

## CHAPTER 5

# Verbal Arts in the Age of Learning

This chapter has three principal objectives: it seeks to examine the nature and influence of rhetoric, to identify the main features of Latin education and the school system in Iceland, and to discuss the attitudes of seventeenth-century scholars towards literature and the practice of letters.

For centuries classical rhetoric was the only coherent system of aesthetics available to writers and was thus the foundation on which seventeenth-century “literary studies” were built. Not only did rhetoric establish the rules by which poets worked, but it also set the standards by which literary value was measured. As is well known, rhetoric has a lengthy history, and was responsible for shaping so much of Western European thought about language and style from the fifth century BC until well into the nineteenth century.

Classical rhetoric was part of everyday education in the period covered by the present study, and indeed in the years preceding and following it. Pupils encountered rhetoric in Latin textbooks that treated topics such as *inventio* (the selection of subject matter and argumentation), *dispositio* (the appropriate structuring of the selected material), *elocutio* (the verbalization of the selected and structured material), *memoria* (the memorization of the selected, structured and verbalized material) and, finally, *actio* (the oral delivery of the prepared speech or sermon) (see Curtius 1953 [1948], 68–71; Kelly 1991, 47–50). The fundamental elements of rhetoric could be found in the works of Cicero (106–43 BC) and Quintilian (35–c. 95); the

works of Greek authors such as Aristotle (384–322 BC), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (who lived some twenty-five years before Christ) and Hermogenes (160–225), all in Latin translation; and in the works of later writers such as Augustine (354–430), Martianus Capella (fifth century) and Isidore of Seville (ca. 570–636).<sup>1</sup> Instruction was often accompanied by appropriate quotations from classical, medieval and humanist writers. There were also patristic works, which presented Christian doctrine in an appropriately elegant and rhetorical manner. These texts were very influential, not least among poets (Curtius 1953 [1948], 259–60; Dyck 1991, 23).

It was natural to compose speeches for a variety of public and private occasions, such as school and university ceremonies, visitations, birthdays, weddings and funerals. And it seemed no less natural during the compositional process to seek guidance from the best rhetorical practice with which the educated classes had long been familiar. The same was true with the composition of Christian sermons, with Lutheran theologians drawing especially on Melancthon's *De officiis concionatoris* (1535). In this work, following St Augustine's example, Melancthon showed how sermons could be aligned with traditional rhetorical practice (Dyck 1991, 11). Letter writing was similarly exposed to the kind of rhetorical guidance set out in *Ars dictaminis* handbooks. Indeed the epistolary writer could often seem more preoccupied with winning praise from learned colleagues for compositional elegance than with conveying a personal message. Last but not least, literature, whether in prose or verse, was also composed with the best rhetorical models and traditions in mind.<sup>2</sup> Poetics was viewed as a sub-category of

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1. Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* and the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (attributed to Cicero by medieval scholars) were the major influences on the discussion of poetics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Book catalogues confirm that both Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson and the lawyer Páll Vídalín owned copies of these works; see Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2000, 131–132; Jón Helgason 1948, 119–120, and 1983, 22. The most popular rhetorical textbook among German and Scandinavian Protestants was Gerhard Johannes Vossius's *Elementa rhetorica* (1606). This was first printed in Sweden in 1652 and on ten further occasions during the rest of the century. There were also ten eighteenth-century editions published in Sweden, three of them in Swedish (Hansson 1990, 39). Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík refers to a Latin textbook by Vossius in his *Hagþenkir* (Jón Ólafsson 1996, 34 and 38).

2. Þórunn Sigurðardóttir (2000) has discussed the rhetorical element in seventeenth-century commemorative poems.

rhetoric, concerned particularly with prosody, while other elements were governed by the rules that rhetoric prescribed. Accordingly, it has been suggested (by Barnes, Dyck and others) that since most German poetry from the baroque period was underpinned by rhetoric, such verse must have seemed largely incomprehensible to anyone unversed in these traditional verbal arts.

The works written in Latin by seventeenth-century Icelanders reveal a secure knowledge of the classical language (Sigurður Pétursson 1995, 116). The aims and priorities of Latin schools in Iceland no doubt matched those of equivalent schools in Denmark, and the textbooks and pedagogical methods were very similar. The curriculum had changed little since the Middle Ages: successive generations would study the same canon of classical texts, from Horatian odes and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to Cicero's speeches against Catiline. Latin lent Western culture a sense of timelessness, which disappeared only during the twentieth century (Johannesson 1987a, 159). Tuition, largely conducted in Latin, covered the Bible, classical literature and the Seven Liberal Arts. The latter were subdivided into the *trivium* (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music) (see Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 7–15). The principal Latin textbook was *Ars Minor*, a grammatical work by the fourth-century writer Aelius Donatus. This was used in Iceland from the Middle Ages onwards, initially in manuscript and then (from the sixteenth century) in printed form, together with sections of *Institutiones grammaticae* by Priscian (491–518) (Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 17–18). Pupils were also taught to make use of Latin textbooks when composing their own poetry. Neo-Latin poetry by some thirty-five seventeenth-century Icelandic authors survives in printed or manuscript form, much of it occasional verse; the principal neo-Latin poets were Brynjólfur Sveinsson, Stefán Ólafsson and Jón Vídalín (Sigurður Pétursson 1995, 116–118). Joachim Dyck, who has written extensively about the role of rhetoric in Germany in the baroque period, argues that in terms of subject matter seventeenth-century literature has little new to offer, because its truths are timeless ones about Christian salvation and the divine plan for everything on earth, as revealed in society's fixed structures and rules. General moral values and virtues are promoted, their opposites vilified, and the overall message can

sometimes be a very simple one, such as “war is terrible.” The aim of poetry was to present a particular topic in such a way that educated listeners would be instructed, entertained and moved. In this context Dyck refers to rhetorical theories that can be found in seventeenth-century textbooks on poetics, according to which there are three stylistic levels, one for each of the three kinds of poetic subject matter, and for the three potential discursive objectives. The three identified styles (high, middle and low) and objectives (to instruct, entertain, move) derive ultimately from Cicero and other classical rhetoricians.

Dyck argues that the main priority of religious poetry was to praise God, with instruction and entertainment (*docere vel delectare*) always secondary. However, secular verse aimed to instruct and entertain and by so doing to touch and persuade (*docendo et delectando movere seu persuadere*). A fundamental tenet of seventeenth-century literature was its belief in the persuasive power of rhetorically inflected discourse.<sup>3</sup> Poetry of the period sought to describe the world not as it was but as it ought to be, with everything in its ordained place; a world that reflected Christian salvational history; and a world in which moral values are held in high regard (Dyck 1990, 227). Poetic genius (*ingenium*, see Lausberg 1973 [1960], 550) lay not in flights of poetic fancy but rather in the fastidious application of rhetorical techniques to arguments used when presenting a chosen poetic topic; in making use of mnemonic techniques; and in drawing on all available knowledge (Sieveke 1990, 231).<sup>4</sup>

Roland Barthes (1915–1980) has described the forms and functions of rhetoric in the following terms (Barthes 1970, 173–174; 1990, 35–37). Rhetoric is: 1. A technique or art in the classical sense of the word, the art of persuasion, a complete system developed from rules and formulae for convincing listeners (or, later, readers) that a particular element is “right” in a speech or text even when it is “wrong.” 2. Pedagogical materials. Rhetorical art, originally delivered in person (by an orator to his pupils, his clients), soon

3. *Persuasio*, achieving listeners’ assent to a speaker’s point of view, was the age-old objective of classical rhetoric and can be traced back to Aristotle (Þorleifur Hauksson and Þórir Óskarsson 1994, 16).

4. On *Ars memoriae* see Jakob Benediktsson 1984.

became part of the educational system. In schools rhetoric lay at the heart of what is now the high school and university level curriculum, developing into elements that were examined formally (exercises, lectures, examinations). 3. A discipline or science (or at least a proto-science); that is, (a) an independent research area, which isolates and studies the common features that make up the *effets*, or persuasive resources of a language; b) the codification of these resources into a fixed system (most commonly by means of listing figures of speech); c) the language of language (meta-language), the many books and essays that discuss or refer to language. 4. Morality: as a rule-based system rhetoric is permeated with verbal ambiguity: it is both an instructional textbook with a practical purpose but also a book of rules, a collection of ethical imperatives whose role is to regulate the language of feelings, to authorize and control. 5. A social phenomenon: rhetoric is the technology of the elect, because it costs money to access it. Rhetoric enables the ruling classes to form their own group of those who own the language. Because language involves power, special rules were created to control access to that power, while those rules became a half-baked science that excluded those “who are unable to speak.” Rhetoric, whose origins 2,500 years ago may lie in disputes over possessions, dies out among “the rhetorical class,” thereby heralding the official consecration of bourgeois culture. 6. A game: because all this activity created a powerful institutional system, it was natural that a reaction would set in, with traditional rhetoric ridiculed and an alternative rhetoric emerging: irony and insult, game-playing, parody, ambiguity, distortion, high-school humor, verbal pranks of every kind, all of which still await scholarly exploration and definition as a cultural code.

As already noted, the part of rhetoric that relates specifically to poets is divided into three categories: *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*.<sup>5</sup> The first element, *inventio*, turns on finding *topoi* suitable for the theme of the poem. In their searches poets look in specific *loci*, where specific questions are posed that make it easier to find answers or topics that can then be used in the poem. One such

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5. Over time the significance of these categories has been debated. Petrus Ramus (1515–1572) sought to narrow the meaning of rhetoric so that it would cover only *elocutio* and *actio*, while *inventio* and *dispositio* belonged with the study of logic: see Þorleifur Hauksson and Þórir Óskarsson 1994, 31.

place is *locus ex definitione*, that is, how to define a phenomenon: a poem may begin with a question such as “What is the world?” and then provide appropriate answers. Also popular is *locus notationis*, which involves interpreting the name of a phenomenon or person about which or whom the poem is written. While this is not a common feature of Hallgrímur Pétursson’s occasional verse, in every chapter of his *Diarium* we find an interpretation of the name of the day under discussion. Similarly, in Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík’s congratulatory poem addressed to Bishop Gísli Magnússon the recipient’s name is interpreted (Jón Helgason 1926, 269).<sup>6</sup>

*Dispositio* refers to the configuration of *topoi*. Individual works can have any number of sections, though a classical oration would normally be divided into five sections.<sup>7</sup> The main rule was that the work should begin with an *exordium*, the introduction, which itself could be sub-divided, and whose function was to identify the subject for discussion and the manner of that discussion: to indicate if the text was to be a panegyric or a lament, for example, and thus to help prepare the listeners’ responses. Next comes *narratio*, the narrative, followed by *argumentatio*, the argument, and sometimes by the *refutatio*, the refutation, in which potential objections are identified and then challenged. The final part is the *peroratio*, in which the material is brought together and the conclusion set out.<sup>8</sup> As indicated above, *elocutio* refers to presentation and stylistic matters are part of that function. Rhetoric identifies four stylistic priorities: *puritas*, *perspicuitas*, *ornatus* and *aptum* (the choice of style) (see Lausberg 1973 [1960], 249). *Puritas*, or *latinitas*, relates to linguistic clarity, and though it really belongs under “Grammar,” it is dealt with in rhetorical treatises. Linguistic infelicities such

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6. Jón Ólafsson did in fact study the meanings of people’s names and may have circulated works of this kind (Jón Helgason 1926, 132).

7. See Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 44; Lausberg 1973 [1960], 148–149. Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík (1996, 50) states that a complete speech has six parts: *exordium*, *propositio*, *narratio*, *confirmatio*, *confutatio* and *conclusio*.

8. Individual sections of a speech can be more variable and complex than is normally assumed. The *exordium* needs to take account of the subject matter and audience and thus *principium* is normally used, but in certain circumstances, as when anticipating a tired or hostile audience, *insinuatio* is preferred (see Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 48ff.). Three kinds of proof can be used in argument: “signa” [signs], “rök” [arguments] and “dæmi” [examples].

as dialect, loan words and slang are criticized. German rhetorical treatises claim that the language has retained its innocence and is still a “Jungfrau” (Dyck 1991, 71). A similar view of the Icelandic language appears in a letter from Hallgrímur Pétursson to Þormóður Torfason, in which he argues that while Old Norse had originally been untainted, during his lifetime Icelandic had been in contact with other languages “með skaða og niðrun vors ágæta og auðuga móðurmáls” [to the detriment and disrespect of our rich and glorious mother tongue] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1913, 60). Similar attitudes can be found earlier with Arngrímur Jónsson the Learned, as will be discussed below (see Gottskálk Þór Jenson 2003, 59–61). The second element, *perspicuitas*, involves composing or writing in such a way that the reader/listener can follow the direction of the text’s argument. This is of fundamental importance because the reader would simply stop reading if unable to understand the text, in which case the author’s best efforts would have been in vain. Yet, as Dyck points out, if poets had followed this prescription to the letter there would be no opportunity to explore the “manieristischen Dunkelheiten” [mannerist murkiness] in seventeenth-century poetry (Dyck 1991, 74). In fact plenty of examples of such mannerism can be found in German (and Icelandic) poetry. Poets could justify the use of opaque vocabulary on the grounds that readers were of mixed ability, with some well able to understand a text that others might find challenging or even impenetrable. Icelandic *rímur* certainly have their moments of complexity, with poets confident that they could rely on the interpretative abilities of experienced listeners. The third element, *ornatus*, relates to the decorative element in language (especially tropes and figures of speech), which serves to flesh out and animate the linguistic skeleton, lending color and flavor to any discourse. However, rhetorical figures serve not only to embellish a text or speech but also to help the poet or orator engage the feelings of the reader/listener: they serve to move, please, convince and stir.<sup>9</sup> Some handbooks list individual figures of speech and describe the psychological effects of each. The fourth element, *aptum*, involves

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9. Augustine cites Cicero on the importance of teaching, pleasing and moving; he discusses these issues further and identifies the elements that should be emphasized in Christian witness ([Augustinus, Aurelius] 1958, 136ff.).

selecting the most appropriate style (high, middle or low), depending on content and context. Internal harmony and balance in poetry (or any work of art) are achieved when the topic under discussion is one with which the poet is comfortable, when the meter adopted is appropriate for the chosen genre, and when the verbal style suits the subject matter. The harmonization of subject matter and style was essential. Tragedy requires a heightened style, for it deals with awesome fate and mighty protagonists such as heroes, kings and leaders; comedy requires a less elevated style in treating its more mundane subject matter and characters. Thus rhetorical practice and decorum reflect a society in which everything and everyone has an assigned function, both literally and metaphorically. It would thus have been unthinkable and absurd to have ordinary folk as protagonists in a tragedy.

It was more of a problem to decide what style was appropriate for religious works whose primary purpose was instructional. There was an unavoidable tension between the church's mission to preach the gospel in a straightforward and comprehensible way and the rhetorical requirement that all topics should achieve elegant expression. Medieval Icelandic writers wrestled with this same dilemma (Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 173–178). Dyck has discussed in detail the works of Christian literary theory and biblical rhetoric that were influential in seventeenth-century Germany (Dyck 1991). There was, for example, *Teutsche Rhetorica* (1634) by Johann Matthäus Meyfahrt, Professor of Theology at the University of Erfurt. In this work Meyfahrt concentrates on how *elocutio* ought to be used, underlining that no speech or “register” can be wholly without figures of speech, but that these must be used appropriately and in moderation. It becomes clear in his work that Meyfahrt himself may have attracted criticism for excessive use of classical ornamentation. He deploys several persuasive arguments in reply, claiming for instance that rhetorical prowess is a divine gift that should be used properly. Dyck argues that from their earliest days seventeenth-century theologians were so well schooled in rhetoric that it would have been almost pointless to insist that they adopt a plain *sermo humilis* style in their preaching. Moreover, they would also have been much influenced by the contemporary fashion for elaborate exposition (Dyck 1965, 235). Meyfahrt, Johann Gerhard

(in the Preface to *Meditationes sacrae*) and Abraham Calov (*Paedia Theologica* [Wittenberg], 1652) emphasize that moderate rather than extravagant levels of decoration ought to be used for preaching. It ought to serve the purpose of the sermon and follow the dictates of style and decorum (Dyck 1965, 236).

Augustine laid the foundations for Christian literary theory and rhetoric, and his ideas are discussed further in chapter 15.<sup>10</sup> His works and other patristic writings carried great weight not just because of their theological authority but also for their views on style and presentation (see Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 174–175). They provided authorization for and examples of treating Christian material in a rhetorical style. They were cited not just in other theological texts but also in works on astronomy, medicine, natural science, history and philology (Dyck 1991, 143). The church fathers functioned as Christian spokesmen for classical culture. To imitate them, and to copy and translate their works, were regarded as necessary and noble tasks. Dyck notes that patristic writings played a major role in seventeenth-century Germany in disseminating those verbal arts that are often regarded as baroque, but which, viewed in their appropriate historical context, belong as much to the classical and medieval eras, because they derive from the morphology of rhetoric (Dyck 1991, 150).

Naturally, in Protestant Europe in the seventeenth century the Holy Scriptures enjoyed a very special status. Augustine and the church fathers had to defend the Bible in the learned heathen world, demonstrating that far from being barbaric in style it was perfectly in harmony with the precepts of rhetoric (see Augustine 1958, 124ff.). In the seventeenth century biblical authority was absolute, not just in terms of its narrative of salvational history but also in its role as a source for all kinds of *exempla* (*inventio*). Accordingly, poets made extensive use of it.

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10. *De doctrina Christiana* was one of Augustine's most remarkable and influential works, which enjoyed renewed attention during the Renaissance. The work was reprinted thirteen times in Germany between 1480 and 1679, while the fourth book was published separately (Lindgärde 1996, 111). In Iceland we know that there was a copy in the monastery on Viðey in 1397 (Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 31), and Augustine's influence is also identifiable in Icelandic saints' lives and homilies. AM 227 8vo includes a list of printed books and manuscripts in the library at Skálholt in the 1588–1704 period, among which is *Sermones sancti Augustini* (folio 29v).

### Latin Studies and Schooling In Iceland

The period that in European literary history is identified with humanism and the baroque saw an unprecedented growth in the number of rhetorical textbooks created. As we have noted, virtually every text produced during this period was based on earlier rhetorical models (Ueding 1976, 78; Þorleifur Hauksson and Þórir Óskarsson 1994, 31). Rhetoric was part of general education and thus any Icelander studying at a Latin school would encounter its basic elements; and those pursuing further study in Copenhagen would learn even more about it. A revealing source of information on this topic is the account of the education of Vigfús Hákonarson (1647–1670) presented in his “lífshistoría” [biography] as preserved in AM 96 8vo (38r–67v). Vigfús’s mother, Helga Magnúsdóttir of Bræðratunga, prepared him for study at the Latin school at Skálholt:

She introduced her young son to bookish arts and knowledge at home under her own supervision, control and discipline, and also under the guidance of those whom she trusted. Shortly after this, believing that her son was old enough and sufficiently well educated, she sent him to Hólar in Ytri-Hreppur, on the advice of that respected teacher séra Erasmus Pálsson, there to learn writing, singing and the rudiments of the Latin language. He remained there for two years, earning a high reputation and revealing his good nature and behavior. To make progress in the basics of the Latin language he was then sent to séra Torfi Jónsson, an honorable and learned teacher, pastor at Gaulverjabær and Stokkseyri, and provost here in Árnesþing. He remained there for a further two years, earning a fine reputation for his good progress and conduct, and known and liked by all, as was right and proper for a good young man courteous in both word and deed. And when he had been well grounded in literature and the Latin language he left his excellent and loving mother and was placed under the supervision of Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson at the Skálholt cathedral school; the bishop took him in straightaway and assigned him tasks, alongside the children of other venerable and honorable men.<sup>11</sup>

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11. Enn þessum sínum vnga syni hieilt hun til boklegra lista og kunnattu fyrst heima hiá ser under sinne vmmsiön aga og vmmvöndun enn tilsogn þeirra sem henni leist þar til ad trua. Skómmu þar effer a þa henni syndist hann þar til fær fyrer alldurs saker let

We should note here the emphasis placed on knowledge of Latin and also that study at the cathedral school was preceded by many years of preparatory language learning. Another revealing source concerning such preliminary instruction is “Um þá lærðu Vídalína” [On the learned Vídalíns], an essay by Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík (Jón Ólafsson 1950, 104 and 151–152), in which Jón describes his education at the home of Páll Vídalín at Víðidalstunga over the winter of 1720–1721, when he was fifteen years old. Jón states that pupils had been made to read *Rhetorica*, a work by the French author Omer Talon. This treatise, first printed in 1548, was written in collaboration with the logician Petrus Ramus; Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson held Ramus’s theories in high regard (see Gunnar Harðarson 1988, 89–100; Brynjólfur Sveinsson 1988, 101–105). In Jón of Grunnavík’s account we learn that pupils were also made to read, explicate and translate parts of classical works such as Virgil’s *Aeneid*, to recite and repeat from memory particular chapters in Icelandic and Latin, to analyze style, and to prepare essays for correction (see Þorleifur Hauksson and Þórir Óskarsson 1994, 345). This education was clearly multi-faceted, with a young man’s upbringing involving not just the study of books but also recitation, oral performance and general comportment. Jón says of his teacher Páll Vídalín:

I remember how sensibly he taught, and that the late séra Jón Sigurðsson and I studied *Rhetoricam Thalæi* over the winters of 1720 and 1721, and also most of Books 4 and 5 of Virgil, and that Páll read out phrases from it, made use of a map and illustrated points with short stories. He also corrected our compositions. For the first

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hun hann sendast j tilsogn heidurlegs kennimans s: Erasmi Paalssonar ad Holum j Ytra Repp til ad nema þar fyrstu vpptók latinu malsens skrifftar og saunglistar, þar dualdist hann med agiætu mannordi og vitnisburdi gödrar natturu og sidprydi j tuo vetur. Þar effter ä var hann til enn meiri frammferdar j latinu malsinns vnderstödu og annars lofflegs boka näms j kiendslu sendur til heidurlegs og vellærds kennimans s. Thorffa Jonssonar soknarprests ad Gaulveriabæar og Stoxeyrar kyrkna; enn profasts her j Arness þingi, huar hann og stadnæmdist adra tuo vetur, huar hann ser og j besta mata kom j ollu godu frammferdi og sidprydi, þeckur og giedfeldur ollum, sem gödu og sidsömu vngmenni hæffer bædi til orda og athæffis. Og sem hann haffdi þar nockurn gödann grundvöll lagt bokamentanna og latinu tungumäls var hann nu frammveigis aff sinne agiætu og elskulegu modur, feinginn til vmmsionar biskupenum M. Bryniolffi Sueinssyni huorn hann þegar medtök og skickadi asamt annara heidurlegra og erlegra manna bornum j Skallholts domkyrkiu skola (AM 96 8vo, 45v–47r).

winter there were six of us at most. We also learned a number of customs: women could not serve at table whereas we young men took it in turns to do so; while standing we read the table-hymn, one week in Icelandic and the next in Latin, and other similar texts; we read the Catechism in Latin and Icelandic on certain evenings and “repeated,” as it was called.<sup>12</sup>

When a pupil had achieved a secure command of Latin he was allowed to study prosody and then to practice verse composition, as we see in Jón of Grunnavík’s *Hagþenkir* (Jón Ólafsson 1996, 44). A letter from Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson indicates that the main reason for establishing a school at Hólar was to teach Latin there (Sigurður Pétursson 1995, 100). After Guðbrandur was able to ensure that Icelandic students had access to the University of Copenhagen, the Danish capital became “indisputably the cultural center where most of the Icelanders who travelled abroad became acquainted with university life and an international atmosphere of learning” (Sigurður Pétursson 1995, 100). Elsewhere the influence of rhetoric, both secular and spiritual, was beyond question; during the seventeenth century it exercised a profound influence within the church, in schools and university, at court and in general among politicians, lawyers, historians and poets (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3 1983, 78). There were no original rhetorical textbooks in Icelandic at this time and books in Latin were probably regarded as more serviceable, though a 1589 Icelandic translation by Magnús Jónsson *þrúði* [the Polite] (1530–1591) of a rhetorical text by Riederer was available.<sup>13</sup> The original work is among the first German books

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12. Ég man, hversu skynsamlega hann fór að kenna, þá við síra Jón sálugi Sigurðsson lærðum um veturinn 1720 og 1721 Rhetoricam Thalæi hjá honum og mikinn part af libro IV. et V. Virgílii, og las okkur þar úr phrases, sýndi til þess landcaart, og sumt illustreraði [hann] með smásögum. Líka hversu hann fór að því að laga stíl okkar; en áður fyrri returnar vorum við sex flestir. Þar að auki síðir ýmislegir: kvenfólk mátti ei bera á borð, heldur við piltarnir til skiptis, lesa standandi fyrir borði, aðra vikuna borðsálminn í íslenzku, aðra í latínu, og annað þvílíkt fleira; lesa catechismum í latínu og íslenzku á vissum kveldum og repetera, sem so kallast. (Jón Ólafsson 1950, 104–105)

13. The title in AM 702 4to is: “A mirror of the true rhetoric of Marcus Tullius Cicero and others [. . .] and translated into Icelandic by me, Magnús Jónsson of Hagi in Barðaströnd and Raudasandur, for the benefit of my countrymen and country, A.D. 1589” [Speigill þeirrar sónnu Rethorica vt af Marco Tullio Cicerone og audrum til samans tekinn [. . .] enn íslendskud af mier Magnusi Jonssyni af Haga aa Bardastrond og Raudasandi mjnum landmonnum og faudurlandi til goda anno 1589]. *Spiegel der waren*

on rhetoric, but by the end of the fifteenth century German society was changing under the influence of humanism and other factors so that further such works were being written or (as with Donatus's *Ars minor*) translated into German (Haage 1991, 232). Magnús must have aimed his translation at a broader readership than just scholars, and his initiative may be one of the first indications of the influence of humanism in Iceland. The work is extant in manuscript but has never been published; an edition would certainly be a worthwhile project, not least because it is intriguing to see how Magnús copes with the specialist Latin terminology (see Gunnar Harðarson 1985, 54–55). Some of the terms he uses are certainly neologisms but others are well established, as with “fundning/fyndning” for *inventio*. It seems certain that Icelandic poets took an interest in new foreign works on rhetoric and poetics. Most of these writers had received some school education and, as we have noted, such Latin works were part of the syllabus. Exposure to classical rhetoric was unavoidable; it was part of any general education and its influence was ubiquitous, as can be seen in the many Christian meditative works translated into Icelandic, and it proved as pervasive in Iceland as elsewhere in Europe. As Krummacher (1986) has shown convincingly, with examples from edifying works by Moller, Arndt, Nicolai, Meyfahrt and Stegmann, these texts were written with an eye to best rhetorical practice and, in turn, they became popular not just for their content (which was entirely in tune with the times) but also for their expository clarity and elegance of expression, which many poets regarded as definitive.

### Literary Understanding in the Age of Learning

Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson's introduction to his *Sálmabók* (1589) is the earliest printed discussion of Icelandic literature. Guðbrandur was a student at the University of Copenhagen 1561–1564, and among his teachers were accomplished scholars such as Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600) and Poul Madsen, who in 1693 became Bishop of Zealand (Jakob Benediktsson 1987b,

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*rhetoric* was published in Germany in 1493 (Haage 1991, 232). Magnús Jónsson also translated Fuchsberger's *Dialektik* (see Gunnar Harðarson 1985, 54–55).

208–209). Guðbrandur absorbed the new teachings of Luther and other leading Reformation figures, while also being influenced by the new humanism. It is striking how often he refers to the concept of eloquence. He clearly had in mind “Wohlredenheit,” the term often used in contemporary German literature to denote rhetoric; medieval Icelandic writers often used the term “málsnilld” (see Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 7; also Gunnar Harðarson 1989, 89), and Guðbrandur uses this same word with reference to Old Icelandic poetry, claiming that “hinir gömlu forfeður vorir” [our venerable forefathers] (1589, 4) had loved eloquence and employed the poetic forms best suited to the Norse language. Guðbrandur regarded “skáldskapar málsnilld” [poetic eloquence] as a divine gift, like music, and wished that hymns in Iceland could achieve greater eloquence than hitherto and follow Icelandic poetic practice more closely, notably as regards “rétt hljóðstafagrein” [correct alliteration]. Guðbrandur’s *Sálmabók* preface underlines his high regard for and even glorification of the Icelandic language. He considers that “þetta norrænumál” [this Norse language] surpasses many other tongues (1589, 5); indeed he claims that in German and Danish “there is none of the alliteration or poetic eloquence that is part of our native language and poetic tradition.”<sup>14</sup> Here is the origin of the idea developed more clearly by the author of *Íslandslýsing* [A description of Iceland] and in an essay by Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás (to be discussed below). It relates to the origins and special characteristics of Icelandic poetry, and the duty of Icelanders to preserve this ancient tradition.

Guðbrandur probably played an important role in developing this idea, and his views on the history of the Icelandic language later attracted support from Arngrímur Jónsson the Learned. Guðbrandur’s position is marked by his great ambition for Icelandic poetry, and his concern for retaining its distinctiveness, even though he also draws attention to literary fashion in other countries; indeed he was at the forefront of those who sought to introduce European literature to Iceland. His admiration for the Icelandic language reflects the direct influence of humanism,

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14. engin hljóðastafagrein né skáldskapar málsnilld inni fundin sem voru móðurmáli og réttum vísnaðætti til heyrir (Guðbrandur Þorláksson 1589, 8).

and similar attitudes can be found elsewhere in northern Europe, notably in Germany, Sweden and Denmark. German baroque poets and scholars of poetics sought to demonstrate that their vernacular could stand comparison with or even surpass other sophisticated languages, ancient and modern: “as we know it was one of the aims of German baroque poets and theorists to prove that the German language was *comparable with* or even *superior to* the ancient and modern cultural languages.”<sup>15</sup>

*Qualiscunque Descriptio Islandiae* or *Íslandslýsing* was probably written during the winter of 1588–1589, around the time that the *Sálmabók* was published.<sup>16</sup> Its author was an even more ardent admirer of the Icelandic language than Guðbrandur, stating that it is “one of the major languages, and the other national tongues, those of the Danes and Swedes, derive from it” (76).<sup>17</sup> A similar claim—that Icelandic is an ancient language comparable in status to Latin—can be found in Arngrímur the Learned’s *Crymogæa* (1609), in which Icelandic is associated with both runes and the Gothic language (Gottskálf Þór Jensson 2003, 53–54).<sup>18</sup>

When the author of *Íslandslýsing* discusses Icelandic poetry he expresses amazement at the great variety of works, the range of meters and the potential of the language:

There is also an infinity of ornaments, not only from the artistic repetition of similar and slightly dissimilar sounds, which is absolutely of such a nature that there is no rhetorical figure of repetition or diction in the Latin language that has not been elegantly expressed in our vernacular poetry, but indeed also by ellipsis, pleonasm and also enallage—something which could be illustrated for each category

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15. Bekanntlich gehörte es zu den Zielen der deutschen Barockdichter und -theoretiker, die deutsche Sprache gegenüber den alten und neuen Kultursprachen als *gleichberechtigt* oder sogar *überlegen* zu erweisen (Windfuhr 1966, 59; emphasis mine).

16. Though the author of this work is unknown, Jakob Benediktsson has shown that it may well have been Oddur Einarsson: see Jakob Benediktsson 1971, 6–12.

17. *illam linguam unam esse ex omnibus linguis principalibus et reliqua idiomatica, Danorum et Suecorum, ex hac esse deducta* (*Qualiscunque* 1928, 76).

18. Opitz proposed his views concerning the purity of the German language in a 1617 lecture, and his views are very similar to those set out in 1600 by Arngrímur the Learned and in *Qualiscunque Descriptio Islandiae* (Gottskálf Þór Jensson 2003, 59–60; Árni Sigurjónsson 1995, 106).

with countless examples, were it not that it would take too long to cite them here.<sup>19</sup>

In claiming that there is no *repetitionis rhetoricæ* or *dictionis figura* in Latin verse that cannot also be found in Icelandic poetry, the author's intention is clearly to demonstrate that Icelandic verse is in no way inferior to foreign (especially Latin) poetry, and that the rules of Icelandic poetry are no less complex than those for classical verse. In particular he points to the rule concerning what Guðbrandur calls "rétt hljóðstafagrein" [correct alliteration]. The *Íslandslýsing* author points to this as a distinctive characteristic of Icelandic verse, an essential rule from which no deviation is permitted. He discusses *aðalhendingar* (full vowel and consonant rhyme within the same verse line) and *skothendingar* (partial rhyme within the same line), and believes he can demonstrate that in Icelandic poetry everything is composed and constructed with greater care than in conventional poetry published elsewhere in Europe.<sup>20</sup> He argues later that Icelandic verse has made use of Latin poetic rules as regards changes in the length of feet and syllables. This is an important point in the cultural debate of the time because ideas were emerging to the effect that poetry in the Germanic languages such as German and Danish should be harmonized with the rules of Latin verse (discussed further below). Finally, the *Íslandslýsing* author discusses the meters of Icelandic verse romance and court poetry. He makes much of the latter's complexity: "Most venerable and revered of all is the type of poem that Icelanders generally call the sixteener [sextánmælt], because it has sixteen repetitions of sounds [rhymes]."<sup>21</sup> Examples and variants are cited, together with specimens of Latin court poetry. The author deems vernacular court verse to

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19. Accedunt etiam infinitæ exornationes non tantum ex artificiosa partim similium, partim leuiter dissimilium sonorum repetitione, quæ talis omnino est, ut nulla extet in Latina lingua repetitionis rhetoricæ siue dictionis figura, quæ non eleganter expressa sit uernaculis nostris cantionibus, uerum etiam ex ellipsi, pleonasmò et enallage, quod infinitis exemplis speciatim poterit demonstrari, nisi nimis longum foret illa huc ascribere (*Qualiscunque* 1928, 79).

20. quod omnia sunt in nostris pœmatis multo accuratius composita et conformata quam in Germanorum, Danorum, Suecorum aut etiam Anglorum, Gallorum et Itatorum rythmis uulgaribus, qui hactenus sunt diulgati (*Qualiscunque* 1928, 81).

21. Sed omnium nobilissimum et antiquissimum carmen censetur illud, quod Islandi uulgo appellant *sextanmællt*, ideo quod sedecim uocum reciprocationes uel sonorum repetitiones habeat (*Qualiscunque* 1928, 83).

be “heroic,” “reuera antiquissimum genus nostræ uersificationis” (84 [indeed our oldest form of poetry]), and the poetic art most favored in the royal courts of medieval Scandinavia: “[W]e read that these men with a talent for versifying or traditional poetry were much esteemed by kings and chieftains.”<sup>22</sup> This point was important for the author in an age in which one function of poetry was to praise or honor the highest and mightiest in society. He then names two works that provide instruction in the rules and traditions of this poetry. The reference here may be to *Snorra Edda*, which he divides into two parts, “Skálda” and “Edda” (see Sverrir Tómasson 1996c, 55). The author indicates that these works remained influential and much used in his own day, as poets learn from riddles and kennings how to “cloak the mother tongue in such mystery, for the sake of entertainment, that it becomes even more difficult to interpret such popular pieces than the oracles of the sibyls and the riddles of the sphinxes, except for those very experienced in such imaginings.”<sup>23</sup> The author seems here to be referring to ancient poetic modes, but he could also mean what in Old Icelandic poetics is called “ofljóst” [equivocal], that is, when a poet uses ambiguous wording in order to compose in a “fólgið” [concealed, secretive] manner, as Snorri puts it (Jakob Benediktsson 1983, 198).<sup>24</sup> In the fourteenth century the monk Eysteinn Ásgrímsson revealed a new mode of composition in his poem *Lilja*, based on the ideas of Geoffrey of Vinsauf (d. 1210) in his *Poetria Nova*. Eysteinn used few kennings and composed in a transparent and comprehensible manner (Foote 1984, 259–264; Vésteinn Ólason 1993, 286–299). Bishop Guðbrandur’s preference for such writing seems apparent when he criticizes poetry “with obscure kennings and barely comprehensible vocabulary and meanings.”<sup>25</sup> During the Renaissance and baroque periods such opaqueness was regarded as

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22. rhythmistas illos siue componistas ueteres apud reges et principes olim fuisse in maximo pretio (*Qualiscunque* 1928, 85).

23. [. . .] maternam linguam uoluptatis gratia obscurare, ut ipsis popularibus difficilior sit intellectu quam Sibyllarum oracula uel Sphingis ænigmata nisi illis, qui diu multumque in figmentis hisce uersati sunt (*Qualiscunque* 1928, p. 86).

24. This is linked to the idea of Augustine and others that the text contains a hidden meaning that the reader must uncover and interpret; see also the idea of *integumentum* (see Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 252).

25. með djúpum kenningum og lítt skiljandi orðum og meiningum (Bishop Guðbrandur’s *Vísnaþók* 1612 1937, 236; see Foote 1984, 267–269).

artful and desirable, and the author of *Íslandslýsing* seems proud that Icelandic poets are specifically taught to compose in this way. Such a style made great demands on the knowledge and awareness of listeners. In *Qualiscunque* emphasis is placed on the number of gifted modern Icelanders, both clerical and lay, who compose “spiritual and moral poems, wonderful hymns and songs of praise.”<sup>26</sup> And while the poetic genres favored in Iceland are listed there is no attempt to minimize the importance of foreign influences, from Scandinavia and Germany:

Almost all the psalms, sacred poems and hymns of praise that I have seen or heard have been translated into the Icelandic language from German and Danish books. Through their initiative we also have many didactic odes, written in accordance with God’s holy word, and beautifully composed sacred songs, including, for example, those about the creation of the world, the Fall, the restoration of mankind to his former condition, worldly vanity, the Seven Deadly Sins, the healing of the soul, the suffering of the Savior, sacred marriage, the ship of Christ, and all the Gospels and epistles. Such works are used throughout the year by people in God’s holy church.<sup>27</sup>

As we have noted, the period shortly after the composition of *Qualiscunque* also saw the publication of Arngrímur Jónsson the Learned’s theories about the role of the Icelandic or Norse language in preserving the main residue of the old Gothic language (*Crymogæa* 1985, 133, see Sverrir Tómasson 1996a, 68). Arngrímur was a pupil and later a colleague of Bishop Guðbrandur and it is clear that these ideas combine to form a coherent intellectual framework for Icelandic scholars towards the end of the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. Shortly before the publication of *Crymogæa* in

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26. *ethicas et sacras cantiones, psalmos et hymnos dulcissimos (Qualiscunque 1928, 87).*

27. *Eorum, inquam, studio et diligentia acceptum referre debemus, quod ex Germanicis et Danicis libellis in popularem linguam siue Islandicum idioma conuersi sunt omnes fere psalmi, cantiones et hymni, quos uidimus uel audiimus. Per eosdem etiam ex sacro Dei uerbo multas didacticas odas et diuina cantica pulcherrime habemus concinnata, ut: de mundi creatione, de hominis lapsu et modo restitutionis in pristinum statum, de uanitate mundi, de septem grauissimis uitijis, de medicina animæ, de Dominica passione, de santo conjugio, de nauicula Christi, de omnibus Euangelijis et Epistolis, quæ per totum annum in Ecclesia Dei sancta populo proponuntur (Qualiscunque 1928, 87).*

the winter of 1608–1609 Arngrímur arranged for Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás to prepare a new version of *Snorra Edda*. Magnús divided the work into two parts, arranged the material in a new way, and reworded the text extensively or summarized it (Sverrir Tómasson 1996a, 69; Malm 1996, 46).<sup>28</sup> Snorri's medieval textbook of poetics was extant in many manuscript copies and remained very popular as a guide to best poetic practice (Sverrir Tómasson 1996a, 85–86). As we have already noted, the author of *Íslandslýsing* states that Norse poetry was based on particular rules that could be accessed in both “Edda” and “Skálda.” The *Edda* was a source of pride for Icelanders and would attract the interest and attention of international scholars.

### Renewing the Art of Poetry

The ideas of the *Íslandslýsing* author, noted above, about the possibility of using the rules of Latin concerning rhythm and syllabic length in Icelandic poetry were no exaggeration. In Denmark, Germany and farther afield at that time there was a movement to renew vernacular language and poetry using classical tradition as a guide. These ideas became very influential during the seventeenth century and though they may be associated with the baroque they also represent a direct continuation of humanistic values, which serves to confirm how indistinct and porous the boundaries between the Renaissance and the baroque can be (Storstein and Sørensen 1999, 32–36). In late medieval Germany, Denmark and Sweden poetry was of two kinds, learned works in Latin and popular verse in the vernacular. There was a major divide between these two traditions (Billeskov Jansen 1969 [1944], 59). In popular medieval poetry the most common meter was “knittelvers,” whose irregular accentual rhythm was based on stressed syllables and thus differed significantly from the more orderly nature of Latin verse.<sup>29</sup> Baroque writers sought to improve vernacular poetry

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28. Mats Malm argues that by its division into two parts, with mythological narratives separated from kennings, the *Laufás Edda* lost sight of Snorri's original link between these two elements—an association crucial to understanding the nature and substance of the poetry. Using the *Edda* as a thesaurus in which a poet can find ideas and methodologies reflects the *imitatio*-method that was widespread (in various forms) in European classical literary tradition (Malm 1996, 113–114).

29. “Knittelvers” can be found at the end of some late sagas in Iceland but seems not to have been used for independent poetic composition (Jakob Benediktsson 1983, 147).

by making it more sophisticated and cosmopolitan, and believed that this would involve recasting its form along classical lines by establishing rhythmic regularity based on syllabic length (Storstein and Sørensen 1999, 40–50; Óskar Halldórsson 1996, 51). This was not easy to achieve, however, because the rhythms of later languages obeyed rules different from those governing Latin (see Billeskov Jansen 1969 [1944], 65–66). The Danish grammarian Hans Stephanius (1599–1651) was the first to demonstrate that stress governs poetic rhythm in the later Germanic languages and that accordingly poetry in these tongues developed its own distinctive patterns of rhythmic regularity. Stephanius's work was never published, however, and thus it was Martin Opitz, a German scholar of poetics, whose period of residence in Denmark brought him into contact with native scholars there, who became associated with these new theories about accentuation in poetry after the publication of his *Buch von der deutschen Poeterey* (1624). Poetry was now no longer concerned with counting long and short syllables as in Latin verse but rather with distinguishing between heavily and lightly accented syllables. The first Danish study of prosody (published in 1649) was by Hans Mikkelsen Ravn (1610–1663), who notes that “the new poetic art is a more demanding way to create poetry and one that our ancestors neither knew nor attempted to use.”<sup>30</sup>

Icelandic attitudes toward the poetry of their forefathers were quite different, not only because Icelanders saw themselves as the custodians of Norse poetic traditions but also because they had long associated native poetic tradition with that of Latin (see Foote 1984). From the outset Icelandic prosody used classical poetics as a reference point, with the Old Icelandic *háttalyklar* [metrical guides] modeled on them (Holtmark 1941; Foote 1984, 254; Guðrún Nordal 2001). There was thus an established tradition of associating the rules of Latin poetry with Icelandic and Norse tradition, as a treatise by Ólafr Þorðarson hvítaskáld (d. 1259) also confirms (Foote 1984, 254–255).

Other works on prosody and the new poetic arts (the *Rhythmologia Nova*) were written in Scandinavia during the seventeenth century, though various poets were certainly already familiar with such ideas, and scholars of prosody cite the evidence of older poetry in support of

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30. den ny rimkunst er en strengere måde at gøre vers på, som vore forfædre ikke har kendt eller prøvet (*Danske metrikere* 1953, 156; see Storstein and Sørensen 1999, 30).

these views (Friese 1968, 82). The works of Søren Poulsen Gotlænder (Judichær) (1599–1688) on prosody are also based on classical rhetoric and were very influential, as was *Nogle Betænkninger om det Cimbriske Sprog* [Some thoughts on the Cimbrian language] (1663) by Peder Syv (1631–1702). Syv was clearly familiar with the Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás version of the *Edda*, which was printed two years after the publication of *Nogle Betænkninger*. He discusses kennings, *dróttkvæði* [court poetry] and the importance of the *Edda* but is especially interested in those features of early Norse poetry that resemble baroque mannerism (Malm 1996, 116).

In this light we may note that the author of *Íslandslýsing* sees no problem for “thoughtful and creative men to determine the correct length of syllables and to divide individual words into specific feet; it is thus really quite easy to harmonize the whole grammatical system of any well known national language with the word forms and syntax of the Hebrew, Greek and Latin systems.”<sup>31</sup> As we have seen, contemporary European scholars regarded this task as a high priority. The *Íslandslýsing* author then points out that it was no problem in Icelandic because in that language each and every foot had to be recited in a certain rhythm and pronounced in accordance with the nature of each poem, “as I believe was the custom of ancient poets in Hebrew, Greek and Latin poems.”<sup>32</sup> *Dróttkvætt* rhythm was based both on syllabic length and accent (Kristján Árnason 1980, 109; Kristján Árnason 1991, 147–148) and the *Íslandslýsing* author states that division of feet in Icelandic poetry is governed by “ákveðnum lengdarreglum” [specific rules of length] (Oddur Einarsson 1971, 149).

During the sixteenth century changes in the system of vowel length (Great Vowel Shift) were becoming apparent and these also had an impact on the rules of poetry.<sup>33</sup> The changes appear not to

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31. hugvitssömum og athugulum mönnum, að ákvarða rétt lengd atkvæða og skipa einstökum orðum í ákveðna bragliði, þar sem í rauninni er ofurauðvelt að samræma allt málfræðikerfi sérhverrar vel kunnrar þjóðtöngu í orðmyndum og setningafræði hinu hebreska, gríska og latneska kerfi (Oddur Einarsson 1971, 152).

32. eins og ég álit að fornskáldin hafi tíðkað áður fyrr í hebreskum, grískum og latneskum kvæðum (Oddur Einarsson 1971, 152).

33. Before the so-called Great Vowel Shift stressed syllables were either long or short (as in Latin) but after the “shift” each vowel was long or short, with its length determined by what followed it (Stefán Karlsson 2000, 25).

have affected the discussion of prosody in *Íslandslýsing* and research suggests that linguistic change may have been slower in Iceland than elsewhere, that it may have varied from region to region, and that the old rules of vowel length may have lasted until the eighteenth century, as examples of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poetry suggest (Kristján Árnason 1980, 159–160).

The *Íslandslýsing* author couches his discussion of Icelandic prosody in terms of classical Latin verse, and his potential readers will have shared this frame of reference, for his work was intended for scholars at home and abroad. He classifies Icelandic poems “að latneskri fyrirmynd” [according to a Latin model] (1971, 152), and as an example of the four-foot sixteener (*brynhenda*) line, he cites a verse from *Lilja*, noting that each line has four feet and is almost entirely trochaic, and adding that it would be just as easy to use “the six foot line pattern used by the Romans.”<sup>34</sup> His discussion of the Icelandic language and prosody is underpinned by the notion that the Norse (that is, Icelandic) language is on a par with the ancient classical languages, and that Old Norse poetry is of equivalent perfection and nobility and thus not in need of improvement.<sup>35</sup>

It has been argued that the original idea of Icelandic linguistic

34. Þá mælingu, sem er á sex liða braglinum hjá Rómverjum (Oddur Einarsson 1971, 154–155). Árni Sigurjónsson regards it as significant that the author of *Íslandslýsing* “does not analyse the division of feet or fixed syllable length in the verses he himself cites” [greini ekki bragliðaskiptingu né fasta atkvæðalengd í vísunum sem hann vitnar sjálfur til] (Árni Sigurjónsson 1995, 76). The present writer believes rather that the author regards the division as self-evident, as, for example, when he takes examples of a letter repeated three times “in this special six-foot line” [í þessari einstöku sexliða braglinu] (Oddur Einarsson 1971, 150).

35. In his own *Íslandslýsing* Peder Hansen Resen (1625–1688) seeks support for his views from the *Íslandslýsing* attributed to Oddur Einarsson. However, he appears to have misunderstood and misrepresented that author by attributing to him the view “that they [the Icelanders] do not know the length of syllables or concern themselves with regularity of feet in poetic scansion, as can be seen in Icelandic poems that commonly feature irregular rhythm, confusion over iambs and trochees and other metrical variations. In this respect the poetry resembles that written in France and England, rather than in Holland and Germany by Opitz, Cats, Vondel and others, all of whom emphasize the need for stronger poetic rules” [að þeir [Íslendingar] þekki ekki lengd atkvæða og kæri sig kollótta um reglulega bragliði, enda sést það af íslenskum kvæðum, þar sem algeng er bæði óregluleg hrynjandi og ruglingur á öfugum tvílið og réttum og önnur umskipti á bragliðum. Í þessu eru kvæðin lík frönskum og enskum skáldskap, en ólík hollenskum og þýskum þeirra Opitz, Cats, Vondels og annarra, sem leggja áherslu á strangari reglur í skáldskap] (Resen 1991, 260; Jakob Benediktsson’s modern Icelandic translation of Resen’s unpublished Latin text). Jakob Benediktsson argues that Resen’s *Íslandslýsing* draws on contemporary European works about Iceland, and that several of his statements are incorrect or based on misunderstandings (Resen 1991, 51).

purism makes no sense unless attention is paid to Latin discussion of such matters by humanist writers (Gottskálf Þór Jenson 2003, 38ff.).<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the views of Icelanders about the special position and importance of Icelandic or Norse poetry bear the marks of direct influence from the same modes of thought that led to the emergence of humanism and the Renaissance. Not only was there a lengthy Icelandic poetic tradition, but there were also early works on meter, as with the *háttalyklar* and, not least, the “Háttatal” in *Snorra Edda*, the first old northern study of prosody, in which Snorri builds on the authoritative foundations of classical writers such as Donatus, Priscian and even Quintilian (see Foote 1984, 257). The assertions of learned Icelanders that their language could be ranked alongside Latin were bold in the extreme, but led by Arngrímur the Learned and encouraged by benevolent and interested supporters in Copenhagen, they allowed themselves to make the claim, arguing that its validity could only be truly appreciated by those who knew the ancient and noble Norse language. We might say that they had simply adopted humanist ideas about the importance of Latin and transferred them to Icelandic. On this basis they could also assert the importance of retaining all the characteristics of early Norse poetry, such as alliteration, rhyme and the old meters. *Drottkvæði* was at the top of their list, no less respected by them than the hexameter or other classical measures. This view finds expression in most contemporary discussions of poetry.

### Essays On Poetics

*Literatura Runica in Poësi usum uberius declarans* (1636), by the Danish scholar Ole Worm, concludes with two essays on Old Icelandic poetry, one by Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás (“Magni Olavii de Poesi nostra discursu,” see Faulkes 1993, 102; text and English translation in Faulkes 1979, 408–415), the other by Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason. An Icelandic version of Magnús’s Latin essay exists in manuscript (AM 148 8vo, *Kvæðabók úr Vigur*, 34r–38v; see Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2008) and the following discussion draws on that Icelandic version.

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36. The phenomenon of linguistic purism and correctness can be traced back to Roman ideas about removing foreign impurities (barbarisms) from the Latin language; see Sverrir Tómasson 1998, 299.

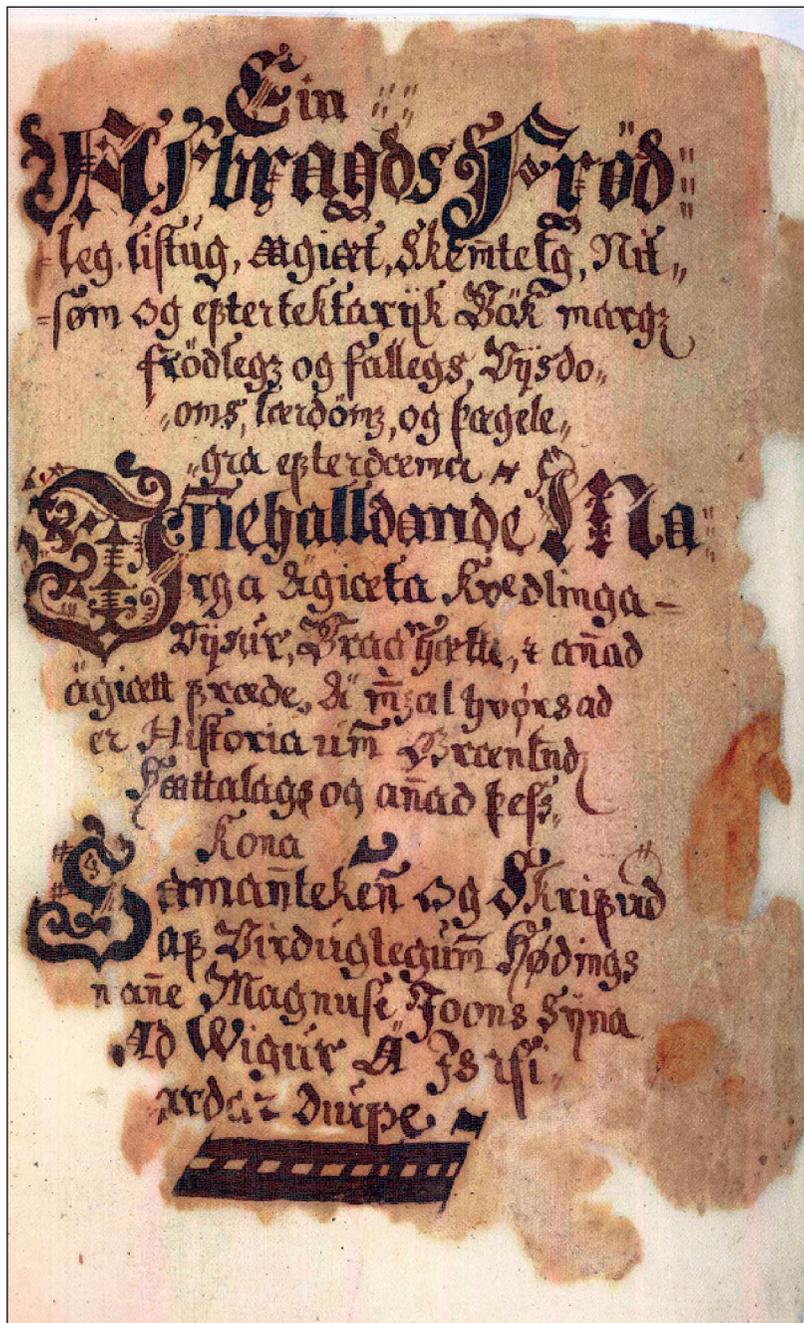
Þorlákur's essay was printed first in the Appendix to *Literarum Runicarum*.<sup>37</sup> In it he discusses *dróttkvæði*, quotes examples of verses featuring runic letters, and includes a Latin commentary. He discusses poetic language and figures of speech, tracing them back to classical rhetoric, for example by calling the phrase “Ýmis hold” [Ýmir's flesh] a metonymy [*metonymia*] rather than a kenning for “the earth,” and by identifying the Eddic river “Gjöll” as a synecdoche for any “river” (Worm 1636, 181; Malm 1996, 37–38). Þorlákur emphasises how a contemporary poet can make use of the rules of such poetry. Both his essay and that of Magnús are clearly eager to link Icelandic poetry with European verse (Malm 1996, 35). Magnús Ólafsson asserts at the beginning of his discussion that Norse-Icelandic poetry far surpasses that in other languages, both in terms of craftsmanship and influence (*arte et effectu*; “að list, snilli, krafti og verkan” [in terms of art, genius, power and influence]). He justifies this claim by stating that poetry in the language offers an unusually large number of types of elegant circumlocution and artistic expression, adding that these can prove difficult or even impossible to explain to those unfamiliar with the language. Later in the essay he indicates clearly that he makes these claims not just because Icelandic is his native tongue or because he is very familiar with poetry in the language, but simply because the craftsmanship of Icelandic poetry is unique. He says that this can even be explained with examples to someone unfamiliar with Icelandic or Norse.

Right at the outset Magnús refers to the *Edda* and the importance of poets composing in accordance with Eddic rules. The *Edda* is a kind of secret weapon for Icelanders because though its learning is comparable with Latin sources, its rules (on meter, alliteration, rhyme and other elements) apply only to the Icelandic language. Nevertheless, Magnús argues that Norse poetry stands on an equal footing with classical Latin verse: “Nor are there in our poetry fewer rules, licences, tropes, and figures of speech used than in versification among the chief Latin poets.”<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to

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37. Wormius, Olaus. 1936. [Runer] *Seu Danica Literatura Antiquissima*. Copenhagen; see pp. 175–249 for Þorlákur's essay.

38. Nec in nostra Poesi pauciores cautiones, licentiæ, tropi et figuræ usurpantur, quam in re metrica apud Latonis Poetarum principes (Text and translation in Faulkes 1979, 410; Icelandic text in AM 148 8vo, p. 351).



Title-page of a poetry manuscript from Vigur, AM 148 8vo. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum [Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies], Reykjavík. Photograph: Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.

compare Magnús's claims with the views of non-Icelandic scholars of poetics, such as the Swede Andreas Arvidi in his short guide to Swedish poetry, published in 1651.<sup>39</sup> Supported by a range of examples, Arvidi asserts "that each figure, verse and genre in Greek and Latin poetry is transferable to the Swedish language."<sup>40</sup>

Magnús also states that Icelandic poetry contains all kinds of riddles and metaphors. He probably means kennings, though there are also versified riddles (and works of this kind are attributed to Magnús himself). Meanings were often concealed in the names of runes (see below for discussion of the names of Magnús Ólafsson and Hallgrímur Pétursson). Magnús makes no special mention of *dróttkvæði*, of which, as noted earlier, there is detailed discussion in Þorlákur Skúlason's essay included in the Appendices to Ole Worm's 1636 *Literatura runica*. Magnús argues that in Iceland the gift of verse is associated with supernatural inspiration, in such a way that some poets can be found behaving strangely and composing better than usual at the time of each new moon. This distinguishes an Icelandic poet from those in other countries because European poets can easily learn to write poetry by following specific rules whereas the Icelandic poet requires additional inspiration. Magnús refers here to the two sides of poetic talent—art and nature [*ars* and *natura*]<sup>41</sup>—and suggests that the latter is more valued in Iceland than elsewhere (see Malm 1996, 40–41). After discussing a number of old writers Magnús turns to Icelandic contemporary poets to remind readers that though the early Norse language is no longer understood elsewhere in Scandinavia there are still those in Iceland who honor its medieval poetic traditions while at the same time addressing the literary needs of the contemporary church:

There are however still in Iceland, where the use of this language is especially well preserved, many fluent and skilful poets who turn into poetry not only secular subjects, which is the area to which the Edda principally applies, but also sacred stories in a straightforward verbal style, composing psalms and holy and serious songs and thereby

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39. *Manuductio ad poesin Svecanam, Thet är, En kort handledning til thet svenske poeterij*, ed. Malm (1996).

40. att varje figur, versmått och genre inom den grekiska och latinska poesin kunde överföras till det svenska språket (Johannesson 1987a, 176).

communicating the [truths of the] church of God in our land most valuably [. . .]. (Faulkes 1979, 414–415)<sup>41</sup>

In *Kvæðabók úr Vigur* [A poetry book from Vigur], AM 148 8vo, there are two essays on poetics, the first of which is probably by Magnús Jónsson of Vigur (1637–1702), who arranged for the manuscript to be produced and indeed wrote much of it himself. The second piece, as already noted, is the essay by Magnús Ólafsson in an Icelandic version that may be the work of Magnús of Vigur. The first of these essays discusses an issue of particular interest during the baroque period, namely, the extent to which embellishment and exaggeration were permissible in poetry. Particular attention is paid to sagas and *rímur*: ought their style to be straightforward or fantastic and their subject matter realistic or elaborate? The essay itself bears all the marks of having been written by a learned individual with a command of rhetorical ornamentation, as when, for example, he states that old poets sometimes speak elliptically “either because they are frightened by the anger of chieftains, or corrupted by bribes, or provoked by hatred, seduced by friendship and tricked by favours.”<sup>42</sup> The author notes that some believe each saga narrative or set of *rímur* ought to be like “a maiden, unspoiled, unscathed, clear, honorable, blameless and of spotless morality.”<sup>43</sup> A distinction is drawn between the contrasting ways chaste maidens and promiscuous prostitutes see fit to dress themselves, and this same distinction is then applied to poetry. It is clear that the author does his best to ensure that his own style is not excessively plain. A set of *rímur* “ought not to be bare, spare, cold and dull, but ought rather to be colorful, vivid, decorative, popular, accessible and lively, yet always sincere, complete and, as

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41. [. . .] adhuc tamen in Islandia ubi lingvæ ejus usus præcipue conservatur, magno numero Poetæ extant, prompti et ingeniosi, qui non tantum res profanas, ubi Edda potissimum locum habet, sed etiam sacras historias simplici orationis vena in numeros convertunt Rhythmicos, Psalmos et cantilenas pias et graves componunt, et ecclesiæ Dei apud nos utiliter communicant [. . .] (Faulkes 1979, I 414–415). See AM 148 8vo, bl. 38v).

42. annað hvort af höfðingjanna reiði skelfdir, eður af fémútum forspilltir, eður af hatri uppæstir, af vináttu vélaðir og af gunst gabbaðir (31v).

43. önnur mey, óspillt, ókrenkt, skýrleg, heiðarleg, vammalaus og hreinferðugleg (31v).

I am trying to say, pure and dignified.”<sup>44</sup> He therefore concludes that stylistic elaboration and excess have their place in poetry, and supports this view with reference to foreign works such as *De rerum varietate* by the Italian mathematician and philosopher Hieronymus Cardanus (1501–1576) (AM 148 8vo p. 32r; Jón Helgason 1955, 34), and to Snorri Sturluson’s *Edda*, stating that “our old and well-known *Edda* provides plenty of these and similarly diverting embellishments and exaggerations.”<sup>45</sup> His statement about the *Edda* and its origins may echo the words of Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson in a letter to Stephan Stephanus in 1641 (see Jón Helgason 1955, 34).

There are several individual essays on Latin prosody in Icelandic manuscripts, and these may well be just the tip of the iceberg, with most such works connected with the Latin teaching that took place in the homes of educated officials as well as in the cathedral schools, as we have seen in the biography (cited above) of Vigfús Hákonarson. Lbs ÍB 103 8vo, for example, consists of two school booklets, one of them written in a pleasingly neat hand during the second half of the eighteenth century and entitled *De Prosodia*. It is a work in Icelandic about Latin prosody and begins: “Prosody is the part of grammar that teaches us to assign the correct sound to consonants or correctly to pronounce each consonant.”<sup>46</sup> Among the chapter headings we find “Um allar samstöfur yfir höfuð” [On all consonants in general], “Þeir brúkanlegustu pedes eru” [These are the most useful types of poetic feet], “Um brúkanlegustu versategundir” [On the most useful kinds of verse], “Hexametrum” [Hexameters], “Pentametrum” [Pentameters], and “Jambicum” [Iambics]. The booklet is in the hand of séra Björn Halldórsson, latterly from Garður in Kelduhverfi. The names of Björn’s pupils are listed on the protective outer pages of the manuscript, which has clearly been used for teaching purposes.

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44. ekki að vera óprýddur, ekki berlegur, ekki fálegur, ekki dauflegur, heldur prýðilegur, blómlegur, skrautbúinn, fjölmennilegur, liðlegur og líflegur, ávallt þó heill og fullkomlegur og sem ég skyldi sagt hafa óspilltur og sómasamlegur (32v; see Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2008, 200).

45. slíkar og þvílíkar fyndinga skreytur og gamanýkjur gefur nóglega af sér vor gamla og alkunnuga íslenska Edda (33v; see Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2008, 201).

46. Prosodia er sá partur af Grammatica sem kennir oss að gefa samstöfunum þeirra rétta hljóð eður rétt að úttala hverja samstöfu.

### Icelandic Poetry In Europe

In his *Unterricht Von Der Teutschen Sprache und Poesie* (1682) the German scholar of poetics Daniel Georg Morhof (1639–1691) presents a detailed discussion of German language and literature, and also of the poetry of other countries, notably Scandinavia, but also Italy, France, England, Holland, as well as the Greek and Latin classics. Morhof's treatment of these topics is now recognized as a remarkable achievement, and he augments his examination of contemporary poetics with a detailed exploration of German literary history in a European context (see Meid 1986, 24). He begins his discussion of Norse poetry by acknowledging that it is old, and reflecting on the relative antiquity of old northern and German verse. Though appearing slightly reluctant to entertain the notion that Norse poetry might be the older form, he sets out the arguments for and against. Morhof was clearly aware of the theories (discussed above) about the early origins of the Norse language, and Icelanders were certainly not alone in making these claims. In seventeenth-century Europe it was a matter of national honor that particular modern vernaculars had developed from ancient languages. As we have noted the period was marked by great interest in national vernaculars and the equivalent national histories. Discussing seventeenth-century Danish attitudes to language, not least the desire for their language to be recognized as older than Swedish, modern Danish scholars would now use the term “sprogpatiotisme” [linguistic patriotism].

As for Icelandic poetic traditions, Morhof is particularly interested in the *Edda*, in the medieval poetry based on it, and in the high prestige it enjoyed in royal courts. In particular he names *dróttkvætt* verse and describes the variant known as the sixteener, with his account probably based on Þorlákur Skúlason's essay in the Appendix to *Literatura Runica*.

Morhof clearly knows Resen's 1665 edition of the *Edda*, Ole Worm's *Literatura runica* (1636 and 1651), and Arngrímur Jónsson's *Crymogæa*; and also cites works by the Swedish scholars Olof Rudbeck (1630–1702) and Olof Verelius (1618–1682). Because Morhof's discussion of Icelandic poetry is relatively unknown, it is included as an appendix to this chapter, together with an English

translation. Morhof cites the first book of *Crymogæa* as his source for believing that the author of “Skálda” was alive in 1216. In fact Arngrímur the Learned does not mention “Skálda” but says of the First Grammarian: “Around the year 1216 one of our countrymen wrote about the Icelandic alphabet in our native language.”<sup>47</sup> Arngrímur seems to have attributed all the grammatical treatises to the same author, for his remarks on the subject of rhetorical figures are in line with the contents of the Third Grammatical Treatise.<sup>48</sup> This is probably the work referred to by Morhof as “Skálda.” Morhof also finds support for various ideas in Magnús Ólafsson’s essay (“Dn. Magni Olavii de Poesi nostra discursus”), which was printed in *Literatura runica* and from which he quotes directly. His interest in the *Edda* as a major source for early Icelandic poetry and in *dróttkvæði* fully reflects the widespread seventeenth-century fascination with poetic circumlocution and metrical complexity. And the same can be said of his interest in riddles [*logogryphi*] composed in accordance with the specific rules of Icelandic poetry. Morhof’s comments about “Poetischen Schwindel” [poetic swindles], known by Icelanders as “Scallviingl” [poetic delirium], clearly derive from Magnús Ólafsson’s remarkable account in his (previously cited) essay about the strange mental derangements that can sometimes overwhelm a poet:<sup>49</sup> “and often this quality can be detected even in strangers, from particular gestures and mannerisms which we call *Skallviingl* [skáldvingl], that is, poetic delirium.”<sup>50</sup>

47. Um það bil árið 1216 skrifaði einhver landi vor á móðurmáli um stafróf íslensskunnar (Arngrímur Jónsson 1985, 100).

48. “But when our fellow countryman has finished with the alphabet he then describes figures of speech and meanings in our native tongue complete with Icelandic examples, though he retains their Greek names, such as *epizeuxis*, *anadiplosis* and so on” [En þegar þessi landi vor hefur lokið við bókstafina snýr hann sér að því að lýsa stílbrögðum orðræðu og merkingar í móðurmáli og sýna dæmi um þau á íslensku, en heldur þó hinum grísku nöfnum þeirra, svo sem *epizeuxis*, *anadiplosis* o.s.frv.] (Arngrímur Jónsson 1985, 101).

49. Páll Vídalín states that Guðmundur Erlendsson, the pastor and poet from Fell, became deranged at every new and full moon and composed poems; and that had he not done so he would have almost lost his mind (Páll Vídalín 1985, 39).

50. [. . .] et sæpius hæc indoles etiam in ignotis ex singulari aliquo gestu conspicitur, quem nos *Skallviingl* i.e. Poeticam vertiginem appellamus (Text and English translation in Faulkes 1979, 411). Magnús Ólafsson’s account reads: [. . .] og þetta náttúrulega sést oftlega, jafnvel af ókenndum, með sérdeilis látæði og viðbragði, hvört að vér skáldvingl almennilega nefna gjörum (AM 148 8vo, p. 36v).

Morhof's remark about the popularity of *dróttkvæði* among the kings and nobility of old is a point much discussed by Icelandic scholars of poetics. They see it as evidence of the aristocratic and learned nature of this verse. Such a view doubtless appealed greatly to an age in which poetry was viewed as a means of social self-promotion, not least at court. We may note, finally, that Morhof names only one Danish poet of the time, Dorothe Engelbretsdatter from Bergen: "the Danish language is not short of good poets and currently a woman, Dorothe Engelbertsdatter, is much praised; she has composed spiritual songs of uncommon refinement."<sup>51</sup>

### The Poetics of Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík

Drafts of three essays on poetics by Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík (1705–1779) are extant in AM 986 4to and AM 1028 4to. He also wrote a treatise on stylistics (Aðalsteinn Eyþórsson 1999, 7–19) and in his *Hagþenkir* (Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 1996b) he discusses poets and poetry. In addition Jón assembled a list of authors that amounts to a draft literary history of Iceland.<sup>52</sup> Not only did Jón have a scholarly interest in poetry but he was also a poet himself, a considerable number of whose works survive in manuscript (see Seelow 1990). His writings are an important source for our knowledge of Icelandic post-Reformation verse and contemporary attitudes towards it, as Hubert Seelow (1991) has shown and, as we have already noted, many scholars have emphasized the fundamental importance of research into poetics for our understanding of the poetry of the period. It is therefore appropriate at this point to consider Jón's overall ideas in more detail, particularly his view of poetry. Though he is younger than the principal poets under discussion here there is an obvious continuity between his own ideas and the attitudes that informed seventeenth-century verse, and indeed he frequently cites works by seventeenth-century poets. Seelow (1990) notes that Jón's writings confirm how closely he followed the current debate on poetry and poetics. In his draft

51. Es fehlet auch in der Dänischen Sprache nicht an guten Poeten / und wird ietziger Zeit eine Frauensperson Dorothea Engelberts Datter sehr gerühmet / welche geistliche Carmina von ungemeiner Zierlichkeit geschrieben (Morhof 1682, 409).

52. See the forthcoming edition of Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir.

treatises he refers to Daniel Georg Morhof and his *Unterricht Von Der Teutschen Sprache und Poesie / deren Ursprung / Fortgang und Lehrsätzen* (1682, 1700).

In his discussion of stylistics Jón sets out rules based on classical rhetoric but also presents his own views on linguistic “purification” (Aðalsteinn Eyþórsson 1999, 7). The essay is a good example of the importance of rhetoric as a source for both concepts and rules (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 1994b). In the draft literary history (AM 986 4to) it is apparent that Jón intends to discuss Eddic poetics. Elsewhere in the same text he discusses “figures [of speech], both those commonly used by poets and those in the *Edda*.”<sup>53</sup> He appears therefore to regard Icelandic poetics as part of (or as a genre within) classical stylistics. Jón’s comments frequently involve comparisons between Icelandic and European poetry, as when he notes that “*Inventio* is the life and soul of every poem; the Germans and Danes are often good at this, Icelanders rather less so and that is of some significance.”<sup>54</sup> The Icelanders have their strengths, however: “[they] often achieve wittier and more pleasing verbal combinations, the playful and joyous sound of words, as can be seen in their *rímur*.”<sup>55</sup> Jón’s writings confirm that for him *inventio* could involve deriving ideas from foreign poetry: “Here *Inventio* could also profit greatly from collecting various German and Danish poems, looking for ideas and imitating those that are appropriate. This can be a source of ideas worth remembering.”<sup>56</sup> On the other hand he is very suspicious of translations: “It is difficult to translate a poem or hymn successfully from one language into another. Páll Vídalín the Lawman rightly refers to translating as ‘unwise work’.”<sup>57</sup> Jón cites two reasons for his scepticism. First, Icelandic is an inflected language with a strong alliterative tradition:

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53. fígúrir, bæði þær almennu hjá skáldum og þær í Eddu (AM 986 4to, p. 5v; further page references in the paragraph are to this manuscript).

54. *Inventio* er líf og sál í hverju kvæði; Þýskir og danskir oft góðir í því. Íslenskir oft lakari og gjörir það ei so lítið (p. 13v).

55. Íslenskir stunda oft meir sniðuga og snotra samfelling orðanna, spilandi og leikandi glaum orðanna, sem sjá má af rímalögum þeirra (p. 13v).

56. Hér til (*inventivam*) má og vel þéna að leggja sér til collection, af ýmsum þýskum og dönskum kvæðum, að sjá eftir *conceptum*, og imitera þau er vel koma við. Kann það að vera manni sem einn *memoriall* (p. 14).

57. Að snúa kvæði í annað kvæði eður sálmi í annan sálm úr annarri tungu er yfrið bágst svo vel fari. Það kallaði Páll lögmaður Vídalín óviskuverk og er það satt (p. 40r).

“Icelanders must commit themselves to their alliteration: *hljóðstafir*, as they now call it, or *höfuðstaðir* as it is described in the *Edda*.”<sup>58</sup> Jón cites examples of hymns from old service books, Lutheran hymns and other works, and their translated versions were, to put it mildly, uneven in quality (see Óskar Halldórsson 1996, 51ff.). He also cites Stefán Ólafsson’s translation of Kingo’s hymns, noting the significant differences between the original texts and the Icelandic renderings. Yet Stefán’s own hymns are “liðugri og frjálslegri” [more supple and free]. Jón prefers to recommend Hallgrímur Pétursson’s approach: that is, to make use of books in other languages and derive his ideas from them.

Jón offers a brief discussion of alliteration, for centuries a defining characteristic of Icelandic poetry, and a feature “sem íslenskir binda sig við en aðrir ei” [to which Icelanders are committed while others are not]. He notes that Jón Þorkelsson (d. 1759), the rector of Skálholt, who died in 1759, once declared that alliteration ought to be made illegal, but this had only been in jest, not least because it would be virtually impossible to eradicate such a long-established tradition. Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík discusses the merits and limitations of alliteration, acknowledging the significant challenges it creates. He devotes a chapter to music and song and how these ought to be appropriate for the poems they accompany: “Tunes for leaping and prancing, for hopping and skipping, which feature repeated arpeggios rising ever higher, with dips in between, are best suited for dancing.”<sup>59</sup> Jón talks about other musical forms before discussing the Icelandic traditions of *vikivakar* [dance songs] and *rímur*. As regards the latter form he states that “quatrain melodies suit mundane topics of every kind.”<sup>60</sup>

In Jón’s essay “Um skáldskap norrænan en þó sér í lagi íslenskan” [On Norse poetry, especially Icelandic] (in AM 986 4to) he compares Old Norse poetry with Greek and Latin verse and tries to find reasons why Scandinavian poets, not least Icelandic, should compose verse in the old northern way rather than seek out

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58. Íslenskir hljóta að binda sig við hljóðstafi sína sem þeir nú so þannin kalla en Edda höfuðstafi (p. 41v).

59. Dansandi og spilandi, hoppandi og leikandi lög, sem spila sig með ítrekuðum klifunum hærra og hærra upp, þó þau fari nokkuð niður á millum, heyra dönsnum helst til (p. 63).

60. ferskeytt lög eiga heima við hvern hégómann (p. 63).

Graeco-Roman models.<sup>61</sup> He acknowledges that classical verse is complex, but no more so than native Icelandic poetry; not only does Norse poetry distinguish between long and short syllables as in classical tradition but it also deploys rhyme and alliteration. Jón makes it clear that the theory and praxis of Latin poetry are easier to learn than their Icelandic equivalents, because it is very hard for individuals to compose in Icelandic unless they are naturally gifted. He states that “the evidence is clear: many Icelanders who know Greek and Latin find it easier to compose poetry in those languages than in Icelandic. Yes, it is virtually impossible to teach anyone to compose a fault-free verse unless they have a natural inclination for composition in Icelandic.”<sup>62</sup>

In Jón’s *Hagþenkir*, which discusses “bringing up and educating children, higher education, specialist subject knowledge and the utility of all such matters in Iceland,”<sup>63</sup> he explains what young scholars need to do if they intend to become poets. After a detailed account of the pupil’s Latin education, which must be central to his studies (Jón Ólafsson 1996, 46), composing Latin verse is identified as a natural part or indeed the pinnacle of a Latin education. There is then discussion of other speech-related art forms (*artes dicendi*) such as singing and rhetoric, other oratorical skills and, finally, Latin verse composition. We may note that Jón advises poets to correct the substance of their Icelandic poems by using Latin poetic models. His fundamental point of reference is classical; in discussing poetry and poetic composition he uses the terminology of classical rhetoric and discusses classical literary and poetic genres. Later Jón draws on his knowledge of Latin poetry in order to analyze Icelandic verse. We have noted that Latin composition was part of a formal Latin school education, and Jón describes how pupils were first taught to attempt straightforward verses before graduating to more complex compositions. The first stage was to create verse that obeyed the rules of prosody; the composition of occasional verses came next,

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61. This point is also made clearly in Jón Ólafsson of Svefneyjar’s *Om Nordens gamle Digtekonst* [On the Old Poetic Art of the North] (1786); see Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 1996, 222–229.

62. Dæmin eru ljós, Margir íslenskir, er grísku og latínu kunna, veitir hægra að gjöra vers í þeim en íslensku. Já, þeim sem af náttúrunni eru ei hneigðir til íslensks skáldskapar verður varla kennt að gjöra lýtalausa vísu.

63. uppfræðslu og uppeldi barna, æðri menntun, fagþekkingu og nytsemi alls þessa á Íslandi (Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 1996b, x).

with pupils needing to understand that poetic form was mainly determined by subject matter, and that four elements should be kept in mind: invention, amplification, disposition and elocution (Jón Ólafsson 1996, 44ff.). Jón then lists ten types of poem whose content is determined by specific circumstances or, in other words, which are composed for particular occasions. They are:

- 1) *Carmen Genethliacum*, verses celebrating the day of someone's birth or first anniversary.
- 2) *Epithalamium*, a wedding poem.
- 3) *Gratulatorium*, verses to celebrate when a good friend has secured a new appointment or academic honor, or to express New Year greetings.
- 4) *Carmen Onomasticon*, verses composed on the day that bears the man's name. Such poems are now common in Denmark and are known as "bindivers," but not in Iceland or in earlier Icelandic literary tradition.
- 5) *Propenticum*, verses to mark departures or journeys.
- 6) *Elogia litteraria*, verses praising books or disputations or their equivalent.
- 7) *Dedicatorium*, dedicatory verses to be included in a particular book, disputation or the equivalent.
- 8) *Iconographicum*, verses to accompany a frontispiece image or picture in a book or an engraving, or the equivalent.
- 9) *Epicedium*, a funeral ode.
- 10) *Epitaphium*, verses on a gravestone or grave.<sup>64</sup>

The third and highest level of poetry in Latin is the composition of "alvöru" [serious] poems. Jón identifies seven such types: first, *epopoeia*, "or a hexameter poem praising a specially valiant deed by some warrior,"<sup>65</sup> that is to say an epic poem in hexameters. Second, there is drama, which can be tragic or comic (and here Jón naturally assumes that drama will be in verse). Third, there is elegy, which

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64. 1) *Carmen Genethliacum* (vers á fyrsta fæðingardag manns eður annan á ný. 2) *Epithalamium*, brúðlaupsvers. 3) *Gratulatorium*, samfögnunarvers ef góður vinur hefur hreppt nýtt embætti eður akademískan heiður, eður lukkuósk að nýju ári. Þá er og 4) *Carmen Onomasticon*, sem gjört er á þann dag sem nafn manns ber á. Það er nú almennt utanlands í Danmörk og kallast þar bindivers en íslenskum eigi, né öllum þeim gömlu. 5) *Propenticum*, reis- eður burtferðarvers. 6) *Elogia litteraria* eru vers sem gjörð eru á bækur, dispútasíur og þvílíkt. 7) *Dedicatorium* er það vers sem maður dedicerar með einhverja bók, disputation og þvílíkt. 8) *Iconographicum*, sem er gjört við einhvers bílæti eður mynd, framan við nokkra bók eður í annarri kóparrstungu eður öðru þvílíku. 9) *Epicedium*, líkvers. 10) *Epitaphium* er sem yfirskrift á líkstein manns eður gróf. (Jón Ólafsson 1996:44–45).

65. eður *Carmen Hexametrum*, í hverju maður hrósar einhverrar kempu sérlegu frægðarverki.

according to prosodic rules should alternate between hexameter and pentameter. Fourth, odes, which “are the same in Greek or Latin as poems and verses in German or Icelandic [. . .] and may be used for all topics.”<sup>66</sup> Fifth, eclogues, or pastoral poetry, “songs composed in the name of shepherds, vineyard workers, those who tend the meadows, gardeners, fishermen and the like”;<sup>67</sup> according to Jón such pieces are most often in hexameters. Sixth, we have epigrams, “short and ingenious poems that (as the name implies) are composed as a kind of heading for something.”<sup>68</sup> Finally, *technopægnia*, which “are poets’ *jeu d’esprit* pieces; they certainly exhibit a special artistry though no specific meter.”<sup>69</sup> Jón then describes in detail what this genre involves and in doing so provides a vivid picture of one of the principal interests of baroque poets:

1) Some give the year in Roman letters (*Eteosticha*). 2) Sometimes the first letters are those of a man’s name or something similar (*Acrosticha*). There are many such pieces in Icelandic. 3) Poems that can be read backwards (*palindromon*) are called *veltuvísur* in Icelandic, and such a poem is either *commune*, where all the words can be read backwards, or *diabolicum*, where the letters and words can be read forwards or backwards. Such poems have additional names in Latin and we have many of these in Icelandic, and they are of two kinds. Some have the same meaning whether read forwards or backwards; others have a different meaning, and can only be found in individual verses, such as “Dóma grundar” etc., while the *diabolicum* is rarely if ever found in Icelandic. 4) *Carmina concordantia*, where two verses mirror each other and have many words in common, but each stanza has its own meaning. Our “sléttubönd” are of this type. 5) *Carmina relativa*, meaningless songs as they stand; they have to be assembled in a certain way for the correct meaning to emerge. We also have some of these in Icelandic. There are also 6) *Carmina æquidica*. 7) *Figurata*. 8) *Versus protei*. 9) *Quadrati*. 10) *Anagrammata*. 11) *Logogriphi* and

66. í grísku og latínu er hið sama sem ljóð eður kvæði á þýsku og íslensku [. . .] og má brúka um alla hluti.

67. carmina sem ort eru í nafni hirðara, víngarðsmanna, akurdýrðkara, urtagarðsmanna, fiskara og þvílíkra.

68. hugvitssamur og stuttur diktur sem (eins og nafnið hljóðar) er gjörður um eitthvað sem nokkurskonar yfirskrift.

69. eru látgæðiskvæði skálda. Í þeim er að sönnu sérdeilis kúnt en enginn viss bragarhátur (Jón Ólafsson 1996, 45).

12) *Echo*, and these last two can both be found in Icelandic. Finally, 13) *Centones* are verses made up of fragments from other poems, like a much-patched garment. I have written this account just for fun, but also because there are many such pieces in Icelandic.<sup>70</sup>

Jón explains these “technical tricks” in greater detail (and in largely the same order) in an essay entitled *Technopægnia* [Skaldic fun and games] (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 1999b). Thus, for example, the seventh item, *carmina figurata*, involves writing down the poem in the form of a tree, heart, oak, egg, cross, altar or harp. Such pieces were very popular in the baroque period; Jón himself composed a wedding poem that appears on the page in the shape of a tree and, unlike other wedding poems, was not to be sung or performed to music (Seelow 1990, 163–164). Jón also created puzzles or metaphors based on particular names, such as those of the author or the dedicatee. This was, of course, a well-established Icelandic tradition, as Seelow shows, but he rightly notes that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it needs to be seen in the context of baroque poetry.<sup>71</sup>

70. 1) Sum hafa ártal í vissum bókstöfum eftir rómverskri tölu (Eteosticha). 2) Stundum samsetja fyrstu bókstafirnir eitthvert mannsnafn eður annað þvílíkt (Acrosticha). Þau eru líka til á íslensku og það mörg. 3) Það sem má lesast aftur á bak (palindromon) köllum vér veltuvísur, og er slíkt carmen annaðhvert commune, þá öll orðin mega aftur á bak lesast; eður diabolicum, þá eins má lesa bókstafina og orðin, aftur á bak sem áfram. Þau fyrir slags hafa fleiri nöfn á latínu og finnast mörg hjá oss, og það af tvennu tagi: Önnur sem hafa sömu meiningu aftur á bak lesin sem áfram. Hin öfuga meiningu, og eru ei nema í einstaka vísum, sem Dóma grundar etc. en diabolica geta varla eður ekki haft stað í íslensku. 4) Carmina concordantia, þá tvö vers eru sett saman, og eru mörg orð hin sömu í báðum, og þó sín meining í hverju. Þess kyns eru vor sléttubönd sum. Þá eru 5) Carmina relativa sem í sinni röð hafa enga meining en verða að setjast saman á vissan máta, ef hinn rétti skilningur skal út koma. Af þeim höfum vér og nokkur. Til eru líka 6) carmina æqvídica. 7) Figurata. 8) Versus protei. 9. Quadrati. 10) Anagrammata. 11) Logogríphi og 12) Echo, af báðum þeim höfum vér nokkur. Og síðst 13) Centones eru vers, samsett af versabrotum annarra kvæða sem margþætt fat. Þetta svo langort skrifa eg til gamans, og af því að margt þess konar hefur stað í vorri íslensku (Jón Ólafsson 1996, 44–46).

71. “Also, the encryption of the name of the author at the end of the dedications of the poems (II–IV) and the allusions to the names of the bride and groom [. . .] should be seen in the context of baroque game poetry; they were all familiar to Jón Ólafsson, as with his ‘Capitule umm Technopægnia’ [Essay on skaldic fun and games] in AM 1028 4to proves” [Auch die Verschlüsselung des Namens des Autors am Schluß der Dedikationen der Gedichte (II–IV) und die Anspielungen auf die Namen der Brautleute [. . .] müssen wohl im Zusammenhang mit solchen, in der barocken Dichtung gängigen Spielereien gesehen werden; sie alle waren Jón Ólafssons bestens vertraut, wie sein ‘Capitule umm Technopægnia’ in AM 1028 4to beweist] (Seelow 1990, 165).

### Nature and Art

In writing poetry during the baroque period European writers drew extensively on a variety of helpful reference works, including poetic dictionaries that offered guidance (with examples) on how to create metaphors. Such volumes were used for teaching the basics of poetic composition, which to some extent was regarded as a craft skill. Poets and those who discuss poetry are aware that the art of poetry needs to be learned and exercised, for practice helps to make perfect. Knowledge in and of itself is insufficient, however, because a poet needs to be naturally gifted, with a distinction drawn between a skilled poet and a mere rhymester (van Ingen 1966, 43). Thus *natura* and *ars* are mutually dependent: neither can exist without the other. This fundamental point is sometimes made through symbols; the laurel represents nature and ivy stands for art. We see this in works by Danish scholars of poetics such as Peder Syv: “an artist emerges first when nature and craftsmanship achieve a still higher unity in the practice of poetry.”<sup>72</sup> Romantic ideas about the poet as a divinely touched genius had yet to emerge (Dyck 1991, 122).

Søren Poulsen Gotlænder Judichær, the Danish scholar of poetics, states in his *Synopsis Prosodiæ Danicæ* (1650) that a poet must have natural talents or be endowed with “a poetic Vena, or natural gift and capacity for poetry”;<sup>73</sup> second, that “poetic art, like anything else, demands discipline, and knowledge of the art”;<sup>74</sup> and, thirdly, that a poet needs “*Exercitium*, or exercise; a man using this book ought to make rhymes in this way so that nature and art might be further strengthened.”<sup>75</sup> Jón of Grunnavík discusses these matters in *Hagþenkir* in a chapter entitled “Að skælda í íslensku” [To compose poetry in Icelandic]. He states that those with poetic gifts ought to use them for the benefit of themselves and others, by composing edifying works such as “góða sálma eður moralia” [good hymns or

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72. Kunstner blev man først, hvis natur og håndværk gik op i en højere enhed i den digteriske praksis (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3 1983, 103).

73. en Poëtiske Vena, eller god Art / oc Skickelighed / til Poëteri.

74. Udkræfvis til Skalder-Kunsten / som til anden Ting / Disciplina, eller Kunst-Lærdom

75. Exercitium, eller Øfvelse / I det / at Mand ofte / i Riim saaledis at gjøre / som her læris / sig øfver / at Naturen oc Kunsten / kunde blifve dis mere styrkede (*Danske metrikere* II 1954, 136–138).

*moralia*] (Jón Ólafsson 1996, 53). But though Jón places great store on the utility of poetry, he acknowledges that the pleasure derived by the poet himself from verse is not to be discounted:

If he has an eye for poetry in his own language he should not neglect it while he is young. Poetry is also God's great gift and therefore he would wish it to be put to use for the benefit of mankind. Poetry is now less respected than was once the case when fewer people composed verse, because now too many people do so. However, it would not be right to conceal such a gift within oneself through idleness, if man realizes that he is good at poetry, indeed good at composing useful pieces that people value, good hymns or *moralia*; and even if the poet derives no other benefit from his poetry there remains the pleasure and fun that no one can deprive him of.<sup>76</sup>

Jón discusses the difference between composing in the Icelandic vernacular and in other European languages, including Latin and Greek, and indicates that the poets who can do the one can usually do the other. He stresses that even the person who considers himself “vel náttúrugáfað[an]” [naturally very gifted] should pay attention to learning his craft, especially prosody, and a poet can correct the substance of a work by following the example of Latin poetry in most things (Jón Ólafsson 1996, 53). Jón notes the claim of Icelandic poets that they compose “meir af náttúru en kúnt” [more by nature than art] (*ibid.*), yet even mentioning this appears to be an implicit criticism of their inadequate learning. Jón sees little merit in most modern Icelandic writers, “apart from the works of Jón Vídalín, séra Hallgrímur's hymns and pastors' mass-books.”<sup>77</sup> Thus Jón is drawn to the two seventeenth-century authors who excel in rhetoric and are most

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76. Sé hann hneigður til skáldskapar í sínu máli, skal hann ei afrækja hann, meðan hann er ungur. Skáldskapur er og góð gáfa Guðs og því vill hann hún brúkist og það til nytsemi mönnum. Nú er ei skáldskapur svo virtur sem forðum daga þá færri kváðu því nú kveða ofmargir. Þó er ei rétt að kæfa með sjálfum sér þá gáfu með brúkarleysi, ef maður er sér samvitandi, að hann kann vel að yrkja, heldur kveða gagnlega hluti sem fólk gangist fyrir, góða sálma eður *moralia*, hafi skáld ei annað gagn af sínum skáldskap þá er það þó alltaf indæli og gaman sem engi maður fær af þeim tekið (Jón Ólafsson 1996, 53; spelling modernized).

77. Jón Ólafsson 1996, 79.

clearly influenced by the baroque. By “pastors’ mass-books” Jón probably means *Graduale*, a mass-book that included various hymns, many of them by Luther. The works of Jón Grunnvíkingur and Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás appear to suggest that Icelandic-Norse verse derives its strength from the poets’ natural gifts rather than from learning, even though both men recognize the importance of study. This appears most clearly in the phenomenon of “skáldvingl” [*delirium poeticum*], where the suggestion is that poetry is an external power over which man does not have full control.<sup>78</sup> It has thus been suggested that Magnús’s ideas are Platonic in nature and developed in Iceland alongside classical literary tradition (Malm 1996, 40–41). We might say that by their emphasis on the natural power of poetry Icelandic scholars of poetics have compromised their claims that Norse poetic art is based on rules no less complex than those of classical literature, as seen in Morhof’s reflections on this theme.

### Summary

The first part of this chapter discussed the importance of classical rhetoric as the basis for all ideas about the poetry and literature of earlier periods. All the Icelanders who wrote about poetry and poetics in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries derived their ideas and theories from their classical education. This was also the source for their belief in the special position of Icelandic poetry and its important links with Norse poetic tradition. They supported their views with quotations from Latin authorities. Humanist ideas about Latin as a linguistic model worthy of imitation encouraged them to view Norse poetic traditions in the same way. Icelandic theorists concluded that poets should cultivate their Norse poetic inheritance because the old language was best suited to accommodate its distinctive prosody, alliteration and poetic diction, and these same elements were comparable with key features in Graeco-Roman verse. Their descriptions of Norse poetry emphasized the qualities most likely to awaken admiration among their contemporaries

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78. Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir (1994) discusses the links between poetry, divine strength and euphoria in an article on the poetry of Páll Vídalín.

abroad; the complexities of *dróttkvæði*, the elliptical puzzles of kennings, and the respect Icelandic poets once enjoyed in medieval royal courts. It is interesting that writers do not just discuss Icelandic poetry in the context of Latin verse but also pay due heed to contemporary European writings, especially Danish and German, about which they seem quite well informed. They certainly do not regard Icelandic literature as an isolated phenomenon even though few foreign publications found their way to Iceland at this time. Icelanders emphasize that the distinctive excellence of their native poetry has parallels in other countries; European scholars of poetics invariably argued for the noble origins of their own particular language. During this period Icelandic treatises on poetics confirm the eagerness of authors to contribute to international discussion of poetry, and in doing so they reveal their knowledge of the Latin language and its poetic traditions, which represented the common medium of learned exchange and reference throughout Europe. Humanist and later baroque writers were the representatives of this learned European tradition, and Icelanders saw themselves as participant members of that community.

#### Excerpt From a Work by Daniel Morhof

Among the Icelanders a remarkable book, the *Edda*, has been preserved, a work made up of the mythology and poetics of the Old Nordic peoples, or more precisely their theology, natural science and ethics. There were actually two Eddas, the older one is composed in ancient, inscrutable verse by Sæmundr Sigfússon, who was known as “fróði,” that is “the Wise One,” and in 1077 was pastor at Oddi in Iceland. The new *Edda* was composed by Snorri Sturluson, a distinguished and intelligent man and an *yfirdómari* [lawspeaker] in Iceland in 1222; it was based on Sæmundr’s older version, which Petrus Resenius edited with a very useful commentary and an extensive preface in which he discusses both of these Eddas. There is, as Mr. Rudbeck reports, another and better manuscript in the Royal Swedish Library. Snorri Sturluson is supposed to have altered the older *Edda* and improved its poetics somewhat. Just as the *Edda* was their mythology, so was the *Skálda* their prosody. Arngrímur Jónsson says that “Scalda is the book on the art of poetry among

the Icelanders,” but from this term “Skálda” the word “skalds” derives, who among the kings enjoyed the same prestige as a chancellor and councillor does today. The kings themselves considered it the greatest honor when they could get them to be members of their courts and display their skill by reciting many poems. The author of this *Skálda*, as Arngrímur attests in his *Crymog. lib. I* [*Crymogæa; sive, rerum Islandicarum* (1609), Book 1], was alive in 1216 and is often cited from this book by Worm in his *Literatura Runica*. It is also very credible that the older version observed definite artistic rules; in addition, as Ole Worm says in the Appendix to *Literat. Runic.*, “there are infinite numbers of ancient rhythms or harmonies, but of those commonly used there are thought to be 136.” Here he refers to several types and forms such as the sixteener verse, in which a certain sound of the words is repeated sixteen times: this is also called *dróttkvætt*. With reference to these same verses he also mentions many riddles that could not have been composed without definite artistic rules. In addition, they sometimes used certain intercalated verses, as Thomas Bartholinus the Younger demonstrates in chapter 15 of his dissertation on Holger the Dane. But Verelius maintains the opposite in his *Runography*, Chapter 6, namely that the old skalds did not have any definite rules. He says: “The poetry of the Skalds depended more on nature than on art. And although all the schemes of grammar and rhetoric may be found in their poems, you could rightly say that, being quite ignorant of the art of grammar and rhetoric, it was through felicity and abundance of talent alone that they produced those works which even in their time were a source of wonderment to us, and which we admire today. From them Snorri has compiled and ordered like the skilled poet that he himself was.” If this were so, it would also be the reason for Mr Rudbeck’s praise, since he believes that the kind of *carmina*, which they call *refrun* and which Tacitus commemorates, is the oldest, and then it would be apparent that they were really not so old. The art of these verses lies in the fact that there is no end-rhyme in the conventional sense with which we are familiar but rather a specific number of syllables and alliterating consonants. They have ascribed to this poetry mighty secrets, almost magical powers, just as their runes were also magical. Some poets had a particular additional need for what they called *scallviingl*,

that is, a poetic ecstasy that occurred simultaneously with the new moon, since in this manner *lunatici* or moon-struck poets poured out their verses with unbelievable skill.<sup>79</sup>

79. Bey den Jßländern hat man ein sonderlich Buch die Edda gehabt / welches war die Mythologia Poetica der alten Nordischen Völcker / oder vielmehr ihre Theologia, Physica und Ethica. Es sind zweyerley Eddæ gewesen / die eine als die älteste / ist in alte unverständliche Verse verfasset von Sámund Sigfuson / der mit dem Zunahmen froda / daß ist / der Weise genant worden / und An. 1077 zu Odde in Jßland Prediger gewesen. Die neue Edda hat gemacht Snorre [sic] Sturlåson / ein Vornehmer kluger Mann / und Ober-Richter über Jßland im Jahr 1222. und auß der ältern des Sámunden zusammen gezogen / welche Petrus Resenius mit sehr nützlichen Anmerckungen / und einer weitläufftigen Vorrede herausgegeben / darinnen er mit mehren von diesen beyden [E]ddis handelt. In der königlichen Schwedischen Bibliiothec soll noch eine andere und besser verhanden sein / wie herr Rudbeck meldet. Dieser Snorre Sturleson hat die alte Eddam etwas verändert / und auff ihre Poeterey gerichtet. Wie nun die Edda ihre Mythologia, so ist die Scalda ihre Metrica und Prosodia gewesen. Arngrimus sagt von dieser also: Scalda est liber de arte Poëtica Islandorum, qui est quasi praxis Eddæ ut Edda inventionem, Scalda usum vel artem adiuvet, Von welchem Wort Scalda die Poeten hernach Scaldrer genant / welche bey den Königen in solchen Ansehen gewesen / wie heutiges Tages Cantzler und Rächte. Ja es haben die Königa selbst es für ihre größte Ehre geschätzt / wann sie mit in ihren Orden haben können auffgenommen werden / und mit vielen Liedern ihre Fähigkeit dazu vorgestellt. Der Autor dieser Scaldæ soll wie Arngrimus Crymog. lib. I bezeugt / Anno Chr. 1216 gelebet haben / und wird von den Wormio in seiner Literatura Runica auß diesem Buche oft was angeführet. Es ist auch sehr gläublich daß die Alten gewisse Reguln dieser Kunst gehabt; dann wie Olaus Wormius saget in *Appendice Literat. Runic.* Rhythmorum veterum infinita sunt genera, vulgo tamen usitatorum centum triginta sex esse putantur. Er setzt daselbst unterschiedliche arten und die Nahmen derselbe / als *Sextanmelli Vysa*. Worinnen ein gewisser Schall der Wörter sechzehnmal wiederholt wird / die sie auch *Drottquætt* nennen. Jmgleichen gedenckt er vieler Logogryphorum, welche ohne gewisse Kunstreguln nicht wol haben verfertigt werden können. Auch haben sie bißweilen gewisse Versus intercalares gebraucht / wie Thomas Bartholinus der Jüngere in seiner Dissertation de Holgero Dano cap. 15. erweist. Aber Verelius behauptet in seiner *Runographia* cap. 6. Das Gegentheil / daß nemlich die alten Scaldri keine gewisse Reguln gehabt. Er sagt: Scaldorum poësis natura magis quam arte constabat. Et licet in eorum poematibus omnia schemata Grammatica & Rhetorica inveniuntur, recte tamen dixeris ipsos Grammaticæ & Rhetoricæ artis rudes sola ingenii felicitate & abundantia ea peperisse, quæ & ipsorum ævo & nobis admirationi fuere & hodie admiramur. Ex illis sua congressit Snorro & in formam artis rededit ipse Scaldrus ingeniosus. Wann diesem also were / so wurde auch des Hn. Rudbecks Grund von seiner Erheblichkeit sein / da er die art der Carminum, die sie Refrun nennen / vor die ältesten hält / und von denen / deren Tacitus gedencket / dann die hierunter gebrauchte Kunst an den Tag geben wurde / daß sie so gar alt nicht sein. Worinnen die Kunst der Verse bestanden / daß sie keine bey uns übliche Reime gehabt haben / sondern die Verse sind bestanden in gewisser Zahl der Sylben / und gleichstimmung derselben / aber nicht am Ende. Sie haben dieser Poesey grosse geheime fast zäubrische Krafft zugeschrieben wie sie dann auch ihre Runas magicas gehabt. Einige haben einen gewissen Trieb der Natur dazu gehabt / den sie Scallviingl, daß ist einen Poetischen Schwindel nennen / welcher sich gemeinlich mit dem neuen Mohn eingefunden / da diese auff solche art Lunatici oder Monsüchtige Poeten ihre Verse mit ungläublicher Fertigkeit außgeschüttet. (Morhof 1682, 404-408).

