

## CHAPTER 6

### A Renaissance Figure: Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás

Magnús Ólafsson (ca. 1573–1636), poet, scholar and pastor, is best known for his revised version of Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* that presents the work in an entirely new format. In particular, Magnús arranged the material (notably the kennings) in alphabetical order, thereby making it more accessible and useful for contemporary poets. Magnús was encouraged to undertake these revisions by Arngrímur Jónsson the Learned, whose own works represent an important turning point in Icelandic literary-cultural history. As Jakob Benediktsson has noted, Arngrímur's writings mark the beginning of a new age whose highest achievements include the internationally acknowledged scholarship of Þormóður Torfason and Árni Magnússon, and the poetry of Hallgrímur Pétursson and Stefán Ólafsson (Jakob Benediktsson 1957, 81). We have already examined Magnús's Latin essay on Norse poetry that was printed in Ole Worm's *Literatura Runica* (1636). His Latin translation of the *Edda* formed the basis for P.H. Resen's pioneering edition published in Copenhagen in 1665. Thus Magnús's efforts helped to promote Icelandic literature in Europe, and he was in correspondence with several important foreign scholars. He was also very interested in poetry and poetics and recognized the potential importance of Snorri's *Edda* for contemporary Icelandic poets. It is thus no surprise that Magnús has been identified as a major figure in the Icelandic renaissance (Faulkes 1993, 11). The following discussion seeks to assess Magnús's contribution to the history of Icelandic literature:



Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás. Þjóðminjasafn Íslands [National Museum of Iceland]. Photograph: Ívar Brynjólfsson.

the ways in which old and new traditions intersect in his poetry, and the extent to which his works were influenced by European literary currents and trends.

### Adopted Child of the Aristocracy

The early life of Magnús Ólafsson is unusual in that it was pure chance that led to his adoption by a well-to-do family, who were able to ensure that he had the benefit of a good education. It has been suggested that he may have been from very modest social background with impoverished parents (Páll Eggert Ólason 1926, 259). The story goes that Magnús's father died before he was born, and that his mother then lived a nomadic life before perishing in a terrible storm, with her baby still alive beside her. Páll Vídalín states that the boy was brought up in the household of Benedikt Halldórsson, the estate manager at Möðruvellir (Páll Vídalín 1985, 92–96). This ensured that Magnús had the privilege of an education and proved to be a gifted pupil. He was a student at the Latin school at Hólar when Arngrímur the Learned was rector, and then studied at the university in Copenhagen before returning to Iceland in 1599 (Páll Eggert Ólason 1926, 261), whereupon he taught at Hólar for several years. He was appointed to a curacy but forfeited this position after fathering a child outside wedlock. Páll Vídalín says that Magnús disputed the allegation but was nevertheless held to be guilty and therefore fell out of favor with his benefactors. These circumstances may have encouraged him to return to Denmark and over time he gained the reputation of being something of a troublemaker. Páll suggests that it was a chance meeting with King Christian IV at a banquet honoring a well-born city official that helped to put the young Icelander back on track (Páll Vídalín 1985, 94).

By virtue of his upbringing and education Magnús certainly had the opportunity to become a poet. Most of his verse is “opinber” [official] and served a social function, especially his occasional poems and religious works. His poetry has been much admired, as confirmed in Vídalín's *Recensus*, where Magnús's command of Latin and his vernacular verse are praised:

His fame as an Icelandic poet was unrivaled. There is a fine poem at the end of his *Edda* version and its list of contents, and there is also *Flateyjarríma*, whose subject matter is mostly fictional, but whose wording, composition and kennings are masterful.<sup>1</sup>

The first poem referred to here is *Fagrar viðris veigar* [The fair draughts of Viðrir = Poetry] (printed in Faulkes 1979, 316–317; translated 460–461) and both pieces will be discussed below. Magnús's occasional poems reveal his links with learned men occupying the highest positions in Iceland, not to mention influential figures abroad such as Ole Worm and Christen Friis (1581–1639). Shortly before Friis's death (1635 or 6) Magnús composed *Riddara Kristjáns Frís drápa* [A poem for Christen Friis, knight], a *dróttkvætt* poem of forty-eight stanzas with refrain (*Magnúsarkver* 1993, 109; *Ole Worm's Correspondence* 1948, 97 and 192; Stefán Ólafsson II 1886, 397). Christen Friis belonged to the foremost and wealthiest circle of the Danish nobility (*Dansk biografisk leksikon*, 7:395); after receiving a well-rounded education abroad he became one of the highest officers of the Danish state. He was the protector and patron of many scholars and poets, including Ole Worm, Stephan Stephanius, Arngrímur Jónsson and Anders Arrebo, and as Chancellor he was the dedicatee of many laudatory poems and prefaces. Magnús was thus not alone in acknowledging his indebtedness to Friis but he was probably the only person to compose an elaborate *drápa* in his honor.

Magnús's poetry is notable for its variety, and his comic pieces bears witness to an innovative spirit open to European influences. He in turn influenced younger poets such as Stefán Ólafsson.

### A Poet at the Crossroads

As a poet Magnús belongs to the years between the end of the Reformation and the seventeenth century. Occasional verse was one of the innovations of this period and Magnús, along with

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1. Að hann stóð engum að baki í íslenskri skáldskaparfræð þer með sér fagurt kvæði sem skeytt er aftan við gerð hans af Eddu og efnisröðun hennar, svo og Flateyjar ríma, sem er að mestu skáldskapur að efni til, en snilldarleg að málfarið kveðandi og ágæti kenninga (Páll Vídalín 1985, 95).

Ólafur Jónsson of Sandar (1560–1627), was among the first poets to compose such poetry in Icelandic, though the two men were in many respects very different writers. In terms of style Magnús was an innovative figure by virtue of his fondness for revisiting Old Icelandic poetic modes; he composed *dróttkvæði*, *drápur* (such as the one addressed to Friis) and an alliterative elegy for Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson (Faulkes 1993, 100–101), while other poets such as Ólafur Jónsson of Sandar composed in “mýkri og sönghæfari háttum” [gentler and more songful measures] (Óskar Halldórsson 1996, 26). Learning, both classical and Norse, features much more prominently in Magnús’s poetry than in that of Ólafur Jónsson and Bjarni Jónsson (ca. 1560–ca. 1640). His verse reveals a great interest in formal features such as rhyme, kennings, and periphrasis, though these can make it quite difficult to understand. These same elements can later be found in the poetry of Hallgrímur Pétursson and Stefán Ólafsson. We might say that the works of Magnús of Laufás herald a new era in Icelandic verse, marked by its links with medieval Icelandic tradition, both in his Latin verse and in his vernacular efforts to compose in the style of early Icelandic poets. Far from representing evidence of conservatism or an inflexible adherence to traditional ways, Magnús’s engagement with the past represents the kind of creative innovation that had become fashionable outside of Iceland. He also composed poems in other literary forms, such as “Kvennadans” and “Flateyjarríma,” both of which were also popular. Such pieces certainly confirm Magnús’s interest in renewing Icelandic poetry and probably also his knowledge of contemporary European verse.

Though the source of the idea behind “Kvennadans” [Women’s dance] remains unidentified, the poem may well have been based on a European model. At the beginning of the 200-stanza poem, Magnús claims to be writing in defense of women. The work’s structure and substance are heavily rhetorical, as is to be expected from so learned a writer. The first five stanzas introduce the poem’s theme (the *exordium*). The reader learns that the poet intends to challenge the commonly held view that women are less worthy of praise than men and in some ways inferior beings. He immediately presents one argument in support of his position, namely that it was a woman who brought him into the world, and naturally the same is also

true for other more distinguished figures. A poem's introduction also offers the opportunity for the poet to acknowledge his own inadequacies, and Magnús offers an appropriate humility *topos*, "mig gáfu hróðrar vantar til" [I lack the gift of poetry], before turning to the main section, in which narrative (*narratio*) alternates with argument (*argumentatio*). Under *narratio* we may include, for example, the biblical story of the creation of woman (verses 6–8), while under *argumentatio* we find the proposition, based on the preceding narrative, that female beauty bears witness to the Creator's artistic ambition and handiwork and is thus very pleasing to him (verses 14–39). It is also argued that women contribute much to the common good, as with the example of Pilate's wife in the story of Christ's Passion (noted in the Gospel of St Matthew). Many other examples are then presented and interpreted. A single concluding stanza directs good wishes towards women.

There were many "Mirror for Women" works written in Europe (van Ingen 1984) but their purpose was not so much to defend women as to lay down rules for living. Another poetic genre with which "Kvennadans" can be linked is the *Gynæceum*, in which learned women are listed and praised.<sup>2</sup> Such poems were generally the work of male writers, with "Scutum Gynæcosophias" [In defense of learned women] by Anders Bording (1619–1677) the oldest Danish example (Anders Bording 1984, 1–6; Alenius 1993, 222). In fact Magnús Ólafsson's "Kvennadans" does more than just discuss learned women: it treats women in world history, in the Bible and, not least, in Iceland.

As we have noted, Magnús composed many occasional pieces. Such poems were widespread in Europe, as a result of humanist influence: "From the outset occasional verse was a child of learned Renaissance humanism."<sup>3</sup> As with other poetry of the time it arose out of particular social circumstances and was always associated with universities, where such pieces were composed in Latin, Greek and other learned languages. Towards the end of the seventeenth century occasional poems also became popular among the nobility,

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2. On *Gynæceum* works and the history of women's literature, see Sigurður Pétursson 2001, 72–73.

3. Tilfällesdiktning var från början ett barn av den lärda renässanshumanismen (Hansson 1987, 219).

upper bourgeoisie and wealthy commoners, at first written primarily in Latin but later also in German, French and Swedish; by around 1670 in Sweden the vernacular had largely replaced Latin. Some 10,000–12,000 seventeenth-century poems of this type appeared in print in Sweden, and as Stina Hansson has reminded us this does not tell the whole story, because some pieces may have been lost and others that were never printed survive only in manuscript. There is no way of knowing how many such poems were composed in Iceland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because most of them are extant only in manuscripts that require more detailed cataloguing.

### Latin and Vernacular Poetry

Neo-Latin verse was the precursor of and prerequisite for baroque literature in Germany and elsewhere. All efforts to create sophisticated poetry in the vernacular involved adhering to the same rules that governed Latin composition. But neo-Latin poetry was itself relatively new in its time. The concept of “neo-Latin” relates to poetry whose vocabulary, prosody and presentation differ from medieval poetry and seek as far as possible to resemble classical Latin verse (Skafté Jensen 2002, 9). By the time Magnús Ólafsson was studying in Copenhagen, learned Danes had been composing neo-Latin verse for almost a century; most sixteenth-century poetry in Denmark was written in Latin (though there may also have been some oral pieces in the Danish vernacular). The situation in Sweden was very similar, partly because of the relatively slow development of Swedish as a modern language (Johannesson 1968, 303). Minna Skafté Jensen describes the beginning of humanism in Danish literature as follows:

From the middle of the [sixteenth] century we see internationally trained young poets struggling to implant the fashionable Neo-Latin forms into their native culture and to treat modern and often strictly local topics in ancient classical form, all in the effort to convince themselves and their neighbours that Denmark was no barbarian country, but the scene of a modern, sophisticated culture with roots far back in time. (Skafté Jensen 2002, 10)

In both Sweden and Denmark neo-Latin poetry developed increasingly complex forms and figurative language: ingenious verbal games became ever more popular: anagrams, chronograms, acrostics, *telesticha* and the like (Skafte Jensen 2002, 10). The same is true with Latin poems from Germany and Sweden, through the popularity of anagram pieces in which the letters of an individual's name are rearranged to form a new word that marks some element or characteristic (usually moral or ethical) associated with that individual. Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík describes anagrams as follows:

An anagram is created when a new verbal form appears by rearranging the letters of a man's name or of an equivalent word or words. Anagrams are regarded as poems because the new meaning is more naturally explained in poetic form. The new words ought to match the name exactly so that no letter is added or omitted, and the meaning ought to be so specific that it can readily be linked with the individual bearing the name.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly popular was the *acrostichon* in which the first or last letters of each line or stanza form the name of the poet or the poem's dedicatee. There were also *chronodistikon* pieces in which the letters at the beginning of each verse form a year or other date in Roman numerals. The Swedish poet Lars Wivallius (1605–1669), for example, composed anagrams, acrostics and palindromes (in which a stanza has the same meaning whether read forwards or backwards). There was also an increased interest in the sound of poetry and in rhetoric, not just as a technical resource for achieving clarity, rationality and decorum but also as a form of artistic expression. These developments began around 1590 in Denmark, shortly before Magnús Ólafsson's arrival at the University of Copenhagen. Skafte Jensen regards them as marking the beginning of the baroque

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4. Anagrammata er þá af nokkru manns nafni eður þvílíkum orðum er nokkuð annað útdregið með því móti að víxla stöfunum. Er það því reiknað til kvæða að sú útdregna meining er vant að útskýra í ljóðum. Þau útdregnu orð eiga að vera svo glöggt eftir nafninu að enginn bókstafur sé yfir eður undir, og meiningin svo óþvinguð að hún megi vel heimfærast til persónunnar sem nafnið ber (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 1999b, 32).



in Denmark, noting that “the first steps into this style were taken in Latin” (Skafté Jensen 2002, 10). Magnús Ólafsson’s poetry confirms that he was influenced by this new movement.

Research into the links between seventeenth-century Icelandic and neo-Latin poetry is still in its early stages but we may suppose that such connections were many and various. A case in point is the poetry of Hjörleifur Þórðarson (1695–1786), who translated Hallgrímur’s *Passíúsálmar* into Latin and also composed original Latin verse on subjects such as the Olympian gods; this poetry “not only displays his classical learning but also reveals a fine sense of composition and tasteful imagery” (Sigurður Pétursson 1995, 124). It is also noteworthy that Hjörleifur composed forty-five Latin epigrams in Icelandic meter, naming the overall work *Háttalykill* and applying “often with success, the rules of Icelandic prosody to the Latin language” (Sigurður Pétursson 1995, 124). The oldest extant neo-Latin occasional poems composed by an Icelander may be the two Latin songs of praise by “Sigvardus Stephanus Islandus” and “Gudmundus Enarus Islandus” about Arngrímur Jónsson, both of which were included at the end of the 1593 Copenhagen edition of Arngrímur’s *Brevis Commentarius*. They mark the beginning of a tradition of neo-Latin poetry in Iceland that continued unbroken into the nineteenth century (Sigurður Pétursson 1995, 103).

Much seventeenth-century occasional verse consisted of panegyrics of various kinds. These pieces played an important role in society, both as a source of entertainment at social gatherings and as a way of achieving advancement and winning favor among the powerful. The story of this encomiastic genre in Scandinavia begins with Latin works from the sixteenth century and continues well into the seventeenth century. These became the models for poets from Denmark and other countries towards the end of the seventeenth century (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3 1983, 267). Descriptions of a country, region or community were popular in this context. Such poems were composed in Iceland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in the eastern fjords; there is also a Latin poem by Jón Þorkelsson in praise of Gullbringusýsla (Sigurður Pétursson 1987; Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2002).

### Magnús Ólafsson: Occasional Poems

Nearly all Magnús's Latin poems are occasional pieces, panegyrics addressed to particular individuals and composed for particular occasions, as with his literary "tileinkanir" [dedications]. However, there is also an ironic poem about Dithmar Blefken, whose negative depiction of the Icelanders was regarded as highly offensive. Many of Magnús's works were printed in volumes that Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson arranged to have published, and one of them, *Theoria, vel Speculum vitæ æternæ*, includes a panegyric about Bishop Guðbrandur and Philippus Nicolai, the author of the work.<sup>5</sup> Another Latin poem is dedicated to the students of the Latin school at Hólar, and there are also pieces composed in honor of Arngrímur the Learned. Three such poems can be found at the beginning of Arngrímur's *Epistola pro patria defensoria (Arngrimi Jonæ Opera III)* and are entitled "ARNGRIMUS JONAS per Acrostichidem et triplicem Anagrammatismum." The first piece, *An in armis surgo*, is an *akrostikon* because the first letters of each line form the name Arngrímur. The phrase "triplicem Anagrammatismum" signifies that by shuffling the letters of Arngrímur's name three sentences are created (one in each poem) that describe his qualities, and these sentences serve as both the titles of the poems and their principal themes. Such pieces are thus fully consistent with what was then fashionable in neo-Latin verse composition.

Magnús Ólafsson corresponded with the Danish scholar Ole Worm for over a decade from 1626, and they cooperated fruitfully on antiquarian projects. Among the first works sent by Magnús to Worm as examples of early Icelandic poetry were two of his own Latin stanzas about chess pieces, composed in *dróttkvætt* meter. Worm's admiration for these verses encouraged Magnús to compose and forward other similar poems (Páll E. Ólason 1926, 267–268). Magnús composed a lengthy Latin panegyric about Worm that was printed in *Literatura Runica* in 1636 and 1651 (Faulkes 1993, 107–108). He also addressed poems to him in Icelandic in the same *dróttkvætt* meter, with Worm's name presented in runic form, and also in additional verses from which his name can be deduced (Faulkes 1993, 103–104;

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5. Printed at Hólar in 1608.

Margrét Eggertsdóttir 1999, 90–91). In Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík's *Rúnareiddsla* we learn that such poems were known as “dylgjur” [innuendo pieces], and that Jón did not regard them as particularly old (Jón Helgason 1926, 63–64). The same kind of device is used by Magnús in the opening line of “Ad lectorem,” a poem addressed to Arngrímur the Learned that may have been composed after Magnús had finished writing up his *Edda* (Faulkes 1979, 313–315, 457–459). The first line “Ár erfiði jóra” generates the runic letters AR: “Ár” is the runic name for A and “erfiði jóra” [the burden of horses = “reið” [riding]] is the runic name for R.

At the beginning of Bishop Guðbrandur's *Vísnaþók* (1612) we find Magnús's dedicatory poem “Ad lectorem.” Its three Icelandic *dróttkvætt* verses address the reader and praise Guðbrandur (*Vísnaþók* 2000, 5). Magnús intensifies the metrical complexity by restricting himself to rhymes of the same gender. In the first stanza all the internal rhymes in the eight lines are formed by vowel + ð (for example, *Guðbrandur af góðu*); in the second verse it becomes vowel + *nd* (for example, *landi lýsir blindu*); and in the third we have vowel + *ld* (for example, *gilda þakkarskyldu*). In his final stanza the poet expresses the wish that those who live in Iceland will never be so cold that they forget to thank God, who seeks to lead the land and its people back to the paths of righteousness. The poem concludes with an elegant metaphor in which the Reformation is compared to lightning that illuminates the outermost regions of the earth (Iceland) at night, but which may also suggest that the end of the world is nigh.

As we have noted, Magnús's version of the *Edda*, the so-called *Laufás Edda*, is followed by the *dróttkvætt* poem “Fagrar Viðris veigar” [The fair draught of Óðinn] (Faulkes 1979, 316–317), packed with kennings and at first sight not easy to understand. It discusses poetry and the difficulties of composition, especially if the poet is unhappy, and the poem has its origins, as the poet puts it, “í heiðbjörtu landi hugans” [in the crystal-clear regions of the mind]. Though the substance could be stated in just a few words, in the poem it is expressed by many elaborate kennings that refer to Eddic myths about poetry and its origin among the Æsir. In his analysis of the poem Anthony Faulkes has shown that Magnús derived its underlying idea from Ovid's *Tristia* (Faulkes 1979, 460–461). As we have noted, it was thought appropriate

for poets to seek their ideas and poetic resources in the works of classical writers. “Fagrar Viðris veigar” confirms the closeness of the links between Magnús’s poetry and both Graeco-Roman and Norse traditions.

Among Magnús’s occasional pieces are “Sessu- og áklæðisvísur fyrir Rannveigu Jónsdóttur” [Cushioning and upholstery verses for Rannveig Jónsdóttir] and three verses about cloths and hangings, all in *dróttkvætt* form. The verses appear to have been composed for a specific occasion, perhaps when some woven or embroidered cloth was first taken into use. The pieces are “Vísu um borðtjald” [A verse about an embroidered table covering], “Vísu um sængurtjald” [A verse about an embroidered bed canopy] and “Tjaldvísu” [A verse about an embroidered wall decoration]. The subject matter is simple; in the first poem the guests are welcomed in the name of God and invited to sit together in joy and peace while reading about Jesus. The next poem expresses three related wishes: that good fortune should attend the hanging wherever it is secured around the bed, that a troop of white angels should surround it, and that Christ’s mercy should embrace both body and soul of all who sleep under it. The third piece includes discussion of guests and expresses the wish that God will delight them and cure all their harms and misfortunes. This final poem is the most elaborate of the three with all its internal rhymes in the form of vowel + *st*. It recalls the elaborate final verse in Hallgrímur Pétursson’s New Year’s hymn (“Árið hýra nú hið nýja” [A happy New Year]) which begins, “Kasti verstu kostum lasta / Kristur bestur hæstur mestur fólki frá” [May Christ, highest and best, / cast away the worst of sins from folk]. In Magnús’s poem, the last word of each line is repeated at the start of the next line, a rhetorical device known as *anadiplosis*:

Kristur gleðji gesti,  
gestum unni bestur,  
best í friðnum fasta  
fast geymi við lasti.  
Last og böl frá bresti,  
bresti lækni mestu,  
mest sæmd geðin gisti.  
Gisti yður alla Kristur.

(Faulkes, 1993, 130, spelling modernized)

[May Christ gladden the guests,  
 the guests may he love, being best;  
 best in peace them to save,  
 safe keep them against sin.  
 Sin and blame, may they be broken,  
 the broken, may they be healed wholly,  
 whole in honor may the spirit remain.  
 Remain with you all may Christ.]

### An Elegy for Einar of Eydalir

Magnús's elegy on séra Einar Sigurðsson of Eydalir, who died in 1626, consists of forty-one verses in *dróttkvætt* form (Faulkes 1993, 87–98). In marking the passing of a venerable poet after a long life, the emphasis is on praise rather than sorrow and consolation. The first two stanzas introduce the topic (*exordium*), verses 3–9 outline Einar's life (*narratio*), verses 10–15 focus in greater detail on particular periods in the poet's career to which particular meaning is assigned (*argumentatio*), and then verse 16 serves as a *propositio*, a summary and brief pause, before the poet moves to the next section, in which Einar's final hours are described (verses 17–20). The sorrow described in verse 21 gives way to praise for the deceased in verses 22–23. The final section of the poem begins in verse 24, a *propositio* that links this last section with the two earlier ones. This part (verses 25–41) tells of and praises Einar's sons: Oddur, Sigurður, Ólafur, Höskuldur, Gísli and Jón, with particular attention paid to Ólafur in a passage that is also a message of condolence and good wishes.

The poem begins with a metaphor, regarded as the most common and attractive figure of speech (Quintilianus III, 303). A falling star in the sky is described, representing the dead poet who has fallen "ellimóður" [weary with age]. The image is sustained until the end of the poem, which thus emerges as an allegory.<sup>6</sup> The star begins its ascent in the north, reflecting the fact that Einar was born in Aðaldalur in the north of Iceland. The heavens are not depicted literally but rather as a church-heaven that endures hard times, with ecclesiastical unrest and upheaval akin to natural calamities:

6. For Quintilian an allegory was a sequence of metaphors (Quintilianus 1921 III, 327). See also Þorleifur Hauksson and Þórir Óskarsson 1994, 158; and Breuer 1990, 122.

the planets decay, just as remarkable men have died at this time. In verse 2 the star in question has “útgengið sinn hring” [left its circle] after eighty-seven years, or ninety “þar í fátt þremur árum” [save for three years]. After having toiled to bring light “fól frægðin fögur” [the beautiful fame [is now] pale] and the poem’s final lines confirm that the star was Einar Sigurðsson of Eydalir.<sup>7</sup> His work in the service of the church is then described and kennings such as “bör bóka” [tree of books] and “stýrir heiðurs” [leader of honor] are used to describe him. Three of Einar’s qualities are identified: first, his ministry (“mædda af sorgum græddi” [he healed the weary of sorrows], v. 4); second, his education, described metaphorically—his wisdom welled up everywhere, bringing joy to men like “veigar úr vínþrúgu” [goodness from a grape]; and, last, his poetry. His theological training is emphasized: “Ísraels ör til vísu / unni skýrustu brunnum” [lively of spirit, certainly / he loved Israel’s purest wells], while his major contribution to the composition of vernacular poetry in Iceland is recognized at the end of verse 6. His overall virtues are treated in verse 7; these once “lýstu sem ljósið glæsta” [shone like the clearest light] but are now too rarely evident in the world’s last days. Then verses 8–9 touch on Einar’s early years as a pastor, first in the north of the country, “sá víngarðs kanti ber enn vænt merki verkmanns” [this vineyard border still bears the worthy mark of the workman], and later in the east.

In this section of the poem, which may be called the *argumentatio*, we see how Magnús uses *inventio* creatively by making use of numerology. He claims that Einar had experienced adversity in both his public and private life for forty-nine years, or “sjö sjöundir sorgtárugra ára” [seven times seven sorrow-teared years]. The next stanza is therefore devoted to the number seven and seven examples of holy experience are identified, focusing especially on biblical figures:

Reyndust sjö sjöundir  
sorgtárugra ára

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7. It is not unlikely that Magnús may have been thinking of Einar’s poem about the Last Day (*Vísnaþók* 2000, 127–129), in which Jesus is the “morgunstjarnan” [morning star] that “skært nú skín” [now shines bright].

prútt meðan prestsembætti  
 prúður vann hirðir skrúða,  
 tíminn tölu þá rómar  
 er tamt var af að skammta,  
 lærdómsefni orða  
 og ugg sefandi huggun.

Sjö mótgangsár mýgðu  
 mæddum Job, síðan græddist,  
 sjö þvegin sá Naman  
 sár spítelsku kláruð,  
 sjö sinnum benbrunnur  
 bótarlaug vor nam fljóta,  
 sjö krossvegu fyrir veika  
 vesalinga gekk Jesús.

Sjö orð talaði á trénu  
 í testamenti vor prestur,  
 sjö eru bænir búnar  
 best um hlutina mestu,  
 sjö frá eg greindar gáfur  
 grand skúfunar anda,  
 mörgum miðlaði bjargar  
 mundi úr þeim sjöundum.  
 (Faulkes 1993, 89–90)

[It proved to be seven times seven  
 sorrow-teared years  
 in pious priestly office,  
 purposeful keeper of the cassock [= pastor] toiled;  
 time praises this seven,  
 when simple it was to dispense  
 words of learning,  
 and worry with solace soothe.

Seven years of strife weakened  
 weary Job—was then restored;  
 seven times was Naaman washed,

his leprous wounds then healed;  
 seven times a wound-well [= blood],  
 our salvational pool, flowed;  
 seven Cross ways for weak  
 wretches walked Jesus.

Seven words spoke from the Tree  
 in a testament our Pastor;  
 seven prayers are prepared,  
 strongest for sternest tests;  
 I heard tell of seven gifts  
 of the good spirit;  
 salvation granted to many,  
 solace from these seven.]

Through these examples Einar's own troubles assume a different meaning. His was not a meaningless struggle with poverty but rather a test that had been carefully apportioned by God in sacred measure, and thus his life ended at exactly the right time. Magnús continues to interpret the numbers, believing that during the unluckily numbered year ahead (probably a reference to 1627) God's Word would be under fierce attack and the sins of the people would trigger some imminent misfortune. He further notes that Einar occupied the office of pastor for fifteen times four years plus a further nine, sixty-nine years in all, having been consecrated in 1557, when he was just nineteen years old (Páll E. Ólason 1926:549). This fondness for seeking hidden numerological meanings, noted in chapter 3, is a characteristic of baroque texts in general; the world is made up of signs and symbols and the poet's role is to interpret them. An interest in runes is another aspect of this way of thinking, as can be seen in the poems that Magnús addressed to Arngrímur Jónsson and Ole Worm (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 1999a, 89–92). In verse 21 the Icelandic people are encouraged to lament the death of Einar and the astronomical imagery continues:

Lund hrein ljós farandi  
 ljóss börn þreyi stjörnu,



duglegir dyggðaspegli  
 dregnum frá hryggist þegnar,  
 gleðimenn glúpni hljóðir,  
 glaður veik burtu maður,  
 öldungi skert skálda  
 skaphýr bragþjóð daprist.

[A pure spirit of light is lost,  
 light's children long for a star,  
 the dutiful for a mirror of virtue,  
 the servants, deprived, are saddened,  
 the genial are downcast in sorrow,  
 a joyous man has left them,  
 the poets' elder is absent,  
 an eager verse-nation laid low.]

Finally, there are words of gratitude and the hope is expressed that the memory of Einar Sigurðsson of Eydalir will be honored long into the future. The poem changes in verse 24 as a new but related theme is developed, with Einar's sons seen as sparks from the original star:

Gaus oft gömlu ljósum  
 gjörslökktum upp rökkur,  
 eru því eftir skýrir  
 arfar hans kristni þarfir,  
 halda við geislar gylldir  
 glöðu skini sem röðull,  
 leiftur enn því á lofti  
 liðins sést hjá niðjum.

[In darkness, from old lights  
 long-dimmed, flames flash;  
 for his sons now remain,  
 radiant, faith's benefit;  
 golden beams still glint,  
 shine bright like the sun,  
 lightening is thus still aloft,  
 seen in his successors.]

Four stanzas are devoted to Oddur, Bishop of Skálholt, one to Sigurður, a further nine to Ólafur of Kirkjubær and his friendship with the poet, and a single verse each to Höskuldur and Gísli. The section on Ólafur of Kirkjubær is particularly significant. The two men (Magnús and Ólafur) are personal friends and fellow poets, with Ólafur referred to as “hökla baldur” [chasuble Baldur = pastor] and “veitara golnis gátar, gildan í bragsnilldum” [provider of Óðinn’s mead, gifted in poetic genius] (verses 30–31). The seven best “bókmálistir” [liberal arts] have fostered him and these worthy muses have clearly nourished him well. Figurative language and imagery are thus prominent in Magnús’s poem, while the vivid description of what these friends saw while studying in Copenhagen may be unique in Icelandic poetry of the time:

Margar báðir borgir,  
 bjarkalönd og markir,  
 grafir gamalla jöfra,  
 gotnahallir brotnar,  
 klaustur, kirkjur glæstar,  
 kjólameiða í skólum,  
 krýning kóns á fróni,  
 kerrur sáum og herra.

[We both saw many castles,  
 birch-groves and boundaries,  
 graves of old warriors;  
 wasted Gothic halls,  
 monasteries, gleaming churches,  
 gown-clad scholars in schools,  
 a king’s coronation there,  
 courtiers and chariots.]

We know that Ólafur Einarsson was in Copenhagen from 1594 to 1598. Though Magnús’s description of their time together as serious students is unusually personal, there is also frequent discussion of less earnest matters. We learn, too, that Ólafur was generous towards his friend, “því minn var sjóðurinn grynri” [because my funds were more modest]. Magnús has fond memories of his young

scholarly companion and though they now live far from each other in Iceland they will be happy to meet each other “[á] ódáins akri” [in the blessed land of the undying]. All parts of the poem are brought together in the final stanza (*conclusio*) through an image of the star and its beams of light:

Eru ágætir hlírar  
af Einars kveiktir hreinu  
ljósi í herrans húsum,  
hirtnir auka birtu,  
náð Guðs næst til góða  
með niðjum sérhvörn styðji,  
síðan hjá sælum föður  
sómafullir ljómi.  
(Faulkes 1993, 97)

[Admirable those brothers,  
inspired by Einar's pure  
light in the Lord's house,  
imbued with its luster;  
in good works may God's grace  
sustain each relative;  
then with the heavenly Father  
honor-filled may they shine.]

The whole poem bears witness to Magnús's classical education and his knowledge of Icelandic poetic tradition. He uses a prestigious native meter and kennings that may also be regarded as a branch of classical figurative language (see Þorlákur Skúlason's discussion in *Literatura runica*). Magnús's learning is also evident in the way he structures his material rhetorically and, not least, in the striking metaphors which sustain the allegory in the poem as a whole.

### Magnús Ólafsson: Religious Poems

Several religious poems are attributed to Magnús, all of which are composed in the familiar form of metrical hymn. The “Kvöldsálmur”

[Evening hymn] (Faulkes 1993, 117–121) is sung to the tune “Konung Davíð sem kenndi,” and “Ein bænarvísa út af nafninu Jesú” [A prayer verse from Jesus’ name] (Faulkes 1993, 110–113) to the tune “Guð er minn hirðir” [The Lord is my shepherd]. The language here is much less complex than in Magnús’s occasional verse. The religious pieces are not without imagery, and its source is Christian mysticism and thus perfectly appropriate in context. For example, in “Ein bænarvísa” we find “vef þú mitt hjarta / veikt í þínum sárum” [embrace my heart / weak with your wounds] and “sáðu á sár blóði / sálar minnar þínu” [spread on the sores / of my soul Your blood] (Faulkes 1993, 110–111). Jesus is referred to in traditional terms: “sól og föðurs ljómi” [Sun and Light of the Father], “kóngur dýrðar” [King of glory], “læknir trega” [Healer of sorrows]. He is requested to allow his light to stream into the blood vessels of a heart crushed by remorse. The hymn concludes as follows:

Eg mun geðglaður  
 gæsku þína reyna,  
 góði Guð og maður,  
 græðarinn allra meina.  
 (Faulkes 1993, 112)

[Glad in spirit I will  
 your goodness experience,  
 O goodly God and man,  
 Great Healer of all hurts.]

The fourteen-stanza hymn “Máttugur Guð þín mildin blíð” [O mighty God, Your gentle mercy] (Faulkes 1993, 113–117) is very similar in spirit to the Christmas piece “Hljómi raustin barna best” [May children’s voices sound best].<sup>8</sup> The imagery derives from the Ephesians 6:10–20 and to that extent the poem operates as a versified biblical text. In the scripture Paul calls upon Christians to arm themselves spiritually in “alvæpni Guðs” [the

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8. Though this Christmas hymn is sometimes attributed to Hallgrímur Pétursson, the first three stanzas are probably the work of Bjarni Gissurarson, as it is included in his autograph manuscript, Thott 473 4to; see Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2009.

armor of God]. Each armorial piece is interpreted in the hymn: “Herskrúðinn” [ceremonial battle dress] (innocence and truth), the “brynja” [corslet] (of righteousness), the “hjálmur” [helmet] (of salvation) and the “skjöldur” [shield] (of faith), with each item treated in a separate verse. At the end of the hymn the poet prays for the day of his death and his subsequent salvation. Magnús’s hymns are beautifully crafted with minimal verbal decoration; there are no classically-derived rhetorical figures or internal rhymes.

The 1612 *Vísnaþók* includes two poems by Magnús, “Ad lectorem” (to Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson), already mentioned, and “Klöggun af þremur sálar óvinum, holdi, heimi og djöfli” [Complaint of the soul’s three foes: the world, the flesh and the devil]. This latter work offers a powerful evocation of the malevolent forces in the created world (which, in Magnús’s colorful imagination means Viking armies as well as domestic strife and hatred) and how they lead men astray and cause many misfortunes. The poet concludes by acknowledging his own experience of how evil can gain hold over any individual, and how he was once an “óvarfærinn æskumaður” [heedless young man]. But when need is greatest help is often at hand: “Eftir unnin verkin verst / vitkast stundum hugurinn best” [after the worst of deeds, / sometimes the mind works best], and the poet now understands how “mannskammlegt” [harmful for man] it is to lose touch with Christian truths.

### A Memorable Journey to Flatey on Skjálfandi

We have noted that Páll Vídalín regarded “Flateyjarríma” as one of Magnús Ólafsson’s greatest achievements. It is noticeable that he speaks of the poem as primarily a work of fiction (Páll Vídalín 1985, 95), whereas Icelandic literary histories seem more preoccupied with the historicity of *rímur* about contemporary events. It is worth considering whether comic *rímur* of this kind are likely to be fact or fiction, and also what audience the poet may have had in mind when creating them.

“Flateyjarríma” is preserved in ten manuscripts from which we learn that Magnús wrote the work in either 1626 or 1628, at much the same time as his commemorative poem for séra Einar of

Eydalir; he was then fifty years old. The poem was first printed in 1960 (Finnur Sigmundsson 1960), along with other individual *rímur*, and all references in the following discussion are to this edition. Finnur's commentary acknowledges that the poem is often difficult to understand, particularly because of its complex kennings, but also perhaps because of the circumstances of its transmission. The *ríma* tells of its first-person narrator's visit to Flatey on Skjálfandi Bay in the north of Iceland. Various personalities make their appearance, notably the narrator's traveling companion, séra Illugi Helgason, who was pastor of Staður in Kinn from 1609 until his death in 1652. The poem may well give a faithful account of an actual journey but there is no doubt that the fictional impulse sometimes takes over without warning. The narrative frame takes the form of an apparently realistic travel account in which both fantastic events and supernatural figures appear. We learn that the journey takes place during the autumn Ember Day period,<sup>9</sup> and that the travelers return to the mainland on St Michael's Day, 29 September.

The pastor sets off initially with three youths, later to be joined by Illugi and others. We learn that Illugi is an experienced traveler, and that everyone is well equipped and in good spirits. They secure a passage to the island. The ferryman warns of bad weather but the travelers are too set on completing their journey to be deflected or delayed. The outward voyage goes well, they enjoy generous hospitality on the way, and on the following day they attend a communion service at the church. However, severe weather delays their return journey to the mainland and they are therefore compelled to spend the following six nights on Flatey, where various strange events take place. Two brothers have gone to Húsavík to buy schnapps and on their return attempt to hide it so that they can drink it by themselves. To ensure that the liquor goes undiscovered, the brothers arrange to have it guarded by dark elves [óljóss álfa] from the island underworld. People begin to fall ill, however, either as the direct result of fumes from the liquor or even because they just cannot find the precious hoard. Ormur, a local farmer, looks after the sick and declares that they will recover only when the drink is located. He believes that it

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9. "Imbrudagar" [Ember days] refers to the three-day fasts observed at the start of each quarter of the liturgical year in Catholic tradition.

is being stored under the sea, and this represents a major problem, as no one wishes to explore the world beneath the waves or to wrestle with elves. Finally, however, Illugi the pastor volunteers to do so. The description of him is pleasingly comic, emphasizing that he is both a man of the cloth and an aspiring warrior:

Seggurinn bjóst með sax og stólu  
 í Surtheim vandra,  
 batt með þjóst við beltis ólu  
 banann Andra.

Tvennt var hann, so Fjölnis fengur  
 fræðir ýta,  
 helgur mann og hreystidrengur,  
 harður að líta.  
 (Finnur Sigmundsson 1960, 37)

[The man prepared himself with sax and stole  
 to journey to Surtheim,  
 boldly clipped to belt's strap,  
 the bane of Andri [= sword].

Two things was he, the gain of Fjölnir [= poetry]  
 instructs us,  
 holy man and haughty warrior,  
 heroic to behold.]

Illugi journeys to the underworld in search of the liquor flask and lands in severe trouble with the elves. Meanwhile a certain Tómas, who is said to “skynja margt” [sense many a thing] and to understand the language of birds, is on guard nearby. There is no doubt that Illugi must venture into “hauga” [mounds] and “undirheima” [the underworld], and the natural disasters that occur during his struggle with the elves serve to underline the magnitude of events: earthquakes, falling rocks, heavy waves and the like.

Magnús makes ingenious use of kennings both old (“ennismáni” [forehead's moon = eye] and new (“frömuður messu” [performer of the Mass = pastor])), and refers to sea-gods from both Norse

and Greek mythology: Scylla and Charybdis, the daughters of Hlér [waves], Nereus and “Ýmis blóð” [Ýmir’s blood = the sea]. For Homer Nereus is the “Old Man of the Sea,” a wise and benevolent deity and father of the mermaids. Whales and sea creatures of all kinds rise from the sea surrounding the islands, encouraging the poet to include a long list of fish. Trolls soon join the group: “Gægðust tröll úr Krosshúss klett / við kynngiblöndur / skimuðu öll og skulfu rétt / sem skildivöndur” [trolls peered out from Cross-House promontory / by means of a magic potion, / all looked around and shook, / just like a reed]. Ghosts, dwarves and other spirits are listed: “Polyphemus, Fornjótur og Fenris þjassi / Urnir, Clemus, Ýmir, Ljótur / Iði, Gassi.” Polyphemus is the son of Poseidon the sea-god and one of the Cyclopes described in the *Odyssey*. Fornjótur, king of the Finns, is mentioned in *Flateyjarbók* and Arngrímur the Learned’s *Crymogæa*. Þjassi is a giant and “Fenris þjassi” probably means something similar, Ýmir is the father of all giants, and Ljótur is a berserk, while Iði is a giant and Þjassi’s brother. Eventually the natural disasters pass, with Tómas “postulinn” [the apostle] having all the time continued to compose a poem. Finally Illugi appears with the missing flask to great rejoicing and men are quick to give its contents their full attention. There is much drinking and entertainment and old books are examined:

Skræður fornar skoða tóku  
 skrifendur spjalda,  
 myglubornar margt af klóku  
 mundu halda.  
 (Finnur Sigmundsson 1960, 44)

[Ancient volumes began to study,  
 scribes of vellum;  
 mildewed, much wisdom  
 they must contain.]

The literary works contained in these books are then identified: “Dofra ranns og Dínusspjall” (this could be either *Dínuss saga drambláta* or *Dínusrímur*), “Andra dans” (probably *Andrarímur*), “drápa



Halls” (the reference is probably to Hallur Magnússon, 1530–1601, among whose works are “Sjálfdeilur” (also known as “Hallsrímur”), “Háttalykill” (a collection of *rímur* from different periods, mistakenly attributed to Hallur Magnússon) (see Björn K. Þórólfsson 1934, 60), Þórður from Strjúgur’s “Fjósaríma,” “Bjarkamál” (or “Bjarkarímur”), “Skaufhalabálkur” (which has been attributed to Einar fóstri or Svartur of Hofstaðir), *Bósasaga* (or *rímur*), *Völuspá* and *Hávamál* (here called “Viðris þrjál” [Óðinn’s pomp]).

Thunder and lightning eventually put an end to the feast and someone enters to claim that the liquor flask has been the source of the problem (“fleygðu úr bergi honum álfar út / þeir óttast presta’ [the elves flung it out from the rock / they fear priests], and to request politely that the festivities cease. The journey home then begins. The ferry voyage to the mainland goes well, with all sixteen passengers cheerful and content. After a stay at Hof they continue on horseback, but run into atrocious weather that is described with full use of mythological references:

þá allmjög svartur Ýmis haus  
sér atti að reiði.

Stökk hinn bráði storma hamur  
á stjörnu krafta,  
Elris náði rakki ramur  
rífa kjafta.  
(Finnur Sigmundsson 1960, 49)

[[. . .]  
then the very dark skull of Ýmir [= the heavens]  
grew angry.

Flashed the sudden fierce one of storms  
towards the strong star;  
the mighty hound of Elrir [= the storm]  
got to mouth off.]

It seems as if the “mána hvolf” [the moon’s ceiling] will collapse and all the star-signs will fall “hrúts í maga” [onto the ram’s

stomach]. The weather is dire and the travelers are certain that “að oss væri öllum stefndur / aldurtili” [at us is everything directed / for our death]. There are many complex stanzas and there is no doubt that the *ríma* as a whole was recited for the pleasure of a very discerning audience. The poem depicts a struggle against natural and supernatural forces, with nature presented in mythological terms: the “Dóttir Njörva níða dökk” [dark daughter of Njörvi = Night] [. . .] “vald nam örva og yfir oss hrökk” [increased her power and over us flew] [. . .] and they fought “við dimma drauga og djúpa skafla” [against dark ghosts and deep snowdrifts]. With their clothing now looking much the worse for wear compared with when they set out (181), the travelers eventually arrive home, receive treatment and then celebrate St Michael’s Day (29 September) with the author’s/ narrator’s namesakes. The author claims to have composed his poem while confined to bed recovering from the journey. He concludes by sending his good wishes to Illugi and anyone else who hears the poem.

“Flateyjarríma” is 191 stanzas long in an elaborate meter. It is a verbally complex work, with internal rhyme, opaque kennings and literary and mythological allusions that make significant demands on listeners/readers. The lists of fish, dwarfs, spirits, sagas and poems are doubtless intended for enlightenment and entertainment, and the same is true of the people and places referred to, many of which will have been familiar to audiences (Sverrir Tómasson 2000, 206; Björn K. Þórólfsson 1934, 373). The subject matter is a hazardous journey to a well-known island, followed by an even more perilous expedition to the Otherworld. The travelers are clearly clerics and the poet plays along with the idea that elves are greatly in awe of them.

Two obvious questions arise: where did the idea for a poem such as “Flateyjarríma” come from, and are its literary origins Icelandic or European? Sverrir Tómasson has argued convincingly that “Skíðaríma” was recited (or performed) in the west of Iceland before a period of fasting, and that its origins lie in European carnivalesque literature (as Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Björn K. Þórólfsson had previously suggested). As Sverrir remarks: “Skíðaríma presents the twin worlds of Christianity and paganism accompanied by

traditional comic elements from carnival plays” (Sverrir Tómasson 2000, 208). He adds that whereas after the Reformation such plays were no longer performed, just as other medieval Roman Catholic customs fell into abeyance, “Skíðaríma” itself lived on in people’s memories (p. 210).<sup>10</sup> “Flateyjarríma” also presents a vision of two worlds, with its conflict between Christianity (the principal characters are two pastors) and the heathen underworld inhabited by elves. It may not be a coincidence that the story begins during the Ember day period of fasting. Though a church service is mentioned at the start of the poem the subsequent feast is described in much greater detail.

One narrative feature common to “Skíðaríma,” “Flateyjarríma,” and Stefán Ólafsson from Vallanes’s “Rönkufótsríma” (said to be based on “Flateyjarríma”) is the description of a journey, first within the world of men, or, more precisely, within a region familiar to both author and audience, and then to the underworld; in “Skíðaríma” and “Rönkufótsríma” the main protagonist is a “Narr” [fool] whereas in “Flateyjarríma” he is a comic hero with a sense of humor; in all three poems the protagonists allow themselves to be driven by greed and carnal pleasures: Skíði longs for food, drink and a woman’s company, the pastors on Flatey yearn for liquor, while Sigurður in “Rönkufótsríma” has an eye for fish, which he sells at a profit. In each poem the protagonist confronts both supernatural beings and the forces of nature, and witnesses natural disasters. In “Skíðaríma” and “Rönkufótsríma” the principal characters suffer for their greed and foolishness but fare better in “Flateyjarríma,” even though they certainly confront mortal danger and struggle continually against natural forces on their way home.

Though these trials could be viewed as a punishment for their hedonism, “Flateyjarríma” makes little of this. The roots of the poem seem to lie in medieval tradition, as with so many other literary works from the baroque period. At the same time the poem has many specifically baroque characteristics, both stylistic (kennings, periphrasis, linguistic filigree and literary allusions), and in terms

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10. Post-Reformation scholarly interest in “Skíðaríma” can be seen, for example, in the fact that Bishop Jón Vídalín translated more than half of it into Latin (Björn K. Þorólfsson 1934, 389).

of inverted reality whereby we secure glimpses of the underworld. The poet is willing to depict characters in thrall to alcohol, and to engage high-spiritedly with the serious themes of sin and greed, life and death. We have noted the medieval roots of much baroque comic verse, notably its inversions, distortions and exaggerations of reality and its elaborate discussion of the unmentionables of life, albeit always from a Christian perspective. In this way we can find in the comic verse of Kingo and other baroque poets the same theological themes that are treated in more serious verse but now with different priorities and perspectives (Storstein and Sørensen 1999, 180). Such echoes of the church's teaching can be found in all three poems. Finally, we may point to "Klerkarímur," a work clearly influenced by "Skíðaríma," and also to *rímur* by Bjarni Gissurarson that tell of a man called Sigurður, known as "Austfirðinga Skíði" [Skíði of the Eastern Fjords], as the work's manuscript title confirms. All this evidence points unmistakably to the existence from some sort of poetic tradition.<sup>11</sup>

The poetry of Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás is many-sided and contains elements that reflect new times and trends. He composes serious religious poems that give expression to the tastes and views of the new faith, and also comic verse that is full of playful learning and carnivalistic ingenuity, as we have seen in "Flateyjarríma." Magnús's "Kvennadans" is at one level a fount of traditional learning, but it also presents a more radical and sympathetic view of women. His favorite literary genre is occasional verse, with his Icelandic pieces clearly resembling his Latin compositions, not just because they are intended for a scholarly audience/readership and associated with various kinds of scholarly pursuit, but also because both are informed by similar attitudes to language and poetry. Magnús was clearly much influenced by his teacher Arngrímur the Learned, who had argued in his *Crymogæa* that Icelandic or Norse was one of the original human languages and as such comparable in status with Latin (Gottskálf Þór Jensson 2003, 53). By imitating traditional Norse prosody and figurative language Magnús saw

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11. Bjarni Gissurarson's autograph manuscript, Thott 473 4to, includes "Ríma af Sigurði," "er sumir nefndu Austfirðinga Skíða" [whom some people call Skíði of the Eastern Fjords] (Kristinn E. Andrússon 1928, 326). This poem resembles both "Skíðaríma" and "Rönkufótsríma."

himself as renewing or even reviving the Icelandic language. We see him attempting to create artful verse by employing techniques from both native and classical literary tradition. In Magnús's poetry learning is the key element. His compositions are a telling example of the traces that humanism and the Renaissance left behind them in Icelandic literary history, yet they also point to a new era in which we find poets following in Magnús's footsteps and coming even closer to the characteristics that some scholars have associated with the baroque.

