



The Hóladómkirkja font, by Guðmundur Guðmundsson of Bjarnastaðahlíð. Þjóðminjasafn Íslands [National Museum of Iceland]. Photograph: Ívar Brynjólfsson.

CHAPTER 2

Baroque Literature

Mainland Europe

The baroque is a relatively modern concept as applied to literature and emerged at a time when it would have occurred to no one to apply it to the literature of his own day. The word has its origins in the Romance languages, and it was Italian humanists who first adopted it to describe intellectual contradictions and unsatisfactory reasoning. In sixteenth-century France the term “baroque,” probably a loan-word from Portugal, was used to describe unevenly shaped precious stones that were to be polished. It was not until the twentieth century that the term was adopted in earnest in literary analysis. Previously it had been used rather negatively to denote eccentricities and exaggerations of style. With the emergence of impressionism, and following the example of the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1888), scholars began to employ the word when referring to intellectual originality, stylistic freedom and artistic innovation. After World War I expressionism helped to stimulate German interest in the seventeenth century, and we can speak of a re-evaluation or even revival of the literature and art of that period, which by this time had become widely associated with the baroque.

In his study of twentieth-century baroque research Ferdinand van Ingen (1966) argues that scholars’ conclusions were frequently contradictory and irreconcilable and that no agreement as to the meaning of “baroque” had yet emerged. For some it described an

attitude to life, for others a feature of literary form; some dated its emergence back to the eighteenth century, while others avoided questions of chronology altogether. Yet the issue cannot be ignored because it determines the starting point for our investigation (van Ingen 1966, 13).

Many believe that a 1916 article by Fritz Strich on seventeenth-century lyric style was both a turning point in the study of German poetry from that period and also the starting point for baroque research (van Ingen 1966, 242). Carl-Alfred Zell claims that Strich's paper helped to establish a new perspective from which to view the baroque period. The artistic achievement of literature long regarded as essentially tasteless began to be recognized. Zell notes, however, that for the most part this revival of interest involved secular rather than spiritual verse, with the latter consigned to the margins, as its sacred subject matter was no longer a cultural priority (Zell 1971, 24). He seeks to address this imbalance through his research into the religious poetry of Johann Heermann (1585–1647), noting that in the course of his work it had become clear that the whole notion of “the baroque” needed revisiting.

In his remarkable study *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, E.R. Curtius sought to avoid the term “baroque,” preferring instead “mannerist.”¹ This found little favor, however, and over time the use of baroque became ubiquitous (see van Ingen 1966, 15–16). René Wellek's paper “The Concept of Baroque in Literary Scholarship” (1945) was particularly influential, and his 1962 “Postscript” is no less important (Wellek 1963, 115–127). In the latter, though Wellek refines some of his original conclusions, his belief in the validity of the term baroque to describe certain kinds of seventeenth-century literature is restated. He concedes that his earlier claim that baroque had no place in any discussion of French literature was now unsustainable. Vigorous debate among French scholars had confirmed that “there existed in France a fine poetic tradition which was neither Renaissance nor classical, and can best be described as baroque” (Wellek 1963, 119). Wellek also challenges those scholars whose sense of the baroque seems to him

1. Translated by Willard Trask as *European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages* (New York, 1953; repr. Princeton, 1993).

too simplistic or narrow. Interestingly, he expresses the hope that further research into the history of poetics may lead to a better understanding of the idea of the baroque: “[m]uch more promising are the attempts to approach the problem of the baroque through a study of the history of poetic theories” (Wellek 1963, 123). Wellek also refers to the use of the term in the analysis of English literature. Louis L. Martz had proposed that the phrase “meditative tradition” be substituted for the more conventional “metaphysical” (Martz 1954), but Wellek continued to prefer baroque as “the one term for the style between the Renaissance and classicism which is sufficiently general to override the local terms of schools; and it suggests the unity of a Western literary and artistic period” (Wellek 1963, 127).

For van Ingen definitions of baroque are meaningless when based exclusively on emotions, attitudes to life or synchronistic analysis of style; these elements need to work together (van Ingen 1966, 18). Among those most influential in establishing baroque as a widely-used term of literary-cultural analysis was Marian Szyrocki, a prolific Polish scholar, who edited and wrote about many texts from the baroque period. His insightful paper “Zur Differenzierung des Barockbegriffs” (1966) is representative of his overall contribution to the subject area. German interest in the baroque developed during the 1960s, not least through influential studies by Karl Otto Conrady (1962), who highlights the indebtedness of German baroque literature to Latin tradition and neo-Latin poetry; by Albrecht Schöne (1964), who examines the links between emblem literature and the baroque; and by Manfred Windfuhr (1966), who explores the use of imagery in baroque poetry. In his remarkable study *Barockrhetorik* (1970), Wilfried Barner shows that a secure understanding of baroque literature requires familiarity with classical rhetoric. Though not the first scholar to make this connection, Barner was the first to draw literary-historical conclusions from it, arguing that rhetoric was the “Zentralkategorie” of German and European baroque literature (see Hoffmeister 1987, 135). He also addresses the whole idea of the baroque. Some years later, in order to clarify and facilitate use of the term, Barner suggested that earlier scholars had sought to distinguish among five perspectives, all of which, however, he believed to be mutually interdependent:

(1) artistic (2) stylistic (3) relating to a particular period (4) relating to indigenous literary history (5) socio-historical.

In recent decades baroque research has begun to flourish outside Germany and is now thoroughly international. The reception of German baroque literature elsewhere in Europe has been studied, as have international influences on German baroque literature. Accordingly, much new light has been shed on a previously under-explored literary period in more than one country. An international research group on German baroque literature (Internationaler Arbeitskreis für deutsche Barockliteratur) has been working in Wolfenbüttel since 1972, while in North America the Society for German Renaissance and Baroque Literature provides a focus for research. During the 1960s and 1970s several important editions, monographs and anthologies relating to baroque authors were published.

In 1974 the German scholar Hans-Henrik Krummacher confirmed that great strides had been made in the study of German baroque literature over the previous half century, with progress closely associated with work on the literary and intellectual history of the baroque period. This latter work had helped to alter perceptions, as scholars developed a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the literary-cultural premises and priorities informing baroque writing. This is true, for example, in respect of the influence of classical rhetorical theory, and also of literary convention, irrespective of form or content. Moreover, while the distinctive nature of baroque literature is now better appreciated, texts have also been fruitfully investigated from broader post-Renaissance European literary perspectives, with due attention paid to the significance of neo-Latin writings. There is also greater scholarly awareness of the importance for literary interpretation of allegorical and emblematic readings and patristic writings, the latter still regarded in the seventeenth century as a major element in the church's intellectual inheritance. Finally, handbooks of poetics and rhetoric, previously thought of as low-level pedagogical materials, are now recognized as offering an important key to our understanding of baroque writing (Krummacher 1974, 90-91).

Krummacher has noted that of the three rhetorical elements—*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*—regarded by seventeenth-century writers as of central importance for poetry, modern research has

focused primarily on the last of these, the verbalizing process, rather than on the first two, selection of material (*inventio*) and its organization (*dispositio*). Krummacher underlines the importance of all three elements. He also argues that links between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century spiritual poetry are so close—more so than scholars of the baroque have cared to acknowledge—that the overall value of baroque as an analytic term may be compromised (Krummacher 1976, 462). He criticizes Windfuhr for using the term mainly in relation to style, arguing that this implies too narrow a conception of baroque poetry; as baroque so often relates to the seventeenth century it can reasonably be used to denote such a period (Krummacher 1976, 464, footnote). Krummacher argues that unless the diversity of the term baroque is acknowledged when analyzing seventeenth-century literature, many kinds of works will be ignored. There is also the danger of scholars using overly complex analytical categories, such as “nebenbarocker Humanismus” [sub-baroque humanism] or “Opponenten des Barockstils” [opponents of the baroque style]; Windfuhr’s study is cited in this context. Krummacher suggests that baroque should be used as neutrally as possible in reference to both style and intellectual history, and it should be applicable to the whole of the seventeenth century, at least from the time of Martin Opitz (1597–1639), whose *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey* (1624) marked the beginning of a new chapter in German literary history.² It should then be possible to research and classify diverse movements, positions and categories (and their development) in their own historical terms and in a broader context, while also looking for common characteristics.

In his *Deutsche und europäische Barockliteratur* (1987) Gerhart Hoffmeister examines three elements: the history of research into German baroque literature, baroque research elsewhere in Europe, and the links between baroque literature and indigenous literary tradition. In his Preface Hoffmeister notes that baroque literature in Germany emerged at a time when poets believed they were part of a learned international group whose writings were based on classical and Christian tradition. It was then (especially in the first part of

2. Opitz draws particularly on Julius Scaliger’s *Poetices libri septem* (1561), and on two works by Pierre de Ronsard: see Opitz 1991, Meid 1986, 19ff., also Árni Sigurjónsson 1995, 30–37 and 66–68.

the baroque period) that the foundations for German poetry were established, after which poets familiarized themselves with poetry from other countries (Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Graeco-Roman) and then worked hard to develop a German poetic tradition, with Martin Opitz (see above) the most important figure in this activity. A poet in his own right, he was also the first German writer to set out specific ideas about the nature and function of poetry (see Árni Sigurjónsson 1995, 106–108).

Hoffmeister rejects the idea of a single baroque style, noting instead the stylistic plurality of the time, a diversity that reflects underlying tensions and conflicts. He makes it clear that in his own study the term baroque is employed in a socio-historical context, making use of analytic categories developed in Germany: pre-baroque (1570–1600), early baroque (1600–1640) and high baroque (1640–1660).

By the end of the 1980s baroque scholars were emphasizing the links between seventeenth-century poetry and its Renaissance antecedents, notably ideological and stylistic continuities, modifications and developments. Also, rather than focusing relentlessly on contradictions in the baroque sensibility, scholars now identified in baroque poetry a strong desire to reconcile the transient and the eternal. During the 1970s the social preconditions for baroque literature were explored, its association with the growth of royal power and absolutism, the belief in inflexible social structures, and the dominant presence of the church. The notion that baroque literature was essentially courtly was also questioned. While its poetry clearly flourished in a courtly environment, there was no reason to exclude non-courtly literature from being regarded as baroque. Scholars began instead to distinguish between baroque writing in the courtly and non-courtly worlds (see Friese 1968, 165 and 218). In fact there were relatively few baroque poets with an aristocratic background, and many more whose origins lay among the learned bourgeoisie. A well-educated humanist was regarded as the equal of any aristocrat. Beyond the confines of the court the city was an important cultural space, particularly if it could boast of institutions such as a university, a Latin school and a society for promoting language study (*Sprachgesellschaft*).

For Hoffmeister the most important German baroque poets were

Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664), Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen (1621/22–1676), Jakob Böhme (1575–1624), together with Martin Opitz and Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676). He stresses that the term baroque involves diversity and literary-cultural currents of all kinds. Amongst other elements, baroque poetry was composed for a particular purpose and to exert influence; and this was true for all its genres (van Ingen 1966, 30).

The importance of Germany as the birthplace of the Reformation needs to be understood, as Leonard Forster (1983) has noted; it was to Germany that other countries looked for guidance and inspiration in various fields. There were theological writings, both Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran, in German and Latin. Their influence can be identified first in hymnals and poetry books, and later in the music that helped to carry those words far and wide. In this way Lutheran hymn writing represents the principal contribution of German baroque writers to world literature. Forster stresses the importance of studying the influence of music in the dissemination of German baroque verse beyond the German-speaking world. Young theologians educated in Wittenberg or Jena took German books back to their native lands—poems, sermon collections and other edifying texts, together with a variety of literary works. This pattern was repeated down the generations, as library holdings throughout Europe confirm (Forster 1983, 7–11). Iceland was no exception; Friederike Koch's *Isländer in Hamburg 1550–1662* (1995) identifies many kinds of German–Icelandic links during this period.

A large number of post-Reformation Christian works were published in Germany and widely read at home and abroad; many were translated into Icelandic. Krummacher has argued that such works influenced baroque poetry profoundly. Meditative writings had also circulated extensively before this, at the same time as Martin Opitz was setting out the ideas that are now generally recognized as having been a major formative influence in German baroque literature. These views helped to create a new understanding of the nature and function of vernacular poetry. Krummacher notes that it was at just this time that various elements intersect: religious history and the development of rhetoric; prose and verse; and the various literary genres and their respective roles. He sees this as confirmation of the importance and many-sided influence of rhetoric.

Krummacher (1986, 112) has thus illuminated the close relationship between rhetoric, meditative literature and the origin of the baroque period. Such insights are no less important for investigating seventeenth-century Icelandic literature, because these German works were eagerly translated into Icelandic and circulated widely.

Scandinavia

Discussion of the baroque in Scandinavian literature may be divided into two elements: the debate in Germany and in individual Scandinavian countries. German scholars have often found it easier to identify baroque elements in Scandinavian literature than have Scandinavians themselves, but naturally there has also been reciprocal influence and exchange of views, not least in the fact that several articles referred to in the following discussion were written by Scandinavian scholars but published in German. This is partly because the initiative for particular publications came from Germany, as, for example, with the 1991 *Europäische Barockrezeption* volume, for which contributions were invited from Scandinavia.

One of the first attempts to define and contextualize the baroque in Danish literature was Ejnar Thomsen's article on baroque elements in Danish poetry (1935).³ Thomsen identifies three developmental stages—"praebarok" [pre-baroque], "højbarok" [high baroque] and "senbarok" [late baroque]—and sees the baroque as a combination of style and worldview. Thomson's views are echoed in F.J. Billeskov Jansen's *Danmarks Digtekunst* [Poetic Art in Denmark] (1944), especially in the discussion of Thomas Kingo, in whose works the quintessential baroque may be found (Billeskov Jansen 1969 [1944], 71). However, Billeskov Jansen is reluctant to follow the lead of those who seek to develop an overall definition of baroque or use any single concept to characterize seventeenth-century literature.

Wilhelm Friese's "Nordische Barockdichtung" (1968), his doctoral dissertation from the University of Tübingen, is the first

3. The article was one of four pieces that applicants for a professorial post in Scandinavian literature were required to prepare and submit; for further discussion see Jelsbak 1999, 106–110.

comprehensive treatment of the subject area in Scandinavia, and the first to treat such poetry as an integral part of European baroque literature (Hoffmeister 1987, 45). The baroque period in Denmark and Sweden is subsequently described as the hundred year period from 1620 (Friese 1983, 105), though in fact scholars have never fully agreed about this. Friese's work is important not least because of its emphasis on the baroque being not just about style but also about a particular society at a particular time. Accordingly, he focuses on stylistic features and intellectual history, and also on the social context of baroque literature. A new history of Danish literature by Billeskov-Jansen was published a year later, and his views on the baroque period had clearly undergone some modification. Friese's work was certainly influential from around 1970 in raising the profile of Danish baroque literature, with the publication of editions of works by poets from the period, and also secondary studies. Erik Sønnerholm's research on manuscripts and their transmission was particularly notable. In his 1991 article examining the history of baroque research in Denmark during the twentieth century, Paul Ries notes how initially scholars were inclined to dismiss the post-Reformation period as an embarrassing low point in Danish literature, thereby accounting for the modest levels of critical attention it had attracted. He also notes that scholars had concentrated on preparing editions of secular works, a natural reaction to earlier emphasis on religious texts. However, Ries claims that there was no danger of spiritual texts ever being overshadowed, and that the time had come to recognize the interrelatedness of the sacred and secular.

In 1981 the German scholars Herbert Blume and Dieter Lohmeyer published an overview of post-1965 baroque research in Scandinavia. At the outset they note that for all its national variations, European baroque literature has obvious common features (Blume and Lohmeyer 1981, 93). The importance of Friese's 1968 work is acknowledged; it had reminded scholars that baroque literature had also been written in Scandinavia. After reviewing various editions, anthologies and monographs treating the baroque in Denmark and Sweden, Blume and Lohmeyer note that individual scholars had tended to approach the subject area from either sociological or aesthetic perspectives, whereas Kurt Johannesson's doctoral

dissertation “I polstjárnans tecken” [Under the sign of the North Star] (1968) treats poetry from both points of view.

In a Danish literary history published in 1983 the notion of the baroque has clearly not yet been fully accepted, in that seventeenth-century poetry is often referred to as “reformpoesi.” This term refers to verse that was new to Denmark in its desire to revitalize poetry in accordance with the rules of classical rhetoric. Seventeenth-century scholars of Danish poetics identify three stages in its history: the earliest was associated with verse preserved on rune-stones and in Icelandic manuscripts; there followed a period of decline during the late Middle Ages and the Reformation, when poetry lacked artistic refinement; and, finally, the new poetry emerged, renewed by its exposure to fresh—in fact, old—ideas concerning meter, rhyme, style and presentation (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3 1983, 96). It is clear that “reformpoesi” denotes baroque poetry, as, for example, where frequent references to such verse are interspersed with references to “barokteksterne” [baroque texts] (p. 104). When the discussion turns to Kingo and cultural life on the Danish island of Funen towards the end of the seventeenth century, there is discussion of “den reformpoetiske bevægelse” [the reformed poetry movement] and the rich literary culture and style that developed in that community under the influence of German baroque (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3, 1983, 303–304). Though Kingo is not identified as a baroque poet, his psalms are seen as a conscious attempt to compose hymns in accordance with the principles of “reformed” poetry (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3, 1983, 107).

The same work claims that while everything points to the direct importation of new ideas about poetry from Germany (particularly northern Germany), influence from Italy and France was more indirect. These new notions appealed to particular social groups in Denmark, though as in Germany there was something arbitrary about the way in which ideas from Romance Europe had to be grafted onto a courtly-humanist national literature, as none of the social, political and cultural prerequisites for the new culture were to be found in either Denmark or Germany (*ibid.*).

This assertion seems somewhat contradictory, in that alongside

claims that the social structures for such a literary renewal were lacking, we find an account of that renewal. The authors conclude that “reformpoesien” established its roots most successfully among a group of university men and clergy from Sjælland, who were in contact with each other and also with the principal poets of the time. It is noteworthy that among those identified in this group are Árni Magnússon and Þormóður Torfason, while the pastor and philologist Peder Syv (1631–1702) was in correspondence with both men.⁴

This 1983 *Dansk litteraturhistorie* was sharply criticized five years later by Frederik Stjernfelt. He claims that the idea of a literary period from ca. 1600–1750 specifically associated with the baroque was problematic, and an archetypal example of the instability of literary-critical terminology: though frequently used in literary histories the term had yet to be clearly defined. The problem was partly that some scholars only used it with reference to style while for others it was a chronological marker, and, even when these two senses are in some way combined, no explanation is offered as to how and why the term came to be used in such contexts. Stjernfelt argues that the *Dansk litteraturhistorie* authors were well aware of the problem, and tried to manage it by approaching the topic area from a socio-historical perspective, avoiding all reference to traditional questions of style. Chapter titles avoid the term “baroque,” as with “Enevælde” [Absolutism], “Reformpoesi” [Reform poetry], “Lejlighedsdigtning” [Occasional verse], “Embedsmanskultur” [Official culture] and the like. This does not solve the problem, however, not least because the volume’s index of themes and concepts includes 44 references to “barok” and “barokdigtning.” However, Stjernfelt’s main focus is to show how a clear definition of the term baroque can be found in *Forsamling paa Parnasso* (1699), a satirical tract directed against earlier poets now associated with the baroque. The author, the Danish poet Tøger Reenberg, presents a new poetics in the spirit of new neo-classicism. Stjernfelt argues that Reenberg reveals what the term baroque really

4. Though not a philologist in the modern sense of the term Syv was the author of *Nogle betenkninger om det Cimbriske Sprog* (1663) and the editor of popular poetry and other texts.

signified, and suggests that despite the author's stern criticism of its values he was far from untouched by it.

Peer E. Sørensen (one of the 1983 volume's authors) appears to address Stjernfelt's criticism in *Den barokke tekst* (1999; a collaborative volume with his wife, Eira Storstein), for in it we find the most sustained recent attempt to analyze seventeenth-century literature from the perspective of baroque research. In their preface the two authors underline a point that German baroque scholars have persistently emphasized, which is that the baroque period will not be understood until the basic literary preconceptions and influence of the romantic period are set aside. Instead attention is drawn to the links between the baroque and modernism, and there is discussion of "the return of the baroque" in the twentieth century. The book aims to discuss seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century baroque poetry in Denmark. Storstein and Sørensen suggest that Danish baroque writing was a provincial phenomenon when compared with equivalent French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and German works, despite the fact that during this period Denmark was much influenced by foreign art, music and literature. Danish baroque is seen as a sub-category of north German baroque (Storstein and Sørensen 1999, 94), with the high proportion of occasional poems serving to underline the importance of socio-political context or textual environment. Storstein and Sørensen suggest that Renaissance and baroque elements in Danish literary history are so tightly interwoven that it is difficult to make use of analytic terminology that serves to categorize other European literature in terms of periods.

In Torben Jelsbak's informative paper "Barokken i dansk digtning. En receptionshistorie" [The baroque in Danish poetry: A reception history], also published in 1999, the author notes that the baroque and baroque research have found their way if not into the heart of the Western literary canon, then at least into general literary consciousness (Jelsbak 1999, 87). In his discussion of Danish scholarship in the second half of the twentieth century he remarks wryly that it appears to be the melancholy fate of the baroque enthusiast to publish editions of baroque texts that nobody reads (Jelsbak 1999, 112). He cites recent complete editions of the works of Arrebo,

Kingo and Bording, identified as the canonical Danish baroque authors, and also Erik Sønderholm's, *Dansk barokdigtning 1600–1750*, vol. 1, Tekster (1969), whose introduction emphasizes the need for further research into what are identified as the two schools of baroque poetry and their stylistic priorities. Though Sønderholm never undertook such research himself he did republish (in 1971) Ejnar Thomsen's 1935 article (discussed above). Jelsbak was critical of the 1983 *Dansk litteraturhistorie*, claiming that its authors fail to engage with the consequences of the uncertain definition of the term baroque (Jelsbak 1999, 113). He concludes by drawing attention to the high level of baroque literary research activity in recent times, as reflected in detailed 1990s discussions of the work of Reenberg, Philedor, Kingo, Arrebo and of occasional verse. There had been no comparable surge of activity since the 1930s, "og nu altså con amore!" [but now there is real enthusiasm!] (Jelsbak 1999, 115).

In a review article, published in German in 1984 (and representing a kind of dialogue with German scholars), Kurt Johannesson argues that the Scandinavian baroque arose in part through literary influences from farther south in Europe (notably Germany and Holland), and partly through the conscious cultivation by Scandinavian countries of their own literary-cultural past. Royal power grew steadily; in the first half of the seventeenth century Sweden was a major power under the leadership of Gustavus Adolphus, while after 1665 King Frederik III established absolute power in Denmark. Thereafter, the royal courts in Stockholm and Copenhagen became cultural centers. Johannesson argues that Scandinavian baroque was first and foremost "fürstenbarock" [royal baroque], underpinned by triumphant Lutheran orthodoxy. Just as everything ought to be well ordered and harmonious in society at large, so should rhetoric and poetics help promote tradition and decorum in verse and oratory. The most popular literary genre was hymn writing, and poets followed the example of neo-Latin verse by adopting new meters and forms, such as the Alexandrine line and the sonnet—the first Swedish sonnet was composed in 1644. It was not unusual for the same poet to compose in two or more languages, such as Latin and Swedish or Danish and German.

Elsewhere Johannesson discusses Scandinavian aristocratic culture before devoting a section to baroque poetry, in which the following writers are identified: Hans Willumsen Lauremberg, Anders Christiansen Arrebo and Thomas Kingo (whom he regards as the most accomplished poet of the period, notably in his eighteen Passion hymns), Jacob Worm, Petter Dass, Lasse Lucidor and Haquin Spegel. Finally, Johannesson refers to Gunno Eurelius-Dahlstierna's "Kunga Skald" [Royal poem], an elegy describing the decline of Svea (the personification of Sweden) after the death of Charles XI. Johannesson claims that with its striking metaphors, ingenious word games and puzzles, not to mention its eloquence and pathos, this work represents for Sweden the baroque style in its purest form (Johannesson 1984, 492). Moreover Dahlstierna's reverence for the past sets an example which other Scandinavian poets and scholars duly followed. From this we can see the same close links between Scandinavian baroque, humanism and antiquarianism that also developed strongly in Iceland; and indeed these links were nourished in Sweden through contacts with Icelandic students, scholars and manuscripts.

Three years later (in 1987) chapters by Johannesson and others were published in *Den Svenska Litteraturen*, a literary history of Sweden. The authors appear to have been somewhat reluctant to use the term "baroque." In his chapter on the Swedish poet Georg Stiernhielm, for example, Sven Delblanc refers to "Stiernhielm—renässansförfattaren [Renaissance author], 1598–1672." Yet Friese (1968) had previously identified Stiernhielm as a baroque—or at least pre-baroque—writer. Kurt Johannesson's chapter "Karolinsk barock—adelsprakt och kungahyllning 1660–1718" [Carolinian baroque—aristocratic splendor and royal homage, 1660–1718] includes an interesting discussion of "the baroque" in a section subtitled "Barock eller classicism" [Baroque or classicism], in which passing reference is made to the history of baroque research. Johannesson's somewhat tentative and open conclusion is that a middle way, a synthesis, can be found between baroque and classicism. From the 1960s there had been a growing emphasis on sixteenth-century art poetry being rooted in the rhetoric and poetics practiced in the Latin schools and universities of the day:

And this literary sensibility embraced what are known as “classical” and baroque ideals. Linguistic purity, clarity and concentration, together with style appropriately attuned to subject matter, genre and audience—these were always the first priorities of rhetoric. Linguistic variety was also emphasized, as created by different “characters” or “ornaments” that served to engage the hearts and minds of readers and audiences as powerfully as possible. This was especially true of the high style.⁵

Johannesson suggests that towards the end of the seventeenth century writers were clearly eager to create a new art poetry, and cites Stiernhielm’s poem “Hercules” as marking the beginning of this new movement in Sweden.

Few Scandinavian scholars have produced as comprehensive and convincing an overview of seventeenth-century Swedish literature as Stina Hansson. She has long been somewhat suspicious of the term “baroque,” regarding it as misleading in relation to Swedish literature. She addresses the topic directly in an article boldly published in a *Festschrift* for Bernt Olsson, who had played a key role in linking Swedish literature with the German baroque, and in introducing the idea of the baroque into literary-historical discourse in Sweden. Stina Hansson notes that the term was first used in Sweden in Magnus von Platen’s 1954 dissertation, in which he criticizes the baroque debate in Germany, and she concludes that the term was an unnecessary but unavoidable importation that, if necessary, can be used to denote a particular literary period (Stina Hansson 1994, 85). She later discusses an article by Olsson (1991) in which he acknowledges initially that baroque literature is a much debated notion in Sweden, but claims, on the basis of his own research into stylistic features, to be able to demonstrate the existence of Swedish baroque, albeit for a much shorter period (1670–1730) than in Germany. Hansson

5. Och egentligen rymde denna litterära teori både det vi kallar “klassicerande” och “barocka” ideal. Språkets renhet, klarhet och koncentration liksom stilens anpassning efter ämnet, genren och publiken var alltid retorikens första krav. Men den inskräpte likaså att språket måste varieras och utvecklas med hjälp av olika “figurer” eller “ornament” för att gripa åhörarnas eller läsarnas sinnen och känslor med maximal kraft. Detta gällde särskilt den höga stilen (Johannesson 1987b, 244).

challenges this conclusion by stating, first, that there are many texts from the period that cannot possibly be classified as baroque on the basis of style. Second, Olsson's theory about the transition from a noun- to a verb-based style is not one that other scholars would recognize as particularly characteristic of the baroque period. Hansson does confirm that though some Swedish scholars (herself included) avoid using the term baroque simply because they regard it as meaningless, it nevertheless appears to be gaining a foothold in Swedish literary discourse (1994, 86). However, she claims that the notion of baroque is undergoing reexamination in Germany and no longer enjoys the unquestioned acceptance that it once did. Moreover, Hansson notes that discussion about the baroque has been closely linked to wide-ranging post-1960 research into the history of rhetoric, and that doubts about the term's validity have arisen in the wake of that research. Scholars have shown that the same rhetorical rules, ideas and methodologies were employed from the medieval period through to the romantic age. Hansson does not deny the validity of some of the stylistic research undertaken in Sweden, including that by Olsson, despite her belief that its overall conclusions are unsustainable. She also discusses oral and written traditions, arguing that the difference between romantic literature and that which preceded it is largely a function of the prestige enjoyed by oral recitation among romantic writers and theorists. Returning to the concept of "the baroque", she draws attention to unpublished research by Anders Cullhed.⁶ Though not accepting all his conclusions, Hansson finds his analysis stimulating. Cullhed's basic thesis is that there are many significant links between the baroque and early literature, and that in itself the baroque has no particular style, however style is defined. Baroque instead denotes a period of time, indeed a great epoch when "the crisis and resolution of European Renaissance culture, first noticeable—naturally—in the Renaissance heartland, Italy, spread across the continent from Sicily and Andalusia up to the distant Stockholm."⁷ Hansson concludes by summarizing her own view of baroque (1994, 92), which relates in

6. *Diktens tidrymd. Studier i Franciso de Quevedo och hans tid* (1995).

7. den europeiska renässanskulturens upplösings-och kristillstånd, allra tidigast kännbart—som naturligt är—i renässanens huvudland, Italien, med spridning över kontinenten från Sicilien eller Andalusien upp till det avlägsna Stockholm (Hansson 1994, 81).

particular to authors' attitudes to literary tradition. The poet draws on tradition to create something new, and that which has been called baroque and mannerist can be simply explained: in order to develop rather than merely repeat tradition, priority must be given to elevating the style. And that process was underway long before what is now known as the baroque period. Accordingly, Hansson suggests that the term baroque could be replaced by "senrenässansen" [late Renaissance].

Mats Malm (1999) agrees with Stina Hansson's views on the definition and use of baroque; for him it represents not a specific period of time but a particular discursive style whose origins lie in the poets' sense that traditional stylistic resources had been over-used to the point of exhaustion and that more arresting verbal effects were required to render the subject matter more striking and persuasive (Malm 1999, 28). Nevertheless Malm uses the term baroque about literature from a particular period, speaking of "i barocken" [in the baroque] (1999, 31 and *passim*), while developing his own theory as to its distinguishing features. At its heart lies "auktoritet" [authority], power or permission; that is, how an author or a text constructs his/its authority by appealing to tradition and also by testing its boundaries through challenging or even rejecting its prescriptions: "Baroque literature defines itself against tradition and conventional literature. The tension created when convention or authority is acknowledged or challenged is perhaps the key element, and the common theme is the question of authorization."⁸ Malm's analysis, supported by examples from Swedish literary prose and verse, is not unlike that of Sørensen and Storstein, which will be examined in the next chapter.

In his preface to *Mimesis förvandlingar* (2002), a collection of essays subtitled "Tradition och förnyelse i renässansens och barockens litteratur" [Tradition and renewal in Renaissance and baroque literature], Kurt Johannesson discusses briefly the history of the terms "renässans" and "barock." He cites the "paradigm shift" theory developed by Thomas Kuhn (*The Structure*

8. Den barocka litteraturen profilerar sig gentemot traditionen och den konventionella litteraturen. Den spänning som uppstår när man följer eller ifrågasätter konventioner og auktoriteter är kanske det helt centrala, och den röda tråden är auktoriseringsproblemet [. . .] (Malm 1999, 32).

of *Scientific Revolutions*, 1962), according to which theories or patterns constantly develop that win acceptance for a time, before an ever-increasing number of anomalies or instances gradually develop that are irreconcilable with the established theories. Eventually the scholarly community rejects received wisdom and develops a new theory more in line with the latest evidence. Johannesson wonders whether “renässans” and “barock” have almost become examples of this phenomenon. He indicates that while not intending to address the issue directly he wishes to point to another choice concerning how best to study what is traditionally called Renaissance and baroque literature (Johannesson 2002, 18). He notes the importance of recognizing that “litteratur” is a relatively modern nineteenth-century term that replaced notions such as “vältalighet” [eloquence] and “poesi.” Achieving mastery of those earlier disciplines had required special training beyond the reach of the unlettered classes. Nineteenth-century aesthetics rejected such a view: anyone could be a poet, irrespective of class, education or experience. Johannesson notes that in recent times it has become increasingly common to analyze older literature in its own ideological and theoretical terms, but suggests that we need to go farther and pay more attention to the ways in which the term “literature” itself represents a barrier between ourselves and earlier periods. He argues that instead of “Renaissance” and baroque we should adopt a new term, “classicism,” which embraces the idea of eloquence and poetic creativity from the end of the Middle Ages through to the beginning of romanticism—that is, in Swedish terms, the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Johannesson cites evidence from rhetorical tradition in support of his argument. He considers that the whole of what might be called the “classical” period was marked by a tension between “ornatus” and “perspicuitas,” that is, between elaborate and pellucid expression. Johannesson’s proposed term “classicism” was, of course, far from new and has been regarded by some as no less problematic than baroque. The advantage of a wide-ranging term such as “classicism” may be primarily that it functions, like the idea of “the age of humanism,” to denote a period that is largely unbroken and homogenous. The same is true of “early modern” or “frühe Neuzeit,” a formulation regarded by Jürg Glauser as more useful than baroque. We may note

that in Iceland this same period is now increasingly referred to as “árnýöld” [early modern] (see Loftur Guttormsson 1998b, 147).

The Norwegian scholar Jørgen Sejersted's 1995 article “Barokken og norsk kanon” [The baroque and the Norwegian canon] assumes that the baroque period in Norwegian literature was 1650–1720. He claims that the Norwegian literary canon, as established and sustained by national literary histories and university courses, has given a misleading picture of baroque literature. Exploring the reception history of texts from the period, he argues that they have more in common with modernist literature than most other early texts, and, by analyzing a number of baroque works, he attempts to raise the baroque “fra det apokryfe mørke mot kanons lys” [from the apocryphal dark into the canonical light] (Sejersted 1995, 109). He summarizes J.S. Welhaven's discussion of Petter Dass (1854), which first raised the profile and prestige of the Norwegian poet, and then suggests that Welhaven's deep-seated romanticism prevented him from viewing Dass in the most appropriate light (Sejersted 1995, 110). Sejersted refers to Kjell Heggelund's chapter “1600-tallet. Senrenessansens og barokkens hundreår” [The 1600s: the late Renaissance and baroque century] in the 1982 Norwegian literary history edited by Edvard Beyer as the most thorough recent discussion of the seventeenth century. Yet, noting that here as elsewhere in Norwegian and Danish accounts of seventeenth-century verse Thomas Kingo's work is held up as the undisputed high-point, Sejersted points to this as an example of the uncritical canonization of Kingo (Sejersted 1995, 109), as many of that poet's contemporaries held Anders Bording in higher regard. Sejersted further argues that Heggelund's discussion of Passion hymns as a literary genre is colored by the critic's sense that the subject matter is unsuitable for literary treatment (Sejersted 1995, 113), even though he acknowledges that the material is very much of its time. Dass is warmly praised by Heggelund, particularly for those works that are uncharacteristic of the period (Sejersted 1995, 114). Sejersted concludes that Heggelund was largely out of sympathy with seventeenth-century occasional verse. After discussing the reception of baroque literature in Norway, Sejersted compares the language and meaning of baroque and modernist texts, arguing that the connection between material and form, referent and reference, is

invariably indirect and opaque in both kinds of texts. There is one key difference between such works, however: in the seventeenth-century worldview God is the undisputed center and foundation of everything, whereas modernism is based on nihilism and skepticism about the existence of God or any other all-embracing truth. It is in this light that Sejersted analyses a poem by Petter Dass composed after the great fire in Bergen in 1702 (“Andet Plaster den brændte BERGENS Saar, d. 19de May 1702”) and identifies the elements that mark out the poem as a baroque text. He concludes that the baroque deserves a special place in literary history, but for this to happen more attention needs to be paid to works other than those canonized during the romantic period.

Seven years later, in an article discussing the baroque in Norwegian literary history and the importance of Petter Dass, Sejersted questions the term. He points to the reluctance of many literary scholars, himself included, to employ the term, because the texts under discussion are hard to reconcile with baroque values. Those texts are part of the Copenhagen-dominated Danish-Norwegian literary tradition (Sejersted 2002, 43), whereas learning and stylistic extravagance are much less prominent in Norwegian texts since these were created on the Scandinavian cultural periphery. Sejersted argues that texts are more subjective when their authors are neither learned nor artistically gifted and are therefore instinctively more inclined to foreground the expression of authorial feeling. Moreover, using the term “classicism” rather than baroque does not solve the problem. However, Sejersted agrees with Johannesson in wishing to use a term that represents the whole period from the Middle Ages to the present day; he suggests “tidligmoderne” [early modern]. He also discusses the advantages and limitations of dividing literary history into periods, wonders whether the aim is to present a uniform picture of each period, and asks what can be done with those texts that stand out as atypical in terms of any given definition. Sejersted discusses how the term baroque has been used in Norwegian literary history, identifying disagreements as to which period should be so designated. He claims, however, that there is general scholarly agreement as to the essence of the baroque, with its extravagant use of classical figures of speech widely regarded as a flawed or at best problematic element. Sejersted considers that

the conceptual problem reveals itself not least in respect of the unconventional poet, the individual genius who stands apart from his fellows. In Norwegian literary history Petter Dass is just such a figure, and he is invariably described as an excellent poet in spite of the milieu out of which he emerged: “the idea of the baroque has no meaning for Dass, except to emphasize his independence.”⁹ Sejersted concludes by noting that while the baroque seems to be establishing itself more securely in Norwegian literary history, which is no bad thing in itself, ultimately when scholars realize the intellectual bind into which it can lead them they may recognize the need for a new term.

Another Norwegian scholar to discuss the baroque is Laila Akslen in her *Feminin barokk: Dorothe Engelbretsdotters liv og diktning* [Feminine baroque: Dorothe Engelbretsdotters life and poetry] (1970), *Norsk barokk: Dorothe Engelbretsdatter og Petter Dass i retorisk tradisjon* [Norwegian baroque: Dorothe Engelbretsdatter and Petter Dass in rhetorical tradition] (1997) and *Femfaldig festbarokk: Norske perikopedikt til kyrkjelege høgtider* [Fivefold festive baroque: Norwegian pericope poems for church festivals] (2002). In the preface to this latter work Akslen indicates that her research takes seriously the idea that baroque poetry is pre-romantic, utilitarian verse serving particular situations, and belonging to a long and diverse rhetorical tradition. Akslen’s study emphasizes the learned element in poetry that draws on knowledge from many subject areas, and highlights the importance of interdisciplinarity in future baroque research. In a paper in *Skandinaviske Litteraturen der frühen Neuzeit* (2002), she points to the link between Norwegian hymn-writing and translated biblical texts, and discusses the underlying Christian rhetorical (baroque) tradition.

H.K. Riikonen’s article “Till frågan om barocken i finsk litteratur” [On the question of the baroque in Finnish literature] (1999) offers an overview of research into seventeenth-century literature in Finland, confirming the existence of baroque writing during that period and underlining the urgent need to reevaluate these works in the light of other European baroque research.

9. I forhold til Dass har barokken ingen annen forklaringskraft enn a understreke hans uavhengighet (Sejersted 2002, 53).

An important contribution to Scandinavian baroque literary research is *Skandinavische Literaturen der frühen Neuzeit* (2002), a collection of papers edited by Jürg Glauser and Barbara Sabel. Most of the essays began life as lectures delivered at a “Nordische Barock” conference in Tübingen, held in honor of Wilhelm Friese on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. In his introduction Glauser provides an excellent assessment of the current state of baroque research. He confirms that the study of seventeenth-century literature has flourished in Scandinavia in recent years. Explaining the volume’s title, he notes that it does not feature the term baroque because the focus of the volume is broader than just the baroque in Scandinavia (Glauser 2002, 1). The editors regarded “Frühe Neuzeit” as a more inclusive and convenient term since there is no agreement as to the appropriateness of using baroque in relation to a particular period. Glauser admits that he avoids the question as to whether this “zeitliche und begriffliche Offenheit” [chronological and conceptual openness] causes more problems than it solves (Glauser 2002, 2).

It is noteworthy that all the Scandinavian scholars who criticize the term baroque do so on the grounds that it is misleading in respect of their own countries, all of which are far removed from the geographical heart of European culture. Cullhed (1995) argues that the baroque came very late to the relatively remote city of Stockholm. Storstein and Sørensen (1999) emphasize that Denmark was a culturally peripheral province, while Sejersted (2002) notes that Norway was a long way from the Copenhagen royal court and that Norwegian literature was not comparable with the works produced among the learned community of the Danish capital. Moreover, it need hardly be said that Iceland was situated right at the margins of the inhabited world (albeit that, according to this view, as the modern Icelandic author Þórarinn Eldjárn has noted, the earth must be shaped like a pancake rather than a globe), and indeed in his writings about Icelandic baroque Friese has happily linked Iceland with the ends of the earth, much as Petter Dass did in his own day. The same view can be found in Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson’s Preface to the 1589 *Sálmabók*: “vler sem þo erum i fiarlægd vid adra menn / og bwum naliga ytst vnder heimsins skaute [we who are far distant from other men, and live almost at the ends of the earth]

(Guðbrandur Þorláksson, 1589, 2; preface pagination). Despite their remoteness from the European beaten track, Icelanders have long believed that their language and literature were key elements in a distinctive cultural inheritance that they were eager to preserve and maintain. In the present writer's view discussion of baroque influence in Icelandic literature has been limited because Icelanders have tended to regard themselves as a self-sufficient nation, with their own literary traditions of which they are rightly proud and which stand comparison with the finest Graeco-Roman achievements. Sigurður Nordal's theory about the continuity of Icelandic literature has encouraged the idea that the literature stands alone and creates its own internal context. However, more recent research has increasingly shown that Icelandic literature is part of a broader cultural framework, and that foreign influence was more prevalent than used to be acknowledged.

Iceland

In the introduction to his *Íslensk lestrarbók* [An Icelandic reader] (1924) Sigurður Nordal claims that the Reformation created "a new and terrible cloud over Icelandic language and culture."¹⁰ He suggests that Icelandic poetic art had never sunk as low as it did in the hymns of Bishop Gísli Jónsson and some of the other Lutheran hymn-writers of the sixteenth century (*ibid.*). Nordal then seeks briefly to explain what saved Icelandic nationhood during the Reformation, arguing that the answer lies partly in the cultivation of antiquarian studies that began in earnest around this time. Indeed Nordal suggests that the seventeenth century saw progress on all fronts in Icelandic literature, naming as examples the two principal poets of the age, Hallgrímur Pétursson and Stefán Ólafsson. For Nordal the seventeenth century ought to be called the "age of learning" [lærdómsöld] rather than of witchcraft, not least because of its cultivation of antiquarian studies, whose roots can be traced in no small measure to the works of Arngrímur Jónsson the Learned (Sigurður Nordal 1924, xxiii). We might say that Sigurður Nordal's views helped to lay the foundation for a new and more positive view

10. nýja og ægilega blíku yfir mál og mentir Íslendinga (Sigurður Nordal 1924, xx).

of post-Reformation Icelandic literature than had emerged up to that point.

Stefán Einarsson was the first scholar to discuss the baroque in Icelandic literature in his *A History of Icelandic Literature* (1957). For him the term was first and foremost a stylistic category and a particular kind of poetry. His chapter on Icelandic secular verse during the period 1550–1750 includes a section entitled “Topsy-turvy style” (Stefán Einarsson 1957: 191–192; 1961: 238–240),¹¹ in which Stefán discusses fantasy stories and parodies, among them Bjarni Jónsson’s *Öfugmælavísur*, Bjarni Gissurarson’s *Hrakfal-labáلكur* and *Þráðarleggsvísur*, attributed to Hallgrímur Pétursson. He suggests that the unfamiliar style of these pieces can be traced to European influence, both German and French. In his *Austfirzk skáld og rithöfundar* [Poets and authors from the Eastern Fjords] (1964) Nordal describes Stefán Ólafsson’s work as “afkáralegur” [bizarre], “burleskur” [burlesque] and “gróteskur” [grotesque], and very similar in many respects to the poems of John Skelton (1460–1529) (Stefán Einarsson 1964: 42–47).

Some years later Sverrir Tómasson published a paper in which he discusses two poems by Páll Jónsson of Staðarhóll (ca. 1534–1598). He identifies links between the two pieces and contemporary European poetry, analyses both works insightfully, and concludes that they are particularly striking because “they herald a new day for the Icelandic lyric; the dawn of the baroque period has arrived.”¹² Here Sverrir assigns a new (for Iceland) meaning to the term baroque by speaking of a period rather than (as Stefán Einarsson had done) a particular style.

Hannes Pétursson’s 1973 short reference book on literature includes a clear and informative discussion of the baroque. The author provides a summary of scholarship about the meaning and use of the term and refers to several baroque poets, among them Hallgrímur Pétursson and Stefán Ólafsson (Hannes Pétursson 1973, 11).

Taking up the baton from Sigurður Nordal (1924) Óskar Hall-dórsson adopts the term *lærdómsöld* in the title of his *Bókmenntir*

11. “Blæstriður stíll brokkgengur (barokk)” in the Icelandic version (Stefán Einarsson 1957: 191–192; 1961: 238–240).

12. að þar djarfar fyrir nýjum degi í íslenzkri lýrik; barokktímabilið er að renna upp (Sverrir Tómasson 1979, 19).

á lærdómsöld [Literature in the age of learning] (1977). By this time the expression was well established, though we should note that the idea of the baroque had still been prominent in German literary analysis when Sigurður Nordal first proposed the term “lærdómsöld” and Icelandic baroque research was in its infancy. Óskar uses baroque on four occasions, referring to a particular feature as “barokkkennt” [baroque-like] or having about it “keim af barokk” [a touch of the baroque]. In Böðvar Guðmundsson’s chapter in the *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* [Icelandic literary history] (1993) discussion of the baroque is confined to a few rather narrowly defined remarks about style (extravagance, excess; 1993, 431) and even this brief discussion is separate from the main text.

The concept of the “age of learning” has its parallels in the literary histories of other Scandinavian countries. In Denmark Peer E. Sørensen links the notion of “den lærde tid” with negative attitudes to seventeenth-century literature, claiming in a recent article that “later classical and romantic devaluation of baroque artistry—‘the age of learning’ as the sixteenth century was known in Grundtvigian Denmark—appears to us today to have been unsuccessful.”¹³ Yet, as noted earlier, Sørensen was reluctant to use the term baroque to denote an extended period in Danish literary history.

“The age of learning” is a useful notion in several respects. It reflects not only Icelandic interest in scholarship—manuscript collecting and the study of medieval Icelandic literary culture—but also the fact that a majority of European poets at this time were indeed well-educated men who created “learned” literature. Thus, the term certainly embraces several, though not all, of the important features of the literature of the period, as Hubert Seelow (1989, 14–15) has noted (see below).

The idea that post-Reformation Icelandic literature was independent of and isolated from contemporary European literary thought is, in the present writer’s view, unsustainable. In the introduction to his book on Icelandic literature during the “age of learning” Óskar Halldórsson notes that Germany was at the heart of the Lutheran religious and cultural sphere of influence that extended first to

13. Klassicisternes og romantikernes senere nedvurdering af barokkens kunstfærdighed—“den lærde tid” hedder 1600-tallet på grundtvigiansk i Danmark—forekommer os i dag at være forfejlet (Sørensen 2002, 75).

Denmark and then to Iceland. However, with the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) destroying the German economy and weakening its culture, it was not until around and after the middle of the eighteenth century that poetry began to flourish there again. All these developments led to Icelandic isolation and spiritual impoverishment (Óskar Halldórsson 1996, 8). Yet such a view reveals a certain lack of understanding of (or sympathy for) seventeenth-century German and Icelandic literature, even though Óskar's work represents one of the best Icelandic treatments of this period. We may also note that he identifies many examples of German cultural influence in Iceland that extended beyond religion, as with books of popular tales.

It is clear that during this period learning was considered a prerequisite for any ambitious poet, as Hallgrímur Pétursson appears to recognize: "I can and do acknowledge freely my ignorance in scholarly matters and my lack of education in poetry [. . .]." ¹⁴ Though obviously couched in the form of a humility *topos* Hallgrímur's statement seems to confirm that a poet needed a good education in order to be able to compose successfully. Learning is clearly an important element in the list of native Icelandic authors prepared by Páll Vídalín; he accepts the close association between a poet's learning and the quality of his poetry, though he is aware of some exceptions. In this respect Páll differs from Jón Þorkelsson, Thorcellius, whose *Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ* includes only the names of well-educated writers.

But how learned were Icelandic poets during "the age of learning" and in which areas and disciplines did their learning lie? Scholars of the baroque period place as much emphasis on the nature and extent of poets' learning as they do on the intellectual abilities of the original audience/readership for such poetry. Ferdinand van Ingen notes, "This determines the character of the art. It is a scholarly if not a scholars' art [. . .]," ¹⁵ and finds support in Volker Meid's *Barocklyrik* study: the new art poetry in German, developed and promoted with an enthusiasm born of cultural nationalism, was learned verse grounded in humanism (Meid 1986, 3).

14. Ég má meðkenna og meðkenni viljuglega fáfræði mitt í lærdómnum og mentaleysi í skáldskapnum (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887 I, 377).

15. Dies bestimmt das Wesen dieser Kunst. Es ist eine gelehrte Kunst, wenn nicht gar eine Gelehrten-Kunst [. . .] (van Ingen 1966, 33).

Elsewhere Meid notes that there was a gulf between the new learned poetry and popular verse, with the older tradition surviving in folksong. Nearly all the poets at this time belonged to the learned classes; they had all completed their university education in the humanities and were thus familiar with rhetoric and poetics, and had undergone the kind of philological training considered essential for any aspiring poet (Meid 1986, 10). This in turn meant that poets at this time did not regard poetry as their principal occupation or career. They worked instead as clergymen, university professors, doctors, or city, state or court officials: there were no financially independent writers (Meid 1986, 11). The situation in Iceland was very similar, with most poets coming from a learned (often ecclesiastical) background.

The Icelanders who promoted the new Lutheran faith were clearly much influenced by a variety of cultural influences from Germany, the heartland of both the Reformation and the new poetics. The Swedish scholar Bernt Olsson has pointed out that in Sweden people looked to Germany for examples of best poetic practice, especially for spiritual verse; they were otherwise suspicious of influence from abroad (Olsson 1983, 155). Olsson indicates that German influence on Swedish spiritual poetry was particularly strong though there were exceptions, especially around 1680 when various preachers and authors of devotional texts sought inspiration from England, and this helped to create a much more consciously artful style and a greater sense of inwardness and psychological awareness than was common in German sermons (Olsson 1983, 156). Much the same can be said of Iceland, especially at the end of the seventeenth century, when English influence is discernible in the oratorical style of Jón Vídalín (Þorleifur Hauksson and Þórir Óskarsson 1994, 408–410).

In his *Nordische Barockdichtung* (1968) Friese concludes that it is hardly possible to talk about baroque influence in Icelandic literature. Though he recognizes that Icelandic social circumstances and assumptions were similar to those in Norway and elsewhere in Europe (Friese 1968, 63), he claims that the rhetorically-based stylistic features which were such an important element in baroque discourse in continental European were of little significance in Iceland. In a footnote he adds that the style of individual

seventeenth-century poets has been little explored, and that there are many worthwhile potential projects, all of them dependent on the availability of accurate scholarly editions. He notes that Icelandic poetry of this period is characterized by its use of alliteration and traditional poetic language, and, like Sigurður Nordal, emphasizes the role of context (Friese 1968, 126). By 1983 Friese's views have undergone some modification. He acknowledges that even if the influence of mainland tradition was not overly strong the offshoots of European baroque poetry did reach geographically remote areas, "und das Wort des Norwegers Petter Dass aufzugreifen, 'am Ende der Welt' gelegene Island [and, in the words of the Norwegian Petter Dass, Iceland lies "at the ends of the earth"]. Friese regards Hallgrímur Pétursson's *Passíusálmar* (1666) as a "ein großartiges Zeugnis" [a magnificent testimonial] to the religious literature that was such an important part of the literature of the period (Friese 1983, 115). He concludes by claiming that Hallgrímur, together with Anders Arrebo and Thomas Kingo from Denmark, the Swedes George Stiernhielm and Lasse Lucidor, and the Norwegian Petter Dass should all be regarded as among the great baroque poets of Europe (Friese 1983, 117).

In Kurt Johannesson's 1984 literary-historical chapter (discussed above) he discusses Renaissance and baroque in Scandinavian literature. Hallgrímur Pétursson is the only Icelandic poet mentioned in a chapter on hymn writing entitled "Ein neues Lied wir haben an" [Let us sing a new song]. Johannesson analyses passages from three poets, Anders Christensen Arrebo from Denmark, the Swede Lars Wivallius, and Hallgrímur Pétursson. Two of Hallgrímur's works are cited, "Aldarháttur" [The spirit of the age] (though the poem is never actually identified by name) and *Passíusálmar* [Passion hymns]. Of "Aldarháttur" Johannesson writes that Hallgrímur, exploiting the pathos created by the poem's strict hexameters, wants his fellow-countrymen to recall the spirit and virtues of their forefathers (Johannesson 1984, 481). As so often when the *Passíusálmar* are discussed by non-Icelandic scholars their qualities—or at least their literary qualities—are not analyzed in sufficient detail; instead the poems are described in terms that recall many another Passion lyric composed outside Iceland at the same time. The impression is given that their chief value lies in the reverence long accorded them by Icelanders:

“Right up to the present day in Iceland these psalms are memorized and read aloud in households over Lent” (Johannesson 1984, 481).¹⁶

Hubert Seelow (1991) has discussed the state of Icelandic baroque and post-Reformation literary research. His findings are published in a collection of articles (*Europäische Barockrezeption*) based on a conference held in Wolfenbüttel. Seelow’s essay is one of several to treat aspects of the Scandinavian baroque. He begins by recognizing the pioneering achievement of Friese’s *Nordische Barockdichtung* (1968), a work all the more impressive for the attention it devotes to Icelandic literature. This was far from easy at that time, given that many Icelandic works of the period remain extant only in manuscript, and that in the immediate post-Reformation years the only books printed were those that faithfully served the church and promoted Christianity. Seelow examined relevant Icelandic scholarship published since Friese’s study, working systematically through the bibliographies published in the literary-cultural journal *Skírnir* and noting appropriate items. The author most written about proved to be Hallgrímur Pétursson, though several other figures had attracted attention: Bjarni Gissurarson (ca. 1612–1712), Einar Sigurðsson (1538–1626), Jón Magnússon the Elder (1601–1675), Jón Magnússon the Younger (ca. 1610–1696), Jón Ólafsson Indíafari [the India Explorer] (1593–1679), Jón Vídalín (1666–1720), Ólafur Egilsson (1564–1639), Stefán Ólafsson (1618–1688) and Vigfús Jónsson (Leirulækjar-Fúsi) (ca. 1648–1728). While there are some seventy references to these poets in the bibliographies, there are 120 references to Hallgrímur Pétursson alone. Seelow draws particular attention to the work of the philologist Jón Samsonarson, the author of many of the items listed. Seelow notes Jón’s particular interest in the transmission and preservation of texts, but concludes that since 1968 Icelandic literary scholarship has been reluctant to engage with the seventeenth century and the baroque. Even when the term baroque appears as a headword in a recent reference book on literary criticism, the entry reveals that within Iceland the term remains somewhat unfamiliar (Seelow 1991, 1123). By way of confirmation Seelow draws attention to an international conference on Scandinavian literature in 1980 at which Sveinn

16. Bis auf den heutigen Tag werden diese Psalmen in Island auswendig gelernt und während der Fastenzeit zu Hause laut vorgelesen (Johannesson 1984, 481).

Skorri Höskuldsson, a professor at the University of Iceland, delivered a lecture on the writing of literary history without once mentioning the term baroque, or acknowledging that any attempt to define and demarcate the 1550–1750 period might be problematic (Seelow 1991, 1123).

The “age of learning” idea derives, as we have noted, from Sigurður Nordal, who by his use of the term sought to highlight the positive elements in poetry and the practice of letters during the seventeenth century, or even in the lengthier period between the Reformation and the Enlightenment. He sought to banish pejorative terms such as “Galdraöldin” [the age of witchcraft] that had been common in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century accounts of literature from this period. Seelow points out that Nordal placed great emphasis on the unique nature of Icelandic literature and its cultural background, as is even apparent in the extracts selected for inclusion in his *Íslensk lestrarbók* [An Icelandic reader] (1924) anthology. The pieces selected serve to confirm Nordal’s theories about the distinctiveness of the Icelandic context; works touched by foreign influence were not included (Seelow 1991, 1124–25). At the same time Seelow also notes that foreign scholars have only been interested in what they think of as genuine Icelandic material and have thus largely ignored the baroque period. Finally, he suggests that the baroque debate itself may be partly to blame for such lack of interest—the relentless emphasis on concepts such as “Counter-Reformation”, “Absolutism”, “Aristocracy” and “High Culture” may have discouraged scholars with some knowledge of the period from associating it with the baroque. He acknowledges, however, that Friese’s theory that the deep-seated Christian idea of an ordered world (*Ordo-Gedanken*) is a major distinguishing feature of Scandinavian baroque literature accords well with seventeenth-century Icelandic literature and deserves further exploration. Seelow concludes by identifying worthwhile future research projects in the field of Icelandic baroque literature. He himself has contributed to these investigations, not least in an article discussing the wedding poems composed by the brothers Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík and Erlendur Ólafsson (see Seelow 1990).

Porleifur Hauksson and Þórir Óskarsson, the authors of *Íslensk stílfraeði* (1994), discuss briefly what they refer to as “barokkstíl”

[baroque style] in relation to prose texts. They identify Jón Vídalín's *Húspostilla* [House sermons], Þorleifur Halldórsson's *Lof lyginnar* [In praise of lies] and Jón Magnússon's *Píslarsaga Jóns Magnússonar* [The martyrdom of Jón Magnússon] as the principal Icelandic works written in an elevated style (Þorleifur Hauksson and Þórir Óskarsson 1994, 346). They support this claim by identifying a number of baroque stylistic features in these works, though noting that genuine baroque style is otherwise rare in Icelandic prose literature at this time. It is certainly to be welcomed that works with characteristic baroque features are highlighted, though it must be said that the authors present a rather narrow definition of baroque—one concerned only with style.

Two recent articles introduce the concepts of “baroque theology” and “baroque culture,” which for all their breadth of meaning refer to a specific period in European ecclesiastical and cultural history. First, in his introduction to *Vídalínspostilla* [Vídalín's sermons] (1995) Gunnar Kristjánsson uses the concept of “baroque theology,” which he attributes to the German theologian Carl Heinz Ratschow (1983). He argues that this formulation rather than “Lutheran orthodoxy” better describes the dominant mindset of the Lutheran church after the death of its founder (Gunnar Kristjánsson 1995, lvi). Gunnar also refers to the “baroque age,” noting for example that in Iceland Hallgrímur Pétursson stands head and shoulders above other hymn-writers of the period (Gunnar Kristjánsson 1995, lvi). The section of Gunnar's introduction devoted to rhetoric in *Vídalínspostilla* is of particular interest. In it he identifies a variety of classical stylistic features and then shows how they function in Jón Vídalín's sermons. The author concludes that the prominence of classical rhetoric in these works is a direct result of baroque influence, and that “Búningur barokktímans er óneitanlega tilkomumíkill og glæsilegur” [Baroque period literary form is undeniably impressive and elegant] (Gunnar Kristjánsson 1995, xcvi). Second, Loftur Guttormsson uses the term “barokkmenning” [baroque culture] in an article about Bishop Þórður Þorláksson (Loftur Guttormsson 1998a, 38–40). He points out that Þórður lived during an age of scientific revolution and baroque sensibility—at a time of growing royal absolutism in Europe and diminishing religious orthodoxy. Loftur concludes by speculating intriguingly on the role of Þórður

in introducing his fellow Icelanders to the various fruits of baroque culture (Loftur Guttormsson 1998a, 27).

In a chapter entitled “Barokktíminn—17. Öld” [The baroque age—the Seventeenth Century] in his *Bókmenntakenningar síðari alda* [Post-medieval literary theory] (1995) Árni Sigurjónsson is the first Icelandic literary scholar to pay particular attention to the history, meaning and function of the baroque. He notes that Scandinavian authors such as Kingo, Dass and Stiernhielm fit in well with the idea of the baroque and aligned themselves with the mainstream of European literature, and he recognizes the importance of Friese’s work in associating Hallgrímur Pétursson with this movement (Árni Sigurjónsson 1995, 89).

Otherwise there has been no sustained Icelandic attempt to consider the constituent elements of the term baroque or its utility as a stylistic or periodic marker within Icelandic literary history. Nor have scholars made use of the findings of baroque research to develop a fuller understanding of Icelandic literature, which would indeed be a more worthwhile undertaking than simply debating the meaning of the term baroque. The present study seeks to take the first steps in this direction. In particular it aims to draw on the insights of baroque research from Europe and farther afield when considering particular works by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Icelandic authors. In Scandinavia, as this chapter has shown, scholars remain uncertain as to whether baroque is a viable term for describing a particular period in their respective national literary histories. Yet some scholars, notably Sørensen (1999) and Sejersted (1995), have attempted to analyze a particular form of poetry that they call “den barokke tekst” [the baroque text], and it is to this notion that we must now turn.