hánun Gulle</td>
<td>en their hétu hánun gulli i</td>
<td>but they promised him gold in return.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i gen:</td>
<td>gegn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saatt er56 lietust</td>
<td>Sáttir létust</td>
<td>They pretended to peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medan saman drucku</td>
<td>medan saman drukku,</td>
<td>as together they drank,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>envi tho komu flærder fram:</td>
<td>en thó kómu flærðir fram.</td>
<td>but then the deceptions appeared.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stanza twenty-one indicates that Sörli was in a position to take vengeance against Vigúlfur, but granted him and his followers quarter instead. Like a good Christian, he forgave his enemies and all were reconciled, but afterwards the evil doers begin to revert to their former devious ways, with

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56 The word “their” is added after “er” in a later hand.
the suggestion that they will not abide by the truce. The stanza is ambiguous about whether the transaction described here is simply a standard Icelandic legal proceeding such as we know from the sagas, or whether it is a more unusual act of dramatic Christian mercy. I believe it shows the conflict between both worlds.

Sólarrljóð does not tell how Sörli has happened to be in a position where he has power over the killers of his brother, but it is clear that he is in a position to grant a peace for which his evil opponents are willing to pay. Such a situation is not especially remarkable, and there is no need for Sólarrljóð to explain how Sörli was fortunate enough to get the best of his opponents. What is remarkable is that Sörli does not take vengeance when it appears to be possible. In the society depicted in the sagas, at least, it would require a great Christian generosity to settle for monetary damages instead of blood in recompense for the death of any relative so close as a brother.

Sörli does not demand the death of Vigúlfur and his followers. Instead, he either offers them a settlement, or forgives them outright. Inasmuch as Sörli is already too good to be true, I believe he offers them complete pardon, simply from the Christian goodness of his heart. He turns the other cheek. “Selja grid” seems to indicate a granting of pardon more than it does a settlement of damages. A settlement of damages is more usually expressed with the verbs setja or geфа. Selja connotes a more complete surrendering of rights. While “af göðum hug” in line two does not necessarily indicate anything more than Sörli’s sincerity in wishing an honest settlement, in a case as extreme as this, it appears to be a motivation. Inspired by nothing more than his own Christian goodness, Sörli forgives the killers of his brother.

The killers, on the other hand, are not especially Christian, or part of any culture of forgiveness. They view the offering of peace as the usual legal settlement for wrongful death, and offer gold as compensation. I read the conjunction en here in its contrastive meaning of ‘but’ rather than in its copulative meaning of ‘and’. There is certainly nothing to indicate that the gold is ever delivered to Sörli. For Vigúlfur, the procedure is clearly an offering of grith, for which a monetary compensation or security must be
paid. There is nothing to indicate whether or not Sörli agrees to be compensated.

The final helming is less ambiguous, but also contains little new information. Vigúlfr and his followers pretend to be reconciled and at peace with Sörli while they drink in celebration of their accord. But then the falsehoods come forth. Sörli is not rewarded for his great Christian act of forgiveness. He is still surrounded by enemies who are set on achieving his destruction. For now they are at peace and partying together in celebration, but the nature of the deceiver never changes. The banquet of stanza twenty-one is no more than another form of speaking fair while planning ill. Sörli is being flattered only that he might be lead astray, just as the devil sets pleasant traps to ensnare too trusting Christians into sin.

Stanza 22

Enn tha epter  
a odrum deiæ,  
er their höfdi ð i Eyrdal  
suerðum their meiddu  
thann er saklaus var,  
og lietu hans fjörve farit:

En thá eptir  
á ðöðrum degi  
er their höððu i Eyrdal  
sverðum their meiddu  
thann er saklauss var  
ok léðu hans fjörví farit.

And afterwards,  
on the following day,  
when they had ridden in Eyrdal,  
they sliced with their swords  
the one who was innocent  
and deprived him of his life.

Stanza twenty-two follows twenty-one in strict chronological order. It takes place after the drinking, on the day following. Sólarljóð is surprisingly exact here, perhaps in the same way that it is with the names of characters and now also places. The trivial details are specified and not left open to interpretation. Matters of narrative or theological significance, however, always seem to be ambiguous and open for discussion. Beyond the determination of the specific day for the events of this stanza, there is also an exact determination of the place. The guileless Sörli goes riding with his newly agreed friends in a place the manuscript LBS 1109, 40 calls Eyrdal.

57 Rygjardal in most editions; ryrdal in AM166b, 80.
Njarðvík considers this a variant of eýardal,\textsuperscript{58} but neither form of the name has any advantage over the name Rygiardal, which has been standard since the Sólarljóð edition of 1787. That first edition also contains the best discussion of this particular name,\textsuperscript{59} but for purposes of first-level interpretation the name is not significant. The characters could as well be riding on an errand (rída eyrendi) as riding in Eyrdal.

It is the action of the narrative that is important, and the action is another murder. The stage is set in the first helming, with time and place specified. Then, as the first word of the second helming, swords appear. Vigúlfr and his friends maim the innocent Sörli with their swords, and free him from life. As with the reformed greppr before him, Sörli is referred to as saklauss, or innocent. In the case of Sörli, this clearly has the meaning ‘ingenuous’, for there is no better word to describe the guileless faith of the good-hearted man so easily fooled and led astray by a band of known murderers.

And yet the word saklauss has importance beyond its precise application to the characteristics of Sörli’s personality. It is also a characteristic of Sörli as a victim. He was killed in cold blood, without having been in any way responsible for having actually incited the violence that takes place. A saklauss victim appears to be, if not a legal requirement for a killing to qualify as murder, then a prerequisite for the automatic salvation that occurs when the innocent person is killed (see page above). The formal requirement is stated in Sól. 22.5, and in case we have forgotten, the closing line of the stanza repeats the memorable fjörvi of stanza one, so we will be sure to make the link back to the first narrative and the example of the greppr and the gestr. A second man has now been murdered in innocence, and we can expect angels to again come down from on high to take the victim’s soul with them up to heaven.

\textsuperscript{58} Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 28.

\textsuperscript{59} Edda Sæmundar hinns fróða. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787) 1:362n29.
The angels do not appear in stanza twenty-three to collect the soul of the murdered Sörli. Instead, we see the murderers attempt to hide the body and with that the evidence of their crime. They drag the body by unseen ways, hidden from the sight of men. Then they carve the body into pieces and throw it down a well. A brutal mangling of Sörli’s body was implied already in the previous stanza with “sverðum their meiddu” (Sól. 22.4). The resultant death was delayed until two lines later, as though it followed almost as a secondary consequence rather than as the sole purpose of the attack. Vigúlfr and his band seem consistently to employ more swordplay than is absolutely necessary to achieve their ends.

Sörli’s body is barbarously cut up and dropped into a well. Sólarljóð combines the two actions into one line, one sentence, by using only the single verb brytja ‘to chop’. This leaves the rather grotesque image of the evildoers slicing piece after piece off the body, directly into the water. The mistreatment of the corpse makes Sörli’s enemies seem more evil, as does also their pollution of the well. Yet the destruction of Sörli’s body serves a further function of demonstrating its independence from the soul. Despite all that happens to his body, his soul remains whole and in the hands of God.

The second helming explains that the acts committed in the first helming were done with the motive of trying to hide the body to thereby conceal the crime that had been committed. The efforts were in vain, of course, for God is omniscient, and nothing can be hidden from him. The holy Lord saw the entire transaction from up in his heaven. Whether or not the expected angels were actually fooled by the attempt to hide the body is not made clear, but it is certain that God was not fooled, his reaction remains to be seen.
Stanza 24

Sål hans bad
hinn sanni Gúð,
i sinn fógnud fara:
Sókudólgar
higg eg sijsla mune,
kalladír frá quolum:

The veritable God
requested his soul
to pass on into his bliss,
but the adversaries
I think will be late
to be summoned away from torments.

God himself intervenes in stanza twenty-four—without the first narrative’s use of angelic messengers—to welcome the good Sörli into heaven. God is called “hinn sanni Gúð”, the true God, thereby reminding us of his opponent, the fiendish deceiver. But despite the treatment here of a backgrounded (or higher-level) conflict between good and evil, the greatest significance of the common adjective sannr is probably its ability to complete the meter, and to alliterate with sál. No one in Sólarljóð has been so deceived as to be confused about God.

God invites Sörli’s soul to enter into its joy. Despite the mutilation of Sörli’s body, his soul is intact and suitable for salvation. Since he was killed in innocence, the purity of his blood should automatically ensure him a place in heaven as it did earlier in the poem for the greppr. God the judge does indeed ask Sörli’s soul to find its heavenly happiness, and to do so immediately, without any purgation. This is in contrast to Vigúlfr and his followers who are pictured in a torment from which they may ultimately be called away, even if not anytime soon.

The second helming of the stanza deals with Vigúlfr and company, and their expected punishment, just as the first dealt with Sörli and his salvation. We are not shown the punishment of the enemies of Sörli—his opponents in battle, if not in all possible respects. After disposing of Sörli’s body, they probably ride off as if nothing had happened. It was clear from the previous stanza that, other than all-seeing God, there were no witnesses, and every precaution was taken to prevent discovery. The only punishment to be expected is at the hand of God.
God's punishment of the evildoers is not actually shown in this narrative. When speaking about their torture, Sólarljóð very carefully stresses that it is dealing merely with the opinion of the narrator by inserting the comment, "hygg ek." The narrator says he thinks it will be a long time before the enemies will be called away from their torments. This is a highly ambiguous statement. The most literal reading would treat the "I think" as speculative, indicating that the narrator is unsure. After all, any torments applied to the evildoers are not likely to come either from the uninformed worldly authorities, or from any unevidenced guilty consciences. It is nowhere said that Sórli had a remaining brother that could have avenged him. Any torments to be applied as penalty will occur in another world, either in hell or in purgatory, and there is no evidence that Vigúlf and his followers have as yet departed from this world of mortals. Their punishment is in the hands of God, and its nature and length will be determined by God. The narrator certainly does not presume to speak for the Divinity, and so qualifies his statement with "hygg ek."

On the other hand, nothing is so sure in this world as death, and every Christian knows divine justice will be meted out in the hereafter. Sólarljóð is a reminder of just that. The narrator feels the crimes committed have been especially heinous and believes that the punishment for them will be severe in proper proportion. Because God is known as a matter of religious faith to be just, the pragmatic effect of the "hygg ek" is to denote the narrator's participation in a certainty shared also by the audience. Certainty is actually stressed by the disclaimer. The comment also adds a colloquial tone that draws the audience more intimately into the narrative even as it marks the information that follows as similarly colloquial understatement. The narrator says he thinks the evildoers will be called away from tortures late, but he implies that a reprieve may never come at all. He certainly gives the impression of hoping for eternal torment.

Because the idea of being called from torment late appears to be expressed as understatement, it is not possible to determine whether it is purgatory pictured or whether hell is simply being limited through a rhetorical figure. The context seems to provide something of a prayer to God that people like
Vigúlf be condemned to eternal damnation in hell. On the other side of the coin, Sörli certainly goes directly to heaven, but then he is a special case and appears to receive special treatment from God. Unlike the lust of Sváfaðr and Skarðheðinn or the pride of Ráðny and Véboði, murder is not directly a deadly sin, and so would seem suitable for purgation. We have seen how a murderer like the greppr was able to enter heaven despite the many sins he had committed. The ambiguous language of Sólarljóð provides many opportunities for theological discussion, debate and commentary, but the point it is trying to make is generally clear. The point here is simply that Vigúlf and his fellow evildoers will be punished.

The narrative about Sörli and Vigúlf is supposed to be an example corresponding to the advice in stanza nineteen, never to trust enemies, and to be warned by the punishment of others. This lesson appears to be fairly obvious. Sörli trusted his enemy and was punished by death and the desecration of his body, so we should be warned by his end not to trust as he did. A two-fold problem has been perceived here. First, this does not seem like an especially Christian message, and second, this message is confused by the reversal of fates after death, where it appears that Sörli is rewarded rather than punished.

There is nothing extremely unChristian about not trusting enemies, despite the Christian principles of forgiveness and turning the other cheek. Particularly in medieval society, where Disticha Catonis, for example, was considered to demonstrate high Christian morality, the attitude probably would have been that even forgiveness has its limits and nothing in Christianity requires one to be stupid. A more orthodox reading would perhaps have seen here an allegory of good and evil, to draw Hjalmar Falk's Christian moral, "slut ikke fred og forlik med de onde, selv om det synes din fordel." Peace and conciliation surely should not be made with evil, whether or not Sörli made peace because he sought monetary advantage to himself. A distinction should probably be drawn between forgiveness and trust. Sörli's mistake, if mistake it was, was not forgiveness. Forgiveness

60 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 12.
would simply have meant sparing his enemies and suffering the indignity of having an unavenged brother. He could still have promised, and even delivered goodness to them. This would be a Christ-like action. Jesus went so far as to say “Love your enemies” (Matt 5:44). Sörli’s mistake, if any, was not forgiveness but trust. He allowed himself to be fooled by evil people into thinking they were no longer evil.

Sörli was no doubt unwise in contracting with evil people, in drinking and riding with evil people so that he probably appeared to be one of them, and in putting himself at the mercy of evil people. Sörli ceased to be on guard against evil people and so fell prey to them. However, he never fell prey to evil itself. He was never tricked or tempted into performing evil or into sinning against God. In the final analysis, his life was exemplary in the most positive Christian sense.

Sörli is punished on earth because he is not adequately on guard against his earthly enemies, but we are not shown that he fails to be on guard against the enemies of his soul. After death, Sörli is rewarded rather than punished. The reversal of the earthly punishment comes as something of a surprise, because the opening proverbs in stanza nineteen have told us to look for and be warned by punishment coming as a result of trusting enemies. Furthermore, in the preceding three narratives the punishments on earth have so closely paralleled the punishments after death as to become confused with them. The narrative of Sörli and Vigúlfr sharply reminds us that the judgment of heaven does not necessarily parallel any judgment on earth.

The ones punished in the end by God are the evil Vigúlfr and his followers. In fact, they are not punished at all in this world, but we know they will be punished after death by long or eterral tortures. Sólarljóð places almost no value at all on the earthly world, so we should know that it is only the punishment that occurs after death that should be our warning.

What warning is to be taken from the punishment of Vigúlfr? He is, among other things, an enemy of the good, a liar, a murderer, and a desecrator of corpses, and we should surely be warned not to engage in sins like these. However, it appears only to be Sörli and not Vigúlfr who has violated the
gnomic precept in stanza nineteen, to never trust one’s enemies. There is
certainly never the least hint that Vigúlf trusted Sörli, even when Sörli
proved to be no danger to him. The Christian Sörli, of course, is not the real
enemy.

Sólarljóð as a whole always has one enemy, although it is presented in many
different forms. That enemy is, strangely, not the devil or evil per se, but
simply the world. Vigúlf trusted in the world, mankind’s worst enemy. He
sought earthly advantage in his dealings with Sörli, completely forgetting that
God sees everything from heaven. Vigúlf forgot the inevitability of his own
death and the certainty of eternal reward for his earthly actions.

Sörli, on the other hand, showed a proper contempt for the values of this
world. He left any vengeance to the Lord (Rom 12:19) and forgave his earthly
enemies, seeming to follow the precept of Luke 6:27 to “love your enemies,
do good to them which hate you.” He lay no special weight on the
preservation even of life itself, and retained in all respects a proper
contemptus mundi. Sörli held God as his friend and the world as his enemy,
and it was this mundane enemy he did not trust. Vigúlf, on the other hand,
did trust in the world and earned in return a long if not eternal punishment.
It is this punishment that should be a warning to us not to value this world.

The conflict between the appearances of this world’s punishment and the
reality of punishment in the world to come has almost certainly been
perceived by anyone who has examined the narrative of Sörli and Vigúlf.
The only difficulties have arisen from trying to see a direct parallel between
this world and the more important life to come after death. As Fidjestøl has
noted, the good fortune of evil people in the world has posed a long-standing
ethical problem. Christianity generally solves this problem by focusing on the
world to come, where things will be different, and this is a major theme of
Sólarljóð in particular.61

The Bible, addressing the worldly as adulterers and adulteresses, asks “know
ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever

61 Bjarne Fidjestøl, Sólarljóð (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 40.
therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jas 4:4). Therefore, to be a friend of God, one should be an enemy of the world. Although humans must live in the world, that world must always remain an enemy and should never be trusted, for it will always prove false. Only God is true. If this lesson was not obvious from the beginning of the narrative of Sörli and Vigúlf, it is because we have been fooled by our enemy the world into thinking the world to be the stage upon which the important action was taking place. We have been tricked into applying a worldly standard. A truly good Christian probably would not have been fooled into thinking for a moment that it was Sörli being punished for trusting an enemy. With a little consideration of the matter, anyone with a Christian background can take Vigúlf’s punishment—though never actually depicted—as a warning not to trust the standards of the world. The only potential problem here might be for a supposed pagan audience trying to apply examples from the visible world to gain a knowledge of an unfamiliar Christian world view. This example seems to presuppose a reasonable knowledge of Christian dogma.

6.7. The Seven Counsels.

Upon the conclusion of the narrative of Sörli and Vigúlf, Sólarljóð returns to its pattern of using as an interlude a stanza filled with gnomic advice. Now, however, there are several such stanzas, and the tone is somewhat less aphoristic. There are fewer statements of sweeping applicability to ‘all’, ‘most’, or ‘no one’, and fewer applications that are similarly suitable ‘often’, ‘always’ or ‘never’. The advice given is often as personal as it is proverbial, with the narrator making his own presence more clearly known than before.

There are eight of these non-narrative stanzas, with the last of them, stanza thirty-two, announcing that seven friendly counsels have been delivered. Despite the medieval love of enumerated lists, the counsels are identified only at the end, as being seven in sum. Although there have been many attempts at identifying precisely seven rules of Christian dogma here, it appears that the organization is much looser, with each stanza being counted as a counsel, regardless of its actual content. With the enumeration delayed until the end, the narrator can hardly be expecting his son to be ticking off counsels as they are delivered.
In content, the seven counseling stanzas are quite varied and sometimes difficult to fit even under Sólarljóð’s primary theme of being prepared for death. They should, perhaps, be viewed principally as a part of the poem’s frame. It is here that the narrator’s ek, having first intruded into the previous stanza (Sól. 24.5), begins to make itself a part of the work. These stanzas consist of bits of advice clearly delivered from an ek to a thér. The section, taken by itself, belongs to the clearly recognizable and popular genre of gnomic poetry, in which the most common framework was that of a father advising his son. Since Sólarljóð as a whole is delivered by a deceased father to his son, it is not surprising that this father would want to give his heir the same sort of assistance that other fathers traditionally gave their sons. Hence, the establishment of the father-son relationship, and a demonstration of the father’s instructive affection for his child may be as important as the actual advice given.

Stanza 25

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Díjse bid thu thier</td>
<td>Disir bíd thú thér</td>
<td>Ask the ladies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drottins mála</td>
<td>Dróttins mála</td>
<td>of the Lord’s pleadings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vera hollar í hugum,</td>
<td>vera hollar í hugum</td>
<td>to be gracious to you in temper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viku epter</td>
<td>viku eptir</td>
<td>after a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mun thier vilia thijns,</td>
<td>mun thér vilja thínns</td>
<td>all of your joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allt ad oskum62 ganga:</td>
<td>allt at óskum ganga,63</td>
<td>shall go according to wish.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The twenty-fifth stanza is especially difficult to interpret, if only because it seems too simple, too theologically naive. It seems to guarantee an answer to prayer within seven days, something few Christians would venture to promise under any circumstances. A simple recommendation of prayer also departs rather radically from the general theme thus far, the theme of avoiding sin to ensure a place in heaven after death. However, prayer is certainly a virtue and it is also dealt with in later stanzas as well, so it cannot be completely out of place here.

62 The word audnu is written above oskum# in later ink.
63 AM 166b 80 has gá for ganga.
The first word of the stanza, *dísir*, is best known in application to Germanic female spirits of pre-Christian conception, and the use of the term here in a Christian poem has caused a good deal of confusion. However, by the time of the first printed edition of *Sólarljóð* in 1789, the problem had been mostly solved, with these mysterious ladies still called *divas*, but with all the parts to the puzzle as well identified as they have been to date, even if the editor had to admit to not knowing how they all fit together. The *dísir* were imagined as minor female deities such as those (among others) venerated in cults surrounding early Christian saints. A simpler solution, of course, is simply to equate the *dísir* directly with female saints.

The *dísir* of *Sólarljóð* are clearly conceived of as Christian beings, since they are “*dísir Dróttins mála,“ or the *dísir* of the Lord’s words. The usual image proposed has been one of heavenly handmaidens of one sort or another in conversation with God. The state of the art in interpretation of this stanza was probably already achieved back in 1805 by James Beresford, who, perhaps guided by his training as a minister, retranslated the Latin *divas* into English as “saintly maids.” Most recently, Njörður Njarðvík calls the *dísir* “de feer eller älvor som talar till Gud, sanctæ virgines, de heliga jungfrurna, som man tänkte sig fanns i Guds närhet och till honom framförde människornas böner.” Although he cites Falk, Paasche and Ølsen for considering the *dísir* to be *sanctae virgines*, or holy virgins, his own equation of *sanctae virgines* with “fairies” or “elves” is a novelty that doesn’t seem worthy of consideration. But it is not at all hard to imagine *sanctae virgines* (in the usual sense) to be in God’s presence and to deliver to him the prayers of mortals.

In the cosmology of *Sólarljóð*, female saints could well have been imagined to be in the presence of God by virtue of their holiness. Although less orthodox,

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64 Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787) 1:364.

65 James Beresford, The Song of the Sun (London: Johnson, 1805) 35.

virgins could also have been seen to merit such a position by virtue of their purity. The distinction may have provided grounds for discussion and commentary among members of the originally intended audience for Sólarljóð, but it does not seem essential to the current interpretation. Assuming the dísr to be in God’s presence, there are still some theological difficulties with the idea of these spirits being in conversation with God, as though they were part of some heavenly discussion group. It might be easier to conceive of the holy women as dísr of the Lord’s Word, thus simply placing them within God’s court or making them his representatives. However, this does violence to the sense of mála, if for no other reason than that mál is in the plural, referring rather to speeches than to a concept like the Word. These do not appear to be women passing on God’s message to mankind as though they were some sort of female angels.

What is most important and clear about these dísr is that they may be petitioned to show favor to mortals. From their function they can be more clearly identified, for it is the Virgin Mary and the saints who serve as intermediaries between humans and God. To these may doubtless be added Christian virgins, and perhaps even those women murdered in innocence, since Sólarljóð seems, like some other medieval sources (e.g. Mechthild, above pg.), to accord these the rights of martyrs. What should be clear from the function of the dísr as intermediaries, is that they deliver petitions to the Lord. It is not the Lord who speaks through them. Therefore, “Dróttins mála” would be the words or speeches delivered by the Disir to the Lord, and not words addressed by the Lord to others.

The situation here does not resemble a heavenly gathering of friends engaged in conversation with their lord so much as it resembles a court of law. The dísr are, in the manner of lawyers, delivering petitions to the supreme judge. It is to the dísr that mortals must pray, because it is the dísr who have the necessary standing to be heard by God. The mála of Sól. 25.2 are lawsuits or petitions. They are the formal cases presented to the Lord by the dísr as intermediaries of mortals.

Sólarljóð says that one should pray to the holy females of heaven, so that they will be generous. That is, they must be requested and persuaded to intercede
with God on one's behalf. After a week, the poem continues, one will get
one's desire. The message of this second helming has received little attention
because it seems to be quite clear. It simply restates the "Ask, and it shall be
given you" of the Bible (Matt 7:7). The promise that prayers will be answered
in a week has raised some eyebrows, but has inspired no particular
controversy. If, however, Sólarljóð is at all unified thematically, it seems
extremely odd that one would now be advised to pray in order to receive
earthly desires. Until this point, Sólarljóð has been very consistent in
demanding a contemptus mundi and the rejection of any earthly desires.

The resolution of this seeming difficulty is really quite simple, because
Sólarljóð does indeed continue to focus on death and on the eternal life of the
soul to come. "Vilja thíns" of Sól. 25.5 is not the sinful earthly desire of an
Unnarr or a Véboði or a Skarðhedin. The desire spoken of is the desire of the
Christian for salvation. The vilja in this stanza is the desire for heaven, or
indeed, heaven itself, the same metanomous joy as the fógnud into which
Sørlí's soul ascended (Sól. 24.3). The dísir are not to be asked for trivial
earthly pleasures. Sólarljóð recommends that they be asked to intercede
before Almighty God and mediate on the soul's behalf. This is the primary
reason for any Catholic to pray for intercession by the Virgin or saints.

Sólarljóð continues to emphasize the fate of the soul after death. Through
the intercession of dísir, God's purgation of the soul may be made less
onerous. This is what one should pray for during life. Of course, there are
limits. There would be no use in praying for a soul that has been condemned
to hell, for example. Likewise, the strange reference in Sólarljóð 25.4 to "viku
eptir" may imply that some brief time must be spent in purgatory no matter
what, perhaps to purge original sin, forgiven sins, or simply to await
doomsday. The phrase is translated by Guðmundur Magnæus as "tempore
postero,"\(^{67}\) which makes it very tempting to suppose that the "week" of
Sólarljóð was, in fact, a translation or interpretation of tempus from some
Latin source. Although the biblical tempus is usually translated as "year"
rather than "week," vika may have been chosen to emphasize the brevity of

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\(^{67}\) Edda Saxmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols.
(Havniæ, 1787) 1:364.
the purgatorial period. It is certain that the number seven is important to the author of Sólarrjóð, and a week, of course, consists of seven days. With or without an influence from Latin, the week's period may be taken as something less than literal, since, after all, time presumably has a different meaning after death.

Ultimately, should the dísir be gracious, bliss will be attained, as all goes according to wish. The soul will speed to its heavenly reward. Prayer is thus something someone can do before death to improve one's hope for eternal life after death. Thus, under this interpretation, the versification of the twenty-fifth stanza made by Beresford nearly two hundred years ago was quite near the mark.

With lowly vows you Saintly Maids implore
To raise thy soul in colloquies divine:
Thence, with revolving time, in happiest hour
Accored, shall the hallow'd wish be thine.68

Although Beresford made a translation of a translation of an aberrant manuscript reading, and seemed to value flowery language (here relatively restrained) over any sort of accuracy, he was nevertheless able to correctly identify the dísir as saintly maids, the sanctae virgines, and to identify the purpose of the prayer as raising the soul. In stanza twenty-five Sólarrjóð advises the son of its narrator to pray to the heavenly women who can intercede with the Lord on behalf of the soul. Should these prove generous as requested, they will argue for an expeditious exaltation of the soul after death, and it will be granted by God. The proper purpose of life is to make arrangements for eternity.

68 James Beresford, The Song of the Sun (London: Johnson, 1805) 35.
Stanza 26

Reiðiverk  Reiðiverk  For works of wrath
thu thu69 vnrid hefur,  thau thú unnit hefr  that you have wrought
bæt thu eie jllu yfer:  bœt thú ei illu yfir.  don’t offer extra ill.
grættanv gala  Grættan göala  Console the crier
skalltu med godum hlutum;  skaltu med göðum hlutum;  with something good;
that Sálu sama:  that70 sálu sama.  that will suit the soul.

Stanza twenty-six again gives advice on how to act in the world, though retaining its ultimate focus on the good of the soul and, hence, its fortunes after death. The message is more worldly, inasmuch as it addresses interpersonal relationships rather than prayer and the health only of one’s own soul. This stanza is aimed at acts committed in anger. In this it parallels gnomic advice commonly given elsewhere, except that such advice usually applies to words spoken in anger rather than to concrete acts. Sólarljóð gives no solid hints as to what sort of acts it is referring to. The important aspect seems to be the harm these acts do to other people. It is clear, at least, that these acts leave behind them someone to weep.

It is interesting that Sólarljóð speaks against reiðiverk ‘works of wrath’ and not sins or evil deeds generally. It seems as though the warning is addressed to someone who would not willingly commit sin or evil deeds, if not for the somewhat mitigating circumstance of anger. Surely the father would not attribute intentional sins to his beloved son. However, since anger is itself one of the mortal sins, it is probably more deleterious to the soul than any actual act committed under its influence. The one who commits a reiðiverk is clearly in a serious state of sin. And yet, is not also God wrathful against sinners?

69 A superior 2 is written over thu and a 1 over thau in later ink to indicate transposition.

70 The first edition supplied kvéða following that; it is not in any of the oldest manuscripts.
Sólarljóð is, as usual, rather ambiguous about all the details of the case it is trying to make. One having done something in anger, perhaps even justified anger, is to make reparation. The reparation is to be made not to God, but to the person injured. While this may turn thoughts to wergeld and the like, the focus here is very definitely psychological and religious rather than legalistic. The main warning is that of line three, not to make reparation for an evil action with further evil actions. Having made a mistake because of the sin of anger, one must avoid the all-too-human tendency to then deny the error and blame the injured party for the entire affair. As it does so often, Sólarljóð is once more giving the dim outlines of circumstances that can be filled in with great detail and brilliant color by anyone who has lived on earth and gained some experience with human nature. There is hardly any limit to the additional evils one can do to someone who was injured in a previous fit of anger. When the anger passes, the mistake becomes clear, but few can admit they made such a mistake.

Sólarljóð says to offer redress to the injured. This naturally involves first admitting the fact of the injury to oneself and confessing the guilt for it. The repayment to the victim here very much parallels the contrition due for any sin, except that redress is more difficult to make to God. Sólarljóð again seems to be functioning on parallel earthly and spiritual levels. In either realm the lesson is to make payment for sin rather than to multiply an old sin through the commission of new ones.

The second helming turns to the means by which a sin can be repaid. It suggests comforting the injured person by giving good things. There is no suggestion as to what these things might be. Although worldly reparation payments immediately spring to mind, there is no reason why psychological or emotional consolation itself might not be included among the things that comfort. The poem specifically suggests “good things,” with a possible moral value implied in addition or even contrast to monetary value. The good things to be given no doubt depend on the sort of injury caused.

The ever-significant final line of the stanza turns away from the victim and the injury he or she has been caused, and returns to the one being advised. The purpose of whatever good is done in payment for the angry action is
ultimately selfish. The one crying is to be soothed for the sake of the soul. To be sure, this line could apply to the soul of the injured party, but this is not likely. The idea of the injured party’s soul itself being soothed and comforted sounds quite reasonable, but only in a very modern sense of the soul as a human’s emotional nature. In Sólarljóð the only soul is the immortal spiritual essence that can only be comforted through the union with God in heaven.

The father advises his son to look after his own soul, and take an action that befits it. It must be assumed that it is the nature of a Christian’s soul to desire good rather than evil. Correcting a sinful action thus contributes to the restoration of the soul’s natural balance and health. Furthermore, repaying an evil action with good helps to remove a blot on the soul. While it is only God who can ultimately forgive a sin, restoration of the injured victim is at least evidence of the required remorse. Perhaps most important is the warning not to use the earlier sin as an excuse to commit more sins. Sooner or later all sins will have to be paid for, not to the victims, but to God in the afterlife. The focus of Sólarljóð always returns to death and the fate to be met thereafter. Attention must be paid to the soul.

Stanza 27

A gud skaltu heita
til gödra hluta,
thanu er hefer skatna
skapad:
Mioq fyrr verðr
manna húr,
er sier finna fódur,

Á Guð skaltu heita
til göðra hluta
thanu er hestar skatna
skapad
mjók fyrrir verðr
manna hvern
er seinar71 finna fódur.

On God you shall call
for good things
on him who created men.
Much suffering befalls
to every man
who delays in finding the
father.

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71 Seinar was originally Bugge’s emendation, but it has become traditional. It is not supported by the manuscripts, but seinir is frequent in later ones. Like LBS 1199, 40, the oldest manuscripts have sér in this location, but it is usually followed by fjóna instead of finna. See Njörður Njarðvík, Solsängen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 33.
The twenty-seventh stanza returns to the idea of prayer that was discussed in stanza twenty-five. Larrington noted that the “gódra hluta” of line two links this stanza to the one directly preceding as well, but in the light of the probable corruption of at least the last line of this stanza, such a repetition is somewhat suspicious. Nevertheless, it poses no problems and suits the context well, while providing a possible reason for this stanza and not some other to occupy this location.

In this stanza the father advises his son to call on God, or to invoke him, for good things. This time the prayer seems to be directed at gaining advantage in this world, and not only the next. The good things appear to be material benefits, but the qualifying adjective could again imply that it is only the morally good things for which one should petition God. Falk also argues that this refers to the spiritual good of the soul. It is also interesting that there seems to be no need for dísir to mediate this sort of prayer. After all, prayers regarding the fate of the soul can best be offered by someone else after one’s own death, while prayers regarding matters affecting mundane life can be offered directly.

The reference to God as creator is particularly important. It is, of course, quite common to refer to God as the Creator. This is particularly true in missionary contexts, since God is most evident through his creations. It does not therefore follow, however, that Sólarljóð is a missionary work. At this location in the poem, God is referred to not as creator of the universe, but as the creator of men. The purpose is surely to emphasize the link between God and mankind, to provide a strong reason for believing God answers prayer. If God has created men, he must then care about them and be interested in their welfare. He would thus be likely to listen to prayer and respond to it favorably.

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73 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 16.
Another reason for referring to God as men’s creator is to provide a reason for backtracking somewhat on the theme of contemptus mundi. The prayers referred to here are almost certainly prayers for the good things of this world of mortals. The world may be a prison of the soul as it awaits freedom in death, but it was still made by God and therefore cannot be entirely evil. Like woman, who was created purely (Sól. 10.6), the world cannot be condemned outright. It is God’s creation and serves God’s purposes. But again like woman, the world was made to lead men astray, and loving it too much is likely to lead to perdition. Despite its focus on death, Sólarljóð has good things to say about the world. Life is not bad; it is simply to be lived in a Christian manner, always looking forward to eternity.

In the last analysis, the initial helming of this stanza is quite neutral. It says that one may petition God for good things. God is thus shown to have a gracious relationship towards mankind. Good things are shown to come from God. On the other hand, this may be interpreted as a grant exclusively of morally good things, and that God should not be petitioned for things related only to worldly comfort.

The second helming is likewise pregnant with ambiguity. The reading that follows most closely upon the first helming emphasizes that the person who does not pray (for good things) is at a disadvantage compared to one who does pray. One misses out on what prayer can provide. One encounters obstacles, hindrance, suffering or injury that could have been prevented by the Heavenly Father having answered a prayer directed to him. Life is easier to live when God gives his assistance. Through prayer one may be granted a needed material benefit, or on a spiritual level, one may be relieved of temptations or simply be given a proper Christian perspective on the trials of this world. As long as one is removed from God, one is not able to gain the benefits of prayer. The sooner one finds God, the sooner one is able to pray for good things and receive them.

Another reading, though not at all incompatible with the first one, relates this helming back to the story of the greppr and the gestr. In that example the greppr found the father, but did so very late. He allowed God into his heart for the first time only in what were to be the final few hours of his life. His
first prayer to God was made with his last dying breath, or almost. This was a prayer to God for something good. He prayed to God to help him (Sól. 6.1–2), and this prayer was answered not by the gift of the mortal life presumably requested, but by the much better gift of eternal life with God (Sól. 7.5–6). This was a good thing.

The alternative to this situation, however, is horrible to imagine. Had the greppr delayed just one more day in finding the Father, he would not have made his prayer, and he would not have died a Christian. The innocence of his dying blood could never have compensated for his heathendom, and he would have been denied the joys of heaven. His sinful nonChristian life would have ensured for him the eternal torments of Hell. This helming is a warning not to delay finding God, because death can come at any time and put an end to the possibility of salvation.

Although this interpretation is the one most directly focused on death, an intermediate interpretation more applicable to the average person is also possible. The greppr’s dramatic salvation was a special case, although it demonstrates that the power of prayer should not be underestimated. Most people, however, cannot be expected to be granted a martyr’s death and immediate exaltation into heaven. For them the travails of purgatory await after death.

The person who has not found the Father, or who hates the Father (or perhaps his representative, the narrating father) as the manuscript AM 166b, 80, and others would have it, is more likely to commit sin than is one who has found the father. Indeed, no sin could be so bad as the simple turning away from God, and failing to find him. Each day involves the accumulation of new sins, much like the greppr must have murdered more and more wayfarers with the passage of time. Each new sin will require further purgation after death. Finding the father means becoming a Christian and thereby discontinuing the worst of sins. It presumably also means a reduction in the number of lesser sins committed, simply by virtue of leading a Christian life. But as suggested by the first helming of this stanza, finding God also means the possibility of praying to him for the forgiveness of sins. If one is to pray for good things, what better thing could there be to pray for than
forgiveness? The only thing better would be the overcoming of any temptation to sin at all. After death, in purgatory, much pain and distress could be saved by having committed fewer sins and by having had more of them forgiven. The person who is late in finding the Father, and slack in offering prayer will have more unforgiven sins to be purged after death, and will face more suffering.

Stanza twenty-seven advises one to pray to God for good things, and warns that hardships await anyone who is late in finding the Father. Both of these messages indicate that prayer (which presupposes finding the Father) can make life easier. They can also be read as affirming that prayer and finding the Father can make one’s condition after death easier as well. Finding the Father too late could result in eternal damnation. Finding him earlier can mean the commission of fewer sins. Prayer can result in fewer temptations and the forgiveness of sins already committed. Fewer sins, especially unforgiven sins, could reduce the travails of purgatory. The advice of the father in stanza twenty-seven may not have been specifically aimed towards death, but if it is examined in the context of a poem directed at death, it is easy to see how following that advice during life could help the soul after death.

**Stanza 28**

Āsta thiker 

einkum vandlega,
theiss er thiker vant vera,
alls á vîn verðr,
sá er enskis bidr,
fâr higgr theigande thórf,

Æsta dugir\(^{74}\) 
einkum vandliga
theiss er thykkir vant vera.
Alls án\(^{75}\) verðr
sá er enskis bidr.
Fâr higgr theganda thórf.

It aids to ask especially exactly for what there seems to be want. Lacking all will be the one who nothing at all requests. Few heed the need of the mute.

Stanza twenty-eight presents some special textual problems. The only line that seems absolutely clear is the last one, “fâr higgr theganda thórf,” or “few consider the need of the silent” (Sól. 28.6), but with this meaning clear,

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\(^{74}\) Since Bugge, almost all editions emend this to *dugir*.

\(^{75}\) This emendation first by P. A. Munch, *Den ældre Edda* (Christiania: Malling, 1847) 180.
everything else falls nicely into place. Bugge emended the first line to read "Æsta dugir,"76 thereby eliminating the awkward tiykkir that is repeated in the third line. The original author of Sólarið is not likely to have used this same word twice, and duga ‘to help’ fits the stanza well as it has been understood. However, as Njarðvík pointed out, there is no basis for this emendation in the manuscripts.77

The manuscripts show a wide variety of readings in the fourth line of this stanza. Guðmundur Magnússon settled on a conjectural “Alls ání verthr” for the first edition of Sólarið.78 Bugge later emended the line to read “alls án æ verðr,”79 starting a tradition which has its latest manifestation in Fidjestøl’s “als án verðr.”80 The primary manuscript, AM 166b, 80, has a rather different “als a væl verdr” for this line, but Njörður Njarðvík’s 1993 edition, usually based on this manuscript, returns without comment to a reading of “alls á mis verðr,”81 probably taken from Ólsen.82

It is interesting that the manuscripts LBS 1199, 40, and AM 166b, 80, which do not generally have anything extraordinary in common when one or the other departs from later editorial consensus, both insert a similar looking word into this line. LBS 1199, 40, shares with the usually reliable AM 738, 40, “ä vil” where the also generally reliable AM 166b, 80, has “a væl.” The manuscripts upon which Guðmundur Magnússon and Björn Ólsen based their readings all seem to be descendants from Kungl. Biblioteket MS Isl. Papp. 8:o nr. 15.

76 Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 361.
77 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 110–11.
78 Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787) 1:366.
79 Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 361.
80 Bjarne Fidjestøl, Sólarið (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 62.
81 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 110.
This parent manuscript, rarely accorded much status in recent generations, reads “ami.” The only remaining known seventeenth-century manuscript that probably does not descend from the others is the fragmentary LBS 1562, 4o. This is very closely related to Isl. Papp. 8:o nr. 15 and reads “a me.”

Assuming an earlier source manuscript that was very hard to read,83 “a vil” and “ami” could both be readings of an original “a uil,” with the three minims of u+i being read as an m by the writer of Isl. Papp 8:o, 15, and the final l being mistaken for an i. How i could be mistaken for æ (the reading of AM 166b, 8o) is unclear. There are, however, locations within Reykjavík’s LBS 1562, 4o, where the characters i and e are hard to distinguish one from the other, so the conflict between “ami” and “a me” is more likely than one might imagine.

None of the oldest manuscripts produces a clear and consistent reading of this stanza, and LBS 1199, 4o, makes more sense than most. A normalized version of the stanza from that manuscript follows. The usual emendation of a to án has been retained, although it was based originally on an “á ne” derived from the ami tradition.84 However, an archetypical án could just as easily have been changed to the actual á simply through a nasal marker having been omitted or interpreted as a length marker.

Æsta thykkir
einkum vandliga
thess er thykkir vant vera
alls án vil verðr
sá er enskis biðr
fár hyggr thegjanda thörf

It’s to be asked, it seems
epecially carefully
for that which is thought to be lacking.
Altogether unselfish is he
who not a single thing asks.
Few heed the need of the silent.

The manuscript version of this stanza puts a limitation on prayer. One should pray for what one is in need of, or for what one thinks one is in need


84 Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787) 1:366.
of, according to the Vollzeile of the first helming. But one should be very careful about this, explains the second line. Perhaps this is an admonition against inflated ritual as warned against in Matthew 6:7. But the austere life recommended by Sólarljóð generally suggests a counsel here, that one should pray for what one absolutely needs, but for absolutely nothing more. Likewise, the second thykkir suggests that one should be self-aware, and challenge one’s own ideas of what is needed. What is thought to be lacking may not correspond to an actual need. The narrative examples earlier showed the danger of the sin of luxury. One must avoid seeking the rewards of this life as Ráðny and Véboði had done. Prayer should be focused on what is needed to live a Christian life, aimed always towards temporal death and eternal life.

The gratuitous thykkir of the first line, however, calls all this into question. It is thought that one should pray for these needs, but maybe even this is too much. Maybe the general opinion is wrong. The author of Sólarljóð, and particularly the writer of LBS 1199, 40 (who had been too stern to allow forgiveness of the greppr in the first narrative) could have had a more ascetic life in mind. The second helming gives support to this idea. The one who asks for nothing is utterly without self-indulgence or willfulness, it says, at least initially. This would surely be a Christian virtue. The truly unselfish person should then pray for nothing.

The idea of being unselfish and not petitioning through prayer at all is shattered by the all-important final Vollzeile. It is a very proverbial-sounding “fár hyggr thegjanda thórf,” with the plain meaning that the squeaky wheel gets the oil. The one who is silent will be ignored, and although the previous two lines suggest that it might be a good thing to have one’s wants ignored, this powerful folk wisdom would surely have overridden any such suggestion. Unfortunately, it is precisely this last line which is the most likely one in the stanza to be inauthentic. As a proverb, the line has a life of its own, and could have been added to this location in Sólarljóð at any time during the poem’s transmission. The original author may indeed have used it to round off the idea of the stanza, but since it, in fact, does not round off any idea otherwise clear in the stanza, it probably came to fill this position
more or less by accident. That the phrase itself is not original to Sólarljóð is demonstrated by the similar passage “fát gat ec thegiandi thar” (Háv. 104.3)\(^{85}\) or “little I received while silent,” from Hávamál. Both phrases probably derived from the same popular aphorism. But no matter how few consider the need of one who doesn’t ask, it seems strange that Sólarljóð would imply that omniscient God would ignore one in need. After all, he helped save Sórlí’s soul without hearing any special prayer. The Bible as well says that “your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (Matt 6:8).

In sum, the twenty-eighth stanza as it appears in LBS 1199, 40 contains three different messages. First, it is thought (correctly or incorrectly) that one should tailor one’s prayers to one’s specific needs. Second, it shows selflessness to ask for nothing at all. Third, a need not prayed for will not be met (which may be taken as meaning a need that is prayed for will be). From this it is certain, at least, that the stanza is dealing with prayer throughout.

The consensus emended version of this stanza is easier to deal with. Adding dugir to the first line makes the statement more positive and removes most of the emphasis from “einkum vandliga”. Prayer will gain the particular thing asked for, Sólarljóð now seems to say, instead of requiring the thing requested to be especially particular. Aim prayer at whatever is needed. The idea seems to be to pray with special intensity, or perhaps with special faith, along the lines of the Bible’s “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24).

The second helming shows the alternative to the first, for the one who requests nothing will have nothing. The closing proverb is a more memorable restatement of the same idea, a negatively phrased version of the Bible’s famous “ask, and ye shall receive” (John 16:24). There is nothing in the stanza to specifically relate prayer unambiguously to the fate of the soul after death. However, this stanza twenty-eight revolves around the idea of asking, and it is stanza twenty-nine that deals with what is promised to the

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one who asks. Stanzas twenty-eight and twenty-nine, with twenty-seven as well, should be read as a unit.

Stanza 29

Síðla ek kom
Snemma ek kallaðr
Til doms Valldz dyra.
Thangat ek ætlumk
Thvít mér heitit var
Sá hefir krás er krefr.

Late I came
though early called
to the doorway of the Judge.
I plan to go there
because I was promised
he who knocks gets the goodie.

Stanza twenty-nine continues the theme of prayer and asking good things of God. The metaphor of the doorway here is a clear reference to the Bible’s “And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Luke 11:9). Once more, however, there is an emphasis not only on asking, but also on being sure to turn to God as early as possible.

The stanza begins with an autobiographical passage, with the narrator saying how he was late in coming to God’s doorway, although having been called early. This recalls stanza twenty-seven, which spoke of one who was late to find the Father (Sól. 27.4–6). The connection with the previous stanza makes it clear that coming to the doorway of God should be primarily equated with finding God, as through conversion to Christianity, or more likely through what in modern parlance would be called being born again, or accepting Christ as one’s personal savior. That the narrator had been called early shows that he had heard Christian teaching long before he made a decision to accept it and live an intentionally Christian life.

God is referred to in this stanza as Dómvaldr ‘the Judge’, or perhaps more properly stressing his awesome majesty, ‘the Wielder of Doom’. Sólarljóð will never allow us to forget that God is the judge of the soul after death, since it is the poem’s purpose to remind us just that. But the poem is always ambiguous, and capable of being read on multiple levels. At the most basic level it is best to look at this name as nothing more than a cognomen of God.
The narrator was late in coming to the doorway of God, a metonymic expression of his delay in finding God. He was late in dedicating his life to Christianity and in performing Christian works, but he must have made the decision early enough—before death—since he clearly entertains hope of heaven and looks forward to encountering God.

In the second helming the narrator expresses his intention of going “thither,” referring back to the first helming and to going to the doorway of the Judge. It seems that the metonym has shifted slightly at this point, with the doorway now referring not to God (as a metaphor of Christianity) but to heaven. Njörður P. Njarðvík perceived a discrepancy between the past-tense kom of the first line and the future intent expressed through ætlumk in line four.86 This variance has not been disturbing to any previous interpreter, and was brought forward by Njarðvík as a result of his misreading of kom as kem in the manuscript AM166b, 80.87 There is, in fact, a chronological shift in the narrative from the time in the past when or before the narrator lived as a Christian, through his death, to a sequence of travels through the afterlife and a future hope of heaven or the Second Resurrection. The narrator may be living in eternity now, but a sequential chronology is clear to the mortal audience.

The second helming expresses the narrator’s plan to go to the doorway of the Judge. He plans to go thangad ‘thither’, with the doorway as his immediate goal. There is nothing said directly about going through the door, for entry still depends on the decision of the Judge. God alone determines whether a human being may enter heaven, and his function as the pronouncer of the final doom at the Last Judgment is stressed through the name Dómvald. Nevertheless, the narrator has been promised entry by the Bible and the Church. The use of the word krefr in line six, when combined with dyra from line three, gives an idea of knocking at the door (krefja dura) that is strongly reminiscent of the promise of Luke 11:9 or Matt 7:7.

86 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 111.

87 See the description of AM166b, 80, in the chapter on manuscripts, supra, p. 141.
A knock at God’s door should result in it being opened, according to the promise made. However, at the same time the author of Sólarljóð presents us with the image of the Bible’s wayfarer knocking at a humble door, we are also shown the portal of heaven where Christians can expect to meet the Supreme Judge. The word used (dyra) is plural, indicating not a door, but a doorway—the gates of heaven. The final goal of heaven is prominent at all times. The concluding line of the stanza is once more proverbial, with its “he who” formula, and application beyond the case at hand. It has as much secular application as the “fár hyggr thegjanda thörf” or “Few heed the need of the silent” of the previous stanza. That same message is repeated, but now no longer phrased as a negative. The one who craves or claims dainties, says stanza twenty-nine, shall get them.

The key requirement in the stanza as a whole, however, seems to be neither demand nor request so much as expectation. The Christian has been given a promise to rely on. God can be trusted to deliver delicacies in the end. The imagery reflects the common medieval view of heaven as the place where one will get enough to eat. Yet in heaven there is not only abundance, but even the choicest tidbits are available to the Christian who has left the temporal world behind and passed on into eternity.

But beyond the food metaphor, what can one expect to find in heaven? The goodie to be found in heaven is surely the góðr hlutr of stanza 27.2. When Christ said “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matt 7:7), he had divine gifts in mind. He said, “If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matt 7:11). In the equivalent passage from the book of Luke, the good things given mortal children are compared specifically to God’s gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). What exactly the author of Sólarljóð has in mind beyond the heavenly joy referred to in previous stanzas is not really made clear.

The deceased father of Sólarljóð expects to see the gates of heaven, knock on them, and be given entrance to a place where he will have the delicacy—the best very part, the very best thing. The ultimate expectation must be for the
fulfillment of the primary promise made by Christianity, that of eternal life. Perhaps there is a view of the gift of the Holy Spirit as the beatific vision. Once again, the ambiguity of Sölarljóð has left a question open for instructional discussion.

It is most interesting that the narrator speaks of heaven as a future promise, someplace he will go and be given entry as though for the first time. Paasche suggested that the father had, in fact, been face to face with the Judge before coming back to the land of the living, and that he now expects to return and enter heaven.\textsuperscript{88} It is possible that he has seen heaven, or at least its portals, and plans to return there after the meeting with his son has ended. It is also quite possible that the proper "home" of the father is currently in purgatory, and that heaven—or the New Jerusalem—will not properly be entered until after the Last Judgment. At this point in the poem, the audience has no reason to suspect that the narrator is anything but one living mortal giving advice to another, though with the father-son relationship perhaps assumed from literary tradition. The immediate assumption would be that the narrator is looking ahead to his own death.

\textbf{Stanza 30}

\begin{tabular}{lll}
Synder thui valda & Syndir thví valda & Sins are the reason \\
ad vier hriggver forum & at vérd hríggrvér forum & we grieve to go \\
ægis heim wr: & ögisheimi ór. & beyond this present world. \\
Eingeottast & Engi öttast & No one fears \\
nema illt giöre, & nema iltt geri. & unless he does evil. \\
Gott er Vamnalausum vera: & Gott er vammalausum vera. & It's good to be without blemish.
\end{tabular}

The narrator's apparent anticipation of death followed by heaven begins to look more imminent as he begins speaking of leaving the mortal world in stanza thirty. He speaks here in the first person plural, incorporating not only the son being addressed, but all mankind—anyone, at least, who is sad to die. Sorrow at leaving a pleasant life, combined with a fear of the unknown

\textsuperscript{88} Fredrik Paasche, \textit{Hedenskap og Kristendom} (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 178.
future are the emotions typically shared by any mortal contemplating death. The author of Sólarljóð has addressed both aspects in stanza thirty.

It is assumed that we all grieve to depart from the world we live in. Sadness is the usual state with which death is approached, but of course this is not the proper view for a Christian. It is probably, in fact, a sinful view, for it demonstrates too high a value being put on the world and life in it, as well as too low a value being put on the promise of heaven. By now the audience of Sólarljóð should know that the world is to be held in contempt. The word used here for the world, the poetic Ægisheimi, meaning nothing more than the world we live in, was probably also seen to contain the element Ægr or ‘terrible’. The author thus reminds us that we are leaving a world that really is to be feared. Love for the world could cost us eternal life.

The prospect of death probably arouses fear more than sorrow, but this emotion is also inappropriate for a Christian. Only through death in this world can one cash in on the promise of eternal life to be offered in the next. The only death to be feared is the death or loss of the soul. This occurs as punishment for sins, and so sins provide the real reason to fear death.

Being either sad or fearful to leave the world is un-Christian, if not sinful. But it is not an abstract state of sin being addressed in this stanza. Sins are spoken of in the plural, as if the result of particular actions (Sól. 30.1). Original sin does not seem to be a deciding factor here at all, for it is said that no one is afraid unless he do evil. Specific sinful acts are clearly contemplated. The final Vollzeile summarizes this idea with its proverbial universality. “Gott er vammalausum vera” (Sól. 30.6), it pays to be without blemish, free of the stains of sin.

This is a very straightforward, uncomplicated stanza with a clear message, the same message found throughout Sólarljóð. There is no reason to fear death or be sad about dying. Death should be dreaded only by the sinner. The person who is without blemish, without blame, can look forward to eternal reward. Death, the leaving of this world, is only the threshold to eternal life.
Stanza 31

Vl reflux linger,
thilkia vera, aller their
se[m eiga hverfann] hug:
so mun Gefast theim,
er gänga thær\(^{89}\)
glædu Gótur:

Úlfum líkir
thykka allir their\(^{90}\)
se[m eiga hverfan] hug
svá mun gefast
theim er gänga skal\(^{91}\)
thær hinar glædu gótur

Like wolves
one thinks all those to be
who have a wily will.
So shall be shown
to those who will walk
those red-hot glowing ways.

A promise was made that the one knocking at the gates of heaven would be allowed entry. That was the subject discussed in stanzas twenty-seven through thirty, and particularly in stanza twenty-nine. Stanza thirty-one continues the same idea, but showing the other side of the agreement. The one knocking on the Judge’s door is expected to keep a reciprocal promise to his Lord as well. This promise is nowhere discussed, probably because it is felt to be too obvious to need explanation. But the one claiming the Lord’s promise is expected to promise and maintain Christian fealty in return for the promise of eternal life.

Those who do not keep their side of the bargain are compared to wolves. The simile is apt, given the tendency of wolves sometimes to turn on the members of their own pack. Yet ulfr is surely used here more in its figurative sense of ‘enemy,’ since wolves are not generally subjected to torture in the way that enemies so often are. The torture would not show one to be a wolf, though it would be a very reliable indication that one was considered an enemy of the one administering that torture. The Christian is the friend of Christ, and as Christ said, “He that is not with me is against me” (Matt 12:30). An adversarial relationship exists between Christians and non-Christians, with only the true Christians being promised the gift of eternal life.

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\(^{89}\) The word hinar is added above the line in a later hand, with a caret after thær.

\(^{90}\) Most manuscripts omit vera, thereby improving meter.

\(^{91}\) The presence or absence of skal in this line appears to define separate manuscript traditions, with more variants in the final line.
All those with unfaithful hearts or fickle minds are reckoned enemies of God. The “hverfr hugr” seems clearly to apply to the treachery of apostates. It is vacillating, unreliable Christianity condemned as wolf-like. Guðmundur Magnússon⁹² and later Fredrik Paasche⁹³ suggested that the wolves referred to here were the wolf-like false prophets in sheep’s clothing of Matt 7:15–19. False prophets may be dangerous, but they seem to be reliably dangerous, and lacking in the shifting loyalty or “hverfr hugr” of the apostate Christian. The false prophet has made no promise to the Lord, but only pretends Christianity. The apostate, however, has promised to be faithful to his Lord, but has then turned traitor. Whatever the punishment of false prophets, disloyally minded apostates will be exposed as God’s enemies, through punishment after death.

The second helming describes the punishment for inconstant Christians. These will be condemned to walk paths glowing with heat, presumably in hell. This is said to have the instructional purpose of showing the ones so punished that they are wolf-like—the enemies of God. Even to a generous and merciful God, promises must be kept. There is no terse proverbial conclusion to this stanza as to those immediately preceding, perhaps because the punishment described cannot be so easily generalized and made universal. The idea of heat in hell, and of a glowing like coals is not particularly novel, but perhaps the punishment does fit the crime. The wolf who turned towards God and then turned away will spend eternity turning first one direction and then another, always in a futile attempt to find someplace to pause without pain. The sins of this world will be punished in the next, just as the one who is without sin can expect substantial reward. Life in this world sets the stage for eternal life after death.

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⁹² Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniae, 1787) 1:368.

⁹³ Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 178.
Stanza 32

Vinsamleg ráð  
og vite bundin, 
kenne eg thier sío saman. 
Gjörla thu mun, 
oc glata alldre, 
öll eru thau Nyt ad nema:

Vinsamlig ráð  
ok viti bundin 
keni ek thér sjau saman 
görla thau mun 
ok glata aldri 
öll eru thau nyt at nema

Friendly counsels 
and wisely collected 
I taught you seven together. 
Remember them fully 
and lose them never. 
They all are useful to learn.

The seven counsels are concluded by a stanza that tells the audience seven counsels have been imparted. There has been no enumeration of specific rules in the poem before now, and no post hoc calculation by modern scholars has produced convincing results. Njarðvík has made the most recent attempt at specifying a list of seven maxims, but while his differs from Falk’s earlier list, it can’t be aid to have improved on it. The seven counsels most likely respond simply to the seven stanzas preceding the thirty-second, regardless of the internal duplications, for example, of the advice to pray. After all, it was a slightly different aspect of the soul’s welfare after death involved in each of the stanzas relevant to prayer.

The advice given is called friendly counsels, “vinsamlig ráð,” much like the “átsamlig ráð” or affectionate counsels of Hugsvinnsmál (Hugs. 2.1), but not identical. It does seem slightly strange that a father is giving the advice of a friend, but this can probably be attributed to the demands of alliteration. On the other hand, there is nothing revealed so far, beyond the apparent authority of the speaker, to indicate that a father is speaking to his son. That is revealed only at the end. The audience is still kept in the dark about this being fatherly advice.

The most common adjective used with counsels in gnomic poetry as a whole seems to be “wise,” and not friendly or affectionate, or, indeed, fatherly. The

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94 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsängen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 113.

wisdom of Sólarljóð's advice is stressed in the second line. The counsels are "viti bundin" or "wisely bundled," a highly ambiguous phrase, but given the purpose of this stanza, it is perhaps best understood as saying that the advice has now been wrapped up. Stanza thirty-two does little more than provide a conclusion for the preceding seven stanzas of advice.

The fact that there are said to be seven counsels is significant primarily from a numerological viewpoint. The number may provide some mnemonic assistance to one reciting or copying the poem, so that no stanza is omitted. But there has been no satisfying attempt to associate the stanzas or rules therein with any numerical lists of, say, seven deadly sins or seven virtues. The function of the number seems to be mostly mystical. Falk equated the use of seven in Sólarljóð with the use of nine in Svipdagsmál and Hávamál,96 while A. T. Laugesen insists that seven is the Christian number in Sólarljóð but nine is pagan, even within the same poem.97 The number seven seems to me to simply signal mystery—there is something happening here that is somehow greater than run-of-the-mill daily speech. This is not a normal collection of old saws jumbled together in random number. Instead, this is serious advice of mystical proportion, carefully thought out. The counsels are not organized into a group of seven so much as they stand under the protection of seven as a mystical rubric showing wisdom and importance. Seven is a magical symbol, but does not seem to signify anything here beyond importance or mystery per se. Paasche notes that among the things connected with the number seven in Christianity is wisdom.98 Numerology will be discussed further here in connection with stanza 79, but whatever its function here, it is not essential to any understanding of the stanza.

The first helming of stanza thirty-two concludes with the notice that the narrator has taught his audience the seven counsels. Neither the narrator


97 Anker Teligård Laugesen, Syv-Ni-Tolv, Studier fra Sprog- og Oldtidsforskning 237 (København: Gads, 1959) 15.

nor the audience have been specified yet, of course, but both the first person and second person pronouns are used in the singular. One person is teaching another. The second helming switches the perspective and concludes with a comment about learning all the counsels taught. The process of education is thus shown as the presentation of material by the teacher to the pupil, with the pupil to learn it passively, presumably through memorization. The precepts thus learned may be applied later, however, since they are said to be of use. In fact, the difference between eternal joy and eternal perdition has already been shown to depend on practicing these precepts.

Lines five and six also show that this advice is intended to be memorized, with the warning to remember the counsels, and not forget them. This stanza contains no advice beyond this, and is thus not particularly aimed at reminding one of death and the life to come. Only the word glata, used here in the sense of 'forget,' points at all to impending death. The preceding stanzas are aimed especially at preventing the soul itself from being lost and forgotten (glatast), but by remembering and following the given advice, the soul can expect to be saved.

The primary purpose of stanza thirty-two is clearly to help establish the framework wherein an authority imparts advice. The connection of the ek speaking and a thúč spoken to reinforces the outer frame, while the statement about there being seven counsels creates an inner frame around the preceding seven stanzas. Different parts of the poem are clearly being delineated by the author of Sólarljóð and are not being left simply to later critics. Here is a section of pedagogic lecture, while the earlier part consisted of a string of narrative examples. However, the formal teaching is marked as concluding with this stanza, and while the narrator is surely continuing to teach with what follows, the formal structure changes and the content becomes far more personal.

6.8. Sólarljóð's Sun-Song

With the beginning of the thirty-third stanza of Sólarljóð there is a rather jarring break in continuity. No longer is there a stanza of proverbs to form a smooth transition from one narrative to another. Seven specific counsels
were just rounded off with their own explicit framework, and to follow that with more advice would be confusing. The mystical number seven would no longer apply. Instead of an additional gnomic stanza, a different transitional marker is used here, namely the “frá thví er at segja” so common to the sagas. This marker simply announces that something is to be said “about that.” In the sagas this phrase usually precedes a digression from the previous narrative. “Frá thví er at segja” is a cue that some particular aspect is to be looked at in greater detail, usually with a change of scene. Something similar happens in Sólarljóð.

Because the change in scene at this point of Sólarljóð is prepared with only one line instead of a smooth transitional stanza of proverbs, it seems especially abrupt. This abruptness has led some scholars to believe entirely separate works to have been joined here more or less by accident. Sólarljóð now begins a visionary account told in the first person, after having just completed a section of gnomic instruction, preceded in turn by narrative examples or parables told in the third person. There is definitely a change in narrative genre. Given that finding medieval works to be conglomerates of previously independent works or fragments was once a particular scholarly fashion, it is not especially surprising that Sólarljóð should also have been divided into parts.

Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell first divided Sólarljóð into two separate poems at just this point. Here, they thought, begins the “Sun-Song.”\footnote{Guðbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, Corpus Poeticum Boreale, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1883) i:203–4.}\footnote{Finnur Jónsson, ed., Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning (København: Gyldendal, 1912): A1: 631.} With this title they meant to indicate the beginning of a new poem, the equivalent of what Finnur Jónsson called “De egenlige Sólarljóð,” except that for him “the real Sólarljóð” began earlier, with the seven counsels at stanza twenty-five.\footnote{Finnur Jónsson, ed., Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning (København: Gyldendal, 1912): A1: 631.} I use the term “Sun-Song” here not to refer to a separate poem, but to designate the central section of a Sólarljóð seen as a single whole. Since the central motif of this section of the poem is the setting of the sun, and since this is the part of the poem with the anaphoric “sól ek
sá" stanzas, the subtitle seems nonetheless apt. Despite the continuation of
the theme of death from the previous stanzas, stanza thirty-three does indeed
begin something new. At the beginning we were given examples of the sins
of particular mortal stereotypes and how they are rewarded after death. We
were next given advice on how to insure that our own fate after death will be
as painless as possible. In the coming section the narrator will turn to his
own personal experience with death.

Stanza 33

Fra thví er at segja
huad sêl ek var,
aegis Heime i:
og hinu öðru,
hue jta syner verda,
naudgir ad náme:

Frá thví er at segja
hvé sêl ek var
ögisheimi\textsuperscript{101} i,
ok hinu öðru,
hvé yta synir
verða náudgir at námi.

About that is to tell
how happy I was
in this world
and second
how the sons of men
reluctantly happen to learn.

"Frá thví er at segja," or "about that is to say," begins stanza thirty-three. The
difficulty here is that there is no antecedent for the thví. Sólarljóð does not
now continue in order to give some form of direct explanation of the seven
counsels, for example. Instead something new is to be told about, and this
stanza is the introduction that tells what the new material will be.
Unfortunately, there are difficulties here with the text, and these have been
resolved according to each manuscript copyist's individual views on what
Sólarljóð is about.

The manuscript reading from LBS 1195, 4o, above, is the majority reading,
with very few variants. It is the variant readings, however, that have
generally been preferred by recent scholars. The most notable difference is in
line three, where AM 166b, 8o, has "indis heimi" for yndisheimi 'world of
happiness’. This variation from the usual ögisheimi 'world' was one of the
primary reasons Bugge cited for preferring AM 166b, 8o, over other

\textsuperscript{101} AM166b, 8o and recent editions read yndisheimi.
manuscripts.102 The two words should probably be read as roughly synonymous, both describing the world we live in.

There could be an idea of a world of terror associated with the word ægisheimi on the basis of etymology, but the word is common enough that it is not likely to have been seen as signifying anything but the world it denotes. In fact, any etymological associations made by the copyists of the poem seem to have been with ægir ‘ocean’, or more likely with the deity associated with the ocean. There is a rather unambiguous “Ægirs heimi” in the recent manuscript LBS 4361, 8ο, reflecting a probable tendency on the part of copyists historically to make mysterious and pagan whatever possible in Sólarljóð.

Be that as it may, ægisheimr is a common (if poetic) word meaning ‘world’, and it can therefore be seen why it might have replaced a more unique coinage like yndisheimr during manuscript transmission. Using such a term as yndisheimr, ‘world of delight’, could indicate the narrator’s love of the earth as a beautiful creation of God. It could also indicate his unChristian attachment to a world which should have been held in contempt. It could also, of course, be a corruption of an original ægisheimr brought about by the fact that the previous two lines explain that a state of happiness is to be described.

The word yndisheimr as ‘world of happiness or delight’ could be critical to interpretation of this stanza. This might not be a synonym for the world at all, but could refer instead to heaven. There are two things the narrator says in this stanza that he is going to tell us. The first is that he was happy somewhere. If Sólarljóð is viewed primarily as a visionary visit to heaven and hell, then the narrator was surely happy in heaven and unhappy in hell. The stanzas that immediately follow, however, show a person who is very reluctant to leave this world of mortals. Was he then simply happy in this world, and reluctant to leave it?

102 Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) XLV.
The second helming of the stanza gives little assistance in clarifying the first, because it has also been seen as corrupt. The first thing to be told about was the narrator's own happiness somewhere, and the second thing relates to the reluctance of the sons of men to do something. The manuscripts are essentially agreed in reading the last line as "verða nauðgir at námi" or "to be reluctant at learning or study." The first Sólarljóð edition found this reading absurd, and altered it to "Vertha nauðgir at nám" or "reluctantly become a corpse." 103 Some of the manuscripts have followed that reading,104 but none of these predates the nineteenth century and probable influence from the printed edition. The consensus emended version of this stanza is:

Frá thví er at segja,  
  hvé sæll ek var    
  yndisheimi í,      
  ok hinu öldru,    
  hvé yta synir     
  verða nauðgir at nám. 105

About that is to tell, 
  how happy I was    
  in the world of delight, 
  and second     
  how the sons of men  
  reluctantly become corpses.

Taken at face value, it is probably the idea of becoming a corpse that seems more absurd than learning, but this does appear to have been a reasonably common way of referring to death. Stanza seventy-one of Hávamál also uses becoming a corpse to signify death. Following this reading of the Sólarljóð stanza, the narrator says he will tell first how happy he was in the world, and second, how people are reluctant to die. In the following section of Sólarljóð the narrator certainly describes his own reluctant death. However, aside from a brief mention of apparent happiness in two stanzas, there is not anything much detailed about being happy in this world. The immediately following stanzas mention one person's apparent but false happiness on earth, and then describe in great detail a futile struggle against death.


105 Bjarne Fidjestøl, Sólarljóð. Tyding og tolkingsgrunnlag (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 64.
For those who view Sólarljóð as little more than a visionary tour of heaven and hell, however, yndisheimr could well apply to heaven, the site of bliss. Hell, then, could be a place where the damned are taught the meaning of sin. The narrator would have seen happiness in heaven and reluctant learning in hell. This interpretation follows the manuscript reading of the last line, but otherwise has little to recommend it. First, it isn’t clear that the narrator actually visits heaven himself. He doesn’t, at least, get to participate personally in any happiness there. Second, although hellish punishments are described in Sólarljóð, those who suffer them do not seem to be learning anything. The most serious objection, however, is that the tour of heavenly and hellish regions does not occur until another section of the poem, a section marked with its own “frá thví er at segja” introduction. The immediate concern of the section at hand is not with heaven and hell, but with the narrator quite strikingly becoming a corpse.

If yndisheimr thus does not refer to heaven, then it is synonymous with ægisheimr, and one manuscript reading is as good as the other. Yndisheimr has the advantage of stressing the deceptively pleasant nature of the world, something that the author is trying to bring out here. It is likely the correct reading, because the author of Sólarljóð seems to prefer stylistically to use as many different synonyms as possible to describe one sort of thing. Aside from certain precisely parallel phrases, the author avoids repeating the same terms, as can be seen, for example, in the many different synonyms used for “men” or in the rich variety of compounds made from -heimr. The word ægisheimr was used in stanza thirty and is so not likely to have been repeated in stanza thirty-three, unless (as may indeed be the case) a parallel is being drawn between the two stanzas. The yndisheimi of AM 166b, 80, does appear to be the better reading.

Likewise, the emended version of the final line could quite likely have been what the original author intended. It more clearly and concretely corresponds to the description of death following. However, the line from the actual manuscripts is far from absurd. There is a lesson being taught in Sólarljóð, and that lesson is about death. Once again, the two possible readings are essentially synonymous. The narrator will go on to demonstrate how
reluctant he was to learn the lesson that death is inevitable. And it is very important that this be seen as a lesson, for it is the same lesson he is teaching his audience. As was already explicitly stated in stanza thirty, one need only be reluctant to leave this world if one is burdened with sin. The good Christian will not overvalue any pleasures this world has to offer, for it is temporary and death is inevitable. Afterwards, one will be rewarded for the deeds of this life. The narrator was reluctant to die, or he was reluctant to learn that he was required to die. The former interpretation is more elegant, but the latter is the one that corresponds to the actual manuscripts. In any case, the message of this stanza is simply that we are going to be shown how one may be happy in the world, but how death is inevitable.

Stanza 34

Vjöl og dul  Vil ok dul  Desire and pride
tæler virdasonu,  tælir virða sonu  entrap the sons of men
tha er fykiast á fie:  þá er fíkjust á fé  when they are eager for wealth.
ljóser aurar  ljóðir aurar  Shining silver
verda ad lögum trega,  verða at lögum trega  brings to grief in the end.
margann hefur Audur apad:  margan hefr auðr apat.  Wealth has fooled a great many.

Stanza thirty-four returns once more to the gnomic approach of making general statements with universal applications. The stanza is filled with commonplace expressions with sources probably outside Sólarljóð. "Dul og vil," for example, seems to be better known with the terms reversed from their Sólarljóð position. The concluding line, of course, recalls "margr verðr aflöðrom api" from Hávamál (Háv. 75.3). The idea of the stanza is the one that will be found in any collection of wisdom, namely, that wealth is not all it seems, and greed can lead one to a bad end.

At this position in Sólarljóð no transitional stanza is particularly needed, and the proverbs seem somewhat out of place. What is expected is an account of how the narrator was happy in the world of delight. From the warnings against wealth, one gets the impression that wealth was something that gave the narrator happiness in the world. This is not clearly stated, but it seems a quite reasonable inference. Money is generally thought to buy happiness,
proverbs to the contrary notwithstanding. It is the love of money, as explained in the ever-important first Vollzeile, that lies at the root of other sins. The two sins specifically mentioned as affecting those who pursue wealth are desire and pride.

Vil is a very general word for desire, indicating the desire for money as well as carnal lust or simply concern for earthly matters at all. (The manuscript vijl, shared also with AM 166b, 80, does actually appear to have the long vowel of vil ‘misery,’ but this makes little sense in context.) Desire of any kind demonstrates precisely the worldliness that Sólarljóð is preaching against. When the world is held in the proper contempt, the desire for heaven should drive out any attractions earthly matters may otherwise have held. But desire for one thing or another can easily entrap mortals into thinking of worldly things and forgetting the eternal welfare of the soul.

Dul is generally translated as ‘pride’, that most serious of all sins, the one that makes a human turn away from God. This self-conceit or arrogant overestimation of one’s own worth was shown via the example of Ráðny and Véboði to arise especially among rich people. Njörður Njarðvík explains dul as ‘self-deceit’, inasmuch as one is deceiving oneself to believe that wealth brings happiness.\(^{106}\) Although the stanza is certainly trying to say that wealth does not bring happiness in the eternal long-run, ‘self-deceit’ seems a rather broad translation of dul. The self deception is much more likely to be that practiced by the conceited person who believes him or herself to be better than he or she really is. This person really is happy within the range of his or her own perception. Whatever the amount of wealth involved, the self-deceit is dangerous because it represents a sort of self-satisfaction with the things of the world and a consequent turning away from God and the goal of eternal salvation. The dul of stanza thirty-four is probably mostly synonymous with the ofmetnaðr of stanza fifteen (Söl. 15.1).

An eagerness for money is a sin that generates the two further sins of desire and pride. Desire is the fundamental sin of worldliness, the wishing for the

\(^{106}\) Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 114.
things that can be found in the world. Pride is this same worldliness fulfilled. It is the feeling that one has attained the desired things to be found in the world, and that they are sufficient. Pride is a feeling of perfection, a self-deceit going far beyond that of financial or other happiness.

The second helming does focus more intensely, or more unambiguously on money. Line four presents an enticing image of glistening coin, only to warn that it can bring one to grief. Like the sins of the first helming, money will entrap people and lead to their eternal destruction. It is an incontrovertible truth—proven through a wise proverb known by everyone—that wealth tricks people and makes apes of them. Wealth, as representative of all worldly values, plays one false in the long run. Only the eternal realms after death really matter to the Christian.

**Stanza 35**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gladur ad mórgu</th>
<th>Glaðr at mórgu</th>
<th>Cheerful by reason of much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>thötte eg Gummumnum vera,</td>
<td>thótt ek gumnum vera</td>
<td>I seemed to be to men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thvít ad eg vissa fátt fyr,</td>
<td>thvíat ek vissa fátt fyrir.</td>
<td>because I knew little ahead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dvalar heim</td>
<td>Dvalarheim</td>
<td>The Lord created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hefur drottinn skapad,</td>
<td>hefir Dróttinn skapat</td>
<td>this world of waiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>munafullan miðg.</td>
<td>munafullan mjök.</td>
<td>very full of delights.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stanza thirty-five begins with a pun. From the beginning, Sólaljóð has been rather playful with language, citing proverbs, for example, in new forms not quite like those in which they are usually recorded. Here the mist of ambiguity has lifted to reveal a clear intent by the author to use language in especially interesting ways. For glaðr ‘glad’ and margr ‘many’ in line one are both antonyms of fár ‘few’ or ‘depressed or reserved’ in line three. Although there is not much significance to the pun made here, it is worth noting as a stylistic characteristic of the author. The author does like to play with language without necessarily intending “an answer” to earlier works apparently misquoted.

The image drawn here is one of a happy man, apparently truly well of by the standards of this world. He has concrete reasons for being of good cheer, and
other people also see his status as happy. Given the previous stanzas, it is probably safe to assume he has financial wealth. In the Vollzeile, however, we are told that this universal perception of happiness was wrong. The narrator was mistaken. The reason for the mistake is significant—he knew too little. The purpose of Sólarljóð is to ensure that the audience of the poem becomes heir to the knowledge gained by the narrator about the afterlife to come. One who knows more about the possible future in eternity may not make the mistake of attaching too great value to happiness in this world.

The world itself has been given a descriptive name, Dvalarheim. This is the world of ‘dwelling’, but not in the current sense strictly of habitation. A dvöl is a delay, a short pause. One dwells in this world only in the original sense of the English, very temporarily. By using the name Dvalarheim, the poet has emphasized that this world, or one’s stay in it, is simply transitory and not a lasting state.

In AM 166b, 80, stanza thirty-five is attached more directly to thirty-four by an alternate reading, dular heim. This gives the idea of an entire world of conceit, with a false valuation attached to it, just as the same false dul was said to entrap individual men in the previous stanza. Since such a false valuation depends in large part on the misapprehension of the world’s permanence, the alternate reading does not produce a significantly different interpretation. Almost all manuscripts have the more elegant dvalarheim.

The world we live in, that we stay in so briefly, is admittedly attractive. It was created by God and is delightful. The author has nothing but praise for God’s creations. The world as a whole, like the women of stanza ten, can be pernicious if loved more that spiritual salvation, but they do not seem to be evil per se. Nor is there a devil described anywhere as an active agent in leading people astray. It is the world itself, with all its possible delights, whether women, wealth, or even sunny days, that tricks men into perdition. There is no evil intent clearly shown anywhere. What is clear is that by thinking of the wonders of the world one can forget the rewards and punishments of eternity. Sólarljóð teaches that the world is ephemeral. A Christian’s concern should not be with matters of the world, no matter how delightful. Instead, the focus of human striving should be on the death that
will lead to life everlasting. One must know what lies ahead to be able to act properly on earth.

Stanza 36

Lwtur eg sat leinge,  Lútr ek sat,  Bent down I lingered;
og hólludust mioc,  lengi ek hólludumk,  a long time I leaned.
var ðg tha listr ad lifa,  mjökk var ek thá lystr at lifa.  Greatly I then longed to live.
En sa ried  En sá réð,  But that one determined
sem ríkr var,  sem ríkr var:  who was powerful.
framme ero feigs gótur,  frammi eru feigs gótur.  The paths of the doomed are

In the thirty-sixth stanza the narrator seems to stand on the brink of death. The first Vollzeile emphasizes very clearly the desire of the narrator to live. There is something of a battle going on between a mortal desiring life in the first helming, and the divine fate that decides the doom of a mortal in the second helming. The narrator describes a struggle.

Since at least the first Edda edition the standard interpretation of this stanza has been that the narrator is fighting against a disease. The speaker sits bowed down by illness, and wavers long on the brink of death. This struggle against death unites the theme of hesitancy to die from stanza thirty-three (if that is the correct reading there) with the apparently long process of dying that is described in the stanzas to come.

A rather more obvious, if novel, interpretation of this helming would simply have the narrator bent with age. Lútr ‘bent down’ or ‘stooping’ describes the stereotyped image of an old man. The burden of a disease is not likely to make one sit bent over or inclined for a long time. A lengthy illness would more likely have the sufferer entirely prostrate, reclining rather than inclining. The verb sitja I interpret not in the sense of being physically seated, but in its meaning ‘to stay’ or ‘to tarry’, carrying forward the idea of dvala ‘to delay’ from dvalarheim of the previous stanza (Sól. 35.4). The narrator has

remained in this world long enough to become an old man. His disinclination to die is demonstrated through his long life. Old age shows the struggle to stay in the world has in fact been successful up to this point, but no one expects such success to last forever.

The second line seems to repeat the idea of the first, using the verb *halla*, in the reflexive 'to lean', 'incline', or 'to turn'. Perhaps the narrator’s body leans physically in much the same way as it is bent. Perhaps there is a more figurative sense, such as being inclined towards the pleasures of life, as suggested by Sólarrljóð’s first editors. More likely it is a determined leaning away from death. On the other hand, it could also describe the unwilling leaning towards a death unavoidably nearby. Benjamin Thorpe essentially places the narrator leaning first one way and then the other, "tottering" on the edge of death. The second line of the stanza is probably the figurative equivalent of the more concrete first line. Being bent with age, the narrator is leaning ever closer to the death he continually approaches, whether he will or not. Line 40.3 seems to confirm the image of a leaning into death.

The Vollzeile gives a more certain picture, in accordance with everything Sólarrljóð has said up to now, and agreeing with what is to come. The narrator was very desirous of living, it says. Most people are desirous of life, so the statement is not especially surprising. The only particularly interesting element is the thá, indicating that the narrator wanted ‘then’ to live. The clear implication is that he knows better now. The worldly focus of the once living man surely shifted towards paradise after he had died and obtained a glimpse of heavenly reality. But for now, the only hint of anything good about death is a single particle of the sort that may sometimes be inserted for reasons of meter—except that it is not necessary to the meter and nonetheless occurs in almost all manuscripts. The narrator wanted to live in the world, but he has since learned that there are more important things.

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No matter how great the desire to live in the world, it all comes to naught in the end, for mankind is mortal. The narrator tells in the second helming how the ultimate decision over life and death was not made by him. His end was determined elsewhere, by the one in authority. The one with the power settled the matter without regard to the mortal’s great desire to live.

Gudbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell emended the text to ríkrî ‘the Stronger’,\(^{110}\) and they have been followed by several editors since. This emphasizes the struggle involved, making it appear as though the dying man had some potential say in the matter but was simply overpowered in the end. As Njarðvík pointed out, there is no older manuscript evidence to support such a reading.\(^{111}\) Without the comparative form, the comparison intuitively inferred here is much more effective. “The one who was stronger” stands in opposition to one who is merely strong, while “the one who was strong” stands in opposition to one who is absolutely weak. The actual manuscript reading is much better at showing the complete impotence of a mortal being faced with death.

The time of the narrator’s death was decided by “that one who was powerful,” without any closer specification of who that one might be. This would surely be a dangerous oversight if Sólarljóð were really some sort of missionary effort, as sometimes supposed. The ríkr one with the power or authority is not even unambiguously referred to as almáttigr, the almighty God known thus far from lines 7.6 or 17.6, but the poet certainly does not confine him or herself to a single term for God. What is clear is that “sá ... sem ríkr var” (Sól. 36.4–5) is masculine. This does eliminate the possibility of the norns or of Hel. The only remaining figures that would have such power of life and death would be God, or perhaps an unlikely masculine personification of dauðr. Surely God is meant here. It was God who first decreed the mortality of man (Gen 2:17; 13:19). Death is unavoidable.


The final Vollzeile sums up this message about the unavoidability of death in a proverb, but in one that has not been entirely clear. Guðmundur Magnússon admitted that he could not understand how the first word of “framm eru feigs götur” (Söl. 36.6) functioned, and so he emended it to fram ‘onward’.\(^\text{112}\) Although some subsequent editions have followed this emendation, most follow the manuscripts and retain framm, a localized ‘out’ without a sense of motion. Translations and interpretations nonetheless continue to treat the word in this location as though it were framm. As Petersson explained it, framm is simply found sometimes instead of framm.\(^\text{113}\) There is some justification for this position in the light of the similar forms used also in line 52.4.

Njórdur Njarðvík retains the difference, stating that

\[
\text{framm} \text{ uppfattas vanligen som ‘framför’, men möjligjen kan man også tolka det så, att den dödsmärkte har nått målet för vandringen genom livet: han är framme.}\(^\text{114}\)
\]

The paths of the one doomed to death—the fay, or indeed any mortal—do lead inexorably onward toward death. In fact, it is hard to imagine anything but a single path and not plural götur, so unswervingly direct that path is. But the Sólarljóð of the manuscripts does talk of multiple paths, and it has framm with the localizing -i suffix rather than fram. The dying man, and the roads of his wandering through life, have all reached their furthest point. To closely paraphrase the translation from Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell, “the doomed man’s race is run.”\(^\text{115}\)

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\(^\text{114}\) Njórdur Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 115.

A more satisfying solution, however, may be to view the roads of the man facing death as simply lying further ahead, beyond or on the other side of death, outside this mortal world. From birth, the road of any mortal leads directly to death. Once the doom of death has been pronounced—that is, its time determined—the road of the condemned no longer leads forward. Admittedly, if we take the narrator of Sólarljóð as our example, it does still require another eight to ten stanzas from this point to actually reach the final stage of death. Nonetheless, the narrator's days as wayfarer are clearly over here. The next stanza already shows him firmly bound and any further imagery is that of sensation rather than movement, the extended aria of the fat lady after her beheading. Only after death will new paths open, paths leading in various directions. The idea of walking paths after death was already introduced in the opening examples, with the ways of glowing coals (Sól. 31.5–6) and the walking between frost and fire (Sól. 18.5–6).

In Sólarljóð death marks a distinct dividing line between this world and the next. There is not an easy transition from one world to another, a simple path to be followed as if nothing really changes. Death is shown as a barrier between worlds. The future and all-important worlds of eternity cannot be seen by the living because of this barrier of death. It is only through the rare boon of supernatural wisdom from a source such as Sólarljóð that mortals can learn anything at all of the truth beyond death.

After death the paths travelled in life do not continue. Instead, one collects the eternal reward for works performed in this world. What appears as pleasure here will be punished hereafter, and the righteousness that often causes the good to suffer here will later be eternally rewarded. The roadmap of the world has no validity outside this tiny and transitory world. This is the message of Sólarljóð. There are worlds beyond this one with new roads that will be followed through eternity. For the fey mortal the roads to travel will lie on the other side of the barrier of death, frammi, and there is no use struggling to continue traveling the old road of life.
Stanza 37

Heljar reip
kómu hardliga
sveigð at síðum mér.
Slíta ek vilda,
en thau seig váru.
Létt er lauss at fara.

The ropes of Hel came tightly
drawn about my sides.
I tried to tear
but they were tough.
Free to fare is easy.

The description of dying continues with the narrator clearly in the clutches of death. Dauðabönd was the Old Icelandic equivalent of ‘the bonds of death’, and it is actually this metaphor in use here. The poet, however, did not leave the image with a more neutral dauða, but instead chose to make the death struggle more visible and seemingly more real by unambiguously personifying the opponent. Hel can perhaps be as neutral a word for death as dauðr, but when said to be tying ropes, Hel can hardly be perceived as anything but the preChristian Hell, goddess of death and the underworld. This is Sólarljóð’s first hint at anything pagan since the use of the wordóisir to refer to clearly Christian beings in stanza twenty-five.

The significance or even extent of Hel’s heathendom is unclear. It was not Hel who determined the time of death, but she does seem to be the agent of God here in executing his sentence. At this point in Sólarljóð there is no indication that Hel has any particular connection with hell as a realm of punishment. She does not seem to be an equivalent of the devil fighting for a dead man’s soul. She is simply an especially effective literary device, death personified. She has come to transport the living man across the barrier of death. The personification lends additional horror to what is otherwise only a natural event, however unpleasant dying may seem. Like the Grim Reaper, Hel can be vividly imagined as a concrete, even palpable, source of pure mortal terror. If she has dim roots in a rather frightening time before the light of Christianity, this only makes her all the more terrible and effective. This is no mere archangel fallen on hard times, but a former goddess. Hel may now hold her dark ancestral throne only in fief, but her subjugation to the Christian God makes her no less awful an image.
The bonds of this horrid death are ropes, wrapped tightly and determinedly around the dying man. These are usually interpreted as the final illness that carries the narrator away from the land of the living. Whatever the actual cause of death, they represent death’s inescapable enveloping hold on the mortal. They are tight and tough and not to be broken. There is no fleeing death, however hard one may struggle against it or try to avoid it. Hel will always be victorious.

Once again, the final line of the stanza appears to be an attempt at summarizing the stanza. Once again, it is too ambiguous to be clearly understood as a restatement of the stanza’s content. “Létt er lauss at fara” (Sól. 37.6) is a simple tautology. Surely one is less encumbered when going without encumbrance. One is happier when free. Life is easier and more pleasant before one is in the final throes of death. But no mortal can remain free of death—Sölarljóð has already made that clear. So why does the poem restate something so obvious? Is the reference here to the status of the narrator after death? Perhaps he is speaking here of the relief he feels at having this experience behind him. The narrator could be experiencing much more pleasant situations now. The line definitely serves to raise curiosity. In this capacity it draws the audience on into the following stanza in search of greater enlightenment.

Stanza 38

Einni eg visse, Einn ek vissa Only I knew
huorsu alla vegu, hversu alla vegu how on all sides
sullu suter mier. sullu sútír mér. sorrows swelled for me.
Heliar meyar, Heljar meyar Hel’s maidens
mier hrolla budu, mér hrolla budu bade me, trembling,
heim á hvörri quóllde: heim á hverju kveldi. home every evening.

The process of dying is described by the narrator in ever greater detail. These details always remain slightly mysterious, as the procedure is one not generally known to the living. The narrator, however, has been in this situation and can tell us about it firsthand, yet in the first line he still emphasizes how personal the experience is. In death he found himself totally
isolated with no one else aware of his travails or capable of feeling what he felt. By implication, the current audience is also incapable of fully appreciating the horrors of the experience outlined here.

The narrator is clearly enveloped by death. It encroaches from all sides, like the ropes said in the previous stanza to be bound around his body. Despite the geography often outlined in Sólarlýja, here there seems to be no direction at all leading out, no way in which things may be better. The misery continues to increase, gradually crushing the life out of the narrator. What this misery is, beyond death itself, is not made explicit. The sútur complained of in line three could be a direct reference to disease, to the mortal illnesses that finally carry off the deceased. However, being plural, the word probably does not refer to any specific malady but rather to the cares, sorrows and afflictions felt while dying. Perhaps some of this grief would have been reduced had life been lived differently. Perhaps death is always this oppressive.

It is worth noting that the narrator is clearly conscious of everything that happens to him. He seems to have been transported away from the world of the living into a realm where all consciousness is directed inwardly. No wealth, pleasure, or human contact has survived as an interest. At this point there really is a true contemptus mundi. Nothing in the world matters. Everything is reduced to the one individual and his own pains or afflictions. Yet awareness never stops. The narrator will be aware of what happens to his body. He will still appreciate the world as God's creation, but all attachment to it drains away. This continuing consciousness is a good indication of the survival of the soul during and after death.

In the second helming Hel's girls, perhaps even her daughters, are introduced. They are clearly here as her agents and represent death. Perhaps these are the infernal equivalent of the disir of the Lord's words (Sól. 25.1–2). Particularly if the Lord's words are associated with the promise of eternal life, then Heljar meyar provide a clear counter through their association with death. Finnur Magnússon defined these girls as "Helæ virgines sive nymphae
(furiæ) moribundos, qvovis vespere, horride ad ejus habitacula invitant."\textsuperscript{116} Indeed, nothing more is known about them than stated in this stanza. That they are horrid is clear from the way they make the narrator tremble with fear—if not with the actual cold of death. The horror may be inspired by furious behavior, fearful appearance, or simply by the dreaded death into which these girls invite or command the narrator.

The invitation to shudder to Hel’s maidens’ home is said to come every evening, indicating a rather lengthy procedure of dying. This could be the entire nine days said in stanza fifty one to be spent in the norns’ seat. Yet the seven immediately following following stanzas seem to describe a single sunset rather than those of an entire week. The death seems more likely to occur for any practical purposes in a single evening. Inasmuch as the narrator was a mortal, the invitation could have come every evening since birth, only to be heeded in the final days or last evening of illness or incapacity. The chronology of death is never made really clear. It appears that at some point God affixes a termination date, as hinted at in stanza thirty-six, and after that Hel’s henchwomen torture the mortal \textit{i hel} or ‘to death’, transporting him to the realm of Hel.

The precise number of evenings required for death is only of idle academic interest. The important thing is simply that mortals die. However, it is interesting that the invitation to die comes specifically at evening. The dying of the human is compared to the dying of the day and of the light, and the next stanzas will focus on the setting of the sun. \textit{Kveld} ‘evening’, is of course related to the Old English word \textit{cwellan} ‘to kill’, and so evening is in all respects the proper time for a poet to associate with death. It is quite possible that the audience is intended to see every evening as a warning of mortality. The night is the time for sleep which imitates death, and of dreams that may foreshadow Hel’s terrors. Death can come at any time, and the \textit{greppur}, for example, was shown to have been murdered in his sleep. By associating

\textsuperscript{116} Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787–1828) 3:422.
death with evening, the poet is providing a daily reminder that death is approaching for any mortal. One may simply not wake up again.

This stanza does not end with any pithy universal statement one could call a proverb. The narrative from here on is entirely too personal for such generalization, even though the narrator is surely standing as an example of any mortal. By now there is clearly a single narrative carried on by its own plot, however impressionistic, without the need for individual stanzas to be rounded off yet carefully connected to what follows. This stanza leaves the poem drifting into evening.

**Stanza 39**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sol og sá</th>
<th>Sól ek sóa</th>
<th>The sun I saw</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>samad ad Stióru,</td>
<td>samat at stjóru</td>
<td>suited to a star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dríupa dynheimum i</td>
<td>drúpa dynheimum í</td>
<td>drop into the roaring world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eni helgrind</td>
<td>en helgrind</td>
<td>But the gates of Hel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heirda eg annan veg</td>
<td>heyrða ek annan veg</td>
<td>I heard in another direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thióta thunglega:</td>
<td>thjóta thungliga.</td>
<td>slowly screeching.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stanza thirty-nine begins seven stanzas with an anaphoric “Sól ek sóa,” or “I saw the sun.” This is probably the most memorable part of the poem, for which the poet also later names the whole in stanza eighty-one. Here the narrator movingly describes his departure from the world of the living using the image of the setting sun which is the last thing he sees in life. The images become extremely sensual, filled with the brilliant sight of the sinking sun and many strange, overwhelming noises he also hears. At the same time, the dread of death and the emotional sorrow at leaving life continue to keep the successive flashes of sensual experience firmly linked to an introverted and very subjective center. The “sól ek sóa” stanzas tell at least as much about the ek as about the sól. As Theodor Hjelmqvist noted, the correspondence between the setting of the sun and the dying of the narrator stands in sharp opposition to a simultaneous contrast made between the joyous rays of the
sun and the agony of the dying man. As the world slips away, God’s creations seem more attractive than ever, and the narrator is filled with emotion that can be felt even centuries later by modern readers of Sólarljóð. 

Surprisingly, the problems in interpreting stanza thirty-nine begin already with the “sól ek sá.” Hjalmar Falk insisted that the sun of the seven anaphoric stanzas “er ikke vor almindelige, men det nye Jerusalems sol, det til Kristus knyttede salighetshaabs symbol.” Falk’s view is based primarily on Rev 21:23, where Christ is said to be the source of light, replacing both sun and moon, in the New Jerusalem to come after Doomsday. However, Falk introduces other biblical, patrological, homiletic and literary sources as well, all showing the sun to be equated with Christ. Surely to see the connection between the sun and Christ one need look no further than Geisli or Harmsól, or indeed the forty-first stanza of Sólarljóð. But if the sun were a symbol of the hope of salvation, then in leaving it behind, the narrator of Sólarljóð would be taking leave of much more than life on earth. He would be facing certain damnation. On the other hand, there is much in Sólarljóð to speak against the narrator going directly and permanently to hell upon the eventual moment of his death. This does not seem to be a helpful interpretation of the word sól.

Bjarne Fidjestøl held out the interpretation made by Björn M. Ólsen as the most strongly stated alternative to that of Falk, crediting Ólsen with a litteraliter reading in which the sun is simply the sun, helios. In fact, Ólsen’s reading of sun as sun does seem by far the better approach of the two extremes. Sólarljóð is a poem about death, about leaving the world and everything in it, including the sun. If the passage can be read literally, then

117 Theodor Hjelmqvist, Naturskildringarna i den norröna diktningen, diss. Lund (Stockholm: Häggström, 1891) 120.
118 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 22.
120 Björn Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Safn til sögu Íslands og Ísl. Bókmenta 5.1 (Reikjavik: Gutenberg, 1915) 42.
that is the way it should be read, at least as a first step, and it is the first step that still needs to be taken. When the sun of Sólarljóð is viewed as nothing but that star which most brightly illuminates the earth, not only is it possible to achieve a relatively simple and consistent interpretation of the relevant stanzas, but the emotional force of the passage comes through with solar brilliance. The poetic imagery involved here carries with it a more forceful didactic message than could any more formal Christian allegory.

Once sól has been at least tentatively interpreted as the sun we living mortals see in our sky, then the more serious problems can be addressed. As can be seen by the manuscript reading from LBS 1199, 4o, the basic text is not without problems. The second line of this manuscript, "samad ad Stiórnu," departs from the consensus reading of the stanza as

Sól ek só,
 sanna dagstjörnu,
 drúpa dynheimum í.
 En Heljar grind
 heyrða ek á annan veg
 thjóta thungliga.

LBS 1199, 4o, probably does not reflect the intent of the original author of Sólarljóð. Its reading is curious grammatically and all but incomprehensible in interpretation. On the other hand, the accepted reading is also somewhat suspicious. Sanna fits the position in the stanza perfectly well, but the adjective for "true" is simply too universal a filler in medieval poetry for the word to safely serve as the basis for as much interpretive controversy as it has. It fits perhaps too well. Ten percent of the manuscripts have something other than the word sanna in this position, making one suspect that the ultimate source manuscript must have contained something here that was at best difficult to read. Interpretive structures should be built on this particular foundation only with extreme care. However, whatever may have stood in the original Sólarljóð, or in some older source manuscript than has been preserved, the word sanna is nonetheless the best of the solutions offered in the manuscripts that do remain. The sun is called the "sanna dagstjörnu," or
the true morning star, and this is the reading accepted as belonging to the existing consensus text of Sólarljóð.

The first Edda edition interpreted the word dagstjarna by reading it as the sum of its constituent parts, and calling it the true star of day.\textsuperscript{121} Apparently not until Falk was it noted that dagstjarna referred not to the “star of the day” and hence the sun, but to the morning star, the planet Venus, and hence Lucifer.\textsuperscript{122} Sólarljóð was supposed by Falk to be making a contrast between Lucifer and Jesus, who was also referred to as the morning star (Rev 22:16). Following this heavily allegorical interpretation, however, the narrator seems to be saying simply that he sees Christ, as opposed to Lucifer, which hardly seems consonant with the fear and sorrow conveyed in this part of Sólarljóð.

Björn M. Ólsen, the literalist, although accepting the usual definition of the word dagstjarna as ‘morningstar’, maintained that the object referred to here could be nothing other than the sun. The adjective sannr was supposedly appended to show that it is the sun, which shines in the daytime, and not the morning star, which is the true star of day.\textsuperscript{123} Although Njörður P. Njarðvík ridiculed this idea, pointing out that no one needs to be told the sun shines during the day,\textsuperscript{124} Olsen’s idea is probably closest to what the author of Sólarljóð had in mind.

It has already been shown how the author of Sólarljóð enjoys playing with language, altering familiar phrases and making puns (e.g., page supra). I believe it is this same playfulness at work here. The sun is the true morning star, the star that shines in the morning. The wordplay works approximately

\textsuperscript{121} Edda Sæmundar hins fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787–1828) 1:373.

\textsuperscript{122} Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 22.

\textsuperscript{123} Björn Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Safrn til sögu Íslands og Ísl. Bökmenta 5:1 (Reikjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 41.

\textsuperscript{124} Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 117.
as well in English as in Old Icelandic. Nothing terribly deep is necessarily to be proved by this; it is simply a statement that the sun stands unrivalled. No one really needs to be told that either. At the same time there may also be a further reference to the cliché sanur sem dagr, "as clear as the light of day." Again, nothing is necessarily contributed beyond evidence of the poet's virtuosity with language, always making the assumption that the words of today's Sólarlóð were once intended by a particular poet.

In addition to being a virtuoso with language, the author of Sólarlóð is also a virtuoso with imagery. The first two lines of stanza thirty-nine simply state that "I saw the sun, the true star of morning." This describes a simple sensory perception made by a dying man. For the last time he sees the earth's source of energy and life, and the rarest and most beautiful sight in Northern Europe. The sun symbolizes the life being left behind; it sets while the narrator dies. The man is losing something very precious. This is all it is necessary to understand in order to comprehend this section of Sólarlóð. It is only the message that mortals die which is consistently stressed in the poem. Yet hand in hand with this message is the Christian truth that a new life will follow. The sun of our experience always sets only to rise again for another day.

Fredrik Paasche has probably best understood the Christian imagery within Sólarlóð. In this stanza he also accepted the sun as being simply the sun, but at the same time he found much more.

Når man "mediterer" over disse "sol"-vers i Sólarlóð, vil det skje en forandring med dem. De vil likesom lukke sig op innover. En ny virkelighet ligger under den åpenbare. Solen er solen, og samtidig er det som skalden gjennem den ser inn til Kristus. Nettop Kristus er i det kirkelige billedspråk "den sanne dagstjerne" (verus lucifer).  

Sólarlóð is indeed a very rich source of imagery that has frequently led to discovery of new meanings in the poem, as well as occasional

125 Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 181.
overinterpretation. The constant ambiguity invites just the sort of meditation that Paasche speaks about. If Sólarljóð mentions the morning star, that may be a reference to that planet’s heralding a new day to come (the eternal afterlife or New Jerusalem) at the same time the sun sets (signalling death in this world). The sun is a standard symbol for God or Christ, who may be seen here, for example, as the final judge. Because leave is being taken of the sun, this is an opportunity to think about hell as the loss of God, or of heaven as the contrary beatific vision. The sun sets to rise again, just as Christ rose from the dead. It cannot be denied that in Christian symbolism, Christ is the sun, and also the true morning star.

Sólarljóð offers many such opportunities to reflect on Christian images and themes. The partial copy in Reykjavík’s manuscript JS 36, 40, is surrounded by spiritually inspirational materials, indicating that Sólarljóð may have been preserved there, for example, particularly for inspirational purposes. The rich ambiguity of Sólarljóð allows each member of its audience to find the meanings for each stanza that say the most to her or his own soul. But at the same time that this sort of interpretation opens worlds of possibilities, it can also confuse the meaning of the poem as a whole. Njörður Njarðvík, for example, cites various classical examples to prove the sun has often been considered “nágot annat än bara en strålande himlakropp.” While few would deny that the sun can be pictured as something other than a radiant celestial body, the question to be asked is whether picturing the sun as something other than the sun (e.g., the world’s eye) contributes to a more easily comprehensible and consistent interpretation of Sólarljóð as a whole. I believe a more literal reading to be the most productive. The sun is the sun, the true morning star is the sun. The setting of the sun parallels the death of the man. This is all that is required at this point to support an interpretation that makes sense of the entire poem Sólarljóð. If the continuing solar orbit can be related to the immortality of the soul, this is an added bonus. Anything beyond that is probably best reserved for theologians.

126 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 118.
In the third line, the *Vollzeile* of the first helming, the sun is said to droop, as with sadness, in worlds of din. Ignoring the higher levels of possible allegorical interpretation, it seems that the sun becomes lower than it was initially. Yet it does not drop or sink, it droops more in the sense of becoming depressed or even cold. This appears more than anything to be a simple literary transference of characteristics from the narrator to the object he observes. The drooping parallels the being bowed down and leaning of stanza thirty-six. There is no movement into a new state or realm, only a drooping within the space previously occupied. This much is clear from the dative object. Likewise clear is that multiple worlds are spoken of. The question remains what these worlds of noise are.

The immediately following stanzas are all filled with aural imagery. Unfortunately, the sounds do not transfer well across the barriers of time and language. As one might expect, the sounds are those associated with wind and especially with water. Assuming the sun spoken of to be nearing the horizon, it is surely within the worlds of noisy air and water, and within the worlds of mortals—plural if one accepts Snorri’s cosmography. The netherworlds, or the places soon to be portrayed, are definitely depicted as noisy. On the other hand, if there is any place without noise it would be the noonday sky. Perhaps the din and noise spoken of is not related to decibel level so much as to harmony or the lack thereof. The worlds of noise may be here contrasted with Plato’s music of the spheres. On the one hand is the harmonious celestial realm of divine order, and on the other the demonic pagan cacophony of Hel’s kingdom. The mortal middle world would lie somewhere in between.

The setting sun seen in *Sólarljóð* is already within the noisy mortal realm of wind and waves, approaching the ocean into which it will eventually disappear. It droops, no doubt shimmering irregularly in the atmosphere above the water. The waves are noisy, but not loud enough to obscure the even louder sounds emanating from Hel’s domain. The gate to death, barred like more modern prison doors, presumably is heard opening to receive the narrator. That the gate is heard from another direction is proof that it is not opening to receive the sun, but nothing else can be read into its location. It is
not necessarily opposite the sun or the narrator, nor on the other side beyond
the sun. The sound simply comes from somewhere else than the place being
looked at.

As usual, the most important part of the stanza seems to be the last line. Here
it simply attempts to describe the sound made by Hel’s gate. In this sound is
captured all the terror and horror death can convey. The gate is heard to
creak heavily, straining massively, no doubt, on unoiled hinges. A
ponderous and oppressive sound it must be to the dying man. The sound
seems to combine the common squeak of a door with the thunderous winds
of a hurricane. The effect of this looming door of death depends on the
imagination of the audience.

**Stanza 40**

Sól eg sá  
setta dreystófum,
miðg var eg tha j\(^{127}\) heime
hallur,
máttug hun leiste
marga
fra thui sem fyrre var:

Sól ek sá  
setta dreystófum
mjök var ek thá ór heimi
hallr
máttug hon leizt
á marga vegu\(^{128}\)
frá thví sem fyrri var.

The sun I saw
setting with bloody staves.
Much I was then declining
from this world.
Mighty it seemed
in many ways
compared to what was once.

The second of the “Sól ek sá” stanzas seems to find the sun yet lower in the
sky. The setting sun is set within blood-red rays, as it turns red, its light
refracted by the atmosphere. It seems mightier than before, appearing to be
larger when red and low on the horizon than it was when higher in the sky.
Meanwhile, the narrator is similarly sinking away from his life. This is the
essential message of stanza forty.

The dreyrstafr of line two, however, present some problems simply because
of the rich ambiguity of the word. I have rendered it here with as much

\(^{127}\) In a later hand ur was added above the line to replace j, which is dotted
beneath. This change corresponds to the modern consensus reading.

\(^{128}\) This follows AM 166b, 80, and the editions.
ambiguity as I could muster as ‘bloody staves’. Dreyri is ‘blood’, but dreyrraundr is a simple color, blood red. There is no actual blood flowing anywhere, but in the words of Mephistopheles, “Blut ist ein ganz besonderer Saft.”\textsuperscript{129} The bloody color invokes blood as a symbol of life, the life here slipping away from the narrator. There may also be actual bleeding wounds involved as a cause of the narrator’s death, but the blood is more likely symbolic. On a higher level of allegory, Paasche pointed out that the blood surrounding the sun recalls the bleeding wounds of Christ.\textsuperscript{130} From here the symbolism leads to blood as a symbol of salvation, and to blood shed in innocence being the victim’s key to heaven, as first demonstrated in the example of the greppr and the gestr.

The staves of dreyrstafr are not normally used to refer to rays, but of course the shape is suitable. One pressed to find Christian symbolism in each word could perhaps even locate a cross here. But the word dreyrstafr is usually defined as ‘bloody runes’, supposedly taken from the color runes were painted. Runes, of course, are as powerful and mysterious a symbol as blood, and translators and interpreters with a romantic bent have often emphasized the runic connection here. The author of Sólarljóð may indeed have selected this word to stress the mysterious aspect of death. Runes represent wisdom, after all, and this is a poem about wisdom.

On the other hand, the author of Sólarljóð may be seeking ambiguity for its own sake, or for the sake of showing virtuosity with language. While anything having to do with blood will obviously have great potential symbolic value, even the verb of the second line has a large field of different meanings. The sun obviously is setting. At the same time it is set like a jewel within a setting of rays. And finally the line recalls the clichéd phrase of “setja svá rauðan sem blóð” to indicate blushing. Each of these images is highly appropriate in its own way, but surely none of them has much value as Christian allegory. The multiple levels of meaning are very effective,


\textsuperscript{130} Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 181.
however, in conveying the impression of a dying man’s hallucinations as the audience must make various mental leaps probably not unlike the narrator’s own stream of consciousness as he dies.

In the first Vollzeile the narrator reasserts his presence as the real actor of this part of Sólarljóð, and tells that he is also as low as he has just shown the sun to be. LBS 1199, 40, contains a reading of í rather than the òr accepted since the first edition,¹³¹ and indeed in almost every other manuscript. The variation does not seem critical, since the narrator is, in fact, still in the world and has not crossed that final boundary completely. He is presumably prone (in the world) on his deathbed, leaning ever closer to death. If òr is correct, he is leaning ever closer to death and at the same time leaning away from this world. The one image more or less requires the other. The only significant difference is that the majority reading lends strong support to the idea of the halla of line 36.2 also indicating a leaning away towards a departure from the world rather than an inclination towards it.

Nevertheless, the narrator still seems inclined towards the world, having gained an appreciation for the sun quite possibly absent before. The sun seems mightier. As a physical phenomenon, the sun appears larger on the horizon. But at the same time it seems more important, as a symbol of the warmth of life, it is more painful to take leave of it. Its importance swells as the narrator considers that he will never see it again.

On an allegorical level, the mightier sun could reflect the increasingly obvious importance of God, who holds the power over life and death. God was the mighty one determining death in 36.5. On the one hand, the grammatically feminine pronoun tends to downplay the connection of the sun with God, but on the other, the final Vollzeile seems to describe an entire situation rather than merely the sun itself as an object. This situation could refer to the relative lack of concern the narrator must have had for God earlier in life, before death seemed near. God surely has not changed, but the narrator’s attitude is shifting as he gains first-hand knowledge of death. It is,

after all, this very same knowledge he is now trying to impart to his living heir. Sólarljóð is a poem that warns about the sure approach of terrible death in order to inspire the living to attend to the eternity to come rather than to the temporal world.

Stanza 41

Sol eg sa,  Sól ek síá  The sun I saw
so thottie mier  svá thótti mér  so that it seemed
sem eg see á Gófganu Gud,  sem ek seeja gófgan Gud as if I saw glorious God.
henne eg laut,  henni ek laut  I bowed down to it
insta Sinne  hinztá sinni  for the last time
allda heime i,  aldaheimi í.  in the world of mortals.

Stanza forty-one contains the most forceful argument against the sun being an allegory of Christ. In this particular stanza the sun is compared to worshipful God, specifically through a simile. The sun looks as if it were God being seen, with the subjunctive used to indicate the irreality of the statement. The sun is not equated with God as one and the same. The narrator sees the sun merged with God as part of his deathbed hallucinations. Yet seeing the sun as if it were God, the narrator nevertheless bows down in homage to it, the sun (with a feminine pronoun), and not to any other manifestation of God.

With so much bowing and leaning in this part of Sólarljóð it is hard to know exactly what to make of this. Guðbrandur Vigfússon tells of it having been a childhood ritual for him to go outside and say a prayer first thing every morning except during the summer months. Of course, any prayer he may have made upon first springing out of bed on winter mornings was obviously not to the sun, but his point was that the prayer marks the day. Just as his day was begun with a prayer, so the narrator in Sólarljóð ends his day with a prayer at sunset. With the evening prayer, the end of the day is marked in both a literal and figurative sense. The prayer coincides with the setting of

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the sun. As the sun goes down another day ends, but for the speaker it goes
down for the last time and marks the end of his life. The narrator bows down
to the sun perhaps in the sense that he bows down with it, using it to mark
the time to pray to God. The sun sinks in the west as the narrator makes his
final vesper prostration as a living man.

Of course, it is quite possible also that homage is being paid to the sun itself.
Finn Magnusen seemed to think this was the case, a holdover from a pagan
deification of the sun. But as any modern sun worshipper could explain, it
is not necessary to think the sun a god in order to adore it. The narrator's
reverence for the sun can well be imagined, as the sun represents warmth,
light, and all the joys of life never to be seen or felt again in the cold dark
grave. It should be possible to honor the Christian God through the
worshipful appreciation of his creation. The magnificence of the sun
reminds the narrator of God—his thoughts have been elsewhere since stanza
thirty-six—and inspires him to pray.

This final desire to pray carries great emotional force here, not only because
the brilliance of the adored sun is contrasted with the dark mysterious death
to come, but also because the prayer indicates a final submission to the will of
God. The narrator is becoming resigned to death, no longer struggling against
it, though apparently still not in full awareness of any possibility of heaven.
The prayer is a final admission of mortality, a knowledge that this really will
be the last time for prayer or anything else. Choosing to end his life with a
prayer on his lips, the narrator is not unlike the greppr, who also made a
deathbed prayer (Sól. 6.1–3).

The final Vollziele does look beyond the deathbed to see the possibility of a
world beyond this one. The prayer is made not simply and absolutely for the
last time, but with the qualification that this is the last time in the world of
men. The possibility of at least one other world is implied, and that world
would most obviously be the world of the dead. The narrator has already
heard the gates of Hel creaking open to receive him, and he has seen Hel's

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133 Finn Magnusen, trans. Den Ældre Edda, Tredie Band (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1822) 223.
agents in his apparent hallucinations. But from the point of view of the narrator now, as he is telling his story, all the worlds of creation have been manifested and he can speak from experience about the limited boundaries of the mundane world. The audience, too, knows from its Christian background and the earlier parts of Sólarljóð that there are also heaven and hell beyond the mortal world.

The word used to describe the world of mortals, aldaheimr, is quite interesting. Although simply a poetic formulation for the world of men and women, it is transparent as a combination of alda and heimr. Indeed, LBS 1199, 4o, has this written as two separate words. An alda is a large wave, reinforcing the aquatic imagery associated with these solar stanzas, although the connection is far from concrete. On the other hand, alda is also the plural genitive of öld, ‘age’ or ‘era’. This world of ours is then the world of ages and chronological cycles. In other words, it is the temporal world as opposed to the eternal world that the narrator will soon be faced with. This is the world of time, marked out by the passage of the sun into individual days. The narrator’s time is up and eternity lies ahead.

**Stanza 42**

Sol eg sa  
so hun Geislade,  
ad eg thöttist vættke vita,  
Eni Gylvar straumar  
Greniudu a annan veg,  
blandnar myg vid Blöð:  

Sól ek sá,  
svá hon geislaði,  
at ek thóttumk vætti vita.  
En Gylvar straumar  
grenjút á annan veg  
blandnir mjök við blöð.

The sun I saw,  
so radiant she,  
that I thought I’d completely —passed out.  
But Gylv’s streams  
roared from another side  
blended greatly with blood.

Stanza forty-two is difficult in several respects, but especially because of the world Gylvar in line four. The meaning of this word is uncertain, as is the actual form of the word, but it has traditionally been treated as a name, the ultimate (if not first) explanation for any incomprehensible series of letters. Be that as it may, the most important physical action of the stanza is nevertheless clear, as clear as the light of day. Namely, the sun continues to set. The narrator persists in focusing his sight on the setting sun. It beams
brightly, so radiantly, in fact, that the narrator is bedazzled. He can see nothing else, blinded by its light, so that he thinks he has lost consciousness and is aware of absolutely nothing.

In addition to sight, however, the narrator still has his sense of hearing. Although blinded by the sun, he hears on the other hand a roaring sound. Consciousness is apparently regained, or more accurately, the narrator realizes he never lost it, for he does know what this noise is. It is the sound, evidently, of the sea. Whoever or whatever Gylv may be, the connection is clearly with straumar—streams, currents, or even tides. It is the sound of water roaring, another example of the noise associated with the earthly world, as already seen in Sól. 39.3. Distracted from his focus on the sun, the narrator is now able to see in a broader perspective the entire ocean ahead of him. It is mixed with blood, no doubt turned red from the light of the setting sun.

This is the simplest, most literal meaning of the stanza, and as Bjarne Fidjestøl said, it is a good practical rule of interpretation always to begin with the concrete. Not much can be added through speculation about the word Gylvar. As far as the word itself is concerned, AM 166b, 8o, has gylfar; AM 738, 4o, has gylvar; LBS 1562, 4o, and Isl. Papp 8o, 15 have gilnar, as do NKS 1109, fol. and the other late manuscripts that might have been based on a parchment. From these an archetypical gyluar seems likely, where the first vowel could represent i, i, y or even y. The u could easily have been misread as an n, producing the manuscripts with that letter, since both letters would probably have consisted of an identical pair of minims. The same u, seen as a consonantal v by the writer of AM 166b, 8o, might have been mentally devoiced to f. The paleological variations are thus not as wild as they may have once seemed, but a reading of gyluar brings us no closer to any certain meaningful word.

There is, of course, a long history of different explanations for the meaning of the word of which Gylvar must be a corruption. The usual approach has been to try to mystify the passage as much as possible, in order to make Sólarljóð

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seem more romantic, more pagan, and more like the Poetic Edda. The first
printed interpretation was by B. C. Sandvig, who in his translation suggested
"stride Strømme," an interpretation for which he gave no explanation, but
which seems prophetic of the controversy to follow him.

The first Sólarljóð edition identified the word in this location with the river
Gjöll mentioned by Snorri in conjunction with the underworld. The
streams of Gylvar were thus currents of an infernal river that could be
translated as Acheron. Finn Magnusen supported the idea of this being the
mythical river flowing through hel, and the idea has persisted. Fredrik W.
Petersson elaborated some on the idea, suggesting that Gjöll may be
etymologically related to gul, the yellow of infernal sulphur.

The idea of a sulphurous rushing river heard "á annan veg" relative to the
setting sun (Sól. 42.5) produces a geographical parallel to the creaking gate of
Hel earlier heard "á annan veg" of the setting sun (Sól. 39.5). The parallelism
does lend support to the idea that the streams here are being related to Hel
and the entry into death rather than to the exit from life bound up in the
setting of the sun. Nonetheless, it is the point of view of the living man
leaving life that is able to unite all the stanzas of this section of Sólarljóð.
That he is also entering death and the realm of Hel is, of course, precisely the
same event pictured from the opposite perspective. However, death is a
boundary that has not yet been crossed in the poem. It is perhaps significant
that the narrator sees only the sun, an object of this world, as he presumably
also sees, and almost certainly hears, the sea. The hints of anything beyond

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135 B. C. Sandvig, Forsøg til en Oversættelse af Sæmunds Edda
(København, Horrebow, 1783) 14.

136 Snorri cites Gjöll

137 Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols.
(Havnie, 1787–1828) 1: 375–6.

138 Finn Magnusen, trans. Den Ældre Edda, Tredie Band (Kjøbenhavn:
Gyldendal, 1822) 224.

139 Fredrik Wilhelm Petersson, Solsången. Diss. Lund. (Kopenhamn:
Schultz, 1862) 27.
come only through the sense of hearing (as we, too, are being told about them), for the realm of the dead may not be seen by the living.

The view of Sólarljóð's straumar (42.4) as constituting an infernal river or rivers suits not only the historical academic view of Sólarljóð as being closely related to the eddas, but it also accords with the historical associations of Sólarljóð with dream literature and visionary geographies of heaven and hell. Sólarljóð has been used as evidence in attempts to reconstruct both a pagan cosmography of the eddas and a Christian one along the lines of Dante's. The poem has been seen as reflecting universalist ideas of religion in describing a river as boundary into the underworld. Gylvar has been related to Gjallarbro—the bridge into the underworld told about in Draumkvæde—with some writers even forgetting that there is no actual mention of a bridge anywhere in Sólarljóð.140

Vigfusson and Powell suggested that Gylvar (given in their edition as gylfar) could be related to gylfra, 'a witch'.141 In the context of Sólarljóð, this witch or ogress could possibly be Hel herself. Aside from this explanation and the associations with gold or gilt (also colors of a sunset), almost all the words resembling Gylvar seem to have something to do with noise. Sophus Bugge noted this and suggested an original root word gilf, from which he derived the verb gjalfa 'to roar, swell, foam' and the noun gjálfr 'stormy sea, breakers'. 142 He also mentions a word gylfi 'king' from a modern northern Norwegian dialect, which Paasche associates through folk etymology, perhaps correct, with a legendary Gylfi, the king of the sea. 143

Hjalmar Falk returned to the idea of the river Gjöll from the Eddas. He supported this concept with parallel rushing aquatic noises from a

140 Hjalmar Christensen, Vort Litterære Liv (Kristiania: Det norske aktieforlag, 1902) 195.
142 Sophus Bugge, ed., Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 364.
143 Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 181.
Draumkvæde variant, and then described several medieval Icelandic and English works where water, especially bloody water, formed a passage to the underworld. Ultimately citing the Apocalypse of Saint Paul, Falk concluded that Sölarljóð describes an abyss filled with water.\textsuperscript{144} The sounds of rushing water apparently come from water pouring over the edge, constituting the waterfall described in Sól. 45.4. The river Styx as well is said to have its source in a waterfall, so this fits the old idea of universal religious imagery.

Björn Ólsen agreed with Paasche that what is described here is nothing more than the sea, and he bases his argument on an emendation of the text to Gylfa, the genitive of Paasche’s sea king Gylfi. The argument is supported with citation of various kennings based on this name.\textsuperscript{145} Njörður Njarðvík, however, has recently declared that he is unable to see any possible connection of Sól 42.4 with the sea, and has particularly objected that one can hardly associate roaring noises with ocean currents.\textsuperscript{146}

The key to the “sól ek sá” stanzas seems to lie in an awareness of nature. One needs to take the time to watch the sun set, preferably over the north Atlantic. For most medieval Icelanders, the sun would have been seen to set over water regularly, and the sight would have been completely unfamiliar to very few. While the sun may never unambiguously be said to set in Sólarljóð, all the images of changing solar size, position, color, and clarity are familiar natural phenomena associated with the setting of the sun. And opposite the setting sun lies the sea into which it sets, a sea that may also turn the blood red color of the sun itself.

The sea may also roar. Whatever streams are described in Sól. 42.4 are said to roar in 42.5. The roaring of a waterfall is not necessarily louder than the crashing of ocean breakers. The sound of an ocean storm was probably the

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\textsuperscript{144} Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwað, 1914) 26–7.

\textsuperscript{145} Björn Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Saðn til sögu Íslands og Ísl. Bókmenta 5.1 (Reikjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 43.

\textsuperscript{146} Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 120.
loudest sound known to medieval Europeans, at least short of volcanic
eruption. And it was surely also the most terrifying sound for anyone caught
out at sea.

The sight of the setting sun sinking into the sea unites all the stanzas of this
central section of Sólarljóð. The setting of the sun parallels the dying of the
narrator. The strange sounds involved are clearly tied to death and Hel, but
their source is simply not explained. What is visible is water, what is heard is
water, the sea into which the sun is setting. Eventually the sun will seem to
be swallowed up by the water. This same image will be used for the dying man
(Sól. 45.4). Sun and mortal both can be imagined meeting on the horizon,
only to fall beneath it, as in a waterfall or whirlpool, into the realm of the
giantess Hel. In most important respects, all historical views of this stanza
could be reconciled. Even the ocean’s “edge” seen by the living may be
perceived as a river from the other side. The sun stanzas are surrealistic.
They can be read as the shifting hallucinations of a dying man, or as images
for allegoresis. Yet the natural description unites it all in a comprehensible
narrative whole.

**Stanza 43**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sol eg sá</th>
<th>Sól ek sá</th>
<th>The sun I saw</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a síonum skialfande,</td>
<td>á sjónum skjálfandi,</td>
<td>through eyes faltering,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hræmulfultr og hnippin,</td>
<td>hraziľfultr ok hnippin</td>
<td>fearful and failing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thvi hjarta mitt</td>
<td>thvi147 hjarta mitt</td>
<td>such that my heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>var helldur mióng runvid,</td>
<td>var heldr148 mjök</td>
<td>was rather nearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sundr í sega:</td>
<td>runnit sundr í sega.149</td>
<td>raced asunder in pieces.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sun still in sight, the narrator appears to be failing. The previous stanza
hinted at a slipping in and out of consciousness, this stanza forty-three
suggests a heart rent by death, and the next stanza will describe progressive

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147 *AM 166b, 80*, reads *thvit*.

148 *AM 166b, 80*, reads *hardla* and some manuscripts have nothing at all
here, but this seems to be the majority reading.

149 This represents the traditional line division.
paralysis. It seems as if the light is fading, but it is more probable that it is the narrator's vision and not the sun that is growing dim. Actually, since the progress of the setting sun always parallels the progress of the dying man, both the sight and the sun are probably shaky here, and it is a shaking or shivering that Sólarljóð describes, and not actually dimness.

From the beginning, the key word skjálfandi has been argued as applying alternatively to Sól, or to sjónum.\textsuperscript{150} In the line "á sjónum skjálfandi," sjónum seems the most likely candidate to be the referent of skjálfandi simply on the basis of proximity. Then, too, there would be little point in stressing that something was seen with the eyes, unless there was something notable about those eyes—unless, for example, they saw skjálfandi. This appears to be the simplest and most concrete interpretation, and thus the place to begin. But given the ambiguity, and given Sólarljóð's obvious tendency intentionally to employ ambiguity, both interpretations must be valid. Sólarljóð speaks of a quivering, on one hand as though the eyes are struggling to focus, and on the other as if the sun is shimmering through the denser atmosphere during its last moments on the horizon. The parallel is maintained. Both sun and mortal are about to depart this world.

Assuming the more logical interpretation to be that the sun is seen by means of falttering or quivering eyes, the question of why they quiver remains open. The dying man's physical deterioration seems the most immediate answer, and by the following stanza his physical impairment is obvious and undeniable. Njardvík points out that the narrator has been staring into the bright sun for a long time now,\textsuperscript{151} so that alone may be grounds to assume retinal damage. Yet such an interpretation seems somewhat too prosaically concrete. I believe the sight to be affected as part of the process of dying, since that is what this entire section is about.

\textsuperscript{150} Edda Sæmundar hinns fróða. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniaé, 1787–1828) 1: 376.

\textsuperscript{151} Njördur Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 121.
On the other hand, the trembling of the eyes could be motivated simply by fear of death, since that, too, is part of the process of dying. This man who has heard the gates of Hel swinging open to receive him, and who has already felt Hel's bonds and met her retinue, has good reason to be afraid. The helming ends with the adjectives hæzlufullr 'full of terror' and hniþinn 'downcast', emphasizing the emotions here felt. Although these adjectives seem to float in a line of their own, they clearly refer grammatically to the narrator. He is indeed afraid to die, afraid of what he will meet after death. But at the same time he is sinking—sinking into death, and sad or depressed at leaving the world and seeing the sun and other earthly joys for the last time.

The relation of the second helming to the first is not entirely clear. AM 166b, 80, and the editions have some form of the causative thið at, while LBS 1199, 4o, and the other oldest manuscripts have a more resultative thið. The second helming describes a heartbreak of one sort or another, but it is not as clear as it might be whether this heartbreak was caused by fearfully seeing the sun in the first helming, or whether the fear while seeing the sun was caused by this heartbreak. To me the former seems more likely, but given the nearly simultaneous occurrence of the events within the stanza, it does not seem absolutely essential to know the exact sequence. Fear of dying and proximity to death were both present from previous stanzas and are nothing new to this one. The constant anaphoric and thematic repetition and the gradual inching towards death produce a distinct feeling of fear being fed by each each degree the sun sinks. Each repetition seems to add a new layer of terror.

The broken heart that causes or is produced by this latest layer of terror could refer to any number of things. First, as implied in my choice of words to describe it, it could be an emotional disappointment, the result of the terror and drooping depression told about in Sól. 43.3. Taking a last leave of the sun would be heartbreaking or heartrending. Viewed more concretely, this could be a physical heart failure, the ultimate cause of death and perhaps of the symptoms described in the earlier helming. Or, this could be simple hyperbole, the narrator explaining that he was so afraid that his heart raced. It raced so much he thought it was going to explode into pieces. And maybe this is what happened.
It is not really certain whether the heart actually does run asunder. *Mjök* can mean a literal ‘much’ or a more figurative ‘almost’. However, the modifier used by the majority of manuscripts, *heldr*, indicates a rather clear understatement by the author, something not at all out of character stylistically. On the other hand, the so-called best manuscript does have a rare alternate and more affirmative *hardla* instead of *heldr*. Given that the narrator seems to cling to at least limited life for another couple of stanzas, a physical tearing apart seems unlikely.

A further and final difficulty is encountered with the last word of the stanza. There is a large variation among the manuscripts here, but the best of the oldest manuscripts do agree that the last word is *sega*. This is also the only word used that seems to fit grammatically, though some of the alternatives might lead to logical and attractive imagery if they could be made to fit. Older translations are often based on such attempts. The reading ‘i sega’ is clear, yet all but synonymous with *sundr*. The combination seems suspect stylistically, but there is no satisfactory alternative. The narrator’s heart is torn apart into pieces, presumably figuratively.

Strangely, however, this fragmented heart is not said to be torn (*rifit*) or cut (*ristit*) into pieces, but rather to be “run” (*runnit*) to pieces. The verb *renna* has a great many uses including even the description of the dawning of the sun, but it does not usually have a destructive sense. The translators of the last century usually rendered *renna* with its sense of dissolving or melting, but this ceased with the general acceptance of the manuscripts reading “i sega.” Since then the verb has been treated as if it meant “to tear” without further analysis. There seems to be more poetic ambiguity at work here, however, with *renna* perhaps referring to the melting away of life, running out like time or sand through an hourglass, the heart racing or fleeing before the fear of death. Like the sun, the heart courses to its end.

In summary, then, the narrator saw the sun through eyes quivering with fear and infirmity as he watched terrified, depressed, and dying. If the sun seems also to shake, shimmering on the horizon, it is also sinking and in seeming sympathy with the narrator. This scene is one of such excruciating emotional
torment that the narrator feels as though his heart has almost run to its end, in pieces.

**Stanza 44**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sol eg sa</th>
<th>Sól ek sá</th>
<th>The sun I saw</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sjálldan hríggvare,</td>
<td>sjálldan hryggvari,</td>
<td>seldom sadder;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miög var eg tha ur heime</td>
<td>mjök var ek thá ör heimi</td>
<td>I was then much declined from the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hallur,</td>
<td>hallr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunga mín</td>
<td>tunga mín</td>
<td>My tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>var til tries metin,</td>
<td>var til trés metin</td>
<td>was no better than wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>og kölnad fyr utan:</td>
<td>ok kölnat fyr utan,(^{152})</td>
<td>and it felt cold beyond.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stanza forty-four describes the further progression of the narrator on his journey out of this world. Again, or still, he sees the sun. In the second line is another ambiguous phrase, "sjálldan hryggvari," which could apply just as well to a feminine accusative söl as to a masculine nominative ek. Assuming a necessity to pick one possibility over the other, it must be concluded that the narrator had seldom been sadder than now that he is so near death. In fact, this is probably another instance of extreme understatement. The man is understandably sad to die.

Since sadness is a human and not a solar emotion, it must be primarily assumed that it is the man being described as sad here. However, this sadness is easily projected by the narrator onto the sun which similarly seems to be dying from the earthly sky. Such an anthropomorphic literary projection does not require a full personification of the sun, much less an extended Christian allegory. Nevertheless, if one is found, the Christian author of Sólarljóð would no doubt have been pleased. But to understand the poem, all that is required is to realize that the dying man is unhappy about leaving this world. The projection of sadness beyond him simply strengthens the emotion conveyed by these lines and makes the poem more powerful.

\(^{152}\) AM 166b, 80, reads "og kolnud ad firi utan."
The concluding line of the first helming simply restates the reason for sadness, as if it were not already known. The narrator is very near death, but this fact is significantly spoken of from the viewpoint rather of being close to the outer edge of life. The man is leaning over the abyss of death, much too far now to return. There is no sight of death or of any realm beyond this world, but this world is rapidly slipping away.

The final helming seems to describe the physical effects of death. The power of speech departs as the tongue becomes useless, of no more value than wood. Furthermore, it turns cold outside. This is again ambiguous, since it is not absolutely clear what is cold where, but just as with the loss of speech, coldness has so often been associated with death than the image hardly needs any explanation. No doubt a dying person feels cold, as if there is too little heat surrounding him or her, but by this stage nothing can normally be reported. On the other hand, the dead corpse feels cold to those still living, as the mammalian heat of life has departed from it.

Death is described in the concrete physical terms that could describe a corpse. But they are described from the viewpoint of one becoming a corpse himself. The audience is invited, challenged, to put itself in the narrator’s place. With any imagination at all, this is a terrifying position.

**Stanza 45**

Sól eg sa,  
síðan aðlðre  
eptir thann dapha dag,  
thví at fjallavött  
luktust fyur mier saman,  
en ek hvarf kallaðr frá  
kvöllum.  

Sól ek sá  
síðan aldri  
eptir thann dapha dag  
thví at fjallavött  
luktust fyur mier saman  
en ek hvarf kallaðr  
kvöllum.  
The sun I saw  
never since,  
after that dismal day,  
for waters of mountains  
closed up above me  
and I vanished, called  
from torments.

In the last of the “Sól ek sá” stanzas, the sun suddenly vanishes, just as the summer sun, having gradually lowered for hours, can suddenly seem to drop

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153 Since the beginning the editions have preferred this reading to *kaldr*. 
below the watery horizon without warning. It is not clear whether the sun is seen at all in this stanza or whether the narrator simply reflects on no longer seeing it. What is sure is that he will never see it again, at least as a living man. That dismal and depressing day of dying was the last one on which the sun was ever seen.

The second helming explains why the sun is never seen again. Given the constant interplay between the setting of the sun and the dying of the mortal man, the image here seems to be one of plunging below the horizon to be seemingly swallowed up by the ocean. This is certainly what normally appears to happen to the sun when it sets over an ocean, and it appears that the dying or dead man is likewise plunging beneath water here. Nothing is said about the sun setting behind an ocean horizon. Instead, the sun’s setting seems to be displaced to the dying man. He no longer sees the sun because it is he who has sunk beneath the water.

The great difficulty with this stanza is that the water spoken of is not ocean water but mountain water. Fjallavötn are the waters of mountains. Of course mountain water does all eventually flow into the sea, just as all mortals eventually die, but it is unlikely that Sólarljóð is trying to make that point just here.

There is a long history of interpretation of this word or words fjallavötn. In the first edition of Sólarljóð, Guðmundur Magnússon looked at the entire line and concluded that the poem employs hypallage here for vatns fjöll, and that what is meant is “covering water” and hence the sky or heaven.154 Yet the more literal readings of his predecessors had sometimes produced even stranger results. Guðmundur Högnason’s read “eyes,” since pools of water look like eyes in the mountain’s head.155 Finn Magnusen decided the author of Sólarljóð must have meant the waters of Niflheimr or Elívágard at the

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utmost mountian range of Útgarðr. F. W. Petersson thought mountain waters (perhaps cascades) were simply a beautiful natural sight that the narrator was sad not to be able ever to see again. Most translators have simply rendered the word without explanation, or followed the first edition. Not even Guðbrandur Vigfússson cared to offer an opinion.

Hjalmar Falk, as explained in conjunction with stanza forty-two (page ), thought that Sólarljóð accepted medieval images of the entrance to hell being a water-filled abyss, often pictured at the bottom of a cliff. It is hard to imagine this mountainous terrain where the narrator has until now been looking at the sun out over the sea, but it is Sólarljóð (at least as we know it) that suddenly brings up mountains at this point, and Falk is not to be blamed for it. Nor, on the other hand, is it impossible to imagine a shift in cosmic geography here such as Dante described at the center of hell. What was a downward sinking of sun into sea and of mortal into the abyss of death may shift at the horizon of the world. As the sun begins an ascent as it now dawns somewhere near Japan, so the dead man may now likewise have a mountain of water to climb where before he had a whirlpool tugging him downwards. Perhaps the hverfa of the final line, in this case ‘to wheel around’, supports just such a cosmographical reading. Unfortunately there is no support in the poem beyond this stanza.

Fredrik Paasche, of all interpreters of Sólarljóð probably the best qualified to speak on matters of medieval religious imagery, chose to see fjallavötn literally. The dead man’s soul leaves the body and rises above all mountains so high that the waters can no longer be distinguished.

156 Finn Magnusen, trans. Den Ældre Edda, Tredie Band (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1822) 224.


159 Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 182.
The most recent interpretation is that of Njörður Njarðvík, who found a key to this passage in Isaiah 30:25. There it speaks of waters flowing at the tops of mountains. However, even though Njarðvík goes beyond the obvious battle with Assyria to interpret this biblical passage as a prophecy of the end of the world, it is nonetheless hard to see how it can relate to Sólarljóð. There are many images used in Sólarljóð that are also used in the Bible to describe the end of the world—sun, stars, waters, noises, and the like—but Sólarljóð is not about the end of the world. Sólarljóð tells about the death of one man, and its only reference to the end of the world is in stanza eighty-two, where the dead man hopes to later be rejoined with his audience. That would happen after the end of the world, in the New Jerusalem. Unlike several of its interpreters, Sólarljóð seems to be clear and orthodox in keeping the death of an individual clear and distinct from the end of the world.

The most satisfying explanation of fjallavötn is that which was proposed by Björn M. Ólsen. He simply emended fjalla to fjarlra, demonstrating that fjarlra had definitely been written as fjalla elsewhere. It is not difficult to imagine such a slip of the pen changing “distant waters” to “mountain waters.” The only objection to an interpretation of “distant waters” is that by the time the narrator disappears beneath them, they are no longer distant. However, given the physical state of the narrator, and his apparent paralysis, even waters pouring over him would still seem distant. This part of the poem is highly subjective in any case. Ólsen’s reading fits the idea of the stanza and the section as a whole.

Given the goal of interpreting Sólarljóð as it exists, however, without rewriting it, the interpreter is left with fjallavötn in the text of the poem. Although stanza forty-six gives reason to assume a departure of the soul, it seems to stay firmly implanted in the narrator’s breast until then. None of the interpretations involving a departure of the soul—and in one way or another that is most of them—seems satisfying. The narrator has only just reached death, marked, in fact, by the waters closing over him.

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160 Björn Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Safrn til sögu Íslands og Ísl. Bókmenta 5.1 (Reikjavik: Gutenberg, 1915) 44.
Whatever waters are being spoken of are said relatively unambiguously to close up over the narrator (Sól. 45.5). Although the poem has been full of sounds often associated with water, and the central image of the sun is easily imagined to picture the sun sinking over the ocean, there is no concrete evidence of real water anywhere. At best the dying man is looking out over the ocean, probably from land, perhaps from a ship, but perhaps also only in his imagination. The narrator slips into unconsciousness—or paralysis, since he actually remains conscious even as a corpse. He slips into death, and this is represented as slipping into water. Water closes over him like death closes over him. Ultimately, fjallavötn is a metaphor for death, and as such it really needs no further interpretation. Perhaps this verbal image is some sort of hyperbaton, where what is really meant is mountains of waters. The water that closes over the dead man must seem to have the size and weight of mountains, and to that extent a mountain is not out of place here.

The (mountain-) waters of death closed together over the narrator, it says in the fifth line, and this forms a barrier between him and the world of the living. The barrier is certainly as massive and as impenetrable as a mountain and it seems to stand in front of the narrator who is still oriented towards the world. But from the perspective of the living, the narrator has vanished forever beneath the invisible border of the mortal world. The waters close together as waters do, leaving no trace behind.

This departure from the world into death is said in the final Vollzeile to be the result of a summons away from torments. The narrator was called, reminding us that life and death are determined by a higher power. The manuscripts which are usually the most reliable have kalladr rather than kallaðr, and ‘cold’ fits the circumstances as well as ‘called’, but the latter reading has been almost universally adopted for the last two centuries.

The controversy in the last line has revolved around kvöllum, since torments are generally associated with hell rather than the world of mortals. The narrator seems to have been very fond of the world and most depressed about having to leave it. Thus, it does not seem likely that he would now see it as a world of torture, even assuming this to be a later view held while talking to his heir rather than immediately upon dying. The view most generally held
is that the torments referred to were the pains of the illness that caused death. However, Njörður Njardvík’s view that the torments were those of the death struggle\textsuperscript{161} seems most likely. After all, this extended process of dying inch by inch has taken place for over ten stanzas. The dread experienced by the narrator has been so clear that a sensitive reader can feel some relief at this point. The horrible process is at an end. The torture is not necessarily caused by illness, as it is not absolutely certain that the narrator was ill at all. But he did clearly have a horrible struggle with death, so it is probably best to view these torments as \textit{daudakvöl} or ‘death pangs’.

Stanza forty-five is the last of the seven anaphoric “sól ek sá” stanzas. The narrator is now dead and will never see the sun again. (His current narration must be nocturnal.) Despite the many repetitions, the last view of the sun seems to be a single extended observation. First the sun is said to be setting, or at least drooping. This is enough to give an audience an impression of the sun going down, so that with each repetition of the identical phrase “sól ek sá,” the sun seems to be at a slightly lower point in the sky. In each stanza the sun is generally described in a different manner, as though it changes in appearance as it sets. Indeed, the sun really does change appearance as it sets. But in each stanza the narrator also describes his own actions or feelings and thereby informs about his own declining condition.

There is a definite parallel between the setting sun and the decline of the dying man. Yet at the same time there is an interplay between the two. The perspective seems to shift, with dangling modifiers that could apply to sun or man or both. It is not always precisely clear what physical actions are actually taking place, aside from seeing the sun. What is always clear is the passionate emotion of the narrator.

The narrator seems at times to be hallucinating, to drift in and out of consciousness, to focus sometimes on the sun, sometimes to feel Hel. The anaphora makes the presentation seem layered with overlapping themes like a fugue. The descriptions of the sun are impressionistic, the descriptions of

\textsuperscript{161}Njörður Njardvík, \textit{Solsången} (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 123.
dying expressionistic. The sense of sight alternates with the sense of sound. Sun alternates with water. The cause of death is never stated, but even before these seven stanza clues begin to be given to the infirmity of age, to sickness, to injury, and finally to drowning. Ambiguity seems to be important. What is always clear is the inevitable decline into death, because this is the point the poet of Sólarljóð is trying to make. As the sun sets, so also man dies. Life is transitory and death, as uncertain as its details may remain, is horribly certain to occur, and cannot be resisted.

Njörður Njarðvík wrote that “Diktens djupare symbolik är så komplicerad att man inte kan förstå dikten i sin helhet endast genom att gå fram linjärt och tolka de olika delar som följer på varandra.” Sólarljóð’s deeper symbolism is complex, and probably can only be examined by taking the poem apart into bits. But the force of the poem lies in its whole. It was not meant to be understood so much as it was intended to be felt. Particularly the description of dying appeals to the emotions and not the intellect. There was surely a reason for the poet having chosen the art of poetry to convey his or her message. Complex symbolism could have been made clearer in a treatise or homily.

The more complex symbolism of Sólarljóð often remains puzzling, like a riddle to be solved only after meditation. The wise or religiously inspired can no doubt find ever higher levels of religious allegory, to the point where one wonders how much the author actually intended. Nonetheless, Sólarljóð is generally able to make its main point without being extensively studied. Sólarljóð does not need to be mysterious. On the less esoteric levels of physical occurrences, narrative plot and emotional appeal, Sólarljóð can be appreciated rather easily.

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162 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 123.
6.9. After Death

Stanza 46

Vonarstiarna flaug,  Vánarstjarna flaug  Hope's star flew—
tha var eg fæddur,  thá var ek fæddr  I was born then—
burt frá brjóstí mér,  burt frá brjósti mér  off away from my breast.
hátt ad hún fló,  hátt at hón fló  High it fled
huorge settist,  hvergi settist  setting nowhere
so hún mætte huijld hafa.  svá hon mætti hvíld hafa.  so that it could have rest.

Beneath the water-like surface dividing death from life, the star of hope takes flight. This star is something other than the "sanna dagstjörnu," of stanza thirty-nine, but as the sun was referred to as a star in the first of the "sól ek sá" stanzas, so the soul also is referred to as a star in the first of the stanzas encountered thereafter. The star of hope has regularly been identified with the soul since the earliest commentaries on Sólarljóð.163

The idea of the soul leaving the body at death is certainly well known since long before Christianity. Macrobius, the writer by whom the author of Sólarljóð seems to have been most greatly influenced, indicated that souls were of the same substance as stars and other heavenly bodies, and would return to them in the heavens when released from the body at death.164 Calling this stellar soul the star of hope may be a play on Cato's distich II: 25, where hope was said to be the last thing to leave a living man. However, this hope definitely appears here to be the first thing to leave the dead man rather than the last thing to leave the living one. The water image formed a clear boundary, and the narrator is obviously gone from the world of the living.

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According to Hjalmar Falk, the hope referred to in stanza forty-six is the hope of salvation.\textsuperscript{165} He suggests that this star does not come to rest because the dead man was not a member of God’s flock, and he compares the star of hope with the heathen stars of stanza sixty, which represent for him the souls of those who have died without sacrament. Falk’s argument as to vân being not just any hope, but a hope or expectation of salvation is well based in medieval Icelandic literature and has not been gainsaid by any critic since. It seems a reasonable interpretation, although Falk’s further conclusions are less tenable. That a soul hoping for salvation flies from the breast of the corpse no longer seems controversial.

The narrator next interjects the comment that he was born at the time hope’s star flew from his breast. This is a clear indication of a new life after death. Perhaps almost as important, it serves as notice that the departure of the soul from the body in no wise indicates even a temporary death of the soul. The soul has on the contrary been freed, and is now able to soar in flight. The star is said, in fact, to flee, as though the soul is desperate to escape from the mortal form that has housed it.

The second helming speaks only of this stellar soul. It is depicted as fleeing upwards, no doubt seeking the heights of heaven. However, it unmistakably fails to reach heaven, or any other definable place. The soul seems condemned to aimless flight—as far as one can tell from this stanza alone, perhaps until the Last Judgment.

The second line of the helming uses the same setja as was employed in line 40.2 to refer to the sun. While the sun and the dying man were both declining, the movement here is strictly upwards. The soul is not setting, it is fleeing away upwards. The imagery here is not entirely negative. There has been a reversal of what seemed like an inexorable downward motion. To the narrator, who was expecting to see the gates of Hel slam upon him forever, even this seeming limbo of endless flight must seem a great relief.

\textsuperscript{165} Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkaps skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 27–8.
The final *Vollzeile* tells that the soul, by finding nowhere to settle, is unable—or perhaps not allowed—to find rest. Particularly after the pathos of the anaphoric stanzas describing dying, rest does sound extremely attractive. Yet for most of these stanzas the narrator had been struggling desperately to hold onto life and to avoid whatever rest may have been offered by the grave. It is hard to know what to make of this hovering of the soul. Perhaps not finding any form of rest, or place to rest, the soul will be condemned to return to earth. This is a traditional motivation for the appearance of ghosts, and we do know that the narrator is in fact on earth relating Sólarljóð. This is very intriguing, and one becomes especially curious about what will follow in the poem. Unfortunately for our curiosity, the soul is left hovering on hold, and the narrator returns his focus to the corpse. The story continues from the perspective of a dead body. This entire stanza may very well have no real purpose beyond reassuring its audience that the soul does not remain in a corpse, even though the narrator choses to tell his story from the fascinating if grisly perspective of just such a corpse.

**Stanza 47**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Óllumm leingri</th>
<th>Öllum lengri</th>
<th>Longer than all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vær su eina Nött,</td>
<td>var su hin eina nótt</td>
<td>was that night alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er eg lá stirð á straun:</td>
<td>er ek lá stirð á strám</td>
<td>when I lay stiff on straw.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thad merkir that</td>
<td>that(^{166}) merkir that</td>
<td>That shows that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er Gud mæltæ,</td>
<td>er Gud mælti</td>
<td>which God expressed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ad madur er Molldu samur:</td>
<td>at madr er moldu samr.</td>
<td>that man is the same as dust.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stanza forty-seven returns the focus of *Sólarljóð* to the dead corpse of the narrator. He describes one long, tedious night, said to seem longer than all other nights. This first night after death, it is generally agreed, corresponds to the period of the wake, during which the dead body was kept on straw called *nástrá*. Fredrik Paasche suggested further, that this night is the longest because it merges with the sleep of the grave.\(^{167}\)

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\(^{166}\) The editions read *tha*.

From the viewpoint of the living, an important purpose of the wake is to ascertain that the body being watched does not show any signs of revival and is, in fact, dead. From the viewpoint of the narrator, lying stiff in rigor mortis, this must surely seem a futile exercise. Of course, if the narrator did still cherish any hope of revivification, the night of waiting would seem especially long simply because what is waited for never comes. However, there does not seem to be any desire for a return to mortal life. If anything, the mood seems to be one of disappointment with it.

This one long night seems to be a period of contemplation which extends over the next stanzas as well. The night seems long and boring because there is nothing a corpse can do. The narrator is able to see that the human body is worthless. It lies there on the straw moldering, no better than the straw itself. How much more interesting was the restless winging of the soul! The narrator achieves the final realization that his mortal being, the center of all his former concerns, is nothing.

As the second helming explains, the long useless lying on the funeral straw is illuminating. It illustrates the truth of God’s word, presumably that of Gen 3:19, that man is the same as dirt. The narrator, who had struggled so fiercely to cling to mortal life, finally realizes its vanity.

**Stanza 48**

Virde that og vite  
hinn virke Gud,  
sa er skóp hauður og  
Himin,  
huorsu Ein muna lauser  
margin fara,  
tho vid skillda skilie:  
Virði that ok viti  
hinn virki Guð  
sá er skóp hauðr ok himin  
hversu einmana  
margir fara  
thó vid skylda skili.

He reckoned that and knew,  
the cherished God,  
he who formed earth and  
heaven,  
how solitary  
many fare  
though parted from relations.

In the forty-eighth stanza, Sólaljóð returns to mention of God the creator, the divine original planner of the universe and determiner of each individual’s

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168 LBS 1199, 40, seems to combine this common reading with the munadarlausir reading found in AM 166b, 80, and other manuscripts.
fate. God only knew, the poem says, with the apparent implication and resultant connotation, that no mortal could have known how solitary and alone a dead man feels. There are two points made in this first stanza—first, that God is great, and second, that a dead man is separated from everything but himself.

That God is great is a message carried over from the previous stanza where the narrator’s fate was presented as little more than another demonstration of what was long ago decreed by God. Man is mortal and will die. That was ordered by God in the time of Adam and has come to pass for every human since, save Enoch and Elias. It is a fact gladly forgotten by humans as they live their lives on earth. In order to forget their own mortality, the living also gladly forget the dead.

The first helming seems concerned with death as a manifestation of God’s plan, of his control of the universe. God could evaluate the effects of death, and know every detail about it, because even it was one of his creations. God made earth as well as heaven, death as well as life. The narrator who had so long fought death now finally understands it as part of the divine plan. He understands what a Christian must, and realizes that he is in God’s hands. Thus, he is able to refer to this God who decreed his death as one beloved, revered, or cherished. Where there was no personal relationship with God stated earlier, the narrator now professes to love God.

The primary narrative point of the stanza is obscured by inconsistencies in the manuscript transmission. What God knows is how lonely and isolated—einmana—one leaves earthy life. Or, in the words of the “best” manuscript, he knows how munadarlausir or ‘without pleasure’ this departure is. LBS 1199, 4a, the oldest manuscript, seems to attempt to combine both ideas in its “ein muna lauser” (Sól. 48.4) And why not? Surely the dead man leaves all earthly pleasures behind him at the same time that all the people he knows likewise are left behind.

In the hour of death, all the things that seemed important in live are shown to be empty. Earthly pleasures have no meaning to the corpse rotting on a bed of straw. But even the one thing upon which a human can expect to
depend until the last—the loyalty of relatives—evaporates when that last moment, death, is reached. The relatives are spoken of in terms not of mere kinship, but of obligation as well. Yet no one is obligated to a corpse. The dead man cannot depend on anything or anyone. The trip into the afterlife is made alone, and only God knows how lonely that can be. After all, like the narrator after him, Christ, too, once died. No matter how many people one is surrounded with in life, and no matter how close the relationship of these people or how great their obligation, the dead man must meet his death alone, and travel the roads of the dead without any earthly companion. One parts from everything in life, and even relations are left behind.

Stanza 49

\begin{align*}
\text{Sinna verka} & \quad \text{Sinna verka} \quad \text{Of his deeds} \\
\text{nytr seggia huór,} & \quad \text{nytr seggia hverr.} \quad \text{each man derives benefit.} \\
\text{sæll er så sem gott górir,} & \quad \text{Sæll er så sem gott górir.} \quad \text{Blessed is he who does good.} \\
\text{Aude fra} & \quad \text{Auði frá} \quad \text{Away from wealth} \\
\text{er mier ætlud var,} & \quad \text{er}^{169} \text{mér ætlud var} \quad \text{which was intended for me} \\
\text{í sande orpin sæng;} & \quad \text{Í}^{170} \text{sandi orpin sæng.} \quad \text{into a bed strewn with sand.}
\end{align*}

Stanza forty-nine continues the idea of death being the point at which earthly joys are no longer of any concern. Line four reminds the audience of the typical gnomic viewpoint on wealth, that you can't take it with you. However, this is so well known that Sólarljóð really doesn't need to add to the concept. Instead, the Sólarljóð poet concentrates on the positive things from life that do last after death.

While friends, relations and earthly goods have no value beyond the grave, Sólarljóð says that one does derive benefit from the works one performs in life. A Christian life is presumably rewarded, and sins must likewise be punished. The poem says nothing here about what good or bad acts are, or how they are rewarded. The Christian should know that already, and more will be said here later. For now, this is merely a reminder that one's deeds do

\begin{footnotes}
\item[169] AM 166b, 80, has ec here, but the er reading is generally accepted.
\item[170] AM 166b, 80, and the editions omit the í.
\end{footnotes}
have eternal consequences. The message is one of *memento mori*, to keep life in the proper perspective. None of life’s material pleasures can compare with the eternal happiness accorded the person who led a good life, and performed good works on earth.

The second helming puts the message of *memento mori* into a concrete example. Earthly wealth is left behind, and the mortal dies, ending up in the grave. Njördur Njarðvík pointed out the neat contrast implied between a life of luxury and the hole in the ground where the destitute dead person eventually lands. Likwise, the strewing of sand over the coffin during funeral rites marks a very definite formal end of the mortal’s life on earth. Whatever pleasures one may find in life, they are only transitory. Only spiritual matters should be of real concern.

The second helming presents some uncharacteristic grammatical difficulties, with the writer of *LBS 1199, 40*, apparently reading 49.5 as a complete relative clause. The manuscripts do have slightly different readings here as they do for most places in *Sólarljóð*, but the particle *er* is generally treated as redundant. In any event, the meaning is clear. The consensus reading was established by the first edition and was rendered by Bugge as

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{audí frá} \\
\text{er mér ætluð var} \\
\text{sandi orpin sæng}
\end{align*}
\]

Benjamin Thorpe translated this as “of my wealth bereft, to me was destined a bed strewn with sand.” The money is gone and valueless, while the narrator now finds himself in a sand-strewn bed.

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The minor textual difficulty with the second helming casts some doubts on the first, since the first helming consists simply of common platitudes that could have been taken from any gnomic source. However, it is not likely that there was ever anything earlier in the stanza that would have connected grammatically to the second helming. In fact, Sólarljóð uses the same stylistic construction in the next stanza as well. “Er mér ætlud var” has a definite parallel in “er mér leiðast var” (Sól. 50.5).

Stanza forty-nine carries forward the idea of departure from the pleasant things of life as part of a destiny decreed by God. The ætla of line five must refer to the grave as being fated. This accords with the controlling hand of God shown in stanza forty-eight, and with God’s words in stanza forty-seven, saying that man is the same as dust (Sól. 47.6). The death decreed as the fate for all mortals makes a mockery of all earthly pleasures. Social or political family relations are left behind. Wealth is left behind. Only the good works a person may have performed will have any value after death, for they may earn one the joy of heaven.

**Stanza 50**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hörundar hungur</th>
<th>Hörundar hungr</th>
<th>Carnal hunger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tæler hölda opt,</td>
<td>tælir hölda opt.</td>
<td>often entraps men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann hefur margv til mikinn:</td>
<td>Hann hefir margr til mikinn.</td>
<td>Many a one has too much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>langa Vatn</td>
<td>Langa³⁷⁵ vatn</td>
<td>Long tears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er mér leiðast var</td>
<td>er mér leiðast var</td>
<td>to me were most loathed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eitt allra hluta:</td>
<td>eitt allra hluta</td>
<td>alone of all things.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fiftieth stanza of Sólarljóð begins by speaking about desire of the flesh. Hunger it is called, and it is generally taken to be the sin of lust or lechery. Once more, I believe the author of Sólarljóð is contrasting the spiritual with the physical, the eternal with the mortal, and is not trying to make a catalogue of specific sins. This carnal hunger surely does include lust or lechery, but it probably includes luxury and gluttony as well. All physical lusts or hungers place the interests of the worldly body over those of the eternal soul and are

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¹⁷⁵ Usually lauga.
therefore sinful and destructive. Sólarljóð is advocating contempt for the
world and a mortification of the flesh. The asceticism of Sólarljóð goes well
beyond mere chastity to embrace more extreme measures such as fasting (Sól.
71) and self-torment (Sól. 73).

The hunger of the flesh, or carnal desire, is said to be dangerous because it
entraps people. It captures their attention and focuses it on the ephemeral
world. By thinking about worldly things one is led away from the true
purpose of life, which is to prepare oneself for heaven. The Vollzeile
concludes the first helming with the observation that many people have great
carnal hungers. It is not specified whether there are hungers of too many
kinds or whether one hunger occurs too frequently. The distinction is trivial
since either way one may be entrapped by sin.

The second helming deals with the proper response to the fleshly desires one
may feel. It speaks about “lauga vatn,” revealingly reproduced in LBS 1199,
40, as “langa vatn.” The first edition of Sólarljóð chose from among the
alternatives the reading of “lauga vatn,” which it translated as bathwater
(Balnearum aqua). In the interpretive history of Sólarljóð, this was first
taken to be another enumerated sin, the luxurious lounging in a bath. Hjalmar Falk took this bath to be a more figurative purgation of sin. Sólarljóð does, of course, speak of the washing of souls elsewhere (Sól. 73.3).
Ólsen and Paasche took the idea of purgation a step further by pointing out
the standard Christian imagery of the tears of repentance. I believe that the

176 Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiqvior, 3 vols.
(Havniaæ, 1787–1828) 1: 381.

177 James Beresford, trans., Song of the Sun (London: Johnson, 1805) 40;
Finn Magnusen, trans. Den Ældre Edda, Tredie Band (Kjöbenhavn:
Gyldendal, 1822) 224.

178 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos.
Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 28–9.

179 Björn Ólsen, Sólarljóð, Sfn til sögu Íslands og Ísl. Bökmenta 5.1
(Reikjavík: Gutenberg, 1915) 46; Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom
(Øso: Aschehoug, 1948) 183.
manuscript reading of "langa vatn" for "lauga vatn" supports the interpretation of "tears."

The misreading of a u for an n is extremely easy. However, the writer of LBS 1199, 4o, appears to have been a careful copiest who tried to resolve any problems he found. He paid attention to what the text said, rather than just copying letter for letter. He is not likely to have written langa unless it made sense to him. The line is punctuated just before the word langa, so it can hardly have been understood in any connection other than as a modifier of vatn. To an Icelander, "lauga vatn" is such a common phrase that it would seem to take special effort not to read that in a questionable case, and yet that is just what must have been done. I conclude that the copiest read vatn not as 'water', but in its secondary meaning of 'tears'. For although vatn is not as unambiguous a term as tár, it seems to have been more a synonym than a metaphor. "Langa vatn" is then comprehensible as "long tears," a metonym for an extended cry. Hence, the idea of tears of repentance must still have been comprehensible to the Lutheran copiest.

The long or warm tears of repentence may help to wash away sin, but Sólarljóð's narrator claims to have loathed such tears above all other things. This is a surprisingly strong statement. Until now, the discussion was of people generally, who suffered from too much temptation. But now the narrator speaks of himself personally. He hated purging tears. Perhaps there was experience crying such tears, an experience found humiliating and unpleasant. But in that case the contrition and compunction of true penitence must have been lacking. Any painful remorse for the sin was obviously less than the discomfort at having to atone for it. The narrator has the appearance of an unrepentant sinner. Unless, of course, his loathing was really at having sinned so that tears of contrition were required. But it looks as though the narrator will be facing the punishments of hell.
Stanza 51

A Nornastöle
sat eg nú daga,
thadan var eg a hest
hafinn:
Gyarsölær
skynu Grimmlegu,
ur Skydripins Skyllum,

Á norna stóli
sat ek nú daga;
thaðan var ek á hest
hafinn.
Gyar sólír
skinu grimmliga
ór skydrúpnis skyjum.

In the norns’ seat
I sat nine days;
from there I was lifted on
horsemak.
Mock suns
shone grimly
from the clouds of the air.

Stanza fifty-one seems to take the narrator directly to hell as expected. The Christian context of warnings concerning good works, lusts of the flesh, and purging tears of repentance gives way very suddenly to what seems to be the realm of Icelandic heathendom. This has two major effects. The first is disorientation. Sólarljóð suddenly looks like a different poem, and even the readings of earlier stanzas are called into question. The second effect is horror, for what is being described does not look at all pleasant. Although the only unambiguously negative word isgrimmliga in line five, there is a clear reminder of Óðin’s terrible self-crucifixion (from Háv. 138) and an overall atmosphere that is indeed grimly described.

The first physical action described in this stanza is sitting in the seat of the norns for nine days. The norns, of course, are traditionally the three supernatural women who decide fate. However, the term has been extended to other fatal spirits and in modern Icelandic it can simply mean ‘witch’. That the narrator was with the norns for nine days shows that we are not dealing with any literal sitting in a chair. The stóll must be a ‘seat’ more in terms of realm or residence. It is the place over which norns have jurisdiction. Whatever the other details, it seems to be agreed that the narrator is undergoing some sort of ordeal that decides his fate. For nine days he is in the power of the norns, in the power of this fate.

At the end of the nine days some sort of decision has apparently been reached, for the narrator is then lifted onto a horse. In the following stanza he says that he seems to travel, so it may be assumed that the horse is his means of transportation—at least as far as perception reflects reality. The second
helming of fifty-one describes the physical appearance of the environment and is mostly significant as a contrast to life beneath the sun. This is the essential information of this stanza, and it may be best to simply move on the next stanza to see how the narrator’s journey progresses. Stanza fifty-one demonstrates most clearly that we’re not in Iceland anymore, but in a dark and different realm where mortals have lost their bearings.

To attempt to get a more specific picture of what is happening in this stanza, if that is at all wise, the place to start is probably with the narrator. By this time he is present in the poem in several different forms. He is first of all the narrator, come back from the grave in whatever form he is appearing in, ghost or dream, to relate the events of Sólarljóð to his heir. He does interject himself into the story with occasional opinions and warnings. But despite the first person pronoun in the second line, the narrator seems simply to be telling about what had happened to himself at the time of his death, without manifesting any current presence at this point. The character in stanza fifty-one is not the ghost or visionary character who appears to the heir. Or to the degree he is, at the time reported he had not achieved the experiences he will gain later.

In this stanza, the narrator is no longer a living man. He has slid beneath the waters of death (Sóí. 45). Hence, the only way the nine days spoken of here could correspond to the period of a final illness would be if the narrator were making a recapitulation of what had happened several steps back in his history. It would be strange for him to tell us now, after reference to a wake and burial, that he lay nine days altogether in his sickbed nursed by wise women (witches or norns) or that, as Tholander first suggested, he lay that long in his deathbed while it was decided (by norns as fate) whether he would live or die.\(^{180}\) Such a flashback is not at all impossible, but the chronology of Sólarljóð has thus far been reasonably straightforward, moving from earlier events to later ones.

Since the moment of death, the narrator seems to have split his identity into two parts, corpse and soul. The vánarstjarna, as his soul or at least his

animating principle, was left searching restlessly for a place to settle (Sól. 46). There could conceivably be a return to it here. It may have found its place to rest after the ninth day, or have been rejoined in some way to the body at that time. However, the form the narrator takes in this stanza is decidedly corporal since he describes himself as being hoisted onto a horse at the end of the nine days. One wonders to what extent this is may be a revivification (in another world), since on one hand it seems to represent the start of the narrator on new journeys, while on the other hand he must be lifted by external power and does not seem able to mount by himself.

Björn Ólsen took the view that it was the soul which found itself for nine days in the seat of the norns, and not the body. He argued that the norns’ seat was purgatory, and that the soul required a nine-day purgation before it could move on to the sigrheima and eventual paradise. Ólsen was able to avoid the problem of the physical mounting on a horse by emending “á hest” to “á hæst,” indicating a mounting to the top of the mountain of purgatory and exit from it.\(^{181}\)

The primary difficulty with Ólsen’s view is that it presumes a very detailed image of purgatory for which there is no evidence at all within the poem of Sólarljóð. For the idea of a nine-day purgation to make any sense at all in the context of the stanza, it was necessary to emend the text from a manuscript reading that was already easily comprehensible, at least grammatically and as a narrative image. The narrator is set upon a horse. The physical corpse is clearly involved in the narrative within this stanza. One does not generally talk of souls as being mounted on horses (or on mountain tops). Nothing is said about a revival of the body, or of a rejoining with it by the vánarstjarna. The body seems to be as dead as ever, since it must be lifted onto the horse by others. The corpse is able to perceive what goes on around it, but it has had this strange ability all along. The narrator in this stanza can be identified as a dead but sentient corpse, which may or may not be related to a soul.

The primary view of the *norna stóll* has been that it represents the dead man’s bier. This was the view enunciated in the the first edition. The obvious objection to this view is the reference to “sandí orpin sæng” in stanza forty-nine. The apparent reference to a grave there makes it appear as though the corpse has already been buried and could no longer be lying on any bier. However, it was said that the sandy bed was “mér ætluð” (Sól. 49.5), fated or expected, and this fate was not necessarily fulfilled at the time it was mentioned. It is thus quite possible that stanza forty-nine did not involve an actual burial.

Nevertheless, Falk made a more serious objection to the idea of the norns’ seat being the funeral couch or bier. A nine-day wake or wait before burial simply does not correspond to medieval Icelandic burial customs, and was actually forbidden by law. He returned to the idea of the nine days as being the period of final illness, and the horse as being the mode of transport into the underworld, the “helhest” identified by Sophus Bugge. Paasche also agreed with the idea of the deathbed as opposed to the bier, but saw the horse as a real animal which transported a real corpse in a real coffin on its back. The soul, after all, can fly where it will without the need for transportation. The idea of the corpse carried to burial on the back of a horse is well supported and has the distinct advantage of being a concrete action. However, the chronological problems remain.

The chronology as thus far outlined in this interpretation has not named a specific length of an illness. In fact, I have tried to emphasize the ambiguity of the poem concerning the cause of death. The period of dying can be said to have required seven suns—the anaphoric “sól ek sá” stanzas—but these seem

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all to refer to one single gradual sunset. Before these was the leaning over the abyss of death and the struggle to resist Hel. Within the context of Sólaljóð it can properly be said that the period of dying began with birth, since the point repeatedly made is that each man is mortal and will die his own death. Life cannot be depended upon. But for the narrator, the moment of death rather clearly occurs at stanza forty-five. The vánarstjarna departs in stanza forty-six. There is one night spent lying on straw (Sól. 47), a night I have interpreted as the wake. Finally, there is the bed strewn with sand (Sól. 49), which appears to be a burial.

This apparent burial, however, may be apparent at best. Nothing is said about interment in a sandy hole or with a sandy covering. What is described is a strewing of sand, something that can occur in a funeral service that is entirely removed from any actual interment. Yet with one handful of sand, the body is symbolically buried. It has received its last religious rite, and thereafter becomes as dust in the eyes of the living. The corpse itself could hypothetically lie for months in winter, until the ground would thaw sufficiently for an actual grave to be dug. Hence, earthly chronology could still allow a quite lengthy period of uneasy preservation after “burial” before a corpse might be taken on the back of a horse finally to be placed underground. One could perhaps argue a precise chronology of nine days even for the efforts of one person to chop through ice and frozen ground in order to dig a proper grave, though this seems rather extreme.

Be that as it may, I believe one of the primary purposes of the nífu here is to alert the audience that the passage is symbolic. Nine, like seven, is a mystical number, signifying something powerful, but not to be taken necessarily as enumerating anything specific. This is a time marked as being important, not as being of a certain length. Likewise, the place is not a chair normally occupied by norns as individual personalities, but a specifically important place, a seat where fates are determined. The narrator does sit, rather than lying as he would on either a deathbed or bier. The seat is symbolic. The only thing in this entire stanza that seems to have any corporal reality beyond the narrator’s person is the horse onto which he is lifted, and to some extent even this conjures the idea of a gallows in the context of the Odinic nine nights.
Sólarmljóð is clearly unclear about what is happening during the nine nights in the seat of the norns. The best conclusion is that the narrator's immediate fate as a dead man is being decided. The place and time are more symbolic than real. The narrator has already moved beyond this world where time and place can be measured. He seems to want to tell us that a dreadfully important change takes place. He is in a place of awful norns, supernatural eddic creatures of power and mystery, but not necessarily any more pagan than the Lord's dísir encountered in stanza twenty-five. After all, it should be God who ultimately decides the fate of humans. Yet this stage immediately following death is portrayed with the grimiest of imagery, and the appearance of pre-Christian norns reinforces the terrible atmosphere. Death is frightening, especially when eternal damnation may loom ahead.

However, eternal damnation or salvation should first be decreed at the Last Judgment at the end of the world. Some sort of decision must be made at the time of death concerning purification pending the final decision. The nine nights in the seat of the norns may reflect this critical decision process, presented in Sólarmljóð with as much mystery as contained in the event itself. The decision having mysteriously been made, the narrator is placed upon a horse so that he can continue to the next stage.

The horse of stanza fifty-one should probably be viewed simply as transportation. After all, the subsequent stanza describes a journey. Whereas souls do sometimes fly, whether as celestial bodies like the vánarstjarna (Sól. 46) or like the birds later said to be souls (Sól. 53), for the greater part of Sólarmljóð all denizens of the afterlife seem to have human appearance. The punishments described are all corporal and the the blessed are engaged in more or less corporeal activities. Nothing more is ever said about a horse in Sólarmljóð, and there is not really enough evidence to associate this animal with the helhest of Draumkvæde or with any other specific supernatural horse. It does seem to traverse all realms and does not necessarily take its rider directly to hell. In stanza fifty-two the narrator appears to be choosing his own path.

The only conclusion that can be drawn about the narrator's horse from the text of the poem as a whole is that being placed upon it indicates that the
narraror has not been condemned to punishment. He is free to go. Although
the horse takes the narrator to the realm of punishment—and apparently out
again—those being punished are usually on foot.

Although there are exceptions, a wandering on foot seems to be a negative
characteristic in Sólarrljóð beginning even with the treacherous “gestr
gangandi” of lines 2.5–6. The word ganga is often associated with
punishment, as with Ráðny and Véboði, who “ganga skulu / milli frosts ok
funa” (Sól. 18.5–6), or with “theim er ganga skal / thær hinar glæddu götur”
(Sól. 31.5–6). Of course, even Sváfaðr and Skarðtheðinn “gengu” to the holm
of their duel (Sól. 14.4). The association of punishment with travel on foot is
carried through using other verbs with Unnarr and Sævaldi who run to the
woods (Sól. 9.6), and with those in the realm of punishment apparently
condemned to the road (Sól. 62.3). The carrying of burdens in stanza sixty-
three implies a traveling by foot, and those who travel (fara) the red-hot paths
of stanza fifty-nine must do so on foot for the punishment to have much
effect.

On the other hand, those who are rewarded do not seem to have to do much
walking. The murdered greppr was transported into heaven by angels (Sól.
7.1–3), just as others murdered in innocence are transported in wagons in
stanza seventy-four. The other fortunate fates do not seem to involve any
necessary transportation at all.

While the condemned must walk in unpleasant places, and those rewarded
are carried upwards or may lounge around on sunbeams, other modes of
transportation seem to be reserved for the supernatural. Dragons fly (Sól. 54),
and Óðinn’s woman rows or sails (Sól. 77). The seven sons of Niði ride (Sól.
56.1–3). Disembodied souls fly, whether the scorched souls of stanza fifty-
three or the vánarstjarna of 46.1. The verb fara is used for transportation
across worlds, from the dead man traveling far from relations in stanza forty-
eight, to the seven worlds transversed in stanza fifty-two. Finally, fara is the
verb used to describe the action of the majestic solar stag in 55.1–2. That the
narrator is placed upon a horse in stanza fifty-one, and travels (fara) through
seven worlds in stanza fifty-two, seems simply to combine with the mystical
number nine to show that the narrator is no longer in the realm of the living,
and to demonstrate that he has not been condemned to punishment in the realm of Hel either. Yet so much was already clear from the narrative as a whole.

The second helming of stanza fifty-one is both simpler and more puzzling than the first. It describes a landscape (or skyscape) that must surely be that of the norns' seat and the place where the narrator was lifted onto the horse. This place is supernatural and it doesn't really help us mortals to know what it looks like at all. It is enough that it doesn't look like Iceland anymore. The primary difficulty with these lines is the phrase "Gyar sólir" because sól 'sun' does not generally appear in the plural, and the meaning of gyar is completely unclear.

Gyar must be the reading of the source manuscript behind all those remaining, since it is followed by all the oldest manuscripts. Likewise, sól is indeed plural. Gyar could perhaps be the genitive of a personal name Gy or Gyr, though this has never been suggested. After all, such a solution would leave the new and probably worse problem of identifying a new character. If this word refers to a person, better to regard it as a misspelled gygr 'giantess, hag' which could very appropriately refer to Hel, a character already known to Sólafjöð and appropriate to someone appearing beyond the grave. Some of the later manuscripts do read gyyjar (in the form gigjar). Unfortunately, the word is singular and does not likely refer to the norns themselves.

The plural use of sólir is unusual outside the use of 'suns' to enumerate days, simply because our world only has one sun. This word has often been emended to the singular or perhaps simply been viewed as a plural intended to signify the singular. Likewise, the plural ending has also been separated from the stem and viewed as a superfluous (but typical) er

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186 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 57.

187 E.g., Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787–1828) 1: 381.

188 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 127.
belonging to the subsequent line. The sóler spelling of *LBS 1199, 40*, may add some support to this approach. Once this sun is established as singular (and there are later manuscripts which do contain the singular verb *skein*) the sun of the giantess is then usually interpreted further as being the moon, since that is the “sun” that shines down on the supernatural spooks that appear at night.\(^{189}\) Of course, we are dealing here with a realm of the dead, and not with any earthly night.

I return to the translation by Vigfusson and Powell, and render “Gyar sólír” as “mock suns,”\(^{190}\) not on the basis of any Scottish gow-sun,\(^{191}\) but simply because I believe the point of this helming is to demonstrate a contrast with the “sól ek sóa,” the one true star of day seen by the living. There is little point otherwise in the poet’s telling us that either a sun or a moon shines in the sky, no matter how fiercely or what the cloudcover may be like. This is not the sun of the living, but weird multiple suns seen in a strange mysterious place. *Gyar* is not necessarily textually related to *gys* or *gyss* ‘mocking’ any more than to *gygr* ‘giantess’ (Hel) or *gjá* ‘chasm’ (as Falk’s entrance to the underworld). The poet’s word is unknown from the manuscripts and meaning must be sought from the larger context of the poem.

In the land of the norns some sun or suns shine fiercely from “skydrúpnis skyjum,” a very poetic formulation signifying little more than clouds, but surely connoting a dark, cold, wet and depressing atmosphere. I see here direly shining suns that are a mockery of the single sun of the mortal world, the sun that symbolizes Christ. The fiercest shining by these suns still cannot dispell the clouds that surround them or even alleviate the pervading cold atmosphere. Yet an interpretation that would have a single moon shining fearfully through mists beneath a cloudy sky may not be entirely out of place. *Sólarljóð* is clearly painting an eerie image of otherworldliness, and if one

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\(^{189}\) Finn Magnusen, trans. *Den Ældre Edda*, Tredie Band (Kjöbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1822) 225.


image strikes closer to the heart of an audience than another, the ambiguity is certainly wide enough to allow it. The narrator is clearly speaking about a strange world other that the one we mortals know about.

6.10. Journey through the Cosmos

Stanza 52

vtan ok innan  Útan ok innan  From without and within
thottist eg alla fara  thóttumk ek alla fara  I thought myself to wander
Sigur heimna sió,  sigrheimar sjau  all the seven victory-worlds.
 vpp og nidur  upp ok niðr  Up and down
leitate eg ædra vegar,  leitaða ek ðeðra vegar  I sought the higher road
 huar mier væri Greiðastar  hvor mér væri greiðastar  where my paths might be the
Gótr.  götur.  readiest.

From his otherworldly starting point on the back of his mysterious horse, the narrator begins his travels. He travels everywhere—"útan ok innan" (Sól. 52.1). The journey is thorough, covering all seven heavens, as it were, both outside and inside. He does not move simply from place to place, but explores each of the places internally as well. Yet no details whatsoever are given as to what these places may be, at least until the next stanza when a particular place, perhaps one of them, is named kvölheimr. In this stanza the places visited are all called sigrheimar, and there are said to be seven of them.

Sigrheimr is transparently constructed of the words for 'victory' and 'world', but it is a continuing mystery what "victory worlds" may be. The usual interpretation is heavens, since Sólarljóð has seven of them, and victory must apply to something positive. The relatively old manuscript AM 738, 4o, does actually say "sigr himna." 192 Medieval Christianity took over the Hebraic idea of seven heavens with God in the uppermost, but although there is a definite attempt to climb indicated in Sólarljóð (52.5), it does not appear to have much to do with any search for God. The astronomical Ptolemaic universe was similarly divided into seven or more planetary

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192 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 58.
spheres, and Cicero included seven spheres between the earth and God in his *Dream of Scipio* (making a total of nine).193

Sólarljóð enumerates several worlds: ægisheimr (30.3), Ævalrheimr (35.4), dynheimr (39.3), aldaheimr (41.6), and kvölheimr (53.3), with at least three of these being apparent synonyms for the single world we live in. Since kvölheimr is the first world specifically enumerated after Sólarljóð announces travels through seven sigrheimar, serious doubt is cast on sigrheimar being the seven heavens of God and angels. Guðmundur Magnússon assumed a connection with a word sigr for 'sinking' and rendered "sigr heima" as *inferiores mundos*.194 For Hjalmar Falk, victory associated the entire cosmography here with Christ, and made it opposed to the pagan nine worlds of Völuspá 2 and Vafthrúðnismál 43.195 This view has been elaborated most recently by George Tate.196 The most internally coherent view was probably that of Finn Magnusen, who accepted the pagan nine worlds of the Edda and subtracted the netherworlds of Niflheim and Helheim to leave seven victorious worlds for those not condemned to live in those two lowest places.197 Of course, this still fails to account for kvölheimr, and Magnusen himself was unwilling to commit himself solely to the one viewpoint.

While the victory of the sigrheimr is puzzling, and the depths of a sigrheimr speculative at best, the compound word is clearly being used to describe a

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196 George S. Tate, "'Heiðar stjörnur' / 'heiðnar stjörnur'," *The Sixth International Saga Conference 28.7.–2.8. 1985, Workshop Papers II* (København: Det arnamagnænske Institut, København Uiversitet, 1985) 1030.

world or cosmic region. *Sigrheimr* is probably best translated simply as 'world'. *Ægisheimr* likewise has a transparently meaningful prefix (related to 'terror') yet the compound can only be translated meaningfully as 'world'. Such is poetic language. The fact that seven of these worlds are traversed should not be taken as a detailed picture of any cosmography either. As with the "seven seas," the mystical number seven probably indicates nothing more than that all worlds have been traversed. Seven is a number of perfection; the journey through the worlds was thus complete. This journey likewise covered everything "útan ok innan," and with the narrator searching both "upp ok niðr," in short, in all directions.

Stanza fifty-two says nothing more than that the narrator traveled throughout the cosmos. The implication is that much more area was covered than we are to be told about. Everything is included. No concrete details are given, and most of what was seen is probably of no concern to us. This stanza simply provides background for what is to follow. It establishes the authority of the narrator as an eyewitness to the cosmos. It shows him as a man wise in otherworldly experience.

The narrator was placed on a horse in the previous stanza, and here we see a journey presumably on horseback over roads that are difficult to follow. To find the clearest, readiest path, it is necessary to search up and down, experimenting with various approaches. Yet, at the same time, line 52.1 indicates that the entire journey is imaginary or incorporeal. It takes place in the thoughts of the dead man. The poet thus warns his audience not to take these descriptions too literally, reminding us that this is a literary fiction.

Likewise, this dichotomy between the spiritual journey and the travel on horseback alerts the audience to look for more allegorical meanings. Why would a soul moving with the freedom of thought be described in terms of a traveler over rough roads? More attention is given in this stanza to the search for an easy path than to the nature of the area traversed. It must be a rough, nearly impassable universe in a spiritual as well as physical sense. The effort at getting through these worlds overshadows the actual scenery. And then, is it really the higher road that will prove easiest, and is it the easiest road that leads up to eternal life with God? Matt 7:14 recommended
the strait gate and narrow way, not the easy path. Sólarljóð does not deal with these questions in any explicit or consistent way, but the audience is surely being stimulated to consider these problems.

Stanza fifty-two is primarily an introductory stanza. The narrator had been mounted on a horse in the last stanza, the result of some judgment made concerning his fate after death. Now he seems to ride this horse, though not necessarily in any purely corporeal sense, inside and outside, throughout all the seven worlds of the divine cosmos. The journey is long and arduous, and requires most attention to be given to the road taken. Nonetheless, much must have been learned on this trip, and the audience is surely eager to hear about it.

6.11. Kvölheimr

Stanza fifty-three traditionally marks the beginning of a new section of Sólarljóð, based primarily on the “Frá thví er at segja” opening line, and the fact that a definite new geographical realm—Kvölheimr—is introduced. The opening line has its parallel in the opening to stanza thirty-three, which began a section on life in the mortal world and its bitter end. Now it appears that a new realm of torture is to be described, and in fact various torments are soon told about. However, The geography of Sólarljóð is not so clearly delineated as one might wish.

The “Frá thví er at segja” was an imperfect marker of the announced theme of stanza thirty-three. The stanza had been preceded by the seven wise counsels and their conclusory stanza, but then yet another stanza of proverbs followed thirty-three before the beginning of the proclaimed theme of life in the world and sorrowful departure from that life. Likewise, the section on worldly life and death continues well past the departure from life. Before the description of Kvölheimr announced in stanza fifty-three, the narrator has already left the world of mortals and entered that of the norns, and then made a quick (one-stanza) trip through all the seven worlds.

“Frá thví er at segja” should probably be seen as an imperfect marker in stanza fifty-three as well. No such marker is given at all to introduce the
realm of reward begun at stanza sixty-nine. There is good reason to wonder whether, despite the name Kvölheimr, it is not Purgatory rather than Hell being described here. Particularly problematical are the creatures of the compass points, since it is difficult to imagine them all in Hell. It is best to reserve judgment as far as possible until these passages have been examined stanza by stanza.

**Stanza 53**

Frá thui er ad seigta
huad eg fyrrst umn sá,
tha eg var i kuól heima
kominn:
Suidner fuglar
er Saaler voru,
flugu so marger sem My:

Frá thví er at segja
hvat ek fyrrst um sá
thá ek var í kvölheima
kominn
sviðir fuglar
er sálir váru
flugu svá margir sem my.

About that is to tell
what I first saw around
when I had come into the
world of torment.
singed birds
that were souls
flew as many as midges.

The opening line of stanza fifty-three marks it as a new division of the narration. Once again, we are to be told about something different. What is different is that the far-reaching travels through all the seven worlds have come to an end and a very specific place has now become the point of focus. The narrator wants to tell us what he first saw when he came into kvölheimr. Kvölheimr is etymologically a region of torment or torture, and so it is generally assumed to be Hell. Indeed, people are clearly being tormented in this region, and there is later reference to Hel (Sól. 67.4, 68.3), although Hel could still be a realm for all the dead, and not simply the damned. However, there is no separation made in Sólarljóð (as we have it) between this region of Kvölheimr and the region where people (beginning with stanza sixty-nine) seem to have joyous reward. There is no corresponding reference to a Sællheimr. Nor is there any mention of a hreinsanareldr (or thvátheimr or Laugarheimr), even though some idea of a Purgatory has already been evident in the poet’s cosmology (e.g. Sól. 25). The punishments of Hell or Purgatory would be hard to distinguish without an explicit comparison or a statement about their duration. Sólarljóð simply presents us with a realm of torment.
The narrator announces that he is going to tell about what he first saw when he came to Kvölheimr. The second helming gives the answer: he sees flying souls. Then, however, the next stanzas following give descriptions of things seen at various compass points. Finally there is a list of various types of punishment to which people are subjected. While the flying souls as well as those condemned to more individualized punishments may be expected in a realm of torment, the figures introduced at the compass points are harder to fit into such a region. Particularly the solar hart of stanza fifty-five is hard to imagine in hell or purgatory, because this animal is usually associated with Christ. Given the existing text of Sólarljóð, and assuming the poem not to be an accidental conglomeration of unrelated verses, some way must be found to reconcile figures that do not appear necessarily hellish with what is clearly a realm wherein dead souls are being punished.

The easiest solution to this problem is to place the narrator not in any kvölheimr, but on the threshold of these worlds as a whole. At the entrance to such a place the swarm of flying souls can easily be pictured like thick flocks of bats or swallows visible from outside the mouth of a cave. To the west would then be the dragons (Sól. 54), to the south the hart (Sól. 55), and to the north the seven riders (Sól. 56), leaving the kvölheimar to be found at the missing compass point. Alas, the text of Sólarljóð is clear in stating that the narrator had already come into the kvölheimar before seeing these things.

The operative word of the stanza that helps to salvage this solution is the particle um. It serves only to stress a locative ambiguity. What is seen is not clearly placed in the kvölheimar, as it could have been, but is described in such a way that it could just as well be located beyond or surrounding the kvölheimar. If, however, the particular things seen are within an encompassing realm of kvölheimar, then any specific compass directions to be given seem to be thus generalized into approximations, and made relative only to the position of the narrator and his momentary perception. Yet with the narrator having just come inside the kvölheimar, but still at their threshold, there is no reason why he could not take cognizance of what lies outside. From such a vantage point three cardinal directions would be visible, with the kvöllheimar the fourth at the observer's back.
From our own vantage point beginning the fifty-third stanza, however, these problems are not yet evident. "Frá thví er at segja" marks a digression from the broad unspecified cosmic travels, and we are led to believe there will be a more detailed account not necessarily of all the kvölheimar, but at least of what was first seen when the narrator had arrived there. The very first things seen are singed birds. Indeed, the poet does go into great detail about them, although we are disappointed if we want to know any very precise information about kvölheimar.

The singed birds of the second helming are said to fly as thick as midges, apparently swarming all around the narrator as he enters the worlds of torment. The most significant thing about this passage is that it is specified that these birds are souls. Souls are frequently depicted in literature as flying, and quite often even as being birds. Souls are often referred to as being burned through their contact with extraworldly fires. As Pulsiano and Wolf have stated, the depiction of souls as burned birds is less common. Nonetheless, even the specific idea of burned birds is hardly novel. In spite of this, the author of Sólarljóð, a person who at times seems to delight in puzzling the audience, here takes care to explain to us that these singed birds are souls.

The narrator says the singed birds are souls because this fact is important. These aren't just interesting or annoying creatures found in kvölheimar. These are the human souls condemned to inhabit these particular realms. That Sólarljóð is so explicit in this instance, while giving no help at all in the case of more puzzling references, suggests that those unexplained images can be regarded as less important. They are terrifying or glorious figures that may or may not be common symbols, but they need not be understood for one to understand the poet's primary message. Apparently the atmosphere they lend is enough. We do need to know the birds represent souls.

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Only the singed birds are explicated. Yet not too much is explained even here. There is no depiction of avian souls flying through hellfire or dragon breath or being individually subjected to flames of purgation or punishment. That is left to the imagination, or to previous experience with Christian imagery. We can already roughly guess how the birds came to be singed, particularly when we are reassured that the birds are souls. The point the author is trying to make here, if we continue to trust him or her to have put the important material in the final line, is that there are a great many of these souls being tormented. There are swarms of souls in this place, “svá margir sem my” (Sól. 53.6), and not just a few isolated transgressors. Sólarið is not particularly interested in the geography or particular population of the kvölheimar. But the poem does indicate that the kvölheimar make up a very crowded place with a similarly large number of the mortals now living therefore also likely to become resident there. This could happen to us.

Stanza 54

Vitar sa eeg fluga
Vonadreka,
og fiell a Glævallz götu
Vænge their skóku,
so výja thótte mier,
Springa hauður oc himin.

Vitar200 sa ek flygja
vánardreka
ok féll a Glævalds götu
vængi their skóku
svá viða thótti mér
springa hauðr ok himinn.

Consciousnesses I saw
flying,
hope’s dragons,
and fell to the path of the
sea’s ruler.
They shook their wings
so far and wide I thought
earth and heaven to burst.

Stanza fifty-four is traditionally seen to jump abruptly from the talk of flying souls in the previous stanza to a discussion of a dragon or dragons flying from the west. LBS 1199, 40, however, and those later manuscripts referring to a parchment predecessor, say nothing about the west. Instead, parallel to the flying birds that are souls, there are flying dragons that are consciousnesses. These are called vánardreka, in parallel with the vánarstjarna of Sól. 46.1.

The word vestan ‘from the west’, as contained instead of vitar in all editions of Sólarið, is a very logical choice in the light of the subsequent two stanzas that specify directions. In fact, it is much easier to see how the word vestan

200 AM 166B, 40, and all editions read Vestan.
might be supplied by a scribe in parallel with *sunnan* (Sól. 55.2) and *nordan* (Sól. 56.1) than it is to see why one of three (or four?) original directions could have been corrupted into a word like *vitar*. The first edition rejected *vitar* on the grounds that it is apparently the genitive form of a feminine *vit*, a word simply unknown.\(^{201}\) There is, however, a neuter *vit*, meaning ‘consciousness’, ‘intelligence’, ‘wit’, or ‘reason’ that seems to fit the context quite well. How the gender of such a common word could have been confused is a puzzle, but a genitive of neuter *vit* does seem entirely appropriate in the context up to this point, especially assuming one has not read ahead to *sunnan* and *nordan*. That the narrator saw intelligences flying—the principles of thought and animation—is surely very much related to seeing souls fly, as in the previous stanza.

The flying souls of this stanza are not likened to flying birds, but to flying dragons. Njördur Njarðvík says that despite their different approaches, the interpreters are agreed that the dragon here (*vánardreki*) is a symbol for the devil.\(^{202}\) While that does seem, broadly, to have been the primary view of this century’s most important commentators—at least if Leviathan can be equated with Satan—there are several difficulties with picturing *vánardreki* as the devil.

First, there do seem to be multiple dragons. The word *vánardreka* is ambiguous, being either singular or plural, but the pronoun referring to this creature or creatures in line 54.4 is *their* ‘they’ and clearly plural. While it is possible to use a plural pronoun to refer to a singular antecedent, as if the dragon and all his followers together were intended, such a usage does not seem very likely in Sólarljóð. There was a conceptual shift from Vígulf to include all Sörli’s adversaries in stanzas twenty through twenty-four, but there was no grammatical shift in mid-sentence. Furthermore, the image of a set of Satanic wings beating is somehow diminished by the idea of lesser wings beating along with them. On the other hand, a large number of

\(^{201}\) *Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior*, 3 vols. (Havniae, 1787) 1:384.

roughly equal dragon wings has a cumulative and chaotic effect very much like the bird-like souls "svá margir sem my" (Sól. 53.6), though of course much greater. If one accepts the reading in line 54.1 of vitar as intelligences in the sense of souls, then, of course, these dragons are unquestionably plural.

A second problem with viewing a singular vánardreki as being the devil, assuming the stanza to begin with vestan, is that one would expect the devil to be geographically opposed to Christ. Although Christ is indeed usually associated with the east, in Sólarljóð he seems more clearly related to the south, to the direction of the noonday sun. In large part this depends on the Sólarihjörtr of stanza fifty-five being identified with Christ, an admittedly uncertain assumption. Yet Sólarljóð does appear to adopt a more native, even heathen-based cosmography, rather than the Christian oriental orientation of Christ. In Sólarljóð thus far, the west has been the direction of the setting sun, and of death. While Paasche cites homilitic evidence that the west is associated specifically with Christ's death, this is not the same as making it the home of the devil. Sólarljóð tries to make death frightening, at least for the sinner, but it does not make death Satanic.

A third difficulty with associating vánardreki with the devil lies in the similarity of the word to vánarstjarna, earlier interpreted here as the soul or animating principle. Although the usual practice of word-for-word interpretation of Sólarljóð has usually resulted in the parallel being overlooked, Paasche did recognize this relationship. His argument was that the vánardreki was the devil who lay in wait for the vánarstjarna, the star of the expectation of salvation, in order to swallow it. The vánarstjarna, the star of hope, last seen speeding upwards to no certain perch, is now seen in kvölheim dodging a vánardreki which is trying to gobble it up. This is similar to the idea enunciated much earlier by Guðmundur Högnason.

203 Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 186.

204 Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 186.

While such an interpretation does have a certain internal coherence, the ravenous vánardreki in this visual image—and it is difficult to imagine a host of them even as fallen angels—would more likely be swallowing the star forms rather than the expectations of salvation. A vánartjarnadreki, taking the role of the devil in a fight for the soul of the deceased would coincide with common medieval imagery, but it is not at all clear that such imagery is being used here. There is certainly no depiction of angelic forces similarly engaged in battle. Nor is there any clear depiction of the devil eating already damned souls delivered to him in hell. A theologically sounder battleground for the soul would surely have been life. Sólarljóð is otherwise clear about it being acts performed and sins committed in life that primarily determine fate after death.

I view the vánartjarnana and the vánardreki as being parallel not only in the construction of the words, but as being parallel beings. Both are souls. We have seen a vánartjarnana burst from the breast of a man as he dies, and flee upward (Sól. 46). The star of hope, expectation, or even fate, seeks heaven, the home for stars, whether or not it actually reaches that goal. A vánardreki would be a less celestial soul, one burdened down with sin. The medieval Christian dragon represents sin as often as it does the devil, though there is obviously an overlap. A sinful soul may take the form of a dragon because it does, indeed, resemble Satan because of its sin. But probably the dragon appears in Sólarljóð as a native Icelandic symbol rather than as sin alone. For the dragon Niðhögg is said to reside beneath the earth, providing a cosmographical lower or internal location opposite to the celestial spheres above. The prospect (ván) of the good soul is to rise upwards like a star, while the prospect of the sinful soul is to sink downwards like a dragon. It may be perverse to translate ván as 'hope' in the case of the dragons, but the goal of sin is rewarded. Vigfusson and Powell's translation as "Dragons of Despair"\textsuperscript{206} suits the Vánardreki from the Christian's viewpoint of the prospective loss of eternal life with God.

If the vánardreka are accepted as the souls that strive downward, they are similar to the birds of stanza fifty-three, but more terrible. Perhaps these dragons were specifically explicated as consciousnesses in the first line. Perhaps they come from the west, the direction already associated with death in Sólarljóð. Either way, they are a ghastly and horrible sight manifesting eternal death. They are so terrifying, that the narrator falls.

This seemingly obvious conclusion has been obscured by attempts to see water everywhere in the stanza (from the infernal river Ván or from Leviathan) and to make the more interesting dreki sole actor(s) of the stanza. The first edition of Sólarljóð rendered the second line of this stanza as “Ok fella glæ-valls götv” and explained the “fell á” of the manuscripts as an apocope of “fellu á”. The ok was to be considered a relative particle. Although the first edition cites “E Anon. L” for its reading of fella, the only manuscripts noted by Njörður Njarðvík to have any such reading were written well after the edition was published. All subsequent printings of Sólarljóð have followed the majority manuscript reading of “féll á” except for those by Vigfusson and Powell and by Falk. Nonetheless, the first edition’s interpretation of the grammar here has continued as the standard to this day.

A more straightforward approach to the language of the first helming of this stanza yields a result that has the advantage of literal simplicity, while turning interpretation in a direction no less productive. I read the “féll á” of the manuscripts to mean simply “féll á” without any sort of elision. Then the conjunctive ok can also be read in its more common role as a coordinating particle. The first helming consists of two clauses joined by ok. The subject of these coordinated clauses is the shared ek expressed in the first clause. In short, “ek sá ok féll.” This obviates all the historical problems with making the grammar fit the number of dreki. Given the problems with interpreting “glaevalds götu” it doesn’t matter much in advance whether it is seen in conjunction with demons, souls, or the narrator himself.


208 Compare Njörður Njarðvík, Solsängen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 60.
"Glævalds gata" carries two primary associations from earlier in Sólarljóð. First, Glævaldr must be a name, or at least refer to a person, on the pattern of Sævaldi (Sól. 9.2) or Dómvaldr (Sól. 29.3). Second, there is a reminiscence of "hínar glæduðu götur" (Sól. 31.6). Whether relevant or not, these associations have colored the interpretation of this line.

I believe Sævaldi to be nothing but a placeholder where it occurs in the narrative with Unnar. The names could be changed to anything without altering the sense of the narrative, at least on the levels discussed here. The name Dómvaldr, however, was essential. It referred to God in his capacity of judge, so the function of the etymology was very important. Glævaldr is constructed along the same pattern as Dómvaldr. The latter combined the noun dómr with valdr, while Glævaldr combines the noun glær with valdr in just the same way. Glær is the sea, so Glævaldr must be the one with the authority over the sea, just as Dómvaldr was the one with authority over the court or judgement.

Given that Glævaldr, as ruler of the sea, has little immediately obvious relevance to a poem about death, it is easy to see how a parallel would be sought instead with the "glæddu götur" of stanza thirty-one. After all, one may expect paths of glowing coals in the afterlife. Furthermore, dragons breathe fire and appear in the sky like comets, while fires are ubiquitous in images of hell. A ruler of all this glowing heat can be found in Glævaldr, if that word is considered to derive from the verb glæa. The biggest problem with this hypothesis is that the verbal formation is not at all obvious while the nominal one is. Nor is the motivating "glæddu götur" (Sól. 31.6) much more immediately relevant than "gangandi af götu" (Sól. 2.6) or "feigs götur" (Sól. 36.6). Finally, a ruler of glowing, is only superficially more relevant that the ruler of the sea.

It must be remembered that Sólarljóð is not a mythological tale setting out to establish a cosmography, but rather a religious poem written to warn about the inevitability of death and the certainty of eternal reward. Perhaps the foremost literary image in Sólarljóð is that of water—the sea—as representing death. As the central motif, the setting sun sinks into the sea, and the dividing line between life and death was depicted as waters closing over the
narrator in stanza forty-five. To speak here of a ruler of the sea is thus not out of place if that ruler is associated with sea as representing death. Of course, now to be feared is only the second death—eternal damnation. Although this appears in Rev 20:10 as a lake of fire and brimstone rather than a sea, none of the arguments based on the Bible have been very convincing. I interpret "Glævalds gata" as the path leading to the death of the soul. This is the road to hell, on which a soul runs "á glæ;" or to a vain and futile destruction.

The significance of the narrator falling to Glævald's path is unclear. The poet says nothing more about it. Perhaps this was the path the narrator had already been traveling, but due to the fear of dragons he fell temporarily prostrate upon it to avoid them. Perhaps he had been on another path, seeking always the higher way as stated in stanza fifty-two, but was knocked down to a path leading to a lower level. Most certain is that the narrator is on a path, moving, and not immobile or statically noting the positions of symbols fixed firmly around him.

More important than the path to which the narrator fell seems to be the motivation for the fall. He fell as a consequence of seeing vánardreki flying, and the second helming goes on to further describe these creatures. With refreshing clarity it is said unambiguously that they shook their wings, presumably in flight. Like the many bird-like souls swarming like gnats, there are so many of these dragon-like souls that they extend far and wide, while the adverb seems to combine the idea of monstrously wide wingspans. So terrible the appearance of these dragons, and so great the din caused by the shaking of their wings, that the narrator thought heaven and earth to be exploding.

The ultimate purpose of stanza fifty-four seems to be the offering of this image. In the kvölheimar horrible dragons make such a racket the universe seems to come apart. It is a terrifying place populated by many souls in grotesque forms. It is noisy. The details are less important then the literary imagery. After all, what do either the named heaven or earth have to do with the place in which the narrator now finds himself?
Stanza 55

Solarhiort Sólarhjört The sun's stag
leit eg sunnan fara leit ek sunnan fara I saw move from southward;
han teymdu tveir saman hann teymdu tveir saman Two together led him.
fær hans fær hans His feet
stóðu foldu á stóðu foldu á stood on the earth
enn tóku horn til Himins en tóku horn til himins but his horns reached to heaven.

Stanza fifty-five describes yet another new sight seen in the kvölheimar or somewhere in the worlds of those who have passed beyond life. The description of the solar stag presents few difficulties, inasmuch as the language received is quite clear. The problems come in identifying the animal, and then reconciling the details of the identification with its significance. Problems here have led, in turn, back to assumptions of textual corruption despite none being immediately apparent.

The earliest interpretations of this stanza and the next tended to identify the figures therein with historical people on earth. More recent views are divided into two camps, those who see pagan ideas behind difficult images, and those who see Christian allegory behind them. There is a general consensus that there is a stag here representing the sun. The “pagan view” is that the stag carries the sun on its course across the heavens, or that the sun is drawn in a chariot lead by two others. It is a representation of the sun and nothing more. The “Christian view” associates the stag with the sun and both with Christ. The stag is a Christian symbol, trampling sin with its hooves in Physiologus. There is also the Christian image of the Stag of St. Eustace (known on Iceland through Placidus saga), which was an embodiment of Christ. This stag carried a radiant cross between its horns, and the radiant sun which represents Christ elsewhere has been seen to take this same position.

While the Christian view seems the more attractive, it does present certain difficulties. The largest of these is the idea of Christ being led by the reins. The stag of Christ, associated with two others, does make up a Christian trinity, but it is hard to imagine two of its persons leading the third. Paasche
suggested Mary as having tamed the stag\textsuperscript{209} much like a virgin is able to capture the unicorn (another symbol for Christ). But there are two figures leading the stag here, and there is no explanation of the other. Could it be the other Mary?

Although \textit{teyma} actually means to physically lead, as by reins, interpretation becomes more fruitful if figures are sought simply to precede the symbol of Christ rather than compelling him to follow. The obvious predecessor would be John the Baptist, but the second figure could be chosen more or less randomly from any of the prophets, though Elias would be an especially good choice. Another possibility based on historical sequence in the Bible might take the transfiguration (Matt. 17; Mark 9) as its model and have Christ led by Moses and Elias, since Christ does actually appear in their company. This might be additionally suitable precisely because Christ was transfigured “and his face did shine as the sun” (Matt. 17:2).

Perhaps the most attractive interpretation makes the two leaders of the solar stag Elias and Enoch, since it was believed that they would precede Christ at the time of his Second Coming. This interpretation is attractive for several reasons. First, Christ is put into the immediate context of the poem. His overriding importance to those in whatever realm of the dead this might be is as judge. Only at the Last Judgment will any disposition of souls become permanent and irreversible. \textit{Sólarljóð} does specifically look forward to this event in stanza eighty-two, as the day of human rejoicing. Because of this, a glimpse of Christ is not out of place even in a \textit{kvöðheimr}. All souls still have an encounter with Christ to look forward to at the final granting of eternal life or death. The image of the sun’s stag is a reminder. The souls condemned to punishment in this world will not die the Second Death until the Second Coming, and so hope of salvation, however slight, still remains. This world of torment, whatever it is, does look mostly purgatorial, since with a Christ symbol visible from it, it cannot be that hell which is defined as the absence of God.

\textsuperscript{209} Fredrik Paasche, \textit{Hedenskap og Kristendom} (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 188.
Enoch and Elias are also relevant to a poem about death because in the Christian tradition they are the only two mortals ever to have left the earth without dying. Enoch was translated by God due to his pleasing faith (Heb. 11:5) and Elias, better known in English by the name Elijah (the Hebraic, Old Testament form), ascended into heaven on a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11). These two men escaped death, and yet before the world ends, they will return to it to suffer the end of all mortals. Enoch and Elias were commonly identified with the two witnesses of Rev. 11:3, who would come at the time of the Antichrist but eventually be overcome and killed. They thus illustrate the inevitability of death for all mortals, and yet they also portend the return of Christ and everlasting life in the New Jerusalem.

The Christian interpretation of the second helming has been much simpler. The feet standing on the earth have been taken as a manifestation of Christ’s humanity, while the horns reaching to heaven illustrate his divinity. The “pagan interpreters” of this stanza have generally been too involved with the problems of the first helming to venture any suggestions concerning the second at all.

It does seem safe to associate the sólarhjórtr with the sun. Both major trends of interpretation have been in accord on this. A great deal of Christian allegory may be wrapped up in this image, but the poet leaves it to the audience to decipher. There are no clues given as there were for the birds said explicitly to be souls (Sól. 53.4–5). The sun and the stag may probably be equated, though Sólarhjórtr is more than a kenning for ‘sun’. The trope is expanded in the second helming to give the hart physical features. What is seen takes the form of a real hart, though this somehow represents the sun. The sun has thus far in Sólarljóð represented life on its course towards death, with an implied idea of rebirth at dawn, and it seems reasonable to assume that the sun here, too, is related to life and death.

The sun (or its stag) is seen travelling from the south. A journey sunnan is generally taken to indicate a movement from the south towards the north. However, the sun is certainly located here in its proper equatorial position, even though it was last seen to sink in the west. Has the sun now shifted orbits to move from south to north rather than east to west? This would
certainly add another disorienting factor to the post-mortal parts of Sólarljóð. Given the normal southerly location of the sun as spoken of here, it seems natural to think of it continuing its normal orbit from east to west, the entire movement occurring—from the earthly Icelandic perspective—in the south. In fact, the sun’s stag is said to stand on the earth with heaven above, removing the image from any otherworldly geographical context. This does not seem to be one of those eerie plural suns of stanza fifty-one.

The stag of the sun is lead by two together, it says in the Vollzeile of the first helming. It is difficult to imagine Christ being led. The sun is often pictured in pagan mythologies as being drawn in some sort of wheeled vehicle, but that is not the same as being led. Not even a natural stag, a wild animal, is anything that is normally led. It is hard to imagine two people forcefully leading a stag between them. The image of the sun’s hart being led seems to be a picture of something ceremonial; it resembles a parade or procession. As such, it is utterly out of place in the more active world of swarming birds and thunderous dragons.

The passive leading of the sun’s stag by two others shows a grandiose movement of the sun in the south and very little more. That the stag’s feet rest on the earth while its horns touch the heaven says for certain only that it is very large. Again, it is grand and imposing. Such a symbol easily invokes the glory of the sun and of God and God’s grace, but Sólarljóð doesn’t give any explanations to remove ambiguity from the symbol. In any case, this is not a frightening image, like most of the others encountered after death are. If anything, it is reassuring, a glimpse of the warmth of the sun, Sólarljóð’s symbol of life. If, indeed, the narrator is still in the kvölheimar at this point, the sight of the sólarhjörtr shows that there is still an element of hope there. The ability to see anything connected with the sun, whether or not this sólarhjörtr is itself actually within the boundaries of any of the kvölheimar, shows that the inhabitants of these otherworldly realms can see something more comforting than dreadful. Of course, on the other hand, the sight of something so glorious as the sólarhjörtr may simply contribute to the torment.
Stanza 56

Nordan sa eg rída
Nidia sonu,
og voru sió saman,
hornum fullum
drucku their hínna hreina Mioð
vr brunne Baugreirs:

Nordan så ek rída
núdja sonu
ok váru sjau saman.
Homum fullum
drúku their hínna hreina mjöð
ór brunni Baugreirs.210

From the north I saw riding
The sons of kinsmen
and they were seven together.
From full horns
they drank the pure mead
from the well of Baugreir.

From the north are seen the next of Sólarljóð's phenomena. Because the
directional notation is diametrically opposed to the southerly direction of the
sólarihjörtr, most interpretations of stanza fifty-six have tried to make the
imagery here likewise opposite to the that of the sólarhjörtr. However,
despite at least two opposing directions being given in Sólarljóð, the poet has
probably not given them the literary stress and resultant mystical significance
that later critics have assigned. A writer who has demonstrated his mastery
of parallel constructions through his powerful use of anaphor might be
expected to state his directions in the same place and in the same way in each
relevant stanza. But although there is a prominent “Nordan så ek rída”
beginning stanza fifty-six, the “equivalent” passage in stanza fifty-five has
been demoted to the second line. Furthermore, the form of “leit ek sunnan
fara” (Sól. 55.2) has no striking language in common with that of the passage
in the current stanza, despite similar semantic content. East and west may
never have been referred to at all.

Nonetheless, the north–south difference has provided the primary basis for
interpretations of stanza fifty-six. The riders described in it must be in some
significant way opposite to the figures that were described as being at the
opposite compass point. The patterns sought have been primarily martial, to
parallel the apocalyptic array of directions in Völuspá 50–2. However, despite
having huge horns and perhaps hooves capable of trampling Satan himself,
the sólarhjörtr seemed to be led quite passively. Likewise the characters in
stanza fifty-six are drinking mead, and hardly seem to threaten any
immediate apocalyptic destruction. Although things may seem to be closing
in on the narrator from west, south and north, it is far from certain that these

210 Baugregins is the standard reading, supplied from the editions and
some late manuscripts.
things are even seen in the same vertical plane, particularly if the narrator is still falling or travelling along his path. The only thing that nordan denotes with absolute certainty is that the narrator is looking at something in an entirely different direction from that in which he saw the sun’s stag.

Riding from the north (or perhaps only seen in the north as they ride) are seven sons drinking mead from horns. These very human-like characters are identified by the ancestor, or ancestors, of whom they are sons, a genitive plural níðja. The first printed edition derived this form from the masculine níðr ‘son, relative’ and translated it as “Popularium (Posterorum),” which was in turn interpreted to mean the early adopters of Christianity in Iceland.211 The other main tradition, early represented in print by Finn Magnusen,212 derives níðja from the neuter plural níðr, the waning of the moon just before the new moon. This second line of thinking has the advantage of providing a clear opposition to the sun’s stag, but requires a personification of night, darkness, or the moon. Hjalmar Falk argued a third position, that níðja can only be the genitive of Niðr, a name for Christ,213 who descended down (níðr) into hell.

The simplest approach treats the word níðja as a form of the noun níðr, producing the phrase ‘sons of sons’, nothing more obscure than a periphrasis of ‘people’. Although Sólarljóð frequently uses such phrases to indicate humanity (e.g. “yta synir” in 33.5), a sense of kinship is involved which gives these riders an especially specific appearance of being ancestors. Since this is a journey into the afterlife, one expects to see at least a glimpse of the family members who have passed before. This is not a standard literary visit to the underworld by a living person specifically in search of a particular deceased person, but even with a dead father telling the story, some natural curiosity about other family members who passed on earlier might be anticipated.

211 Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787) 1:386.

212 Finn Magnusen, trans. Den Ældre Edda, Tredie Band (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1822) 226.

If, in fact, these are ancestors seen in the world of torment, we can be assured that they are not suffering terribly. They are riding, and not walking along any unpleasant paths such as those shown elsewhere in the poem. The drinking from full horns seems quite festive. It is perhaps not the angelic sort of reward one might expect in heaven, but it is hardly torture. Most precisely, this looks a great deal like Valhalla. The importation into Christian cosmography of the native Icelandic Valhalla would provide an ideal sort of Limbo for pagan ancestors. Dogma would not allow one to imagine pagans in heaven, but one might not care to imagine one’s own ancestors burning in hell either. Valhalla provides a suitably non-Christian reward for non-Christians.

The final line of the first helming explains that these riders number seven. Once more the poet uses a mystical or perfect number that opens worlds of possible speculation, but which does not particularly enlighten. The reference to “sjau saman” does parallel the “tveir saman” of Sól. 55.3. The small number contrasts with the swarms of singed birds (Sól. 53) and the widespread array of dragons (Sól. 54) that were earlier seen. The mystical nature of the number seven indicates that some symbolic meaning is probably to be sought here. These seven people constitute a very select group, and cannot be identified as either a mass of countless humans, nor yet as a specific number of individuals. These are people who do clearly stand out as exceptional. Of course, one’s ancestors might certainly be seen as exceptional. In any event, only the most outstanding pagans would receive special treatment in kvölheimar.

However, the symbolic seven riders are probably not pagan at all. The second helming describes the activity of these riders. While nothing much was said about who these people are, the poet of Sólarljóð describes their drinking in great detail. They drink pure mead from full horns. The symbolic seven warns of some special symbolism, but it is probably not the riders themselves who are important. The important symbol is rather their action of drinking the mead. The mead is said to be pure, but then hreinn is a rather common adjective for mead, and it doesn’t automatically transform the coveted pagan
drink of poetry into Christian eucharistic wine. The mead’s significance clearly rests in its source, the well of Baugreir.

Baugreir seems to be a powerful chieftain, someone who can keep the horns of his followers well filled. The oldest manuscripts of Sólarljóð seem to agree with the reading of Baugreirs, given inevitable slight variations in orthography. The reading of Baugregin in the first edition is not especially well supported by the manuscripts, as attractive as the reading may be. Yet the name is not essential. If there is an error here, an original reading of Baugreifs might be possible, with an open insular F misread or miswritten as a long r to produce the actual reading of Baugreirs. Hence, the original could have meant something like “the one joyous in rings” rather than “the ring-god” that was derived from the somewhat uncertain Baugregin of some of the later manuscripts. The meaning hardly changes. Either way, a rich and therefore powerful lord is signified, presumably divine, and clearly very generous to his followers. The mead being drunk has come from his well.

Given a Christian poem which speaks about death and the eternal rewards to be gained after death, something drunk from a lord’s well can really have only one meaning. As Njörður P. Njarðvík first pointed out,214 this seems to be a clear reference to the conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, where Christ promised “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”215 The seven riders are partaking of the everlasting life offered by Christ.

The contrast between Christian and pagan images is especially marked in this stanza. Christ the Lord seems to be spoken of as the possessor or giver of rings, insofar as baugr is part of the name here. This relates to traditional Icelandic kennings for a ruler, yet one which has historically resulted in Sólarljóð’s ruler being identified in a Biblical context as Mammon.216 But


powerful rulers do not hoard rings; they give them to their retainers. This lord’s generosity has already been demonstrated by the fullness of the horns in line 56.4. The wealth given by this ruler is not in the form of rings. The gift given is the gift of eternal life.

The riders who partake of eternal life would necessarily be Christian. Yet as riders and as drinkers of mead from horns, their context is far closer to that of Iceland’s pagan past than of the world of the Bible. The number seven does distinguish these followers of Christ by making clear that they are not specifically the twelve apostles. Perhaps the riders partaking of this gift of life are given the lucky number seven simply because they are lucky. They were lucky enough to have drunk the pure mead of the eucharist in life (John 6:54), and can therefore expect to drink the mead of eternal life ever after.

Despite the only frame of locational reference being Kvölheimar, undelimited worlds of torment, we have in the south a presentation of Christ as sólarhjórtr, and in the north an image of men drinking from the well of eternal life. These are two figures one associates with heaven, and not with hell. Heaven is the place for fortunate people enjoying eternal life. Heaven is the place where one sees Christ. That these sights are visible from kvölheimar could possibly be part of the torment. The pain may be increased by the vision of a Christ one can never join, or by the sight of those fortunate few who faithfully followed him. However, it seems more likely that these sights preclude at least this particular kvölheimar from being the realm of souls which have died the second death. This seems much more likely to be a place of purgation.

If Kvölheimar, or at least this one of them, can be equated with Purgatory, then neither stag nor riders seem out of place. If the sight of them torments more sinful souls, then the punishment certainly fits the crime. Yet at the same time the sight would offer hope of eventual purgation and remind those suffering that they, too, have been promised eternal life. There is hope, although the hope itself may increase the present pain. A solar stag is quite appropriate in purgatory if this is the stag of Physiologus that finds serpents
and tramples them with its hooves.\textsuperscript{217} In such a case he might reasonably be led in even by the other persons of the trinity to do his work of removing serpentine sin from salvagable souls and destroying it. The seven riders cleansed by the pure mead from the well of eternal life need undergo little in the way of painful purgation, yet they are still here in the kvölheimar and not in heaven or the New Jerusalem. Perhaps it is appropriate that they are seen drinking mead, the best reward pagan Valhalla had to offer, as part of a purgation before they can enter a far grander heaven. The seven riders of stanza fifty-six do seem to be Christians.

\textbf{Stanza 57}

\begin{tabular}{lll}
Vind[r] thagde, & Vindr thagði; & The wind became silent;
vøtn stôðvade, & vøtn stôðvaði. & the waters stood calm.
tha heyrða eg Grimmlegan Gny: & tha heyrða ek grimmligan gny. & Then I heard a bitter din.
signon mønnun, & Signon mønnun & For their men
suipvisar konur & svipvísar konur & treacherous women
moludu molfil til matar: & möluðu molfil til matar. & were milling meals of mud.
\end{tabular}

Suddenly, the wind is still and the waters stop. Stanza fifty-seven dramatically marks another change of scene. Since just before the narrator’s death there has been one thunderous sound after another, each more terrible than the last. Now all becomes silent, in an eerie and ominous pause more frightening than all we have heard before. The sounds begin again, but the silence has set them off from the others and has made them more terrible.

Paasche interpreted the silence as marking the passing of the \textit{vánardreki}, who had flown through both the air and the sea (\textit{Glævalds götu}). With that greater noise ended, it now becomes possible to hear the sounds from the depths of hell.\textsuperscript{218} Certainly one of the sounds enumerated was the thunderous flapping of dragon wings, but it is hard to imagine a Satanic dragon passing by overhead, minding his own business aside from leaving residual audible turbulence. Particularly if there is but one huge dragon that


\textsuperscript{218} Fredrik Paasche, \textit{Hedenskap og Kristendom} (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 191.
eats souls, why would it have ignored the narrator? Since any dragon was last seen, the narrator seems calmly to have been watching the solar stag and the seven riders.

There have been many loud noises discussed in Sólarljóð, and they have always been associated with wind and sea—the components of storms and the natural loud sounds of medieval Iceland. In short, the storm is now over. The tumult of death itself has been left behind. Everything heard up until now simply stops and becomes silent at the beginning of stanza fifty-seven. The narrator has now moved to a different area.

Yet there is also a strong Biblical connotation to this calm. It was one of the miracles performed by Jesus to calm the winds and water at Capernaum (Matt. 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24). The awesome hand of God is felt here, too, similarly calming the rage of winds and waters. Perhaps, as in the Gospels, it is a special reminder to the Christian of the need for faith. Certainly in the context of Sólarljóð it is a reminder that there must be a divine plan behind this view of the afterlife. The scene changes now, and there is an intelligence behind the change.

With the chaotic noises of the entrance to the kvölheimar behind him, the narrator becomes able to hear new and more specific sounds. Alas, these sounds are no less terrible. This is the calm before new storms. A doleful and dire sound is heard, as of wailing, perhaps, yet the only specific source mentioned that might produce sound is milling. The turning of these mill wheels must be making a sound far greater and far more miserable sounding than any mills of mortals. Any mill-song accompanying these labors would surely be a wrenching lament as well.

The people making the noise complained of are svipvisar women—'false, traitorous or fickle'. This is generally interpreted as a reference to adulteresses, and the interpretation does not seem at all unreasonable. The restless revolving of a hand-turned mill wheel is an appropriate analogy to the inconstant dissatisfaction of an unfaithful wife. Grinding and milling also have undoubted sexual connotations. The primary difficulty is with such women milling mould for their husbands. This is surely a futile task, as
no satisfactory meal will result, but the work itself seems hardly more onerous to the women than their earthly tasks of grinding barley or rye. It is the unloved husbands who might be expected to suffer more by being fed dirt. Björn Ólsen changed mönnum to munum, and thereby shifted any such gustatory punishment to the illicitly loved men instead of to the husbands.  

This perhaps increased the burden on the women as well, if they are to give such food to the ones they really love.

Treacherous women milling, of course, also conjures images of Fenja and Menja of Grottasöngr, grinding out an evil fate for Fróði while they were supposed to be grinding out gold. Yet the relevance of that poem here is at most the idea of unhappiness resulting from a treacherous grinding intended to produce happiness. It could account for the choice of grinding as a particular punishment. Women who are treacherous in life must turn the gigantically heavy wheel used so treacherously in Grottasöngr. But of course the treachery of Fenja and Menja had nothing to do with adultery, and would more properly be called vengeance than fickleness.

Thus far in Sólarljóð, the only image of women seems to have been one where they may lead men astray from their proper pursuits and into death. The woman responsible for the destruction of Sváfaðr and Skarð in Sólarljóð had no particular responsibility to either of them. Yet like Fenja and Menja, she nonetheless ground them their fate. Like these svipvisar konur in Sólarljóð fifty-seven and fifty-eight, that woman caused “her” men to bite the dust, and no doubt to be buried beneath the mould. The specific fate dealt out to those earthly men by the woman in Sólarljóð stanzas ten to fourteen was death.

The view of women producing a deadly fate is shared not only with Grottasöngr, but much more strongly with the Bible. It is in the Bible that Eve brings death not only to her man Adam but to all mankind through the food she treacherously presented. In contravention of God’s commandment, she made into food the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Her treachery lay not in adultery, but in disobedience to God. Her

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unfaithfulness was not to the institution of marriage nor directly to her man Adam, but rather to the divinity. It was God who had forbidden them to eat the fruit of this tree, “for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). One traitorous act against God worked against Eve’s man by making his food deadly. Eve thus became treacherous to Adam as well as to God. Instead of nourishment, the food Eve presented to Adam brought mortality. Hence, the grinding of earth as food in Sólarljóð could be a direct reference to Genesis 3:17—“cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.”

Dirt is the meal ground by the women in stanza fifty-seven of Sólarljóð. Dirt is also the metonymous food of mankind after the condemnation to mortality in the Bible. Sólarljóð leaves no mistake about the Bible’s curse and prediction for human beings, that “unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 13:19). Sólarljóð 47.6 states it as “maðr er moldu samr.” In this particular kvöllheimr, it seems the women false to God, and thus false also to their husbands, are milling the mould—death—as nourishment for their men.

**Stanza 58**

Drejrga steina
thær hinar dökkvó konur
dróu dapurlega,
Blöðug hiorðum
hiengum theim fyr brjóst
vtan,
mædd við miklum trega:

Dreyrga steina
thær hinar dekku konur
drógu daprilaga.
Blöðug hjörtu
hengu theim fyr brjóst utan
mædd við miklum trega.

Gory stones
the dark women
turned dismal.
Bloody hearts
hung out from their breasts
exhausted with extreme
sorrow.

The women responsible for grinding earth for their men are more clearly seen to be punished in stanza fifty-eight. This is not just a more literal grinding out of death in hell than had been done by disobeying God in life, or by merely inheriting the wily feminine nature of Eve. This grinding is a simple analogy with what was done in life, but it is obviously a punishment as well. The stones turned are gory with the blood from each woman’s own heart. The dark women must be suffering excruciating pain. The stones seem also to be heavy; it is exhausting work, and the women are both sad and reluctant to be grinding, even aside from the injuries described as physical.
The imagery of this stanza is absolutely clear. There is no doubt about what these women are doing. Even the emotions are clearly described. Sorrow, grief, and reluctance are explicitly stated. The pain of bloody hearts hanging from the body can be imagined quite easily. Nonetheless, there is something supremely puzzling here. Perhaps it is because the pain is never mentioned. Despite obvious physical torture, it is the emotional misery that seems paramount. The stanza expresses the agony of regret more strongly than that of any physical torture. The hearts hanging from the breast seem to indicate a sickness at heart, an exposure and violation of one of the seats of emotion, rather than just some infernal reversal of the Icelandic blood eagle.

The puzzle of this stanza lies in the source of the emotional anguish. What makes these women seem so unnaturally dark and sorrowful? What exactly is the grief that has worn them down as though they were themselves being ground under their own millstones? Do they regret their sins? Do they regret the harm they caused their husbands or paramours? Is theirs simply the regret of the condemned at being deprived of the beatific vision? These questions are not really answered by Sólarljóð.

The sin to be regretted—the only “sin” named—seems to be that of being fickle, whether fickleness refers to adultery or apostasy or simple Christian disobedience or something entirely different. This is the first torment of this particular area to be described, and it is the only torment detailed in more than a single stanza. The punishment thus takes on special significance.

It seems important that those punished are all women. The torture appears to be especially designed for women—forcing on them a form of the same drudgery performed in life. On the other hand, women appear nowhere else in the kvölheimar. Fickleness is often enough perceived as an especially female transgression, but did the author of Sólarljóð intend to place all women together in this particular realm of punishment? Elsewhere in the poem there is positive reference to God’s disir and to holy virgins, so all women are not automatically condemned together. Nonetheless, women seem to have spiritual relevance only to the extent they exert an influence on men. Even here, the purpose of the dreadful grinding is to produce food for men. Perhaps those men also share this realm, but it does not seem likely.
Women seem to be either the true helpers of men in their pursuit of eternal life, or they are the treacherous and fickle temptresses who lead men astray.

There appears to be no middle way for women between true Christian helpmeet and fickle betrayer of men. The good women retain virginity (presumably so as not to tempt men), or they pray for men’s souls, or they help purge men of sin. Sólarljóð is silent about women performing any good acts in life, or doing anything not related to men. In all the worlds of torment there is only one punishment shown for women, with the result that it seems they can commit only one sin—that of fickleness. The woman to be punished is the one who has betrayed men, whether through adultery or through some other way of tempting men to do wrong and lose their hope for eternal life. Aside from a few saints, this seems to encompass the entire female sex.

**Stanza 59**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margan mann</th>
<th>Margan mann</th>
<th>Many a man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sa egl meiddan fart</td>
<td>sa egl meiddan fart</td>
<td>I saw go maimed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a theim Glæddu gótum</td>
<td>á theim glæddu gótum</td>
<td>along those roads of coals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andlit theirra</td>
<td>Andlit theirra</td>
<td>Their faces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thotte mier öll vera</td>
<td>thóttu mér öll vera</td>
<td>I thought all to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryarblöde roðin</td>
<td>rygjar blóði roðin</td>
<td>reddened with women’s blood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stanza fifty-nine makes a transition away from sviðisar konur to margan mann. While it seems as though women may all have been broadly condemned through the specification of a particular limited transgression, the situation for men is reversed. Through the declaration that many men are seen, there is less of an initial limiting. This is no small group of sinners here. But on the other hand, by specifying the group as being large, it is nonetheless made into a clear subset of all men. Not every man is seen here as being condemned. But after the description of punishment for women, the contrast of “margan mann” leaves little doubt that it is specifically members of the male sex being referred to.

The difficulty with stanza fifty-nine lies in the interpretation of the word “ryar” in the last line. The first edition established this as a corruption of rygjar, ‘of women’, although the translation of “Rygjar blóði” was
nevertheless given there as "Fumanti sanguine." Hence, the Latin produced a plausible reading along the lines of Thorpe's "their faces seemed to me all reddened with reeking blood," presumably relating "ryar" to reykr 'smoke'. Another alternative might be based on ryja, 'to pluck, tear, or shear', since that would relate well to the maiming referred to in the second line of the stanza. My own feeling is that the primary thing being described here is the red reflection from glowing coals, and that a solution might better be sought in ryðugr 'rusty' or some other synonym for 'red'.

Whatever one might wish "ryar" to mean, rygjar does seem to follow from the apparent contrast that has been made in the poem between men and women. Women were discussed in the previous two stanzas and the link made as a result could have been intended by the author as much as by readers or copyists. A reading of "rýgjar" does, in fact, occur in the manuscripts as early as the eighteenth century in AM 427, fol. Rygjar is also the one reading that can best be seen on phonological grounds to possibly result in a writing of "ryar." Finally, rygjar has been the accepted reading for two centuries and must be considered to belong to the poem as it exists today, in the absence of some overwhelming argument to the contrary. Hence, we have in stanza fifty-nine many a man whose face seemed to have been smeared with the blood of women.

In the first helming, however, there is no reference to anything beyond the men themselves. The narrator sees that they are maimed. Nothing is said about the nature of the maiming, but something of the magnitude of bleeding hearts hanging from the breast can well be imagined. Björn Ólsen suggested castration, as a punishment to suit the crime of lust. This is surely in


221 Benjamin Thorpe, The Elder Edda of Saemund Sigfusson, Norroena 11 (London: Norroena, 1907) 118.

222 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsängen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 65.

keeping with the apparent contrast between the sexes in these stanzas. This interpretation seems absolutely justified, but on the other hand, not required. The details are left open to be filled in by the audience of Sólarljóð, presumably in as horrible a manner as can be imagined by the individual. What seems most notable is that two separate forms of punishment are again combined.

Like the women who were forced to labor over millstones with their hearts torn out, these men are also somehow maimed in a way independent of the task they are required to perform as punishment. Their primary torture seems to be the typical infernal march across burning coals. Whatever injury may be caused to the soul's feet from walking such a fiery path, it cannot amount to a complete maiming if the walking is to continue. As with the svipvisar konur of stanzas fifty-seven and fifty-eight, these men are tortured by a major physical injury combined with a particular action to be performed. The men must actively walk on coals, even though this does seem only another way of being subjected to pain of a physical sort.

The great difference between the description of the women and that of this particular group of men is that the emotional anguish of the women has no parallel here. There is no sign of regret or remorse or even of pain or suffering. The modifiers, aside from the rather empty quantifier marga, serve only to describe appearances. Perhaps men are not expected to be as emotional. Like the women who seemed rather oblivious to any pain caused by the dreadful exposure of their hearts, these men do not seem especially handicapped by their maiming. But neither do they walk these glowing paths with any expressed reluctance or sorrow. They do not even share the women's exhaustion. Any spiritual aspect of the men's torment seems thereby diminished relative to the torment suffered by the women.

As with the tormented women, the exact nature of sins that may have been committed is less than entirely clear. The second helming refers to faces reddened with the blood of women, so if any specific transgression is being referred to, it is probably related to women, or at least to blood. The most obvious reading seems to be one which would make these men the murderers of women, though one might expect the men sooner to have
blood on their hands than on their faces. However, the women’s blood imagined here was not necessarily shed by the men in violence. This could be menstrual blood somehow related to lust, though Christianity doesn’t seem to stress any spiritual uncleanness in blood per se. This could even be the blood of the women from the previous two stanzas. Their gore had dripped into the mould being ground as food for men, and these could be the men who ate that food. That could at least account for the blood being on their faces rather than elsewhere, while also giving this punishment a perverse element of canibalism. Such a twist might compensate for the lack of any more psychological element obvious in this punishment.

One of the suggestions of the first edition of Sólarljóð was that the blood did not flow from women at all, but from the men’s own wounds at the hands of women. These women—giantesses or furies—may have been responsible for the maiming spoken of in the second line of the stanza.224 This explanation receives some internal support from Sólarljóð, if the kvölheimar are imagined as being ruled by Hel, with “Heljar meyjar” (Sól. 38.4) meting out torments. However, it is difficult to think of blood drawn as being that of the ones who drew it.

Hjalmar Falk and Fredrik Paasche both agreed with the first edition that the women referred to here were no ordinary women, but (based primarily on Draumkvæde) instead witches.225 Falk went on to explain that witches are supposed to drink blood in direct contravention of Christian law. He suggested further that the women of the previous two stanzas must have been witches as well, since they prepared blood as a meal. The blood on the faces of these men would be the mark of the devil, placed there at the initiation of a covenant with him.226

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225 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 40; Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 191.

There is not much in Sólarrjóð itself that actually suggests these men are being punished for witchcraft, either for being witches or for enlisting the aid of witches. The women of stanzas fifty-seven and fifty-eight do not look especially like witches either. They were milling mould into food, and not milling blood. That the food became bloody was a result of their punishment, or a part of it, and not something that seemed at all intended by the women. The idea of an intentional smearing of the face with blood, whether as part of a Satanic dedication or some heathen ritual, is made less likely by the fact that these men only seem to be reddened with blood. One would expect such an important symbol of rebellion against God to be real and unmistakable. There is no indication that there was ever any actual blood on their faces. Only the glowing of the coals seems to cast a red light on these men, through which the narrator is able to recognize a moral stigma.

In all similar descriptions from kvölmheimar, there is some indication of what the sin is for which people are being tormented. The women's blood of this stanza must therefore also be related to the commission of a sin rather than representing a bleeding by the men due to their wounding by Hel's handmaidens. A rygr could very well be a witch or a giantess, but it requires a good imagination to see these men as being punished for having obtained blood from such non-Christian women when there are simpler explanations.

Njörður P. Njarðvík pointed out that rygr does not mean only a giantess or a witch, but also a well-born lady. Indeed, the best translation of the word is probably 'lady', rather than 'woman'. Yet such a lady need not be one of noble birth. This is simply a woman with some extra power, such as the lady of the house, who holds power over her own household. Given the need for alliteration on r, there is little that can be safely concluded from the choice of rygr (if it was even in the original) over kona. These are men with the blood of women on their faces, and there is little doubt that it would have been considered sinful for a man to draw the blood of a woman.

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227 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 137.
Although one could perhaps imagine vampires being punished in this kvölheimr, a less spectacular sin such as ordinary murder seems much more likely. After all, there are many men being punished here, and there must always have been more murderers than vampires. Assuming Sólarljóð to be didactic in purpose, it makes more sense for it to preach against murdering women than against becoming a vampire and making women one’s victim. That women are specified as victims of murder could well follow from the emphasis Sólarljóð places on the shedding of innocent blood, since women would be less likely to be bearing swords in any situation where their guilt or innocence might be unclear. Since the first exemplum, the shedding of innocent blood in Sólarljóð has been something extraordinarily significant. The blood of ladies would almost certainly be blood shed without excuse or justification. It would be innocent blood.

The most important quality of blood, however, is its symbolism of life and death. The Precious Blood of Christ is the eucharistic gift of eternal life. The blood flowing in the veins is the symbol of earthly life. But blood spilled is normally a symbol of death. The blood of the women on the face of these maimed men in stanza fifty-nine is surely what has condemned them to Kvölheimr. If the kvölheimar can be equated with hell, then this blood—the symbol of what they have killed—has condemned them to eternal punishment through the death of the soul.

The key to stanza fifty-nine seems to rest in stanza thirty-one, where those with a “hverfan hug” or faithless mind were condemned to walk paths of glowing coals. Here are the glowing coals, so those walking on them must be the faithless men spoken of. In other words, walking paths of gleeds is the specific punishment reserved for the untrue. This is exactly parallel to the case in stanzas fifty-seven and fifty-eight where fickle women are punished. While the treachery, faithlessness or fickleness could refer to something like Christian apostasy, the fact that men and women are treated separately but almost equally suggests that the fickleness does relate to relations between the sexes. The people punished must be those who are sexually untrue.
Given the key that those faring roads of coals are the unfaithful, Ólsen’s view of this stanza\textsuperscript{228} seems most likely. The men walking the coals are maimed like the women whose hearts were hanging out on account of their fickleness. Like the fickle women, these may have had mayhem done to their hearts as the seat of emotions, but castration seems far more likely, as mayhem to the instrument of lust itself. The men are reddened with the blood of women because the women they seduced have been spiritually murdered by them. Sólarljóð concentrates on life and death, and lust is of special concern because it can lead to the second death—the death of the soul. The unfaithful men are in a world of torment where their own sins have put them, but women who could have been among the holy virgins of heaven must also be in some kvölfheimr through the actions of these men. If this is so, then the peculiarity of the women’s punishment of grinding deadly food for their men may have a parallel here. The work of the men was to result in the damnation of the women they loved.

If the situation of the untrue women and the untrue men in Kvölfheim is so similar, then Sólarljóð may not be as misogynistic as it often appears. The stanzas about women come first, and more detail is given, but the men in stanza fifty-nine seem to be punished for their fickleness against women just as women are punished for their fickleness against men. The details of the men’s punishment are less clear, but that is primarily because the description is confined to one stanza instead of two. Ultimately the crimes of both the men and the women are against God and his laws. Ultimately, the punishment for sins committed during life is the denial of eternal life after mortal death.

Stanza 60

Margarni mann
sä eg moldargeingna,
tha er ei mättu thjónustu na,
Heidnar stjörnur
stöðu yfir höffde theim,
fáðr feikn stofum:

Margan mann
sá ek moldar gengna
tha er ei mättu thjónustu ná
heîðnar stjórnum
stöðu yfir hóði theim
fáðar feiknstöfum.

Many a man
I saw reverted to mould
who couldn't have last rites.
Heathen stars
stood over their heads
painted with portentous runes.

The manuscript *Lbs. 1199, 4o*, differs from the majority of manuscripts by beginning stanza sixty with “margan mann” rather than “marga menn.” Any archtypical manuscript had probably abbreviated the words such that either interpretation would have been possible, but even the writer of this manuscript switches to a plural verb in the second clause. It seems safe to assume a shift from *mann* to *menn*. The poem has thus shifted its focus slightly. As Njóður Njarðvík noted, there is a question in these stanzas as to whether males are being spoken of specifically, or whether *menn* refers to human beings of both sexes.\(^{229}\) This stanza sixty seems to provide a transition between the untrue men of stanza fifty-nine and the men seen in the anaphoric stanzas that follow. *AM 738, 4o*, another of the older manuscripts, demonstrates the structural transition clearly by combining the two opening lines into “Menn sä eg marga.”\(^{230}\)

But the transition is not only structural. If the men punished in stanza fifty-nine have sinned through infidelity to women, then their gender is certainly important. The gender contrast with the women in stanzas fifty-seven and fifty-eight was quite marked. However, the sins of the following stanzas could at least conceivably be committed by members of either sex, and the punishments could likewise be suffered by members of either sex. The concentration on maleness has been removed in the stanzas that begin “menn sä ek tha.” Aside from the *bragnar* of stanza sixty-four, there is no reference to gender in the central part of those stanzas, though the narrator

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\(^{229}\) Njóður Njarðvík, *Solsången* (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 137.

does nonetheless say he saw men, rather than people of entirely neutral gender. Maleness is still relevant to the narrator, of course, as he is male himself. If the heir addressed is also male, then the moral warning may gain in strength by having the condemned souls seem as similar to the addressee as possible. However, there is no compelling argument in favor of imagining that the coals of the kvölheimar heat an exclusively male sauna.

Sólafnjað began its portrayal of kvölheimar with two stanzas describing the torment of women, giving great detail concerning their injuries, actions and emotions. The next stanza described in half as many lines the torment of many a man seen individually, but without report on any emotions suffered. Stanza sixty describes many men as a group, describing more clearly the reason for their being in a world of torment rather than in heaven. In the following stanzas a formulaic phrase is used that shifts attention almost entirely away from the people seen and onto the sins and punishments described. There is a clear shift within Sólafnjað away from describing the suffering of tormented souls and onto enumerations of sins. The author of Sólafnjað never tells everything, but instead relies on the imagination of the audience to fill in details as needed. Ultimately all the suffering souls are referred to as men, but their sole importance is as sinners being punished. Their gender is irrelevant. Only the first sinners listed have faces, wounds, or emotions described to us in any detail at all. The audience must extrapolate the human reactions to suffering sketched at the beginning of the poem to cover the later victims of torture.

In stanza sixty the men observed by the narrator seem to be in the worlds of torment because of a failure to receive the sacraments of the Church. As with most stanzas of Sólafnjað, what appears simple and straightforward leads to difficulties. The main question had been raised by the time of the first edition of the poem, namely, whether this refers to a failure to receive the last rites of the Church or whether a complete excommunication is involved.231

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Falk argued that it is excommunication discussed here. Excommunication was a threat the Icelandic church did make use of during the age of the Sturlungs, and it would result in the denial of a burial in consecrated ground. Excommunication would mean not only the inability to receive the sacraments, but expulsion from the church, such that the former Christian could expect to be treated as a heathen after death. Hence, the punishment of the second helming fits the crime of the first.

Although Paasche was in agreement with Falk, Björn Ólsen felt these were people “sem ekki meðtaka hina helgu kvöldmálitð (thjónustu), áður enn their deija.” It is not clear whether Ólsen is referring specifically to viaticum or to the Eucharist generally, but he does imply that failure to partake of the sacraments is the fault of willfulness rather than of excommunication. Njörður Njarðvík disagrees with Ólsen (apparently equating thjónustu with extremeunction) citing the first narrative of Sólarljóð as evidence that one can indeed get into heaven without it. He finds the theme of excommunication to be the more likely.

However, while those excommunicated might expect to find themselves in a world of punishment where they would be marked as heathens, excommunication is a very strange sin to write about in a didactic poem. One would then be compelled to assume the moral of this stanza to be something like: “do not allow yourself to be excommunicated.” That may be good advice, but in a Christian poem like Sólarljóð, one expects a rule based more on religion and less on expediency, even if the rule needs to be phrased in terms of simple obedience to ecclesiastical authority. Excommunication would likely come as a punishment for some particular sin committed, and it

232 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 41.
is more likely that Sólarrjóð would preach directly against that sin rather than against the excommunication that might result from committing that sin.

On the other hand, showing the sad results that can occur when one does not participate in the sacraments of the church does make sense when the lack of communion is willful and not due to a prohibition by the Church itself. In such a case the moral to be drawn from this stanza may be “go to Church,” or “participate in the sacraments,” or “be a Christian in more than word.”

Because of the strong emphasis on death in this stanza, it seems most likely that the divine services referred to here are indeed last rites. Although all of the souls in the kvölheimar have left the worlds of the living, only this stanza refers to dying. Mortality is stressed in the second line, which expresses dying not just through an image of burial but through the body’s disintegration to dust as well. Ignoring any excommunicant, rites for the dying or dead would certainly be the hardest to obtain, since the one in need of the service is generally the least able to arrange for it.

This stanza does seem to raise questions about the ability to receive services rather than being allowed to participate. The modal verb used in this helming is mega, which could perhaps indicate permission, but which is more likely to show ability. The one who died was not able to receive holy services and was not necessarily denied them by the Church. The modal verb ná would indicate permission, but that verb is not being used as a modal here at all. Ná can hardly be seen to mean more than ‘to obtain’, when used here as an infinitive. However, this brief syllable at the end of the helming does also seem pregnant with death through its proximity to the word nár ‘corpse’. It gives to thjónustu a strong flavor of ná bjargir.

The difficulty with a stanza about the inability to receive last rites (whatever is precisely meant by ‘last rites’) again rests in the problem of determining what moral is being taught. Ability is something over which one generally has no control. Yet a moral can be phrased credibly as “call a priest in a timely manner.” Likewise, the thinking behind this stanza may logically be seen in terms of encouraging the building of churches and the support of priests, so that one might never be caught too far from clergy or consecrated ground.
The lesson could be intended to remind one of the duties to the dead or dying, or even to discourage planning armed ambushes in lonely spots where one might meet death without benefit of clergy.

Njarðvík's objection that the first narrative disproves any need for formal sacrament at death\textsuperscript{236} is without much merit. The case of the greppr (Sól. 1-7) was surely exceptional. He was apparently a lapsed Christian who returned to belief before his death. He had probably received Christian sacraments at some time in his life, and despite his crimes against mankind, there is no reason to believe he had been excommunicated. He did pray to God at the time of his death (Sól. 6). It is true that the greppr did not receive the Sacrament of Extreme Unction between his wounding and his death, but he participated in a rather miraculous sort of martyrdom instead. Through his innocently shed blood he was cleansed of his sins, sharing perhaps in the suffering of Christ as well. In the theology of Sólarljóð, even the mortal sin of murder was apparently remitted, which is more than extreme unction would have been able to accomplish.

Another seeming exception to the need for religious formalities at death was the case of Sörli, who was also killed in innocence (Sól 22) and thrown down a well (Sól. 23) rather than being buried in consecrated ground. That he was summoned to heaven seemed less the effect of his innocence than a demonstration of the power and omniscience of God, but he was innocent when killed nonetheless. The innocent victim is always saved in Sólarljóð, an exception to the need for any particular religious rites. Surely God is capable of saving others as well, but Sólarljóð seems to be urging that one take every possible opportunity to save one's soul before death. One cannot rely on being without sin or in having sins purged through Sólarljóð's version of martyrdom.

Should there be no intervening mechanism for salvation, the sinner can surely expect to suffer for his sins after death. However, among its other benefits, extreme unction can effect the remission of venial sins. Through

\textsuperscript{236} Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 138.
this sacrament, one may be spared much suffering after death. Without the sacrament, one is not necessarily condemned to eternal damnation, but one can expect to suffer for any sins not remitted.

The men seen who had not received holy service are pictured with heathen stars over their heads. This does not seem to be an extraordinarily terrible punishment. Fredrik Paasche explained the punishment as a tormenting fear, one of the important distresses of hell.\textsuperscript{237} However, the image in Sólarljóð is almost entirely visual, while nothing is actually said about fear. The stars are painted with ominous characters perhaps constituting a curse. This might induce fear, but only if there is some future horror that might be actualized as a result of the curse or prediction. If one is in hell, things are not likely to get much worse. There needs to be a clearer indication of fear if that is to be considered the punishment illustrated here.

On the other hand, stanza sixty does contain an element of foreboding that serves as another indication that at least this particular world of torment more closely resembles purgatory than Christian hell. The fate painted on the heathen stars overhead could very well be the eternal death of the soul to be expected after the Last Judgment. Assuming one to have died unshriven, there would surely be a number of sins to suffer for after death. Extreme unction would have allowed the remission of these sins and even of sins one might not have known about having committed. The remaining sins surely weigh upon the head of the deceased, like a burden of heathendom. These sins will be taken before the divine judge on the last day, which is not a promising fate at all.

While the other people in kvölheimar are being tormented, the sinners of stanza sixty simply await the fulfillment of an evil destiny. If this is purgatory, everyone else is suffering in such a way that sin must truly be expiated effectively. It would appear, however, that these people who did not have the benefit of Church ritual in life are also deprived of the benefits of purgation after death. They are no better off than heathens.

\textsuperscript{237} Fredrik Paasche, \textit{Hedenskap og Kristendom} (Oslo: Aschheoug, 1948) 192.
The heathen stars above the heads of these sinners are the unlucky stars of astrological fate. This does not necessarily mean the literal comets suggested by Finn Magnusen, but rather the fate itself. They are out of luck. The future looks like one likely to lead to the second or eternal death, as no doubt spelled out in the curse of the ominous runes. At least these men have nothing to help them. Their heads bear no anointing oil and no blessing has been said over their heads. They must face judgment with no support from the Church. All people must die, but the Church has a great deal of assistance to offer mortals.

### Stanza 61

Menn så og tha
er mjóg ala
ófund um annars hægie:
Blöðgar rungr
voru á Brioste theim,
merkar meintega:

Menn så ek tha
er mjök ala
ófund um annars hagi
blögar rúnir
váru á brjóstí theim
merkar meinliga:

Then I saw men
who greatly bore envy
over affairs of others.
Bloody runes
upon their breast
were painfully inscribed.

Stanza sixty-one begins another series of anaphoric stanzas. The oft-repeated “Menn så ek tha” gives this section the flavor more of a sermon than of a vision. To be sure, the ek is repeated as often as the menn, but the emphasis is not on the first-person experience of the narrator as a cosmic tourist. Nor, for that matter, is the emphasis on the men perceived. “Menn så ek tha” is little more than a formula marking another new stanza with its new idea. Each stanza tells about a sin, and about a punishment. The sinners themselves are of no importance. The point is simply that each sin has its punishment in the next world. One should thus be warned against sinning during life, but no complete catalogue of sins seems to be attempted. Nor do the punishments seem to be carefully tailored to fit the crimes. It is enough that the audience know that punishment of some sort will come, and that it will be unpleasant.

The sin discussed in the first of these parallel stanzas is envy. The object of envy is said to be the advantage of another—in short, anything anyone could expect to ever be envious about. The sin is not at all personalized. It is not

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limited to desire for wealth or for position or for anything at all specifically. It is simply one of the seven deadly sins.

The punishment for envy is more interesting. Bloody runes are written on the breast of each sinner, presumably carved into the flesh. As Njördur Njarðvík wrote, all the critics agree that the breast is site of punishment because it is also the seat of envy. Hjalmar Falk considered this gruesome marking a sign of the outcast, relating it to the mark of Cain and other biblical or saga brandings. Falk does not explain why those guilty of envy are marked as outcasts when all the other outcasts of the kvölheimar are not similarly marked.

James Beresford had hinted that the bloody characters published the nature of the specific crime committed. In fact, this entire episode is quite reminiscent of Kafka’s “In der Strafkolonie.” While one rune would have been quite sufficient to mark the offender as a sinner and an outcast, multiple runes are probably enough to name the sin specifically. Indeed, this punishment could be personalized to the extent of giving to each of the men, carved into his body, the name of that thing he was most envious of in life. Then the punishment would indeed fit the crime.

These runes cannot be read, however, at least by the narrator who informs us. It is not clear to what degree the punishment suits the sin. But there can be little doubt that the mystery of these runes would be known to the sinner tormented by them. Details are left to the imagination, as is usual in Sólarljóð. What is clear is that the sins committed in life will be punished after death—with an inexorability reminiscent of Kafka’s machine.

239 Njördur Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 199.
240 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselskapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 41.
241 James Beresford, trans., The Song of the Sun (London: Johnson, 1805) 43.
Stanza 62

Menn sa eg thar,  Menn sá ek thá,  Then I saw men,
marga [ö]fegre;  marga öfegna;  many and miserable;
their voru viller vega,  their váru villir vega.  they had gone astray.
that kauper sa  that kaupir sá,  That he earns
er thessa heims  er thessa heims  who in this world
[a]past ad öheillum:  apask at öheillum.  is made a fool by mischief

Stanza sixty-two seems to differ slightly from the other anaphoric stanzas in style and in the fact that the punishment is named before the sin. For that matter, the sin named is a very general unrighteousness and thus not nearly as specific as the infractions named elsewhere in this section of Sólarrljóð. The moralistic “that kaupir sá,” gives this stanza a more gnomic flavor of advice being given. The other “menn sá ek thá” stanzas are more visionary, in the sense of simply recording the sights seen in the realm visited.

The men seen here are given an emotion. They are said to be unhappy, though no further details are given concerning their lack of joy. They are called öfegna, the opposite of fegna, which is the word later used by Sólarrljóð to refer to the Second Coming. Hence, the öfegna are probably those unhappy souls who can expect not to be resurrected “á feginsdegi fira” (Sól. 82.3). Once again, this appears to be some sort of purgatorial holding area rather than an infernal realm of eternal punishment.

The sinners seen here are punished by being made or allowed to go astray. Once again, this is not an impressively cruel punishment compared to that suffered by the women of stanzas fifty-seven and fifty-eight. In a place where the roads are paved with glowing coals, to have strayed from the path may even be something of a relief. The usual interpretation of this punishment is simply that those who took the wrong path during life are condemned to continue going the wrong way after death.²⁴²

²⁴² Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 192.
Lee Hollander's translation, which has the men "farin wilding ways,"\textsuperscript{243} seems to indicate that the punishment may include an element of traveling in an even harsher environment than might have been necessary. Perhaps these sinners have left the glowing embers for the roaring flames. I picture men befuddled, confused, foolish, and wandering in aimless circles. These souls are lost in the sense of being unable to find their way anywhere. There is indeed a definite sense of punishment to this. These souls are traveling hopelessly in an eternal search for the exit ramp already passed during life, yet knowing they have already passed it.

The second helming explains who suffers the punishment outlined in the first. That is anyone who is made a fool of by the world's evils. The nature of the \textit{ôheill} is not detailed, and they are, in fact, plural. Any Christian knows that the ways to go wrong are infinite. This is something that cannot be thoroughly specified, although \textit{Sólarljóð} does give several concrete examples. What \textit{Sólarljóð} says here is that these evils—these sins—are able to trick people. They look attractive, but lead to eternal death. Sins make fools or apes of people precisely because they can't all be enumerated and identified in advance. It is usually what appears harmless that most effectively beguiles one, and so \textit{Sólarljóð} can only warn very generally not to be taken in.

The great deceiver behind the temptations that might lead one from the path to eternal life is not said to be the devil, as one might expect, but rather the world. \textit{Sólarljóð} is very consistent in its theme of \textit{contemptus mundi}. It is the world's mischief that leads one astray. Anyone who lets this world's temptations make of fool of him is said to deserve the fate spoken of in the first helming.

The narrator intrudes into the story again in this stanza to stress his moral. No longer is he simply describing a world of torment he has seen. He steps back into the perspective of the audience and refers to the mortal world where he is actually telling his tale. It is this world's evils that lead to all the torments found in the next. This world of mortals is a dangerous place for

\textsuperscript{243} Lee M. Hollander, \textit{Old Norse Poems} (New York: Columbia UP, 1936) 112.
the soul. That point being made, the narrator can return to list some more examples of the sins punished in the worlds of torment.

**Stanza 63**

Menn sa ek thá er mörgum hlutum villtu [um] annars Eigu, flockum their föru til figjarns244 Borgar, og hófðu Byrdar af Byye:  

Then I saw men who many ways cheated for someone’s chattels. They went in hordes to the city of Greed and carried off loads of lead.

The next sin spoken about in Sólarljóð is avarice, and there has been little debate about the meaning of this stanza sixty-three. What is especially interesting about this stanza, though, is that the sinners are not labeled with an abstract sin such as avarice. Nor is it miserliness emphasized, as one might expect, or as the greppr was accused of in the first narrative. Instead, the sinners of this stanza are pictured as worldly criminals. Their crime is fraud.

Sólarljóð is not satisfied to show us a simple thief who lusts after another’s possessions and ultimately steals them. Through the phrase “mörgum hlutum”—something which may initially appear to be just a common filler—Sólarljóð is able to transform a simple conversion of property into an entire range of fraudulent acts. Fraud is said to have been carried out by various means, leaving the audience to imagine a wide variety of cheating, deceit, embezzlement, trickery, confidence schemes and unfair medieval business practices. The “various means” of line 63.2 make it appear that the avaricious will stop at no means to dishonestly aquire wealth from others. This is not just another tiresome appearance of the word margr. It transforms simple fraud into a universal rapacious turpitude.

Despite the sin of avarice being a moral violation, Sólarljóð shows it as having worldly effect. The particular greedy desire for wealth shown is not abstract, but aimed at the possessions of another (63.3). The moral sin is thus

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244 This word appears to have been altered to feigiarns through being written over in heavier letters, probably with the original ink.
manifested as a temporal crime against one’s neighbor. The author of Sólarljóð, however, would probably not have shared quite this view. Instead, he or she would probably have described the world as having been the cause of the sin. The neighbor’s possessions offer a specific temptation to the person who values objects of the mortal world. It is caring for the values of the world that causes one to become greedy and commit the sin of avarice. Consummation of any criminal swindle is secondary at most. As always, the moral is to not care for this transitory world and the things in it. One should concentrate only on what will help one in the eternity following death.

The punishment for avarice and the range of crimes associated with it is clear. It is another variation on the theme of continuing after death what one did wrong in life. The sheer repetition of any sin, perhaps throughout all eternity, does show the futility of any pleasures such a sin might afford. Surely in the case of acquiring wealth, there is little point in continuing to be greedy in a place like Kvölheim, where there is no way of spending the money. Furthermore, since one is on earth such a short time, perhaps there is not really much reason to be greedy here either. That is the lesson of Sólarljóð.

In the worlds of torment, there are many sinners guilty of avarice. They travel in large groups. Their destination is Fégjarn’s stronghold, the residence of Greed personified. Surely it is a strongly walled city or fortress, if it is to surround the miserly. The word Fégjarns has always been interpreted as the possessive form of a name—a personification based on the combination of fé ‘money’ and gjarn ‘desirous of’. Fégjarn is Greed, the one who desires wealth. However, there have been some variations on the theme of Greed.

The first edition translated Fégjarn as Pluto. Plutus might have been a better choice, since it was surely the personification of wealth intended. While Pluto certainly did represent wealth, he is much more strongly identified with death and the underworld. Because of this identification with

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245 Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniaé, 1787) 1:391.
a god of the underworld, there were some rather peculiar interpretations of this stanza around the beginning of the nineteenth century. For example, Finn Magnusen wrote the note: "Underverdenens Guddomme eller Dæmoner forestiltes stedse rige hos alle Folk, da Perler, AEdelstene og kostvare Malme udvælde fra Afgunden og Dybet." This explanation is something of a non sequitur simply from his translation "den Gjerriges Borg". Because of the first edition, Féggjarn (den Gjerrige) had become a chthonic deity.

More recently, Hjalmar Falk made a connection with Mammon a more biblical personification of wealth. Again, I do not believe the intention was to offer a distinctly different interpretation of Féggjarn, but the association was unfortunately somewhat imprecise. Mammon is wealth (fet), while Féggjarn is the desire for wealth. Mammon is often enough (if incorrectly) identified with the love of money. There seems little point in quibbling.

The major point of discussion in this stanza has been with the burdens of lead in the final line. In fact, the first edition had established this back in 1787 as a disappointing but appropriate substitute for someone who had wanted gold. The point has been made explicitly again and again. On the other hand, the lead is also specifically called a burden (Sól. 63.6), so having to lift its weight is also an important part of the punishment. Vigfusson and Powell made a further comparison to the cowl of lead told about by Dante and supposedly used by King John, but the dictum was never developed.

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any case, there is no hint in the text of Sólarljóð about the lead taking any particular shape or being carried in any unusual way.

The normal interpretation of this stanza has swarms of people carrying heavy burdens of lead up to Fégjarð’s fortress. The text says explicitly that groups of people are going to Fégjarð’s burgh (63.3–5) and that they are carrying loads of lead (63.6). It is not certain, however, that both these activities occur at once. The copulative ok of the stanza’s final line could just as well indicate actions performed in sequence. Because Greed’s stronghold is generally imagined at the top of some sort of incline, the steeper the better, the task of the sinners seems to be more arduous if they are lugging heavy weights as they approach it. Indeed, a borg could be a hill, even without a fortification built upon it, so the image is not inappropriate. In fact, it seems a very suitable punishment to picture the swindlers swarming like ants up an anthill, laboriously carrying heavy but worthless lead up the steep slope, only to surrender their burden at the top as a memorial to Greed.

I think it important, however, that the verb used in the final Vollzeile is hafa ‘to have’, ‘to own’ ‘to carry’) and not hefja (‘to lift’). While carrying the weight of lead is surely an important part of the punishment, lifting it is not the sole punishment or even the most important element. The sinners are not just carrying weights to a castle or pressing lead once they get there. The most important aspect of this punishment is the demonstration that wealth is worthless. There is no real difference in value between earthly gold and otherworldly lead. The swindlers who took gold by unfair means seem likely to want to continue using unfair means to aquire wealth after death. Hafa emphasizes this desire for possession, at the same time it can mean “to carry away.” I see these throngs of men going to Fégjarð’s city in search of gold, only to carry away again the worthless but heavy booty of lead. Meanwhile the personified Greed suffers from having his or her coveted wealth, such as it is, stolen by the swindlers.

Perhaps the most diabolical view of this punishment combines all the elements at once. Lead is carried up one side of the hill only to be swindled away and carried back down the other side. The beauty of Sólarljóð is precisely that ambiguity which allows each individual to paint in the details
that seem the most fitting. In any event, the narrator says he has seen men
going to the city of Greed, where nothing is more valuable than burdensome
quantities of lead. This surely contrasts with the city of God, and serves as
another reminder not to love the things of the mortal world. Only those
things should be valued which lead to eternal life.

Stanza 64

Menn sa eg tha
er morgan hófdu
fé og fjörve rænt,
Brjóst i Geignum
rendu Brognun theim,
ófigir Eitrdrekar:

Menn sá ek thá
er morgan hóðu
fé ok fjörvi rænt.
Brjóst i gegovum
rendu brognun theim
ófigir eitrdrekar.

Then I saw men
who had made off with
the money and life of many.
Right through the breasts
of these butchers there slid
powerful poisonous dragons.

Stanza sixty-four has stimulated surprisingly little controversy, despite the
many interesting points it makes. Once again men are seen, and though this
time they are not specifically said to be many, it is said that they have had
many victims. Hence, they probably make up no small number themselves.
The crime of which the men are guilty is twofold—robbery and murder. Not
much has been made by critics of the robbery, and there does not seem to be
any punishment for it mentioned in the second helming that is separable
from the punishment for murder. Sólarljóð seems only interested in the
murder. Of course murder is the greater and mortal sin. As the last stanza
made clear, earthly wealth stolen has no particular value anyway, aside from
the desire for it making one guilty of avarice.

The formulation “fé ok fjörvi rænt” is a quotation from the first two lines of
Sólarljóð and so naturally recalls the narrative of the grepr. Here we see
what would have been the fate of the grepr had he not repented, reformed,
prayed for help and been murdered in what may have been the one innocent
moment of his life. Njörður Njardvík has also mentioned the parallel with
Víðulf in the fifth narrative,\textsuperscript{251} although that story has elements of some of
the other sins (trickery and lying) mentioned in this part of Sólarljóð as well.

\textsuperscript{251} Njörður Njardvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993)
200.
Those who have lived by the sword, causing death on earth, can normally expect to die by the sword to earn a second, eternal death in hell. There has been no disagreement about there being a parallel here between the dragons attacking the breast of each sinner and the swords these murderers ran through the breasts of their victims. The dragons bring a cosmic retribution for the violent acts committed in life. The parallel, however, is even closer than has been noted, for in Icelandic literature swords are not infrequently referred to as serpents. Long and thin and deadly, the sword resembles a snake, a fact made use of by poets in kennings such as blóðormr. The sword is called a worm of blood.

The dragons of stanza sixty-four are larger and more terrible than snakes, but they seem still to represent the serpentine sword. They are just like a snake only more so—they are at least bigger and more unnatural. Yet the dragons cannot be very large if they can pass through a human breast. One hesitates to apply earthly concepts of dimension to denizens of other worlds, but it may be necessary to imagine rather small dragons in Sólarljóð, and to revise the image of the dragons of stanza fifty-four to make them no larger than the singed birds.

As a type of serpent, any dragon is an appropriate resident of the underworld. Snakes live in holes in the ground, and dragons are often said to live in caves. Falk made the connection with Niðöggr, the corpse-eating dragon of Völuspá 39, as well as with various other underworld serpents in literature. What has not been mentioned is the connection of all these ghastly worms with the lowly corpse worm of the memento mori tradition. The death and decomposition that ends the life of the body in the mortal world is shown to have its parallel in the worlds of torment as well. The souls of those who have committed mortal sins also die and are eaten by worms, though the worms are larger and the process is accompanied by eternal torment. Most important, there is no resurrection from this Second Death. The dragons are fatal to the soul.

252 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 42.
That the dragons particularly select the breast as the site of their attack cannot very well have its basis in the murderers always having run their swords through their victim’s hearts, as often suggested. Even literary battles produce a much wider range of mortal wounds. The heart, however, is the organ most associated with life, and so it becomes a symbolic target for anything deadly. The primary characteristic of the dragons in stanza sixty-four is that they are deadly, and represent the death of the soul. In the last line of the stanza they are said to be poisonous (and strong), emphasizing their deadly nature. To be sure, poison may be corrosive and painful, but its primary function is to cause death.

The poisonous dragons slithering through the breasts of these men appear most of all to constitute a metaphor for sin. The heart, as a seat of emotions, is also the place where human sins reside. The desire that drives one to rob and murder is a sinful emotion that can thus be said to live in one’s heart. The heart is the primary target for sin during one’s lifetime, with evil acts proceeding from the internal corruption. To sin in one’s heart during this life on earth is shown to throw that same heart open to dragons of retribution after death.

Stanza 65

Menn sá eg þá,  Menn sá ek þá  Then I saw men
er minst vildu,  er minst vildu  who least desired
halda helga daga:  halda helga daga  to hold holy days.
Hendur theira  hendr theirra  To scalding stones
varu a heitum steinum,  váru á heitum steinum  were their hands
negldar naudlega:  negldar naudliga.  excruciatingly nailed.

With stanza sixty-five Sólarljóð demonstrates that the world’s of torment are not reserved only for those committing the seven deadlys: sins. The men seen next are those who did not want to celebrate religious holidays. This presumably refers to a violation of one of the top ten commandments, that mandating the observance of the sabbath (Exod. 20: 8–11). Once again, there is

an indication of sin residing in the heart, in the intention rather than the act. These men are only explicitly said to have little desired to observe the holy days. It is not said what their actual actions were.

The punishment for the sin of wanting to work on holy days is to have one’s hands nailed to hot stones. The link between the crime and the punishment was clear by 1787. The torture is directed specifically at the hands, because it is with the hands that one violates a day of rest. The hands are the instruments through which work is carried out. Furthermore, fastening the hands is said to force an immobility intended to counter the illicit activity that had been the sin in life. 254 This clever explanation has been accepted ever since, although the feature of immobility is not always mentioned.

Of course, the torture of the hands also reflects a pun on the word halda in line three. Holy days are held, in the sense of being observed. But halda can also be a physical holding with the hands, as is more usual. In this case rocks are given to the sinner to hold.

Driving nails into rocks is no easy task, even when the stones are at a comfortable temperature. That the hands are fastened by means of nailing therefore seems rather peculiar, and reminiscent of the Crucifixion. But just because of Christ’s crucifixion, nailing the hands probably came to mind as an especially painful punishment. The physical suffering of Christ was surely something frequently stressed. That the rocks should be hot is not at all surprising on a volcanic island, and it well suits the usual infernal images with their fire and brimstone. Yet nailing hands to hot stones may not have shown such a great deal of imagination on the part of Sólárljóð’s author. According to Njörður Njarðvík, this was an actual form of medieval torture. 255

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255 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsângen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 140.
Stanza 66

Menn sá ek thá
er af mikillæti
vîrðask vínum framað
klaði theirra
várð kymiliga
eldi um slægin.

Then I saw men
who from pompousness
seemed to surpass their prospects.
Their clothes
were comically
covered about with fire.

The problems in stanza sixty-six are once again related mostly to the text itself.
The middle voiced vîrðask (from line three) has been something of a puzzle
since the first edition, because it generally seems to have had an intransitive
meaning such as ‘they reckoned’, or even an impersonal ‘it seemed’.  
Guðmundur Magnússon read it as a straight reflexive vîrtho sik ‘they
thought themselves [to be ...]’,256 which has been the standard reading
since.257 However, Vigfusson and Powell did suggest “væðask or væddask, a
plain and manifest emendation”258 for the word in what was their line 134.
This results in an eminently sensible “I saw men, that through pride had
dressed too sumptuously.”259 This emendation was also accepted by Finnur
Jónsson260 and continues to exert an influence, particularly on interpreters
and translators.261

Whatever the precise wording of the stanza, the sin being condemned is
clearly pride. These are men who in life thought themselves to be better than

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256 Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols.  
(Havnæ, 1787) 1:392.

257 E.g. Ýjóður Njarðvik, Solsângen (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet,  
1993) 140.

258 Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, Corpus Poeticum Boreale, 2  

259 Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, Corpus Poeticum Boreale, 2  

260 Finnur Jónsson, ed., Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning (København:  
Gyldendal, 1912): B1: 646.

261 E.g. Alan Boucher, The Lily and Lay of the Sun (Reykjavik: Bóksala  
Stúdenta, 1985) 1-40, 2-40; where the Icelandic says vîrðusk, but the translation  
reads as though it had been væðask.
other people, or at least better than they really were. My interpretation treats \textit{virda\dsk} in the sense of being esteemed by others, which I see here as simply taking the personal pride one step further and convincing others as well as oneself, by means of external display. It does not seem here to be an arrogance in the heart that is being punished, but instead an outward exhibition that would most certainly have been manifested by sumptuous clothing.

It does not seem necessary for pretentious clothing specifically to have been mentioned in the first helming, particularly considering the second helming. Clothing would have been the first marker of an elevated social class to which any prideful person would have wanted to pretend. There were no luxury automobiles for the purpose. An emendation to \textit{va\dask} is therefore superfluous.

The sinners of this stanza act superior to other people and to what one would expect from a true analysis of their situation. Pretentious dressing and a pronounced pomposity in actions and attitudes would be the primary symptoms of such a prideful sin. Given the hierarchy even within the medieval Church, it is surely going too far to assume here an advocacy of Christian egalitarianism, yet such would be in keeping with the message of \textit{Sólarljóð} as a whole. After all, earthly status has no importance in the eternal scheme of things. High and low, rich and poor are all reduced to the same naked bones after death. The grave is the great equalizer. Pride and arrogance are based only on transitory advantages that are removed by death. Only the sins will remain to be punished. One should not pretend to be better than one is, for ultimately all mortals are nothing but creations from the same dust. But sin will be carried into the next world and punished severely.

The punishment for prideful posturing is to have one’s clothing—the outward manifestation of the earthly pride—consumed by flames. The adverb referring to this infernal combustion has provided the second textual difficulty of this stanza. The word \textit{kymiliga} ‘humorously’, which occupies line 66.5 of at least the oldest manuscripts, appears in some of the later ones as \textit{kynliga} ‘marvelously’. Starting with Munch’s edition,\textsuperscript{262} this latter reading

\textsuperscript{262} P. A. Munch, \textit{Den ældre Edda} (Christiania: Malling, 1847) 183.
has been adopted as the standard. To the modern reader the spontaneous combustion of someone’s clothing in hell may seem more extraordinary than hilarious, so the adoption of kynliga is easy to understand.

A sudden spontaneous combustion of clothing is certainly marvelous and a wonder, but given the context of the kvölheimar, it is not nearly as unusual as most of the things seen up to this point. Burning clothes generally result in burned bodies as well, and so are not something usually considered funny. However, these are not just any clothes bursting into flame.

This is the humor of the snowball knocking off the top hat. Normal clothing like a cloth cap, does not produce any amusement when it is pelted with snow, but a top hat is a very funny target, simply because of the arrogant pomposity it represents. People delight in bringing down the ones who take such extreme measures to advertise a belief in their personal elevation. Therefore, the sight of the tycoon chasing after his top hat is a frequent source of modern comedy. Likewise, the ignition of pompous clothing was probably humorous at the time Sólarrjóð was written.

Hjalmar Falk noted the parallel in this stanza with The Vision of Thurkill, as well as with a fifteenth-century William Staunton’s Vision. The place of punishment in Thurkill’s Vision is an infernal theater where the condemned act out their earthly sins. As one part of his punishment, the proud man has his clothes turn to fire and consume his body. Hence, the idea of this sort of punishment being humorous is not at all unheard of. There is no reason to “correct” the reading of kymiliga. Tom C. Gardner has demonstrated that there was once a clear pattern of turning infernal torture into entertainment. Sólarrjóð is not alone if it finds amusement in some of the tortures of the afterlife.

263 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarrjóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 42.


In stanza sixty-six pride is manifested through magnificence in clothing. After death this clothing is burned in such a way that emphasizes how ludicrous public displays of pride really are. No doubt this is also a very painful punishment, but certainly more interesting than walking glowing coals.

Stanza 67

Menn sá eg thá
[elr margt hafa
ord á annan logit
heljar hrafnar
vr hófde [theljmun,
hrædilega266 Sónir slitu:

Then I saw men
who many words
about another had lied.
The ravens of Hel
from out of their heads
harshly tore their eyes.

From the deadly sin of pride expressed as a violation of sumptuary sensibility, Sólarljóð returns to condemn the violation of another of the ten commandments. The word used is ljúga, ‘to lie’, or more accurately ljúga á ‘to lie about’ someone. In the words of Exod. 20:16, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” Sólarljóð changes its usual pattern of talking about many men to emphasize the many untrue words being spoken, but this probably has little significance beyond adding some variety to this part of the poem. The sin is no doubt compounded by its repetition, but a single false accusation would probably still be grounds for locating a liar in this particular corner of a world of torment.

The sin at issue here seems to follow the biblical commandment against false witness closely, down to the specification that the words lied are about annan, with ‘another’ corresponding to ‘neighbor’. Probably encompassed here are also the transgressions of mendacity, perjury and even gossip. Any closer specification of the sin intended here might be seen as serving to exclude some other aspect of the transgression. The point is always that all sins are punished.

266 This was changed to hardilega by writing over it, probably by the original writer.
The punishment for this sin does not seem to fit the crime as well as it might. Ravens tear out the eyes of the liar, when in fact it might make more sense for them to attack the liar’s tongue. That is the organ most directly responsible for mendacity. However, the eyes are organs of sight, and the sense of sight is emphasized through the use of the word sjónir rather than the more neutral auga. Sight is the sense to use for witnessing. When that seen is lied about, or dishonest words are uttered about something one has not seen at all, then the sinner might just as well have had no eyes. The punishment of blinding is thus not entirely inappropriate.

That ravens are the agents of the blinding here does not seem to have any special significance. As the messengers of Óinn, ravens certainly belong in the infernal reaches of an Icelandic Christian poem. Hjalmar Falk lists several references to ravens in both Nordic and biblical literature, but examples of ravens as somehow demonic are legion. As birds that at least sometimes eat carrion, ravens have a bad reputation for devouring corpses. The eyes, of course, represent the juiciest morsels.

Fjölsvinnsmál 45 constitutes a curse that ravens should tear out the eyes (slíta sjónir) of a liar as he swings on the gallows. Although ravens, gallows, and the pecking out of eyes are practically inseparable images in European folklore, the addition of the sin of lying makes the parallel with Sólarljóð 67 rather striking. Yet Fjölsvinnsmál is not interested in sin, or in false witness being borne against another. Menglöð’s threat there is designed to ensure only that the truth is being told to her. Nor is hanging in any way associated with the punishment in this stanza of Sólarljóð. No poet works in a vacuum, but neither is there any reason to insist on direct influence here in either direction. The images are nearly universal, and there is nothing in Fjölsvinnsmál 45 that helps to illuminate any problems in Sólarljóð.

The only problem in stanza sixty-seven of Sólarljóð that seems to remain concerns the first word of the last line. The sample manuscript has the word hraðiliga ‘dreadfully’ written over with the more common reading hraðliga.

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267 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 43.
‘severely’. Either reading seems appropriate, since the punishment is dreadful and to be feared, at the same time that it seems harsh or severe. Yet *hardliga* seems to be correct. The ravens accomplish the binding in a stern and severe manner. This gives the birds the appearance of an intelligence fitting their position in folklore and literature (*Fjölsvinnsmál* 45.1 called them *horskir hrafnar*) and it makes their acts seem intentional. This is not the random feeding of carrion birds, but the careful administration of divine punishment. The ravens are simply executing a sentence in the way the sinners deserve. As always, the punishments shown in the worlds of torment are the just result of sins committed during life. Whereas the mortal corpses desecrated by scavengers in our world may expect a restoration and resurrection at the Second Coming, the souls condemned to these otherworldly punishments can expect to suffer eternally.

**Stanza 68**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allar ögnir</th>
<th>Allar ógnir</th>
<th>All the horrors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fær thu ei vitadi</td>
<td>fær þu ei vitað</td>
<td>the hel-goers bear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[th]ær sem helgeingner hafa:</td>
<td>thær er helgengnir hafa.</td>
<td>you cannot come to know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sætar synder</td>
<td>sætir syndir</td>
<td>Sweet sins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verða á sárum bótum</td>
<td>verða at sárum bóturn.</td>
<td>become painful penalties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After seven stanzas beginning with “Menn sá ek thá,” the formula has become an expected pattern, so that the break in the anaphor at stanza sixty-eight comes as a surprise. Until now, there has been a steady progression of sights seen in the worlds of torment. Men are tortured in one way after another, with no clear pattern or logic to the way sights are presented either to the narrator or to his audience. The mystical number seven has been reached, but the sins enumerated in the examples have not reasonably corresponded to any list of seven deadly sins. The sins seem random, differing in severity, in nature and in their earthly victims. For this list of sins to be at all comprehensive, it could go on and on, if not indefinitely, at least to cover all the seven (or more) deadly sins and violations of the ten commandments. This indiscriminate list of sinners seen is said in stanza sixty-eight to be only partial. By now we have learned the pattern, and there
is really no need to tell about every sin and its punishment. The listed examples suffice.

The narrator of Sólarljóð tells his listener (thú) that there are many more terrors in hel that could be told about. However, the listener cannot have all of them demonstrated. Perhaps the narrator is withholding information simply because he wants to get on with his story. Perhaps he wants to protect his heir from the distress of having to hear about even greater horrors. After all, more serious sins against God, such as blasphemy or idolatry have not been mentioned. There is an implication that the horrors not mentioned may be greater than the ones that were mentioned. Perhaps, as a third alternative, the narrator himself was not allowed to see more. There is a divine hand in operation behind the entire vision of the underworld. The limitation leaves the greater religious mysteries protected. No doubt the greatest punishments of hell would be beyond mortal comprehension in any case.

The question again arises, however, as to whether the kvölheimar correspond to the Christian hell at all. Purgatory still remains a clear possibility. Those we have seen punished are called here helgengnir, those who have gone to hel, but hel is not the same as modern English ‘hell’. Hel is no more that a place for those who have died, so helgengnir could simply be those who have died. The tortures depicted may not be eternal punishments for sins, but instead simply painful ways of purging particular sins committed. Sólarljóð is simply not clear on that point. However, Sólarljóð does clearly see a joyous Second Coming and Judgment Day yet to come. It also recognizes the possibility of intercession in aid of those suffering in some way clearly not eternal.

The message of Sólarljóð is that there will be suffering after death for those who have sinned. Never is it said whether the suffering is eternal or simply purgative. The important warning is not to sin during life. The message of the second helming is another statement of this message. No matter how sweet it may seem to sin in this world, there will always be a corresponding suffering imposed in the next world. The suffering imposed, however, is spoken of as a remedy (bót) rather than as a punishment. The sin is repaid,
and the sinner is presumably made whole again, at least if the repayment can be sufficient. The suffering is never actually said to be a punishment as though a case of divine vengeance unrelated to the nature of the sin as a spiritual disease.

There is evidence in stanza sixty-eight that the sins committed in life turn into their own cure after death. Lines four and five seem to support the idea that at least some of the torments depicted consist in continuing after death the same activity that was sinful during life. The pleasure becomes pain when seen in the context of eternity and true Christian values. There is no need for any other sort of remedy. The sinner is punished (or purged) by seeing the error of his own ways yet being forced to continue in that error. The punishment doesn’t fit the crime; the crime is its own punishment. However, since some of the torments shown were clearly not so closely related to the way in which the sins were committed, one should probably not take absolutely literally the statement that sins turn to painful penalties.

That sins lead to penalties is repeated in the last line of the stanza, “æ koma mein eptir munud.” A proverb, universalized through the adverb æ, once more sums up the wisdom of what the narrator wishes to say. With such a clear summing up, the poet of Sólarljóð has marked the end not just of the stanza, but of an entire section. This concludes the description of the bitter tortures of the kvölheimar, although we know there are many more examples we cannot hear about.

6.12. Perhaps Heaven

Stanza sixty-nine resumes the “Menn sá ek thá” anaphor, only the men now described are identified by Christian qualities rather than sins, and their fates are no longer unpleasant. It has become traditional to see here a shift from hell to heaven and to view these as the souls rewarded in paradise. This is a location at which a subdivision of Sólarljóð is usually noted and often labeled something like “heaven” or “paradise.” Sólarljóð does not itself announce a new section here, although the previous stanza did provide a clear ending for the tour of whatever worlds of torment had been visited up to that point.
Vigfusson and Powell took the liberty of supposing here a lost stanza or stanzas that might have included an explanatory introduction for what they thought was a description of heaven. Given the great similarity in structure among the individual stanzas here and in the previous kvölheimar section, one might expect the same number of stanzas in this realm as in the realm before. However, there are fewer. Nor is there any introductory “Frá thví er at ségja” as began the sections at stanzas thirty-three and fifty-three.

Within the existing text of Sólarljóð, there is no actual break in the series of stanzas beginning “Menn sá ek thá,” except for the disclaimer in stanza sixty-eight, that there are more horrors after death than we can be told. The relating of horrors does cease. However, if helgengnir are simply those who have died, and not those who have gone to Christian hell, then the poem certainly continues to speak about helgengnir. Since no sæluheimar are mentioned, it is possible that the narrator is continuing to tell about kvölheimar, but about worlds or regions where there is no longer any such horrible torture.

Although there is no torment described in the following stanzas, neither is there any fabulous reward. While the pains of hell are always easier to imagine than the pleasures of heaven, and generally more interesting to tell about as well, it seems wise to reserve judgment about whether what Sólarljóð refers to as joys (Sól. 71.6) are actually the joys of heaven. Most of the pleasures described have a certain flavor of instruction or enlightenment about them, as if good souls are still being prepared for heaven rather than being there already. The one sure characteristic of heaven is the presence of God, but nowhere in these realms described is he said to be present. The men yet to be seen could be good Christians in some sort of purgatory or other holding area, simply awaiting the day of final judgment.

### Stanza 69

Menr sa eg thå
er mark [h]ófdu
Geðad Guds lógunm,
heinir kyndlar
voru yfir höfd|e theim,
Breðr birartega:

Menn sá ek thå
er mark hóðu
gefit at Gúðs lógun.
Hreinir kyndlar
váru yfir hóði theim
brendir bjartliga.

Then I saw men
who had given mind
to the commandments of God.
Clear candles
were burning brightly,
up above their heads.

The first helming of stanza sixty-nine is subject to different interpretation depending on what text is accepted. The crucial variant is the second (sometimes first) word of the second line. The sample manuscript reads mark where the respected AM 166b, 80, and many other manuscripts have margt or mart. Of course, the textual differences may originally have arisen from different interpretations of the text by the writers of the manuscripts themselves.

Assuming the sample reading mark to be correct, then the men seen here are those who paid attention to the laws of God. This makes the stanza something of an introductory passage, since all the souls seen hereafter have certainly in one way or another obeyed the commandments of God, the laws of the Church, the preachings of Christ, or some other holy precept. The men gave heed to what God wanted rather than being tricked by the world and its pleasures. They seem to be rewarded as a consequence.

If, however, mart or margt is the correct reading, then these men have given much in accordance with God's laws. Guðmundur Högnason explained this giving in terms of offering Christian service or piety, but said that one such duty would be to give actual money for good causes. Finn Magnusen suggested that this meant remembering churches, cloisters and clerics. Hjalmar Falk argued at relatively great length that this stanza refers to giving

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269 Njörður Njarðvik, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 140 reads “er margt” for LBS 1199 in this line. I believe he is mistaken.

270 Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787) 1:393.

271 Finn Magnusen, trans. Den Ældre Edda, Tredie Band (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1822) 228.
alms to the Church. It was he who first pointed out the contrast between the
heathen stars above the heads of those without benefit of church services
(Sól. 60) and the souls illuminated by candles in this stanza sixty-nine.\textsuperscript{272} Those who supported the Church would gain that illumination characteristic
of the Church, while those separated from the Church would have over their
heads the accursed illumination of heathens. The monetary contributions
actually given to a church would have gone in part to buy expensive candles,
and so the heavenly candles of the afterlife are an appropriate reflex. Once
again, the actions performed in life are shown by Sólarljóð to continue as the
reward after death.

Nonetheless, the reading of mark, as found in Lbs 1199, 40, seems the more
likely original reading simply because, as Bjarne Fidjestøl argued, “...det er
mykje lettare å tenkte at mark er blitt til margt under pennen til ein søvnig
skrivar enn det omvendte.”\textsuperscript{273} Particularly with so many stanzas containing
some form of the word margr, it is easy to imagine it being written
automatically. Mark is the reading also of at least the older manuscripts of
the klofnad tradition, though the final k may resemble a t. \textsuperscript{274}

Accepting mark as the reading in 69.2 does not produce any dramatic changes
in interpretation from what has become generally accepted. Men are seen
who had obeyed God’s laws. One of those laws would have included tithing,
so the support of church, cloister and clergy is still encompassed and still
listed first. But this precedence no longer has the sort of force that would
allow anyone to conclude without more that the writer of Sólarljóð was a

\textsuperscript{272} Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos.
Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 46.

\textsuperscript{273} Bjarne Fidjestøl, Sólarljóð, Nordisk institut 4 (Bergen:
Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 55.

\textsuperscript{274} Fidjestøl complained that all editors he knew of followed the reading of
margt, with only the first edition having suggested an alternative (55). The
exception to the rule is Tholander’s edition in Iduna 4, since it attempts to be
a diplomatic version of the University of Uppsala’s manuscript R692, 40. The
alternative of mark is likewise mentioned in diplomatic editions such as
those by Rasmus Rask, Sophus Bugge, Finnur Jónsson, and Njóður
Njarðvík.
(perhaps rather self-seeking) member of the clergy. The primary change results in a lack of any specificity. No longer can the stanza be read to differentiate the giving of money to the Church from giving money to the poor. It cannot fairly be read to speak on the matter of finance at all. Stanza sixty-nine becomes at best an introductory stanza telling about those who did what was required of them to be good Christians. If there is any contrast with the souls to be met with next, it would have to be because of those other souls having perhaps gone even beyond the law to do the things most pleasing to God.

The laws of God to which these men gave attention are not specified. What is meant is surely the divine determination of what separates holiness from sin. This would go beyond the laws of Moses to encompass the whole of canon law, and indeed secular law as well, since any idea of separating Church from State would have been strange. There is certainly nothing in Sólarljóð that seems to reduce God’s laws to the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12) or to replace them with faith (Rom. 3:27–8). It seems safe here to assume the poem is speaking of many laws, though as with those sinners painfully punished, there are only a few actual examples given of souls rewarded for performing particular acts. Each soul in this realm is connected with having obeyed some generally identifiable Christian precept, but the examples are limited. For Sólarljóð to specify too much might have seemed as restricting good Christian deeds.

The second helming of stanza sixty-nine describes the reward of the men who followed God’s laws. Bright lights are held over their heads. The recurrence in line 69.5 of the phrase “yfir hófði theim” invites comparison to stanza sixty, where the phrase first appeared in Sólarljóð.

Margan mann
sá ek moldar gengna
thá er ei máttu thjónustu ná.
Heiðnar stjörnur

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275 The promotion of the Church’s financial interests has been seen as demonstrating that the author of Sólarljóð must have been a member of the clergy, for example by Falk 46, and Ölsen 57.
These were the sinful men who did not receive the last rites of the Church or who for some reason or other did not avail themselves of the sacraments generally. Their penalty compares to the supposed reward of the law-abiding Christians in stanza sixty-nine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heiðmar stjörnur</th>
<th>Hreinir kyndlar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stóðu yfir höfði theim</td>
<td>váru yfir höfði theim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fáðar feiknstöfum.—(Söl. 60)</td>
<td>brendir bjartliga.—(Söl. 69)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The parallel in reward immediately suggests that there may be a parallel in earthly action as well. If the sinners of stanza sixty did not receive Church sacraments, then the saints of stanza sixty-nine must have. It must be in the observance of the sacraments that the better souls obeyed the laws of God. In one way or another, whether through financial support or through partaking of the Eucharist, the Christian has participated in the community of Christ. Conversely, if the men rewarded had followed the laws of the Church in general, the men punished may have disobeyed them in general, which would help explain why they may have been excommunicated.

Approaching these two parallel helmings on a very literal level, one can see here simple images of the disposition of bodies after death. The person in good standing with the Church might have actual wax candles lit over the bier. The person denied a Church burial, however, would have no candles, no church building or churchyard, and could expect burial if any out on some forlorn heath. And exactly here is the supreme pun of Sólarljóð, for instead of candles, this non-Christian corpse would have above it only the stars of the heath: heiðar stjörnur. Of course, this phrase would be understood as meaning ‘bright stars’, a description of the winter stars over the heath, and, as

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276 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 46.
George Tate noted, a phrase also known from Völuspá 57.277 These stars compare as a light source to the candles that brendir björtliga over the heads of Christians in Sól. 69.

The change from heiðar stjörnur to heiðnar stjörnur is not merely a further clever pun, but it serves as well to dim these stars considerably. They become mere symbols of heathendom, marked with characters that seem to foretell a dismal fate. The lights of stanza sixty-nine are likewise symbolic, and not mere candles burning over a corpse. They mark a person as being a member of the Christian community—as being saved.

In the realm beyond death, a burning candle could be a simple sign of Christian distinction, certainly something better than being marked as a heathen. However, the main earthly function of a candle is to give light, and a similar function may be sought here as well. Kyndler could as easily be blazing torches as wax or tallow candles. These men are thoroughly illuminated. As they had been enlightened in life, and had had the wisdom to follow the statutes of the Church, here they are found bathed in another holy light. The situation in life continues once more after death. But just as there were hints among the tormented souls that their disposition may be more purgatorial than final, there are similar hints of a future here.

The heathen stars of stanza sixty were inscribed with curses seeming to thereby indicate a (worse) future. The main purpose of a candle or torch is not to illuminate the person, but to make vision possible. A candle is used to light one’s way, and so there is a possible indication here that these men still have somewhere to go. These lights are a symbol of salvation, surely, appearing as a halo over the head of each of these elect men. But the lights are not the same as halos. The halos would come from inner saintliness and

would be manifested in heaven. The lights seen in this realm would thus constitute but an omen of what is to await in heaven.

The author of Sólarljóð does not say this is part of heaven, or purgatory, or a particular level or world among kvöllheimar. Compared to the torments seen earlier, it may seem like heaven to have candles burning over one’s head. Certainly it is difficult for authors to describe any convincing pleasures of heaven that don’t strike one more as earthly sins. But the light of candles or even torches seems rather subdued compared to the supposed brilliance of heaven or even a reasonably sunny day on earth. Conspicuously absent from this and every other stanza dealing with what is usually considered to be heaven is any reference to the presence of God.

Stanza sixty-nine appears to portray good Christian men who followed the laws of God as dictated by the earthly Church. After death they are found in a place where they are marked as being loyal Christians by having a light shine over their heads. Yet I believe the light is only a foreshadowing—or fore-illumination—of what is to come in heaven after the Last Judgment. Meanwhile, the way to heaven is being lit for these elect souls. In preparation for that day of rejoicing they are being further enlightened. They are being purged not through the “physical” torments of the previous stanzas, but by literally being bathed in light. Sólarljóð gives no clear topography of the afterlife. We are only given an eye-witness testimony that there is a life after death, and that sins are punished and virtues are rewarded. This should be enough to remind us of our own appointment with death and to convince us to obey the laws of God.

Stanza 70

Menn sa eg tha
er mik[l]um hug
veittu fátekum frama:
laasu Englar
helgr bækur
yfer höfde theim:

Menn sá ek thá
er af miklum hugveittu
fátekum frama.
Lásu englar
helgar bær
yfir höfði theim.

Then I saw men
who from the greatness of their
hearts
helped to promote the poor.
Angels read
holy books
up above their heads.

Stanza seventy tells about men who had helped the poor. Although this stanza is generally taken to refer to almsgiving, it appears that something slightly more may have been intended. First, because it was done from the goodness of one’s heart, exhibiting a special Christian magnanimity or munificence, the giver seems to have greater spiritual status than just anyone giving alms. If a contrast with the previous stanza is seen, then this is giving that may surpass what was required by God’s laws. Indeed, there is a sense in this helming of not merely giving money, but of giving whatever sort of aid is really needed. These men have not just thrown scraps to the poor or supported them in their poverty. They seem to have actually elevated the poor to the point where they may no longer have been poor. Of course, Sólarljóð once again gives no details, but stanza seventy is far less ambiguous than most. The Christian virtue praised here is generosity.

It is in the second helming that difficulties arise. The sample manuscript text from Lbs. 1199, 4o, contains a common reading and makes perfect sense, but it does not alliterate properly:

Lásu englar
helgar boekr
yfir hófði theim.—(Sól. 70.4–6)

None of the words in lines four or five shares alliteration with any other word in those lines. The standard manuscript, AM 166b, 8o, became the standard in large part because Bugge thought it offered an alternative that does alliterate. It adds the phrase “ok himna skript” which gave Bugge the material needed to emend the helming and give it the proper poetic form. There is a great deal of variation in the manuscripts, but the alternatives mostly modify the word order and orthography of the following possibilities:
Björn Ólsen thought “himna skript” to be a corruption of “ymna skript,” which would have allowed alliteration with “englar,” while introducing the idea of hymns of praise. Njarðvík has legitimately objected that such a reading lacks manuscript evidence. But even the readings with “himna skript” leave much to be desired. Only the probable descendents of AM 166b, 80, appear to have any such reading, and they cannot agree. Vigfusson and Powell did accept the possibility of “himna skript,” but they protested that “skript is else in poems only used of pictures, mostly of embroidered images, not of written characters.” While this particular protest is not to be given overly much weight, neither does there seem to be any compelling reason for accepting the added words from AM 166b, 80. The reading from AM 167b, 80, while probably an invention of the writer of that manuscript, solves the problem of alliteration in a much more elegant way. One can easily see how the tongue-tangling combination of “ljósir englar / lásu bökkr” might soon result in “lásu englar...” and any number of possible emendations to avoid a repeated lásu. Such an archetypical reading would not be beyond belief. However, it is also fully conceivable that the alliteration always was defective.

279 Bjarne Fidjestøl, Sólarljóð, Nordisk institut 4 (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1979) 69, reflecting the primary manuscript aside from orthography and punctuation.

280 Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) 368.

281 From Sophus Bugge, Norræn Fornkvæði (Christiania: Malling, 1868) 368, his manuscript K.


283 Þjóðar Njarðvík, Sólslæng (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 143.

The poet of Sólarljóð was surely more interested in making his or her point than in passing an exam on poetics.

Aside from the most drastic emendations, none of the suggested readings of the second helming significantly changes its meaning. There are angels reading from books over the heads of the generous souls from the first helming. If Ólsen's ideas are accepted, then they may be singing hymns at the same time. Even so, it is only the reading of books that has seemed especially significant to critics.

The beings reading the books in the second helming are angels. The presence of angels is a good indication of this current location being heaven, although angels are said often to have appeared on earth, and hell itself is supposedly ruled by one. Since Christianity seems usually to consider angels superior beings to humans, it is surprising that they should be honoring mortals, whether with books or hymns. The conclusion must be that these men so honored are very special indeed. If angels are holding books, it is quite possible that the candles of the last stanza were also held by angels. Certainly angels figure again in the following stanza.

More important than the angels, however, are the books themselves. Books were considered to a large degree equivalent to the information held in them. One would not just read a book, for example, but learn it. The men having holy books held over their heads would probably have been considered to be bathed in the holiness of those books much as those beneath candles were bathed in light. They would gain in holiness from the presence of the books.

On an earthly level, it is not hard to imagine a book being held over a corpse much in the way candles would have burned above one.285 This is a simple symbol of sanctification. However, it is in the otherworld where books appear as common iconography. While a saint who is associated with a particular book (as are Mark or Jerome) may be pictured as holding that book,

285 In Sergei Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible, clerics hold an open book over the head of a corpse. A burning candle has been placed in the right hand of the deceased, over his breast. (Stereo Review, January 1992, 100).
Christian artwork commonly contains images of angels holding writings above the heads of saints, if for no other purpose than to identify the one honored.

The book held over the heads of the men in this particular realm has been interpreted as the Bible’s Book of Life, from which the judgment of salvation or damnation is spoken. This could either be a single book for all those judged, or, since plural books are spoken of here, each soul might have a book of his own life, wherein sins and good works are balanced. This general interpretation seems to overlook the fact that there is no evidence of a judgment being made here at all. Any judgment was made in the norns’ seat (stanza fifty-one) or will be made on the last day (stanza eighty-two). If not already in heaven, the good souls spoken of here seem to be in some nebulous realm of the dead, somewhere between death and the Last Judgment. They definitely appear to be directly rewarded, and not judged, by having angels read from books over their heads.

This reward is one that is probably worthy of heaven. The holy books constitute holy words, than which there could be little better. Hearing books read was probably the highest form of entertainment imaginable to the writer of Sólarljóð, and hence an appropriately sinless joy of heaven. Yet at the same time, there is a definite element of instruction in being read to that makes this entire situation again seem as much like a preparation for heaven as like heaven itself.

The final line of the stanza (in all main versions) repeats the “yfir höfði theim” from the conclusion of the previous stanza. This similarity invites

286 Hjalmar Falk, Sólarljóð, Videnskapsselkapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 47.

287 Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 193.

288 This is Falk’s idea (1914, 47). An interesting iconographic example might be The Last Judgment from the middle of the 18th century (Kishi Museum, Karelia), where individual lists seem to be waved over the judged, who then proceed to heaven or hell as on snakes and ladders. It is interesting that most of the relevant artwork seems to come from the Eastern church.
one to imagine that the candles of stanza sixty-nine had been held by angels just like these books are held. That could well be the case. However, this time there is no strong contrast of the virtue praised with any specific vice from the stanzas describing more painful punishment of sinners. The language parallel to stanza sixty remains present, but assisting the poor does not relate in any obvious way to receiving or not receiving holy service. The sinful opposites to the generosity honored would be envy (stanza sixty-one) or avarice (stanza sixty-three) or theft interpreted as covetousness (stanza sixty-four). All of these, however, demonstrated reversals not so much of the Christian’s attitude toward the poor as reversals in the relative economic positions of the judged man and his neighbor. As a practical matter, it might have been difficult to envy or rob a poor man. On the other hand, there was no clear instance of a man punished because he had ignored the poor or done anything to make their condition worse. The poet could easily have included examples or stinginess. Sólarijóð simply is not systematic in contrasting equivalent virtues and vices, any more than it is in listing the cardinal sins or virtues specifically. The sharing of the phrase “yfir hófði theim” does not seem to indicate shared beyond those words themselves.

Another parallel between stanza seventy and stanza sixty can be found in the medium of writing. The heiðnar stjörnur had been marked with feiknstafir, usually interpreted as runes and certainly constituting some sort of written symbol of evil (Sól. 60). This does contrast with holy books and especially with himnaskrift (Sól. 70). Skúli Björn Gunnarsson observed that the parallel can be expanded to encompass stanza sixty-one as well. There runes were rather explicitly carved into the sinner’s breast. The writing itself constituted a major part of the punishment in just such a way as the mere presence of holy writing over the men’s heads in stanza seventy appears to be a reward independent of that writing’s message. In neither punishment nor reward is much detail given about what the writing says. It may be assumed that the holy books, and even himnaskrift, ultimately take their virtue from

their holy message and not from the type of letters in which they are written, but the symbolic virtue of their mere presence is all we are shown.

Inscriptions are used to reward both sinners and saints in Sólarljóð. The virtuous are read pleasant holy books, while the vicious are marked with unholy and ominous characters, carved even into their own flesh. There is a very clear distinction between the treatment of good men and and that of bad men. There is no such contrast, however, between particular vices and particular sins. Sólarljóð is not interested in cataloguing virtues or vices. It simply uses some of them as convenient examples to demonstrate that anything done in this life will have a reward in the next. Virtue will be rewarded, and sin will be punished. The mortal world is transitory, ending in death, with the only true reality being the eternal reward that follows.

**Stanza 71**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menn eg sa tha</th>
<th>Menn sa ek tha</th>
<th>Then I saw men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>er miog hafa,</td>
<td>er mjok hofdu</td>
<td>who had greatly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hungrir i farid hörund:</td>
<td>hungri farit hörund.</td>
<td>abused their bodies with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engljar Guðs</td>
<td>Engljar Guðs</td>
<td>hunger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lutu öllum theim,</td>
<td>lutu öllum theim.</td>
<td>The angels of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that er ædsta vnad,</td>
<td>that er æzta unad-</td>
<td>made obeisance to all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>That is the highest happiness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since before the first edition of Sólarljóð, stanza seventy-one has always been read as referring to fasting, or to fasting as part of a wider asceticism. The narrator sees men who had mortified their flesh through hunger. Njörður Njarðvík has recently and strenuously objected to this interpretation.290 First, he says that ascetics are treated in stanza seventy-three, implying that Sólarljóð would therefore not treat them here as well. More significantly, he draws a parallel with stanza fifty, where he says hörundar hungr occurs in the meaning of ‘carnal desire’.291 Hörund, he writes, is also known in the sense

290 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 144.

of 'sex organ'. According to Njarðvík, the virtue rewarded here is celibacy, not fasting, and these men are honored for their resistance to physical desire.

Hörundar hungr does mean 'carnal desire' or hunger of the flesh. It was objected earlier that even in stanza fifty, this phrase could have included not only lechery, but sins such as luxury, sloth or gluttony. Yet if the phrase is to be interpreted as 'lust of the sex organ', then the range of application does seem to be narrowed considerably. Certainly in modern times, lechery seems to be the most popular carnal sin.

Nevertheless, Njarðvík's hypothesis seems rather strained. The term Hörund appears to have been restricted to human flesh, but otherwise had as full a range as the noun 'flesh' does in Modern English. Unless in a particular limiting context, perhaps like the phrase "hörundar hungr," hörund is not likely to have immediately and overwhelmingly denoted only the sexual. Likewise hungr appears to have had primarily a literal meaning of 'hunger' and not 'lust' or 'desire' for anything beyond food. Stanza seventy-one does not include the words "hörundar hungr," along the lines of the set phrase "lust of the flesh." Instead Sólarljóð simply says these men observed by the narrator had "hungri farit hörund."

The phrase "hungri farit hörund" is not entirely without its problems. Few manuscripts actually contain this reading, with most of them trying to add something after hungrí, or to read the word as hungrí. The sample manuscript Lbs. 1199, 4o, is one example of this. Yet the standard reading of the text remains the most coherent that has been offered. Under the traditional interpretation of that text, hungrí is treated as an instrumental dative, so that the men are said to have "deprived (or mistreated) their flesh by means of hunger." Njarðvík makes no changes to the form of the accepted

293 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 272.
294 See above, p. 570.
text, leaving hungri dative and hörund accusative. Following Njarðvík's reading as I understand it, reading hungr as 'desire' or 'lust', this would mean the men had "deprived their flesh (or sex organs) through lust." What surely must be meant is a deprivation from lust, but no explanation for a dative of abstention has been given. Njarðvík provides very little argumentation for his revolutionary interpretation, since it is obviously crystal clear to him. Perhaps he is assuming hörund is an uninflated genitive, whether through poetic intent or loss in transmission. Then the actual set phrase "hörundar hungr" could be assumed as in stanza fifty, and hungri could be read as a dative object of fara. This could indeed produce a meaning of "then I saw men who had greatly put an end to carnal desire."

However, the text preserved does lack any genitive ending for hörund in stanza seventy-one, and it is not reasonable to assume a genitive meaning when the text makes perfect sense on its face. The standard interpretation of this stanza is clear and unambiguous. The similarity of stanza seventy-one (taken to refer to the mortification of the flesh through fasting) to stanza seventy-three with its mortification of the flesh through self-inflicted pain serves as confirmation that the author of Sólarljóð is including ascetics among the praiseworthy. The approval of fasting reinforces the ascetic theme in this part of Sólarljóð. Otherwise, this section of the poem deals mostly with Christian acts or works of mercy.

The men seen in this part of Sólarljóð have done something positive like helping the poor (Sól. 70) or feeding the hungry (Sól. 72). The ascetics have given not to other mortals, but to God. They have not given mere wealth; they have given themselves. Christlike, they have offered their own suffering, whether through hunger (Sól. 71) or self-flagellation (Sól. 73), or even through their innocent and unplanned death (Sól. 74). Celibacy is not a gift at all. Celibacy is simply an abstention from sinning. It may be a virtue, but it is minimal, and subsumed within the category of those things demanded by God's laws (Sól. 69).

Celibacy, viewed as a rejection of hungers of the flesh, illustrates a praiseworthy ability to withstand the power of temptation. Fasting likewise illustrates a virtuous adherence to the laws of the Church in the face of the
temptations of literal hunger. However, the *mjök* of line 71.2, and indeed the severe *fara* of 71.3, indicate that more than ritual fasting is contemplated in this stanza. These men are Christians who are no longer tempted by any pleasures of the flesh. They have gone out of their way to reject the flesh entirely, ill treating their own bodies for the sake of their souls. The *contemptus mundi* advocated by *Sólarljóð* is illustrated very well. The good Christian should care nothing about the body, nothing about the world, nothing about life. The only real goal is death, for that is what leads to life eternal.

The reward for those who reject not just sin but any care for the world at all is to have the angels bow down before them. This is surely a great honor, and one lacking any of the instructive elements of being read to. No purgation can be involved here, not even through pleasant candlelight. No wonder this referred to as the highest bliss.

It would be ludicrous to think of angels, who have experienced no sexual desire, bowing in respect of the purity of the celibate. However, it is equally ludicrous to think of them bowing in honor of one who has fasted, since they have never felt hunger. The bowing of the angels must be due to the ascetic mortals having been placed in a superior position to the angels within the heavenly hierarchy. These men abased themselves on earth, suffering hunger alongside the poorest of the poor. Their reward is not just to reach heaven, but to be given special status there. Because they so utterly rejected any of the rewards to be offered by earthly life, they are given the highest rewards, the highest bliss, in heaven. These men stand high in the hierarchy of holiness. Perhaps they are honored by the angels also because their suffering on earth was Christlike, and it is that similarity to God the angels so revere.

An interpretation granting ascetics superior status in heaven would seem to preclude the possibility of *Sólarljóð* describing a single (perhaps bicameral) heaven wherein the dead await Judgment Day. However, the verb *lúta* from line five does not necessarily mean 'to bow' as understood in the context of the traditional interpretation. *Lúta* can also mean 'to yield' or 'to give way'. If this is a purgatorial realm, the angels may simply be giving way before those
who rejected their mortal carnality through fasting. Assuming these are not just any angels, but the angels that defend heaven itself, then for them to yield is indeed the highest happiness imaginable.

Ascetics who suffered through self-inflicted fasting may have purged themselves of sin before leaving earth. After death, their presence in a purgatorial hel would have no particular purpose. There would be no need for angels to prevent these purged souls from entering heaven. The angels could only give way before the holy men, or even open their ranks in welcome, as the saints proceed on their pathway to God.

There are various ways of explaining what is happening in stanza seventy-one, but one thing always remains clear. Men who were virtuous in earthly life are rewarded by heavenly angels after death. The reward after death is the highest joy, because it will last eternally. The pains suffered in life are short in the context of the divine cosmos. Therefore, people should look to their own deaths and make the preparations necessary to achieve eternal life.

**Stanza 72**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menn eg sa tha</th>
<th>Menn sá ek thá</th>
<th>Then I saw men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>er modur hafa,</td>
<td>er módr hafa</td>
<td>who had yielded their mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>latit mat i mun,</td>
<td>látit mat í munn.</td>
<td>meals into their mouths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huílur theirra</td>
<td>Hvílur theirra</td>
<td>Their resting places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a himins Geizlum,</td>
<td>váru(^{295}) á himingeislum</td>
<td>on rays of heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hafðar haglega:</td>
<td>hafðar hagliga.</td>
<td>conveniently were carried.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stanza seventy-two may be one of the more peculiar stanzas of Sólarljóð. The men lauded here are those who have fed their mothers. I agree absolutely with Björn Ólsen, who found it peculiar that one should be especially praised for not allowing one’s mother to starve.\(^{296}\) It is much more likely that a módr or ‘weary one’ was intended than a módir or ‘mother’. As Ólsen pointed out, a reading of móðum in line two would make the stanza correspond to the first narrative of Sólarljóð, where food was given to the weary wanderer.

\(^{295}\) From *AM 166b, 80.*

That had been a praiseworthy reversal of the grepr’s character, but it also represented the manifestation of several good Christian works. Giving hospitality to a tired wanderer fulfills the duties of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty and providing shelter to the homeless. These are three of the corporal works of mercy recognized by Catholic tradition, while feeding one’s mother is a filial duty expected even of most non-Christians.

Despite what one might think reasonable, Sólarljóð has módur and not móðum in line 72.2. That is the reading both of the manuscripts and of all editions except that of Ólsen. Guðmundur Magnússon did note the alternative possibility, but he did not adopt it.²⁹⁷ Had he done so, it would probably be the traditional reading today. The only other curiosity in the language of stanza seventy-two is the tense change from pluperfect in the other stanzas to the present perfect hafa lýtt in this one. Although the oldest manuscripts in all traditions agree with this reading, later copyists have reconciled this stanza with the others by changing hafa to höfðu.

The men who the narrator saw next, then, were those each of whom has (or had) put food into the mouth of his mother. The verb lýta implies that there may have been some self-sacrifice involved, as though there had been food only for one and the men had given up their own share. But such need not necessarily have been the case—it simply makes this generosity appear to be a greater gift. It is possible that this stanza is an attempt to combine generosity towards the hungry with the commandment to “honour thy father and thy mother” (Exod. 20:12). Otherwise the ten commandments are not very well represented among God’s laws discussed in this part of Sólarljóð.

The virtuous men have received a reward for their generosity after death, of course. This reward is to have their beds hung on sunbeams, or whatever the holy rays are that emanate from heaven. The author expresses admiration for the way in which these resting places are supported by heaven’s beams, as well he or she might. The adverb hagliga indicates the skillfulness of the divine work in hanging beds from something so completely insubstantial. It

²⁹⁷ Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787) 1:396.
testifies to the suitability or appropriateness of this ethereal suspension as a reward for the men so honored. Of course, this arrangement is comfortable and pleasing to the men honored.

It is difficult to imagine heaven filled with random rays, though it may be brilliantly illuminated. Rays generally radiate from a central point, and the only central point offered for consideration by stanza seventy-two is heaven itself. The rays seem to emanate from heaven. The significance of this is that these comfortable couches must be outside heaven proper. They are very close to heaven—and basking in its rays of warmth, holiness and bliss—but these men seem not to have yet gained admission to heaven itself. On heaven's rays, they are at its very doorstep. The men resting on hvilur are surely ready to rise and enter heaven on the last day, but for now they seem simply to be waiting.

Whether the pleasant beds described are the final bliss intended or there is a better heaven or New Jerusalem to be awaited, it is clear the men of stanza seventy-two have been granted their reward of eternal life. In the mortal world each man nourished his mother, helping to preserve his parent's life. This may have been done with total disregard for the physical nourishment needed by these men themselves, even putting their own lives in danger. The Christian generosity is rewarded in the hereafter. Every act in life has an eternal reward to be collected only after death.

**Stanza 73**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helger meyar</th>
<th>Helgar meyar</th>
<th>Holy maidens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>höfðu h[rein]ega</td>
<td>höfðu hreinliga</td>
<td>had cleanly purged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Säl af Syndum thueigid</td>
<td>säl af syndum thvegig</td>
<td>the soul of its transgressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manna theira</td>
<td>manna theirra,</td>
<td>for all those men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or a morgum d[egi]</td>
<td>er á morgum degi</td>
<td>who on many a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pijna sjálfa sig.</td>
<td>pijna sjálfa sik.</td>
<td>punish their selves themselves.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stanza seventy-three addresses the fate of ascetics who do not wait for the punishments that come after death, but who instead apply their own torment during life. They attempt to purge themselves of their sins even before death. As their reward, the purging process is said to have been completed by holy virgins.
The first edition was concerned with the identity of the saintly girls spoken of here. They may be the same as the "dísir dróttins mála" in Sól. 25.1–2, it was suggested, or they may be allegorical virtues.\textsuperscript{298} not essential. Sólarljóð offers no evidence. Leaving possibility for speculation may be an intentional didactic technique of the poem. It does invite commentary and debate, and has kept the work alive to the present. The edition’s translation of sanctae virgines seems perfectly adequate. One could speculate on some more precise identification, just as one could also speculate on which choir the angels of the poem inhabit.

Beyond the identity of the holy virgins, there has been little controversy concerning what happens in the narrative of this stanza. Nor has the form of the stanza attracted particular attention. However, stanza seventy-three stands out formally because it no longer incorporates the "menn sá ek thá" anaphor. This signals an end to the checklist nature of the tour of the afterlife. The anaphoric stanzas were to a large extent interchangeable (and have been often enough interchanged by translators) making it easy for the audience to imagine many similar examples the narrator simply does not address. The tour does continue, but it is not surprising that this is already the penultimate stanza describing the happier realms of the afterlife. Not carrying the anaphor through to the end makes the conclusion a little less abrupt, perhaps, but if it has any real significance it is probably numerological. Unfortunately, Sólarljóð does not explain the significance of the numbers that seem to have been so important to its author.

While perhaps of no special import to the author of Sólarljóð, some changes occur in this stanza that are quite interesting to the modern reader. Stanza seventy-three, and seventy-four following it, both reverse the order of presentation that had become usual in the stanzas describing the afterlife. The reward is now described before the earthly virtue. Although something similar had been done with the sin and punishment in stanza sixty-two, in these last two stanzas the reward seems to be held out as a particular goal, with the message of the second helmings explaining what sort of person one

\textsuperscript{298} Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havnæ, 1787) 1: 395–6.
must be to receive the heavenly reward. No longer does the narrator simply see faceless men. He sees a reward—becoming pure through a washing by holy virgins. The ability to become sinless is held out to the audience as a general possibility. Who is so blessed as to be able to achieve this advantage? It is given to those who regularly punish themselves for their sinfulness.

Although the reward may still be properly be expressed in the pluperfect, as appropriate to a narrator telling what he had earlier seen, the men are now said to be practicing their virtue in the present tense. To the modern reader this gives a strong sense that the saintly actions are still being performed by other virtuous people at the time of the narration. We the listeners can likewise be or become members of this elect group enjoying heaven simply by following the example of these men, or perhaps by actually joining the same penitential order. Sólarljóð has become less of a neutral listing of rewards and punishments observed in the afterlife. Instead it has become somewhat more direct in its encouragement of the audience to follow the example of good men.

It seems to be assumed here that good men regret their sins. That even the best of men are sinful is nowhere doubted in Sólarljóð. As the poem has clearly shown, all sins will be punished after death. One may, however, have one's soul cleaned of its sin in various ways. The services of the Church referred to in stanza sixty would have been important in precisely this respect. The washing by holy virgins here sounds very attractive, even without any erotic undertones, simply because the clean, sinless soul can expect to be rewarded with eternal life, instead of eternal death.

The labor of the holy maidens seems to be reserved, however, for those who help themselves. Self-torment is required, not as an occasional expression of regret, but on a regular basis—"á mörgum degi." The punishment contemplated here is not necessarily of a physical nature. The self-torment could arise simply from the regret at having sinned. The mortal man may attempt his own purgation through tears—the washing water of stanza fifty. Sorrow and contrition can surely contribute to the expiation of sins. But a more corporal punishment was probably intended. The body is the seat of sinful desires. Created with original sin, it is the worldly aspect of the human
being, and could be perceived as an anchor holding back the soul from its expectation of heaven.

The self-punishment can be imagined as an infliction of pain on the physical body because that body is inherently sinful. Its torment represents a rejection of the desires and lusts of the mortal body, while setting the eternal soul free. The ascetics putting such a philosophy into practice illustrate very well the contemptus mundi of Sólaljóð. They deny the needs of the earthly body (as did those fasting) but go even further to specifically torment the body, thereby manifesting their complete and utter rejection of it. All that matters is the hope for heaven. Sólaljóð advocates looking towards death and the hereafter, because it is there that salvation lies. The joys and pains of earthly life are brief and soon ended by death. Sólaljóð praises these men, for as penitential ascetics know, it is best to suffer on earth so that one may have the joy of eternal life later.

**Stanza 74**

Háfr reidar
sá med himnum fara,
thæg eiga götur) til Gudz:
Menn theim styra
er mirdir ero,
alls fyr önguar sakir:

Hávar reidar
sá ek299 med himnum fara;
thær eiga götur til Guðs.
Menn theim styra
er myrðir eru
alls fyr öngvar sakir.

Glorious chariots
I saw cross the heavens;
they claim the roads to God.
Men steer them
who have been murdered
with no justification at all.

The last glimpse of the worlds of the afterlife given by the narrator of Sólaljóð shows exalted vehicles moving through the heavens on their way to God. At least in this century, the image has always been associated with Elijah’s chariot of fire from 2 Kings 2:11.300 While this is a beautiful picture and appropriately based in the Bible, Sólaljóð says nothing about fire, fiery horses or a whirlwind. The Elijah image does lend support to the argument that this part of Sólaljóð shows people not in heaven but merely on their way to heaven. However, there needs to be some distancing from the biblical story before the actual images of Sólaljóð can become clear.

299 From AM 166b, 80.

300 E.g., Hjalmar Falk, Sólaljóð, Videnskapsselskapets skrifter. II. Hist.-filos. Klasse 7 (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914) 48.
First, what are seen are exalted wheeled vehicles. They may be exalted only in the sense of being high in the sky. As in stanza seventy-three, the poem begins here by telling of the rewards of the afterlife, so as a consequence, anything described here is probably something special. The wagons are likely exalted in their magnificence as well as in their height from the ground. Similarly, they are probably to be thought of as being something fancier than regular medieval Icelandic farm carts—even chariots. The reader is left free to imagine any sort of propulsion for them at all. They are not said to be drawn. Sólarljóð explains only that the vehicles are steered by the same men who are the subject of the stanza. There are, surprisingly, no angelic chauffeurs.

The location of these carts is also somewhat unclear. They do not seem to be taking Elijah’s direct path from earth to heaven. At least the narrator never sees them leave earth. This may simply be because he has been transported far from mundane life himself, and the starting point is not visible. The carts are said to be moving through or among (með) the heavens (plural) and not to Elijah’s singular heaven. Hence, the chariots are seen moving across the sky or perhaps from one otherworldly heaven to the next. The goal is God, but none of the travelers moving in his direction is actually said to reach him.

The reward set as an enticement before us is to have the right to travel the road to God. The way to achieve this bliss is to be murdered while innocent. At once we are returned to the narratives of the greppr and of Sörli. Sörli’s soul was invited to come into God’s bliss (Sól. 24), so it is easy to imagine him in his chariot (maybe even fiery) riding upwards toward God. The soul of the greppr, however, was taken up to God by angels (Sól. 7). One could posit a special miracle related to the spectacular conversion of the greppr, but it is probably better to accept that consistency is a peculiarly modern hobgoblin. Consistency is not a concern of Sólarljóð. It is quite striking, though, that all these victims of murder are said to go to God. God is otherwise conspicuously absent from the described pleasures of the afterlife. While Sörli is not said specifically to go into God’s presence, he is given an invitation from hinu sanni Guð ‘the true God’ to come to his fognud, a
welcoming bliss that seems to imply the presence of the host (Sól. 24.2–3). Innocent victims go to God.

Three times Sólarljóð addresses the subject of those killed in innocence. It must have been an especially important theme to the author for it to have been mentioned so often—and a mystical number of times. In stanza seventy-four the men traveling to God are shown taking multiple roads, which seems to indicate that there are many such men. Perhaps there is indeed a basis here for speculation that Sólarljóð was written during an epidemic of violence. Perhaps the poem was written for an audience directly affected by such murder. For whatever reason, Sólarljóð has made being murdered the surest way to get to heaven.

Assuming Sólarljóð to indeed be a didactic poem, a lesson must be taught here. This lesson, though, can hardly be that one should arrange to have oneself murdered. That would constitute a sinful suicide. However, particularly if the poet saw his time as one of widespread violence, there could be a message here advocating simple innocence. The saintly man described is one who gives no cause for violence against himself. One should not be set on murder oneself, or use violence that might excuse further retaliation by another. Ultimately, one should not commit any transgression that might offend one’s neighbor. This seems to provide a very round-about way of advocating the Christian rule of turning the other cheek. If one never gives offense, but should nonetheless be murdered, heaven is assured.

This rule of being without guilt might be appropriate in violent surroundings where “turn the other cheek” would sound like direct suicide. If adopted widely, the rule would result in the reduction of violence and the provocations that lead up to it. However, before assuming Sólarljóð to be a response directed at any specific violent era, it should be remembered that most religious writers consider themselves to be living in particularly sinful and violent times. The view perhaps implied here by the author of Sólarljóð did not necessarily correspond to any external reality. Those murdered while innocent were, after all, only one among many groups of saints seen. They simply seem to be the ones most emphasized and the ones who are rewarded by being closest to God.
God is never seen by the narrator. As with all the horrors of hel that were explicitly not described in stanza sixty-eight, the vision of God himself may be something forbidden to anyone not a permanent resident of the appropriate realm. Certain sights may well be forbidden to anyone who will return to earth, even if only as a dream or a ghost. Divine mystery must be preserved.

The men riding towards God are never said to reach him or his heaven. Neither God nor heaven is mentioned in any of the anaphoric stanzas in this section usually referred to as being concerned with heaven. The men on heaven’s beams are surely very close to heaven, and the men who had been murdered seem to be even closer. They apparently have been promised entry. Yet that entry may not occur until the last day, the great judgment after the second coming. That is one possibility. Perhaps heaven is thought of as the New Jerusalem to come after the end of the world. Perhaps all the fortunate men described are in heaven already, but perhaps in lower circles than God himself. Perhaps the narrator is simply unable to see into heaven, or into its holier parts. The chariots could indeed all be arriving into God’s presence. The narrator said nothing about seeing their earthly departure, and so he may not have seen the heavenly arrival either.

The one thing that is sure about Sólarljóð’s description of the afterlife is that no detailed topography is given. We are told that the narrator has come i kvölheimar (Sól. 53.3). Perhaps each stanza is a different world of torture. Perhaps the action of each stanza takes place in the same world. Perhaps only stanza fifty-three takes place at the entrance to kvölheimar and everything else takes place somewhere else. The people seen were called helgengnir (Sól. 68.3), but it is not certain whether these people were in a Christian hell or simply in a nebulous realm of hel—the state of being dead. Stanza sixty-eight marked an end to the description of horrible torments, while the descriptions that followed appeared to be rewards that were pleasant. Yet even these blissful rewards could also be forms of torment. Some of them had elements of purgation attached. Others showed a movement toward heaven or toward God. This journey, however joyous, nevertheless implied a present separation from God. For a Christian soul, the separation from God is the very definition of torment.
It seems fairly certain that the highest part of heaven was not shown. There was no image of God. Neither was the lowest area of hell portrayed. There was no devil, no demons, and many horrors were explicitly withheld from our hearing. Nothing was shown that would have been out of place in a single purgatory, although the presentation was such that two major areas could be distinguished. Perhaps each stanza was its own world.

The topography is not clear. The narrator tried to show that there were many more scenes than he could tell about. What is always clear is that actions in the mortal world have their reward after death. Sins are always painfully punished. Virtues are rewarded with pleasant honors that appear to help one on one’s way to God. There is a clear moral given. One must sacrifice the values of this world—to the extent even of literal mortification of the flesh—in order to ensure for oneself the eventual gift of eternal life. Stanza seventy-four is the last glimpse given of the rewards to be met after death.

6.13. A Prayer to God

Stanza 75

Hinn máttke faðir,  
mestur Sonur,  
Heilagur Ande,  
Himins th[ik] bid eg leisa,  
sem skapad hefir  
oss alla Syndum frá:

Hinn mátki Faðir  
mestr Sonr  
Heilagr Andi himins!  
thik bid ek leysa,  
sem skapat hefir  
oss alla syndum frá.

That mighty Father,  
greatest Son,  
Holy Ghost of heaven!  
I pray that you,  
who made us all,  
redeem us all from sins.

Stanza seventy-five is a straightforward prayer to God, invoking him in the separate persons of the trinity in the first helming. In the second helming he is called upon as the creator in the second person singular. The first critics of Sólarljóð were able to use this as evidence that despite pagan references, the poem was indeed Christian and written by someone with at least a rudimentary knowledge of Christian dogma.301

The first helming poses no real problems. The superlative mestur is appropriate for any and all three persons and doesn’t appear to be elevating

301 Edda Saxmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiquior, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787) 1: 397.
the son over the other two persons. The form of the helming seems to be determined by poetics and not theology. The second helming, however, is problematic precisely because theology seems to have overridden poetics.

The second helming as printed here does not alliterate properly. Nothing in line four allirates with anything in line five. Nor is there any alliteration within line six, aside from oss and alla, which cannot both carry stress. The reading of Lbs. 1199, 40, is common and does agree in essentials with the oldest manuscripts of both the other two traditions. However, some of the later manuscripts offer other possibilities. The first edition seized on these to repair the defective alliteration, and the edition’s reading became traditional until the recent trend of following AM 166b, 80. Even Bugge, who first recommended AM 166b, 80, preferred to use the older reading that healed the alliteration.302

Beginning with the reading from the oldest level of manuscripts,

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{thik bið ek leysa,} \\
& \text{sem skapat hefir} \\
& \text{oss alla syndum frá,} \\
& \text{— (Sól. 75.4–6)}
\end{align*}
\]

the sense is relatively clear. The second line is a relative modifier of thik in the first line of the helming, perhaps dislocated, but understandable. The difficulty is that there are two verbs with obligatory object complements and not enough objects to go around. The accusative oss alla can serve as an object in either clause: leysa oss alla or sem skapat hefir oss alla. Although other objects could be assumed, this is probably a simple case of ellipsis with the same complement used in both clauses, to prevent repeating the expression. In other words, the meaning is simply “I pray that you, who made us all, redeem us all from sins.”

In most editions, however, the verb leysa ‘absolve’, ‘release’, loosen’ has been replaced by skilja ‘separate’, ‘part’, ‘exempt from.’ This has been done for the sake of alliteration, although there is manuscript authority for the

reading, at least since Jón Ólafsson's *AM 427, fol.* Likewise, *syndum* 'sins' has been replaced by *eymdum* 'miseries'. Again, this choice achieves alliteration, and is attested by some manuscripts older than the first edition. The choice of these two variants over those in the sample manuscript depends on the usual assumption that the original *Sólarljóð* must have correctly followed traditional rules of Germanic alliteration.

Taking the properly alliterating version of the stanza changes its meaning very little:

\[
\begin{align*}
thik \ bið \ ek \ skilja, 
er \ skapat \ hefir, 
oss \ alla \ eymðum \ frá.
\end{align*}
\]—(Sól. 75.4–6)\textsuperscript{303}

Whereas before, the sense was "I pray that you, who made us all, redeem us all from sins," it now reads "I pray that you, who made us all, exempt us all from miseries." Given the preceding stanzas describing the *kvölheimar*, with their examples of earthly sins causing infernal miseries, this seems to be saying the same thing from the opposite point of view. One reading asks to be redeemed from the sins that result in miseries, while the other asks to be saved from the miseries that result from sin.

Yet in one sense, the traditional reading from the editions fits much better with the preceding stanzas than does the version without alliteration. The prayer for salvation from miseries is equivalent to asking that one's soul be sent to the pleasant places described in stanzas sixty-nine through seventy-four rather than to the brutal places that had been described in stanzas fifty-seven through sixty-seven. Such a prayer serves as a conclusion to what has gone before, summing up, in a way. Two alternatives had been shown, and now there is a prayer that we receive the more attractive of the two.

The prayer "discharge us from sin," on the other hand, is very general and does not have the summing-up quality of the alliterative reading. It does not imply an alternative "and make us virtuous." It might have functioned as a conclusion to the description of sinners being punished, but following after a

\textsuperscript{303} Sophus Bugge, *Norraen Fornkvædi* (Christiania: Malling, 1867) 369.
description of virtuous men being rewarded, it is not so immediately relevant. The people just described were not simply without sin, but had taken rather extreme measures to defend themselves from sin and to lead virtuous lives.

Despite the advantages of the nicely alliterating, conclusory reading from the older editions, the rougher version from the older existing manuscripts seems the better choice. Aside from the fact that there appears little reason for assuming the poet to have been careful to follow rules of alliteration, there are two very good reasons for preferring the reading "leysa oss alla syndum frá."

First, a call to be redeemed from sin corresponds well to the moralistic tone of the poem as a whole. The narrator may petition God for assistance, but he is much more likely to ask not to sin than to ask that his sins simply be overlooked. This is a man who has just been advocating the mortification of the flesh through hunger and torture on earth in order to go to a place where the soul will continue to be scrubbed of its sins, even if in a gentler and more effective manner. The narrator, and probably the poet as well, both truly seem to hate sin. The only examples of divine grace or mercy are confined to those who have been unjustly murdered. This is a very limited circumstance and is especially related to the death of Christ himself. Sins may be redeemed, as through the blood of Christ, but they cannot simply be ignored. Miracles are possible, of course, but the image of God in Sólarljóð is one of a just rather than a merciful ruler. Sins will be punished, and virtues rewarded after death. The way to avoid miseries after death is to avoid sin during life. This is the main message of Sólarljóð. Inasmuch as sin may be unavoidable, it must be repaid by God if not by the sinner. It is not simply forgotten.

The second reason for viewing this stanza as a prayer for protection against sin, and not as a conclusion to the section on the afterlife, is that this allows an explanation for the following stanzas. One of the reasons for viewing stanza seventy-five as a conclusion to the previous stanzas is that it does not stand well on its own. The prayer to God is very abrupt. The prayer in this stanza consists of two parts, an invocation (with an identification) and a petition. God is called upon, and a request is made. What is missing is a
justification for making the request. One expects as a part of the prayer either an explanation of the need for the thing requested, or an explanation of God’s power to grant the request. The previous section is perhaps seen as being connected to this prayer because that section can serve as an explanation of the need for exemption from wretchedness. However, the following two stanzas can similarly serve as an explanation for the need for redemption or exemption from sin. This prayer stanza then becomes less abrupt and the following stanzas can finally be integrated into Sólarljóð. Stanza seventy-five should be read together with stanzas seventy-six and seventy-seven as a single prayer.

Stanza 76

| Vingvör og list vor | Vingvör ok Listvör | Vingvör and Listvör |
| sitía i herdi dyrum, | sitja í herdí dyrum | sit in the door of hardness |
| organs stöle à, | organs stolí á. | in Organ’s seat. |
| järn[na] dreire | Járna dreyri | Iron drops |
| fellur vr nósumn theim, | fellr ór nösum theim | fall from their noses |
| sa vekur fion nz firdum: | sa vekr fjörn með fyrðum. | so that hate arises among men. |

Stanza seventy-six is one of the dark, obscure stanzas of Sólarljóð that has caused the most difficulty. Finnur Jónsson argued that because it is so incomprehensible, it probably was not originally a part of Sólarljóð at all. However, there has been no explanation as to how or why the difficult stanzas of Sólarljóð would have been inserted in just the way they have. Certainly, since this and the other obscure stanzas have been part of the poem for its entire known history, these stanzas can surely be said to belong to it now. In part it is the puzzle they create which has kept Sólarljóð alive and interesting during the last two centuries.

The names in this stanza have caused the greatest problem. Names have caused problems throughout Sólarljóð, because the manuscript copyists have often tried to improve on them, while the text is otherwise usually left alone, barring accident. In this stanza the manuscripts give a wide range of possible names to choose from, and recent critics like Björn Ólsen have emended them to increase the possibilities yet further. ‘Vingvör’ is the choice of AM 166b, 80. It varies from the sample manuscript’s ‘Vingvör’ only by a single letter, and B and V can look quite similar in many medieval hands. The
third old reading is 'Bjúgvör', which is simply 'Bingvör' again, but with a long i and with n read as u. 'Bingvör' is thus a good compromise based on old manuscripts, given that none of the names alliterates or has any obvious allegorical meaning anyway.

The name 'Listvör', with its comprehensible element list 'skill' has produced fewer alternate versions. Hjalmar Falk interpreted the name as "the treacherous one" (den svigefulde), reading the component list as one might in modern German. Reasonably certain is only that in the current Sólarljóð Bingvör and Listvör are female characters. The ending -vör is found in feminine names, though not necessarily only in those of witches. However, Paasche is probably correct in assuming these to be evil women, given their apparent incitement to violence in this stanza.

In the second line almost all manuscripts confront us with another incomprehensible name, Herðir. The sample manuscript, however, does not read 'Herdis', but rather a perhaps even less comprehensible 'herdi'. Instead of the genitive of someone named Herðir, there is the genitive of a noun meaning 'hardness'. The awaking of hatred (line 6) is not unrelated to hard-heartedness, but what isn't perfectly clear is always easier to treat as a name. The sample manuscript is extremely unusual here, but its reading neither adds to nor subtracts from the mystery surrounding this stanza. The first edition suggested that herdis was a contraction of 'her-dísar', meaning goddesses or female spirits of war. This does fit with the waking of hate in the last line of this stanza, but the introduction of such goddesses doesn't fit in very well with the poem as a whole. Nor is it clear what their doors might be.

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305 Fredrik Paasche, Hedenskap og Kristendom (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948) 194.
The third line presents yet another problem with the word 'organs'. This is usually taken as referring to an organ, the musical instrument, with a great deal of interpretation required to explain why these women are playing an organ in somebody's doorway. It would not be a strikingly effective metaphor in any case, since the first organ was set up in Iceland only in 1840, but of course some Icelanders would have known organs from abroad. A foreign mystique would not be out of place here. The author of Sólarrljóð certainly did consider sound to be very important.

However, the sound of the organ does not require a massive musical instrument. In his English translation, Thorpe took the sound itself and rendered this line as "on resounding seat." 307 Björn Ólsen pointed out that the organ could be organum, simply polyphonic vocal music. 308 It would be, as Njörður Njarðvík called it, "ett slags duett." 309 This produces an appropriately sinful sirens' song. We have, then, two temptresses, ideal for those who seek the sin of lust in every passage of Sólarrljóð. Bjarne Fidjestøl even found references to the worldly woman being the devil's organ. 310 Hence, very suitably within the context of Sólarrljóð as a whole, are women representing the temptation of lust, or even devilish temptations of the world generally. That lust could conclude with the hate of the final line of this stanza has been demonstrated already in Sólarrljóð by the narrative of S váfaðr and Skarthoðinn, the former friends who fought a duel over some unknown woman.

309 Njörður Njarðvík, Solsången (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993) 147.
Yet "organ" may not be organ at all. By the 1750s, Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík had already suggested that what was referred to here was not an organ (organum) at all, but orgaman—'severity', 'hardness', and ultimately 'anger'.\(^{311}\) This certainly accords with the word herði from the previous line. Bergmann somewhat similarly explained organs stóli as the seat of terror, deriving 'organ' through questionable etymological derivation from the Latin 'Gorgōna'.\(^{312}\) "Organ" has also, as a variant of "aurgans," been related to lucre.\(^{313}\) Greed has, after all, been the most popular sin found in Sólarljóð after lust. In the end, Organ becomes an allegorical name to be applied however the critic wishes. Without examining possible emendations, however, it should be noted that only one existing manuscript seems to have anything in this position other than "organs" or "organz," with or without capitalization. NKs 1872, 40, reads "Orgerns" in line 76.3, which could perhaps be related to misdeeds, if not actually to the hate of 76.6.

The first three lines of stanza seventy-six, constituting the entire helming, cannot be easily explained. Assuming this stanza to belong to Sólarljóð at all, it must be defective. Alliteration is not simply used incorrectly here, it is not used at all. This is unusual for Sólarljóð. Only a rather wild grasping at ok, í and á could produce an alliteration with organ. Before thinking of possible emendations, however, it seems better to first have a look at the second helming.

The Vollzeile of the second helming alliterates and makes perfect sense. The first two lines make sense after a fashion, but they do lack alliteration. The járnu dreyri of line four "som bokstavligen tolkat betyder 'vapenblod',\(^{314}\) seem clear enough as a kenning. Dreyri are drops, drops of blood, from the

\(^{311}\) Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík, Det Arnamagnæanske Institut, AM 427, fol., (Copenhagen) p. 66.

\(^{312}\) Bergmann Chants de Sól 170–1.

\(^{313}\) *Edda Sæmundar hinns fróda. Edda Rhythmica seu antiqvior*, 3 vols. (Havniæ, 1787) 1: 398.

verb dreyra ‘to bleed’. Jàrn is simply iron, producing something like “drops of iron that resemble (or recall) blood.” Hence, this could be a simple kenning for the drops of blood that are caused by the use of iron weapons. While to the ear of an English speaker, the use of such a literary device might constitute “doling out to us a miserable pittance of meaning, and dropping even that pittance in the dark, with the hope that it might be lost,” to one used to such tropes, such a kenning can be seen as having a literal meaning, even if only Njarðvík’s “vapenblod,” which looks like nothing so much as another kenning.

These drops of blood-like iron fall from the nostrils of the women named in the first line of the stanza. Aside from not alliterating with anything, line 76.5 is not especially difficult. Nostrils mean nose, which may mean face, which may possibly even mean one’s entire being under standard literary metonymy. It seems that the women of the first line cause blood to flow from the iron that falls from their noses. The last line—the only one that really seems to make absolutely perfect sense—says that in this way, hate is incited among human beings. This seems to be something like a mythological sowing of Homeric dragon’s teeth, producing an ultimate battle.

In sum, two probably allegorical women do something in this stanza to kindle hate among men—a hate apparently ending in bloodshed caused by iron. The imagery throughout this stanza looks like that of a smithy. There are certainly iron drops, but even an organ may share with a smithy the all-important bellows. The nösum could well refer to technical tools of a foundry, while herði’s ‘making hard’ refers to nothing quite so precisely as to the tempering of metal.

The foundry or smithy is quite often portrayed as the devil’s workshop, and souls are frequently tortured by being treated as raw material in just such a place. But however much sinful souls may be heated, cooled, and pounded with sledgehammers in medieval visions, the context of punishment is missing here towards the end of Sólarljóð. There is a strong image of sin

315 James Bereford, trans., The Song of the Sun (London: J. Johnson, 1805) xiii.
being punished in the traditional manner of the literary visions, yet this seems secondary to the immediate action of this stanza. The infernal foundary is recalled here as something to be feared, but it remains in the background.

If this stanza is taken as a cloze exercise, where the questionable words are simply treated as blanks, it looks (in English) something like this:

_____ (fem. name) and _____ (fem. name)
sit in the door of _____ (masc/neut)
in _____'s (masc/neut) seat.
Iron drops
fall from their noses
so that hate arises among men.

First of all, it is clear that all the blanks cannot represent humanoid beings. It is not likely that one man's seat would be located in the doorway of another man. The sample manuscript offers a solution, making the last blank a (feminine) 'hardness', read as obduracy. Yet this reading is not shared by the later manuscripts. Still, given no other reasonable manuscript alternative, one might at least experiment with:

_____ (fem. name) and _____ (fem. name)
sit in the door of obduracy,
in the seat of _____ (masc/neut).
Iron drops
fall from their noses
so that hate arises among men.

Obduracy certainly seems an element that might contribute to hate, blood and battle. Being given two women who produce hate among men, one is referred first to the narrative of Sváfaðr and Skarðhæðinn, who killed each other for the love of a woman earlier in Sólarljóð. Yet in the larger realm of Icelandic literature, the experience of Hallgerðr and Bergthóra of Njáls saga seems more in point. Here are two women—not just one—and they kill not just suitors but ultimately most of the people they have ever come in contact with. Their sin was first of all Christian (or nonChristian) pride, but then certainly also obduracy.
Had two women been sitting in a doorway, in the seat of a third woman, and doing something which through obduracy incited hate between men, the stereotypical gnomic infraction would surely have been gossip. The telling of tales, untrue or inappropriate, often causes masculine violence in literature if not also in reality. Such is the basis for much of the action in Njáls saga. This is the basis for the love of silence advocated in most gnomic advice. In the end, there seem to be two women devoted to entrapping men into hate and violence either through lustful enticement or through gossip or lying falsehoods.

This stanza as a whole is unclear. However, it warns that there are women, perhaps supernatural and perhaps not, who one way or another effect a situation where hate and violence are likely to arise. As such, this stanza is not inappropriate to a prayer. The father here has prayed to the holy trinity for redemption from sin, and here shows how people are likely to be entrapped into sinning. A reason is given for why God should be lenient. Hjalmar Falk also thought that this stanza was inspired by the one previous to it. His view, however, was that there is an unholy trinity here of Satan and his two evil daughters. He saw a similar constellation of deity, while I suspect only a motive being shown here for the petition made in the previous stanza. The petitioner simply wants his sins redeemed, because he was enticed by the forces set up on earth with the sole duty of enticing men to sin. He is essentially pleading entrapment by the evil world for any sins he may have committed in life.

**Stanza 77**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Odins kuon</th>
<th>Oðins kván</th>
<th>Oðín’s woman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rær a jarddr skipe</td>
<td>rær á jarðar skipi</td>
<td>rows on Earth’s ship,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i möðuga mun-ad,</td>
<td>möðug á munað</td>
<td>eager for pleasure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seglum hel[unar]</td>
<td>seglum hennar</td>
<td>Those sails of hers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verdr síð hladíð</td>
<td>verðr síð hladit</td>
<td>will late be lowered,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theim er á þráreipum thumr</td>
<td>theim er á þráreipum thruma</td>
<td>which stand on taut ropes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Stanza seventy-seven seems less difficult than it has been made by the interpreters of Sólarljóð. The first problem concerns the identity of Odin's wife or woman. The candidates for Odin's woman have been three. These are Frigg, his traditional consort, Jörd, the mother earth by whom he bore thórr, and Freyja, the erotic goddess with whom he is associated primarily through common Christian condemnation. Frigg is the goddess of marriage, Wagner's moralist, and a character not generally associated by Christians with evil. Freyja, on the other hand, is the chief Nordic fertility goddess, and so associated with lust, lechery and associated sins. On the basis of her sinfulness alone, Freyja is linked with Odin, who often takes on the role of Christianity's Satan. However, as attractive as Freyja is as goddess of lust, she really has little contact with Odin in Nordic mythology as we know it.

The most likely candidate referred to by this heitr is Jörd. Although Sólarljóð does condemn lust, it seems to be more interested in condemning any form of earthly pleasure. The goal is contemptus mundi, and Jörd represents precisely that earth that should be despised. Jörd is also very specifically referred to as 'Odins kone' in Snorri's Skaldskaparmál, where the phase is given as a formal heitr for her.317 If the writer of Sólarljóð knew Norse mythology only imperfectly through the books read in school, then the comment by Snorri may have amounted to everything known about either Odin or Jörd. Odin's kván is here the evil Frú Welt known to continental medieval literature. She is the manifestation of all the temptations the earth has to offer, while at the same time she embodies all its sin and foul corruption.

Earth's ship is its own transport through the heavens, and thus it is the earth itself. The character guiding it is Jörd, and thus once again, the earth proper. Rowing or sailing, the craft stanza seventy-seven is concerned with is the earth. The earth, of course, has many pleasures to offer, but as the audience of Sólarljóð certainly knows by now, these pleasures are transitory and may cost the possibility of eternal life for the soul. Nonetheless, the desire for earthly pleasure is strong among humankind generally, and so

317 Snorri Sturlason, Skaldskaparmál, ***
Jórð's sails are not likely to be reefed for anyone except those faced with approaching death. It is for this reason that the father in Sólarljóð returns to warn his heir about what may happen after death.

The last line of this stanza refers to the ropes holding Jórð's sails in place. There has been no question about these being the ropes holding sails. The problem has been with calling these "ropes of desire,"\textsuperscript{318} which forces an interpretation on what seems little more than a nautical term. The ropes holding Jórð's sails are kept constantly taut, representing a prolonged desire for the benefits of the mundane world. The tension on the ropes represents a stretching after earthly goals, but it seems rather much to confine these goals to sexual desire. The stretching and straining of actual ropes, taut under the driving of a real wind, probably constitutes all the author had in mind here. It would have been entirely comprehensible to a contemporary Icelandic audience, even if the point was lost by copyists as early as the first remaining paper manuscript.

\textbf{Stanza 78}

\begin{eightcolumn}
\begin{verbatim}
Arfe fader eirm,
eg rā[dil] hefe,
oget Sōlkōtlusyniner:
Hiartarhorn
er vor hauge b[ar]
hinn vitre Vygdan linn\textsuperscript{319}:
\end{verbatim}
\end{eightcolumn}

[Note by JW: from here on, Kurt does not give his semi-poetical English renditions of the stanzas; he evidently was still working on them at the time of his death.]

\textsuperscript{318} E.g., Benjamin Thorpe, \textit{The Elder Edda of Saemund Sigfusson}, Norrcena 11 (London: Norröna, 1907) ***

\textsuperscript{319} This was altered to $Vyg\dual{v}an#-lin$: by the insertion of $v$ above the line, marked with a caret below, and the joining of the two words with a hyphen. Retention of the $n#$ was probably an oversight.
Stanza 79: The 9 daughters of Njord

Hier ero runer
sem ristid hafa
Nyrd{r} dætur nyu:
Baudveig hin ellsta,
og Keipp{r} hin Yngsta
og[ ] theira systur sió:

Hér eru rúnir
er ristit hafa
Njarðar dætr nú
Baugveig hin elzta
ok Kreppvör hin yngsta
ok theirra systur sjau.

Sólarijóð remains one of the more mysterious medieval Norse poems. Although clearly Christian in its message, Sólarijóð contains many interesting references to the old pagan gods. Probably at least in part because of this heathen content, Sólarijóð has often been included in manuscripts and editions of the poetic Edda as a sort of apocryphus.

Early scholars of Sólarijóð used its references to pagan gods in order to assist in establishing an Old Norse pantheon. Later, the Christian aspect was emphasized, and Sólarijóð was used as an example of religious syncretism, with Christian and pagan elements coexisting in one poem, as Christians and pagans lived together on Iceland at the beginning of this millenium. Most recently, some of the more obscure references in the poem have been interpreted more in the light of continental Christian mysticism than after pagan models.

One of the more clearly pagan references in the poem is in strophe 79. There the poem speaks of nine daughters of Njord:

Those using Sólarijóð for a source of mythological information were able to add a pair of names to the family of the Vanir. Ráðveig and Kréppvör were added as siblings to Freyr and Freyja, and perhaps Gullveig. Unfortunately, these names were of lesser value than they might have been, because they vary among manuscripts. Ráðveig is also called: Badueing, Baúdveing AM 167, Baudveig AM 427, Bangveig, Skadveig, Skathveig, Ráðveig, Bágveig.

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320 This was later changed to Krippuar added above the line.
Randveig, Ráðvör, Baugveig, and Bjúgvör, and her sister is named Listvör, Kreppvör, and Krippvor.

Nor is much of anything said about these daughters. They are of varying age and not all born at once. They cut or scratch runes, perhaps into the horn mentioned in the previous strophe 78. The mythologies generally refer to Njord’s daughters simply as nymphs. Their number is nine, and less two it is seven, leaving nice mystical numbers that are significant but ambiguous both in Christian and Germanic numerology.

The goddess Hel is mentioned in the Christian Sólarljóð, but presents little difficulty as a pagan deity. In the Christian context she can be viewed simply as a personification of the Christian Hell. The appearance of Njord and Oðin is more difficult to explain. If Sólarljóð is a Christian poem, the most reasonable explanation for the presence of pagan deities is as kennings. In fact, neither Njord nor Oðin play a direct role—the poem is instead concerned with Njord’s daughters and Oðin’s wife. This indirect use of names to describe something else than the persons named should be enough to make one look for meaning as a kenning.

Stanza 80

huoriu
their billt hafa,
Suefne321 og Suaflogie:
Blod their vóktu
og beniar sugu,
Vundir ollum eyvana:

[Bölvi] hverju
their belt hafa
Svafr ok Svafrlogi
bloð their vóktu
ok benjar sugu
vandir illum ey vana.

[Note by JW: from here on, Kurt was evidently unfortunately unable to complete his interpretation of the last stanzas of the poem.]

321 Svafur is written above the line.
Stanza 81

Kvæði thet[a]
er thér kent hefi
skaltu fyrr kvikum kueda:
Sólarljóð
syn[ast] munu
mínstad mórgun login:

Kvæði thetta
er thér kent hefi
skaltu fyrr kvikum kveða
Sólarljóð
er synask munu
mínst at mórgu login.

This Sólarljóð stanza is significant mostly as an admission that this is primarily a poetic and didactic work, and does not pretend to be a true account of a real vision.

Stanza 82

Hier vid skiljuns,
og hittast mund[uu]
a feigins deige fijnunm: 322
Drottings minn
Gefi theim dauð[uun] rö:

Hér vit skiljuns
ok hittast munum
á fæginsdegi fira
Dröttinn minn
gefi dauðum rö
en hínnum líkn, er lífa.

Stanza 83

Dásamligt fræði
var thér í draumast kveðit
en thú sátt it sanna
fyrra engi
var svá fröðr um skapaðr
er áðr heyroi Sólarljóðs sögu.

[Note by JW: No unnormalized form is given for this stanza because it is lacking in manuscript Lbs. 1199 4to, the basis of the unnormalized forms cited in this chapter.]

A. O. Freudenthal, in his notes dated 11 Feb. 1880 in Nordica’s copy of Rask/Afzelius’s Edda (facing page 130), cites Bugge in questioning this stanza.

322 The word fyra was added above the line.
Like alla hdskr. ha'va denna strof. Sången kunde visserligen lämpligt sluta med str. 82 och str. 83 har kunnat tilldiktas efter den sögen, som följde att sonen hört sången kvädas i en dröm; också singul. Sólarljóðs i v. 6 jf. med pluralformen Sólarljóð i str. 81 värker misstankar, men dessa grunder äro dock knappast tillräckliga för att stryka strofen (Bugge).

Note the creative bent of whoever added stanza 83. Could he or she be trusted to have passed on 82 stanzas untouched? Would he or she have cut the opening?
7. WORKS CITED:

[Note by JW: in some instances, the Icelandic practice of arrangement according to the author's first name is followed.]


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Snorri [...].


Vigfusson, Gudbrand. See also Guðbrandur Vigfússon.


