



# Old Norse Poems: The Most Important Non-skaldic Verse Not Included in the Poetic Edda

*Lee M. Hollander*

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THE GROUP of poems here offered comprises practically all the more considerable (non-Skaldic) verse material not in the Edda. It shows, even better than that remarkable collection, of which it is intended to be the supplement, the wealth of independent poetic inventions and forms that flourished in the Scandinavian North before and immediately after the introduction of Christianity, especially when we bear in mind that much is irretrievably lost. As to contents these poems, with respect to the first group of nine, range from the genuinely "heroic," realistic, dialogic-dramatic, earlier lays (such as the *Biarkamól*) to the more "romantic," legendary, monologic-elegiac, retrospective, later lays (like *Hiálmar's Death Song*); though the lines of demarcation are by no means sharp and, in fact, nearly every poem represents an individual combination of these traits. A very different type of lay is seen in the three contemporary encomiastic poems which celebrate the life and deeds of (historic) rulers of Norway—the only non-Skaldic efforts of this genre so exceedingly numerous in Old Norse literature. There is no common denominator for the four poems at the end of the volume, except possibly their arch-heathen character. As a finale the *Song of the Sun* marks the transition to Christian spheres of thought.



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