

## Poems in Praise of Hallgrímur Pétursson

This chapter examines the poems written in praise of Hallgrímur Pétursson during the eighteenth century. These (in many respects) typical baroque works reflect a once familiar but now largely forgotten view of the poet. At the end of the chapter these pieces will be compared with “Hallgrímur Pétursson,” a celebrated nineteenth-century poem by séra Matthías Jochumsson (Matthías Jochumsson 1980, 161–163), in which a very different image of the poet emerges.

All these poems were composed long after Hallgrímur’s death. Four were written by church provosts and published in volumes of Hallgrímur’s poetry in which they serve as a kind of preface. The other five pieces are extant only in manuscript.

*Hallgrímskver*, printed at Hólar in 1765, contains the first three of these poems, two in Icelandic and one in Latin, and each the work of séra Hallgrímur Eldjárnsson (1723–1779).<sup>1</sup> Hallgrímur was a significant poet in his day; his “Sumarheilsan” [Summer greeting] and his Latin panegyric about Ludvig Harboe were regarded as sufficiently important to be printed rather than left in

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1. Hallgrímur Eldjárnsson was born into a family of pastors, and was related to Hallgrímur Pétursson. From the age of seven he grew up with séra Þorsteinn Ketilsson of Hrafnagil, studied at Hólar, and then for a further year in Copenhagen, where he completed his theological studies. He became provost of Vaðlaþing in 1753 (*ÍÆ* II 1949, 280–281).

manuscript.<sup>2</sup> Þorsteinn Pétursson's discussion ("Skrifarar og skáld átjándu aldar: Viðauki við *Recensus* Páls Vídalíns" [Eighteenth-century scribes and poets: Appendix] to Páll Vídalín's *Recensus*) confirms that Hallgrímur Eldjárnsson's two poems about his fellow poet were well known, helped his own reputation, and featured in the frequent reprintings of *Hallgrímskver*:

Sr. Hallgrímur hefur og gjört lofvísur til frænda síns og nafna, sr. Hallgríms Péturssonar, sem prentaðar eru á hans bæklingum nú hvað eftir annað, og öllum verður kunnugt; Sumarheilsan og sumarkveðju hefur hann og ort í söngvísum sem prentaðar voru næstliðinn vetur á Hólum bak við Misserahugvekjur sr. Jóns í Reykjadal. (Páll Vídalín 1985, 195; spelling modernized)

[séra Hallgrímur has also composed poems about his great-uncle and namesake, séra Hallgrímur Petursson; these are now frequently printed in books of his verse, and will be familiar to everyone. He also composed "Summer greeting" and "Summer farewell" in verses for singing that were also printed in Hólar last winter, together with "Semester meditations" by séra Jón of Reykjadalur.]

The first of Hallgrímur Eldjárnsson's poems about Hallgrímur Pétursson consists of seven *dróttkvætt* verses, in which Hallgrímur is praised for having made good use of his God-given abilities (the poem begins "Punda Guðs vel fékk vandað" [He received God's great gifts]). As a result his soul now experiences heavenly joy while those still living can enjoy and benefit from his poetry. Bishop Gísli Magnússon, who was responsible for the edition, is also praised for his initiative. The value of Hallgrímur's poetry for various kinds of readers is then identified:

Hér er hugvits rýrum  
hægt til bent að menntast,

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2. I am grateful to Sigurður Pétursson for providing me with information about this poem.

hér er hug óvörum  
 hermt frá andar grandí,  
 hér er hugar sárum  
 huggun trú vel búin,  
 hér er hugar skærum  
 heitið dýrðar veiting.

[Here for the mind-wit-lacking  
 is guidance on learning;  
 here for the mind-unwary  
 is warning about spiritual harm;  
 here for the mind-sore  
 is ready solace,  
 here for the mind-bright  
 is the promised gift of glory.]

Hallgrímur remains the focus of praise in verse 5: “Fár hefur fegur skrifað / forðum ljóð vorrar þjóðar” [Few have fairer written / in former times, poems for our people]. In verse 6 the Icelandic nation is urged to respond joyfully with all its senses to Hallgrímur’s verse:

Breiðið mót eyrun bæði,  
 blíður Íslands lýður!  
 Breiðið að hendur báðar,  
 býður Guð sitt orð tíðum.  
 Breiðið út hjörtun hraðir,  
 hlýðið sálma smíðum,  
 breiðið varir viður,  
 víða sönginn prýðið!

[Open up your ears,  
 blessed folk of Iceland!  
 Open up both arms,  
 God offers his Word often.  
 Open up your hearts at once,  
 listen to the hymns’ artistry,  
 open up your lips,  
 far and wide sing the song!]

The final verse features the rhetorical figure known to Snorri Sturluson as “dunhent,” also called *anadiplosis* (repetition of a word or stem from the end of one line at the beginning of the next): “Lýsi oss það ljósið / ljós máttum best kjósa / kjósum veg sem vísar / vís er oss þá prísinn [. . .]” [May it illuminate us, that light, / a light let us best choose, / choose a path that points the way surely, / sure for us then is the prize prize [. . .].

Four elegiac lines in Latin by séra Hallgrímur Eldjárnsson follow, in which the poet notes that while pictures were once created by means of colors, the divinely inspired poetic master is depicted and lives on in his verse. Hallgrímur’s third poem about Hallgrímur Pétursson is headed “Epitaphium.” Jón of Grunnavík notes that such pieces are “sem yfirskrift á líkstein manns eður gröf” [like the epitaph on a man’s gravestone or grave] (Jón Ólafsson 1996, 45). The poem is also in *dróttkvætt* measure:

Hér liggur skáld er skyldug  
 skáld stæra forprís skæran  
 skáldmæli um Krist þá kvaldist  
 kærust vann skáld það næra  
 ei skáldum Ísafoldar  
 æru skáldin svo færa  
 sem skáldi því glaðir gjalda  
 grær skálds hrós frábærast.

Eitt ljós Snælands ætta  
 ættmanns voru hættir  
 hætt þá særðu sóttir  
 sótt vann trúar þróttur  
 þróttisæll dó í Drottni  
 Drottins píslarvottur  
 vott þess firðar fréttu  
 frétt með sannleiks rétttri.

Lifir skáld lofti ofar  
 lifir skálds önd dyggð þriffin  
 lifir skálds nafn í lofi  
 lifir skálds gröf hrós yfir

lifi skálds minning ljúfa  
 lifi skálds stærsti bifur  
 lifi skálds ljóðastafir  
 lifi skálds merkisskrifin!

[Here lies a poet whom  
 other poets feel bound to praise;  
 poetry about the suffering Christ  
 this poet composed;  
 to no other poet of Ísafold  
 do poets offer such praise,  
 as to this poet they gladly bring;  
 thus grows the fame of the best of poets.]

A light for Iceland's kinsfolk  
 the kinsman's verses were;  
 when sorely assailed by sickness,  
 sickness felled not faith's strength;  
 strength-blessed died in the Lord,  
 the Lord's faith-witness;  
 witness of this men heard tell,  
 a telling truly right.

The poet lives on in the air above,  
 the poet's virtue-filled spirit lives on,  
 the poet's name lives on in praise,  
 the poet's praise lives on beyond the grave;  
 may the poet's blessed memory live on,  
 may the poet's greatest fame live on,  
 may the poet's words live on,  
 may the poet's fine writings live on.]

The poem illuminates and reflects Hallgrímur's fame. Though especially renowned for his *Passíusálmur*, whose poems tell of Christ's torments, he appears here as a triumphant poet surrounded by praise. He is the guiding light for his countrymen ("Snælands ætta" [Iceland's kinsfolk]), and though stricken by sickness his strength is uncompromised; he dies a martyr and hero.

Fordum Eiood verrar Þjóðar;  
 Mættir nærre hræfku  
 Njitur ber af Jtum,  
 Mæangi mæ stie leinge  
 Meige jafnast við Mafna.

6. Breided moot Eyruñ báde,  
 Blíður Íslands Eijður!  
 Breided að Hendur báðar,  
 Blíður Guð sit Orð Eijðum:  
 Breided wt Hjörtuñ hræder,  
 Blíðed Psalma Smíðum:  
 Breided Barer víður,  
 Blíða Saungen þríðed!

7. Eijfi ofþ þad Eioofed  
 Eioos mættum best Eioofa;  
 Eioofum Þeg sem víssar,  
 Þíð er ofþ þa Þríffn,  
 Þríð í Himna Hwsi,  
 Hwsi þad rækium frosir:  
 Frosi lofs að leifast  
 Eelfi Guð frá Hneifsu!

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Encausto formas veteres pinxere ta-  
 bellis.

In terms of style, in the first verse the word “skáld” [poet] is repeated in a variety of grammatical forms and contexts (*polyptoton*): “skáld,” “skáldmæli,” “skáldin,” “skáldum,” “skáldi” and “skálds.” The next verse features *anadiplosis*, with the final word of one line repeated in some form at the beginning of the next: “ætta” / “ættmanns,” “hættir” / “hætt,” “sóttir” / “sótt” and so on. The final verse features dual repetition, with the same two words repeated at the start of each line, with indicative verbs in the first half of the verse and subjunctive ones thereafter. The rhyming is similarly intricate, with internal *skothending* [consonant rhyme] in the odd lines and internal *aðalending* [vowel and consonant rhyme] in the even ones. In the first verse the poet introduces further complexity by using the same *ær* rhyme in all *aðalending* forms. Then the use of *anadiplosis* in the second verse means that all rhymes, internal and end, both *skothending* and *aðalending*, are of the same type. In the final verse the rhyming is unusual by virtue of being vertical within the final feet (as with “ofar” / “lofi,” “þrifin” / “yfir”) rather than horizontal within each line. Overall, the poem celebrates Hallgrímur’s achievement with elegance and sophistication of form and content.

Praising kings, jarls, or other leaders was a familiar role for medieval *dróttkvætt* verse, but after the Reformation a new kind of panegyric emerged in the form of occasional verse, some of it clearly rooted in Latin tradition (see Jakob Benediktsson 1983, 59; Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2000, 129). Latin occasional pieces were a common feature of humanist literary culture, and the genre was later adopted in European vernaculars during the baroque period (see Jakob Benediktsson 1983, 291). At the end of Arngrímur Jónsson’s *Brevis commentarius de Islandia* (1593) we find two praise poems addressed to the author, which represent the earliest extant examples of Icelandic neo-Latin panegyric verse (Sigurður Pétursson 1995, 103). The genre is briefly discussed in Óskar Halldórsson’s *Bókmenntir á lærdómsöld* [Literature in the age of learning], where he suggests that the emphasis on Old Norse literature within the Icelandic educational system may have encouraged the composition of panegyrics and eulogies, as had once been fashionable (Óskar Halldórsson 1996, 26).

Panegyric verse enjoyed a high profile during the baroque period. Poems were generally addressed to influential individuals, sometimes in the hope of winning favor or office for the poet, but pieces were also composed for other poets. Books of poetry were often

prefaced by effusive verse tributes from friends, acquaintances, or other worthies. The poems served as a kind of recommendation or advertisement for the book, with the dedicatee associated with the great poets of the past. This is certainly how the Danish royal historian Vitus Bering (1617–1675) commends Thomas Kingo:

Noget lignende har Dante ikke skænket,  
 har din Laura ikke givet dig, Petrarca,  
 ej heller Italiens hele digterskare; ikke  
 [. . .]  
 Opitz, der tordner med sin vældige mund  
 (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3 1983, 268–269)

[Nothing of the kind did Dante create,  
 nor, for you, Petrarch, did your Laura compose,  
 nor did Italy's entire pantheon of poets; and nor did  
 [. . .]  
 Opitz, who thunders with his mighty voice]

Panegyrics are generally heavily alliterative, and poets either used the same common models or simply borrowed from each other. Biblical and Graeco-Roman poets are listed, along with contemporary European figures, before we are reminded that no other writer, past or present, can begin to match the achievements of the particular author being celebrated. There were thus hardly any limits to the praise lavished on individual honorees. Sometimes the poems include reflections on earthly transience in the context of eternity, on the brief span of an individual's life, but also on the longevity of a good reputation (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3 1983, 269).

At the end of *Hallgrímsskver*, printed at Hólar in 1770, there is a panegyric on Hallgrímur Pétursson, consisting of seven *dróttkvætt* verses, and composed by séra Þorlákur Þórarinnsson (1711–1773).<sup>3</sup> In

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3. Þorlákur Þórarinnsson studied at Hólar, became a deacon at Möðruvallaklaustur, and lost his clerical position in 1733 after fathering an illegitimate child; he was vindicated in 1735. At Harboe's suggestion he returned to Möðruvallaklaustur as pastor in 1745, where he remained for the rest of his life; he was also provost at Vaðlaþing 1751–1753. He was “lipurmenni, andrjúkur kennimaður, gáfumaður mikill og skáld” [a courteous individual, an inspired teacher, a man of great intellect, and a fine poet] (*ÍÆ* V, 169). His poetry was printed at Hólar in 1775 and several times thereafter; the volume was known as *Þorláksskver*.



verse 1 Hallgrímur is compared to Homer and Vergil; in verse 2 the *Passíusálmur* are lauded as his finest work, followed (in verse 3) by celebration of his other writings. Hallgrímur's cultivation of medieval Icelandic literary tradition is noted in verse 4 and linked to his poem "Aldarháttur," whose complexity is also noted ("ráðgátu vers og viðá / vandfetuð" [a rhyming riddle, in many places / hard to unravel]). The praise reaches its climax in verse 5 with its variable apostrophic form, in which the first four lines begin with "maktar" [might] and the next four with "mektug" or "mektugar" [powerful]. The penultimate verse directs gratitude towards the learned scholars of Hólar who were responsible for the edition, and the poem concludes with the wish that these fine works will be recited in Iceland long into the future. There are several striking noun phrase periphrases, as when Hallgrímur is called "kirkjugildasti gullinn baldur" [most church-worthy golden leader]; his poems are "himinstef" [heaven verses], composed about "sorgar líma sæðis almannagræðis" [the sorrow-branch of the seed of mankind's healer = the Passion of Christ]. The Hólar scholars are praised for collecting and printing Hallgrímur's "mærdarskjölin" [poetic documents = manuscripts]:

Eftirfylgjandi innsent af prófastinum sr.Þ.Þ.s.

Heimsaldar höfuðskálda  
 Hómerus gríski rómast:  
 vildasta Vallands foldar,  
 Vergilius umbergis:  
 Öldum á Ísaveldi  
 yrkir HALLGRIMUR kirkju  
 gildasti gullinn-baldur,  
 getinn að hróðrar metum.

Himinstef hans uppkomin  
 háleit á voru máli,  
 samin um sorgarlíma  
 sæðis almanna græðirs,  
 framast í landi ljóma,  
 löguð, undrunar fögur,  
 naumast kann neinn i heimi  
 neytari söng að líta.

Allmerk hans önnur spjöllin  
 æð hinni sömu blæða  
 gull-legri gáfu snilli  
 glæst og andvarma stærstum,  
 hollustu ráðin heilla,  
 hundruðum saman punduð  
 fylla þann flokk með öllu  
 fríðindis orða smíði.

Kvæðaskáld lista liðugt  
 líka sést hinn andríki;  
 höður fornalda fræðis  
 fann það vel Þormóðs annáll:  
 skoðunarmerkið skráða  
 skátt ber hans Aldarháttur,  
 ráðgátu vers og víða  
 vandfetuð hér í landi.

Maktar skáld mjög var ryktað,  
 maktar þjón Zíons vaktar,  
 maktar andanna mektir  
 maktar kenningu hrakti,  
 mektug hans mælska þókti,  
 mektugar stefis átektir,  
 mektug bænarmál daktuð,  
 mektugar hyggjuspektir.

Vel sé hálærðum hölum  
 Hólastiftis og skóla,  
 félagsherrum forsjálu,  
 fjölþreyð hans mæðarskjölin  
 til þrykks að veiða og velja,  
 valin, svo mörgum ali  
 heilaga sinnis sælu,  
 sól meðan ornar bóllum.

Heiður Guðs, hefð og dáðir,  
 hróður íslendra ljóði.

Fræðendur, klerkar fríðir,  
 fljóð og menn vorrar þjóðar,  
 kveði, syngi, lof laði,  
 lóð, eldar, vötn og hrjóður,  
 iðji sín undirkvæði  
 óðar svo dafni gróðinn.

[The following submitted by séra Þ. Þ. s.]:

Of the age's greatest poets  
 Homer the Greek is praised;  
 from Valland's blessed land  
 comes Virgil;  
 for people in the Land of Ice  
 Hallgrímur composes, church's  
 most blessed golden-Baldur,  
 born for poetry's glory.

His heavenly stanzas stand  
 sublime in our language,  
 composed about the sorrow-branch  
 of the seed of mankind's healer [Christ's Passion];  
 supreme in the land they shine,  
 in a sequence, wondrously fair;  
 few in the world  
 will find finer songs.

Wondrous his other works  
 from the same vein would bleed,  
 with genius' golden gift  
 glittering and much inspired;  
 most wholesome wisdom,  
 laden with worth,  
 fills those works in full,  
 in finely crafted words.

In the poet supple in skill  
 is seen also spiritual richness;

the Höður of ancient learning,  
 Þormóður's commentary, confirms this:  
 the written word,  
 his "Aldarháttur," bears witness—  
 a rhyming riddle, in many places  
 thought hard to unravel here.

The mighty poet was much praised,  
 the mighty servant of Zion stands watch,  
 mighty power of spirits,  
 mighty errors dismissed;  
 mighty his eloquence seemed,  
 mightily he crafted,  
 mighty prayers composed,  
 mighty meditations.

Thanks be to the learned men  
 of Hólar diocese and school,  
 to those foresightful fellows,  
 his precious documents  
 seek out and select for print;  
 selected so that many may live  
 with the blessing of true doctrine,  
 while the sun shines on our settlements.

God's glory, deeds, and prowess,  
 should be praised in Icelanders' verse.  
 Teachers, worthy clerks,  
 our countrymen and women,  
 should compose, sing, and praise;  
 earth, air, fire, and water  
 should work in concert,  
 so that all may flourish.]

A handsomely written text of Þorlákur's poem can be found in JS 272 II 4to (316r–317v), perhaps in the author's hand. The manuscript, which was owned by Hálfdan Einarsson, a schoolmaster who supervised the publication of *Hallgrímskver*, contains four other panegyrics about Hallgrímur. The first, six stanzas in length

and with an additional *dróttkvætt* verse, refers twice to Hallgrímur as a “höfuðskáld” [master poet]. The poet acknowledges that no praise of his can do justice to Hallgrímur Pétursson, but that all Iceland should celebrate the great writer and his works. The final four verses begin with the same words that serve as both *exclamatio* and *apostrophe*: “Ó, þitt dýra eðla pund, ágætasti drottins þjón!” [O, that precious noble treasure of yours, worthiest servant of the Lord]. This changes in the second line of the last of the six main verses to “ágætasti drottins mann!” [worthiest man of God]. Hallgrímur is presented as someone whose compositions can touch and bring comfort to all his countrymen. The final *dróttkvætt* verse notes that while other Icelandic poets have composed fine religious works, none has matched Hallgrímur’s achievement, and his fame will live on for centuries to come:

Svo hefur einn kveðið um skáldskap s<sup>ra</sup> H:P:s: 1761

Hér fyrir dyrum hvílast bein  
höfuðskáldsins góða þess  
Péturssonar helg og hrein  
sem hjartnæm samdi ljóðavers.

Honum nóg eg hrósa ei kann,  
helst eru viljamerkin sljó,  
landið allt það lofar hann,  
langtum betur verkin þó.

Ó, þitt dýra eðla pund  
ágætasti drottins þjón!  
Sem nú hefur öðlast friðarfund,  
frelsarans og dýrðar sjón.

Ó, þitt dýra eðla pund  
ágætasti drottins þjón!  
Huggar marga hrellda lund,  
hjartnæmur þinn sálmatón.

Ó, þitt dýra eðla pund  
ágætasti drottins þjón!

Ávaxtist það alla stund,  
Íslands meðan byggist frón.

Ó, þitt dýra eðla pund,  
ágætasti drottins mann!  
Vér elskum það á alla lund,  
en erfiðislaunin geldur hann.

Vel hefir í móðurmáli  
margur ljóð vorrar þjóða  
—annað er tál að tala—  
trúframur Kristi samið  
en höfuðskáld hulið moldu  
hér fyrir kirkjudyrum  
Hallgrímur einn hefir öllum  
orðstír meir leifðan forðum.

[So has someone composed about the poetry of s[é]ra  
H[allgrímur]: P[éturs]: s[on]: 1761

Here by the door lie the bones  
of this doughty master poet  
Pétursson, holy and pure,  
who composed touching poems.

I cannot praise him enough,  
my poems are mostly dull;  
all the country praises him,  
his works do so better.

O, that precious noble treasure of yours,  
worthiest servant of the Lord,  
who has now found peace,  
a sight of the Saviour and of glory.

O, that precious noble treasure of yours,  
worthiest servant of the Lord,  
many heavy spirits find solace  
in your touching hymns.

O, that precious noble treasure of yours,  
 worthiest servant of the Lord,  
 long may this last,  
 while the Land of Ice lives on.

O, that precious noble treasure of yours,  
 worthiest man of the Lord,  
 we love it with all our hearts,  
 and heaven now rewards his work.

Well in our native tongue  
 many in our nation  
 —to say different would be to deceive—  
 poems have composed, faithful to Christ;  
 but the master poet, covered with dust  
 here by the church door,  
 Hallgrímur alone, more than all others,  
 glory left behind him long ago.

Another panegyric about Hallgrímur follows immediately (319r-v), composed (according to the title) in 1762. In it we learn that a pastor (*mistilteinn messuklæða* [mistletoe of the mass-cloth]) had encouraged the poet to compose lines about Hallgrímur while he was staying with a certain Þorvarður. The host must have been séra Þorvarður Auðunarson (1705–1775), pastor at Saurbær on Hvalfjarðarströnd, who provided Hálfðan Einarsson with important information for his biography of the poet; and the poet can be identified as the accomplished scholar and writer Eggert Ólafsson (1726–1768). The panegyric was included in an 1832 edition of Eggert's verse, under the title "Um Hallgrím Pétursson, kveðið að bón Þorvarðar prests Auðunarsonar, 1762" [On Hallgrímur Pétursson, composed at the request of séra Þorvarður Auðunarson, 1762] (Eggert Ólafsson 1832, 110–111). The 1832 volume, edited in Copenhagen by Tómas Sæmundsson and others, features a preface in which Eggert discusses poetry in general and his own work in particular.<sup>4</sup> He names Hallgrímur Pétursson as an

4. The edited text was established by comparing the poetry extant in other manuscripts with Eggert's autograph versions: for example, in *Bibl. Bodl.* 20722 = *Mss. Bor.* 81, and *JS* 3 4to (see Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson 2011, 84; Vilhjálmur Gíslason 1926:175).

example of the kind of “ágæt skáld” [excellent poets] that Iceland has produced over the centuries (Eggert Ólafsson 1832, 8).<sup>5</sup> Eggert arranges his poetry into four categories (Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson 2011, 85–86): serious, satirical, earnest and game, and comic, and the Hallgrímur poem is duly assigned to the ‘serious’ group. Moreover, had it not been for the poet’s supplementary annotation, parts of the poem would be far from easy to understand. The reader learns, for example, that the unfamiliar adjective “ísfyldir” (used absolutely) derives from “fold” [land] and simply denotes “Icelanders”:

Um Hallgrím Pétursson,  
kveðið að bón Þorvarðar prests Auðunarsonar 1762.

Mig bað um messuklæða  
mistilteinn, er eg gista,  
hrós vinnandi, vísu,  
varð það, að Þorvarðar  
Hallgrímur, einn fyrir öllum  
álm-spennendum sálma,  
reynslu knátti Krists pínslar  
kveða þing Íslendingum.

Varð altara verði  
við Hvalangurs síðu  
góðum byggð af Guði  
gengis hans tilfengin  
stýrði við ástar orðum  
iðulum hæstan biðja  
þann er ósk-maga minnist  
myrkur án þeirri kirkju.

Kenni- mæstur -manna  
mærd guðlega færði,  
marga er af meini borgið  
mjög fékk andar rekkum.  
Péturs leyfir uns lifir

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5. He also names Bishop Jón Vídalín and the sheriff Þorlákur Guðbrandsson.



land son; hallar ansa:  
minnis, ísfyldir! unnið  
aldurtila því skáldi!<sup>6</sup>

[On Hallgrímur Petursson,  
composed at the request of pastor Þorvarður Auðunarsen 1762.

I was asked by the mistletoe  
of mass-cloth, while a guest,  
praiseworthy, for a verse,  
while with Þorvarður;  
Hallgrímur alone, for all  
who have pleasure in hymns,  
could truths of Christ's Passion  
tell to the Icelandic people.

Became altar-guardian  
by Hvalangur's shore [= on Hvalfjarðarströnd],  
a settlement by gracious God  
granted for his benefit;  
with words of love,  
to pray often to the Lord on high,  
to Him who forgets not his flock,  
without darkness, he guided the church.

The greatest of teachers,  
brought godly praise,  
that from spiritual harm,  
saved many a man;  
the land will laud Pétur's son  
while it lives, its rocks resound;  
Ísafold folk must praise his memory,  
this poet, evermore.]

Among the poem's archaized elements we find several kennings that, though not unduly difficult, are certainly original, as with the two expressions for a pastor: "mistilteinn messuklæða" [mistletoe

6. Text from Eggert Ólafsson 1832, 110–111; spelling modernized.

of the mass-cloth] and “altaravörður við Hvalangurs síðu” [altar guardian by Hvalangur’s shore = on Hvalfjarðarströnd]. And as for the poem’s structure, we learn in verse 1 why it was composed; in verse 2 Hallgrímur is praised for his work as a pastor, and in verse 3 for his outstanding poetry. His fame will last for as long as Iceland is inhabited.

The same manuscript contains another poem, eight stanzas in length (322r–323r), that praises séra Hallgrímur; it has the heading “Lítillfjörleg ljóðmæli. Sub melodia: Princeps stelliferis etc.” [A modest collection of poetry. To the melody: Princeps stelliferis etc].<sup>7</sup> The poet was probably Þórður Sveinsson (1727–1770).<sup>8</sup> Its introductory section is followed by an allegory:

Gætið að göfgandi  
 góðfúsa Drottins náð  
 á heila Íslandi  
 yður hvað hér er tjáð:  
 Eik hér ágæta skapt  
 eina fyrr hafði Guð,  
 himinsins heilsusaft  
 henni var innlifuð.

Himinsins blíður blær  
 blómgunar krafti með  
 gæðastór gekk hér nær  
 gefa svo eikin réð  
 af sér um landið allt  
 ilm sætan lífgandi,  
 þar að það æ ávallt  
 er síðan búandi.

[See the enriching  
 grace of the kindly Lord  
 throughout the land

7. The melody is from the Buchanan hymnal; see Árni Heimir Ingólfsson 2003, 10ff.

8. After the commentary on the poem the initials “s. P.S.s” appear in the manuscript. These probably refer to séra Þórður Sveinsson, poet and pastor at Kálfholt. He had previously spent time in the service of Bishop Finnur Jónsson and was an able writer (*ÍÆ* V, 114).

laid out for you here;  
 a lofty oak did God  
 lend life to here,  
 heaven's health-stream  
 was sensed in it.

Heaven's fair breeze  
 with fruitful force,  
 bountiful, moved near here,  
 made the oak to give off  
 from itself throughout the land  
 sweet life-giving fragrance;  
 there has it always  
 flourished since then.]

We may note occasional references to Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmur*, where he speaks of “blæ himins blíðan” [heaven's gentle breeze] (25/10) and “frjóvgunar eikina” [the fruitful oak] (32/2). There are references to oak sap and pollination in verse 4, accompanied by an explanation:

Útlagt í einu þér  
 allt skal, kær lesari!  
 Eikin áminnsta hér  
 alldýr Guðs þénari,  
 sr. Hallgrímur sá  
 son Péturs áður var,  
 hér sem að hauðri á  
 hjálpræðis ávöxt bar.  
 (JS 272 II 4to, 322v)

[Explained for you,  
 it all shall be, dear reader!  
 Here the oak signifies  
 God's dear servant;  
 this Hallgrímur, the pastor,  
 the son of Peter was,  
 who to our fatherland  
 brought salvation's fruit.]

In the latter part of the poem we read that Hallgrímur's "lífleg ljóð" [lively poems] sustain the people of Iceland like the pure waters of life. The final verse claims that though Hallgrímur's body lies at rest on the shores of Hvalfjörður his soul now shares in heaven's eternal joy:

sálin í himnahöll  
 hæstan faðmandi Guð  
 lifir mein laus við öll,  
 lífinu kórónuð.  
 (JS 272 II 4to, 323r)

[his soul in heaven's hall  
 embracing God on high,  
 lives free from all harm,  
 crowned with life.]

The poet evidently thought that the explanations provided in the second half of the poem for the substance of the first half were insufficient, for the work is followed by prose annotation, preceded by a short verse that seems also to be about Hallgrímur and composed by the same author as the main poem.

The final work in the manuscript is a verse about Hallgrímur by Eiríkur Bjarnason of Hvalsnes:

Hallgrímur heill, sóma og snilli  
 hæst klæddur stærst gæddur  
 næsta guðrækinn, geðspakur maður  
 góð sendi þjóðkenndu ljóðin.  
 Krists hjörðu hnoss færði blessað  
 hann besti vann prestur sannast  
 sál hryggva sæl hugga skulu  
 sæt versin mæt hressing ætíð.  
 (JS 272 II 4to, 355v–356r)

[Hallgrímur, in fortune, honor and genius  
 clothed; most highly endowed,  
 deeply pious man of wisdom;  
 composed fine poems known to the nation.]

To Christ's flock brought blessed gifts,  
 best of pastors proved to be;  
 his sweet and sacred stanzas comfort  
 the sad soul—are always a true salve.]

The manuscript Lbs 705 8vo (f. 45v) includes a *dróttkvætt* verse about Hallgrímur. Most of the items in this manuscript are in the hand of séra Pétur Bjarnarson, pastor at Tjörn on Vatnsnes, who was also the author of several of them, as we learn from a page at the front of the manuscript written by Páll Pálsson. Pétur Bjarnarson (1723–1803) was indeed a capable poet in both Icelandic and Latin (*ÍÆ* IV, 152). In his verse about Hallgrímur we find both *anaphora* and *polyptoton* (beginning each line with the same word, albeit not always with the same inflectional ending). Thus all the rhymes feature the same vowel + *ll* form. In terms of theme the reader is assured that Hallgrímur will live on in the future through his literary works. His poems appeal to all readers and help to keep them on the right path in life:

Hrós sál. sr. Hallgríms Péturssonar.  
 P.B.S.

Hallgrímur stýrir heillum  
 Hallgrímur þó sé fallinn  
 Hallgrímur lifir hollur  
 Hallgríms í verki snjalla;  
 Hallgrímur heftir villu  
 Hallgrím skáld besta kallar  
 Hallgrímur hentar öllum  
 Hallgrímur fyrnist aldrei.

[Praise the late séra Hallgrímur Pétursson.  
 P.B.S.

Hallgrímur will bring good fortune.  
 Hallgrímur, though he is dead,  
 Hallgrímur lives on, hale and hearty,  
 in Hallgrímur's masterworks;  
 Hallgrímur inhibits error,

Hallgrímur is called best poet,  
 Hallgrímur is for everyone,  
 Hallgrímur will never fade away.]

As far as is known, all these eighteenth-century poems celebrating Hallgrímur's achievement were composed by pastors. He is presented as a highly educated and much-loved poet who, though long dead, lives on forever and thus rejoices in victory, both in heaven and in the hearts and minds of his countrymen.

Séra Matthías Jochumsson (1835–1920) composed a poem about Hallgrímur in 1874, to mark the bicentennial of his death. Much had happened in Icelandic literary history during the intervening years. The eighteenth-century panegyrics had been composed while the Enlightenment was beginning to make its mark in Iceland, with the poetry of the day still strongly influenced by neo-classical order and formality (Páll Valsson 1996, 231). During the nineteenth century, however, literary romanticism emerged, notably through the works of Jónas Hallgrímsson, and this development left a profound mark on Icelandic attitudes to poetry. Matthías's sense of history was also essentially romantic; he composed many obituaries and often chose to treat famous historical figures at the moment of death (Páll Valsson 1996, 386). Matthías's attitude to Hallgrímur differs strikingly from the eighteenth-century tributes discussed above, despite certain shared elements such as a fondness for rhetorical figures: his poem features many instances of *apostrophe*, *repetitio*, *exclamatio*, *interrogatio*, and *accumulatio*. There is also a shared emphasis on the *Passíusálmur* and their value for the Icelandic nation. Matthías's poem is distinctive not just for its dramatization of the poet's death, but (especially) for its introduction of the poet's own persona into the work. This would never have occurred to any earlier writer. In Matthías's poem the subject—Christ's suffering and death—has now become the lot of the poet. We find the same perspective in Halldór Laxness's 1942 article, referred to at the beginning of the present study. At the start of the poem Hallgrímur is compared to the biblical King David, himself a creator of psalms, and gradually the poet himself comes to resemble Christ:

Signað höfuð sorgar-þyrna ber,—  
 sjá, nú þekkist hann, sem dáinn er.  
 (Matthías Jochumsson 1980, 163)

[Behold, his blessed head bears sorrow-thorns—  
 he [Hallgrímur], who is dead, now resembles Him [Christ].]

Hallgrímur has now become a direct participant in the events explored in the *Passíusálmur*:

Langt með Pétri sástu kvala-kvöld,  
 Kaífasar höll var sjálfs þín öld—  
 sama ambátt: hroka-hjátrú blind;  
 hjálpin sama: Jesú guðdóms-mynd.  
 (Ibid.)

[Long was the painful evening spent with Peter,  
 Caiaphas's palace was your own time—  
 the same slave: pride-blind superstition;  
 the same salvation: Jesus' divine image.]

This image has embedded itself in more recent Icelandic consciousness: the sick and suffering poet dying in misery and poverty.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, it has been suggested that Hallgrímur lived a wretched life, appreciated by no one, and without the help and support he needed. There may be an element of truth in this, and yet it was not the primary image of Hallgrímur to emerge during the eighteenth century. For the clerical poets who composed works in his honor, Hallgrímur Pétursson was a respected pastor and highly accomplished poet who had written with great flair and elegance about a fundamentally important subject—Christ's Passion and death; and, eventually, he had received his due reward, for he is depicted as seated in eternal glory with the heavenly Father, while still enjoying the love and respect of his countrymen in Iceland.

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9. Steinunn Jóhannesdóttir recalls learning the poem as a child—this description affected her rather like a scene from a horror film (Steinunn Jóhannesdóttir 1997, 63–64).

