

CHAPTER 13

Hymns and Religious Verse

In the post-Reformation decades most poets composed both secular and religious verse, though these could be difficult to distinguish between, not least because at this time there was a well-developed spiritual dimension to most people's secular lives and thoughts. The purpose of all poetry was to serve country and church, but above all to praise God. However, a distinction was certainly drawn between secular and religious verse, with the latter placed first in manuscripts and printed books, and with some manuscripts containing only religious works while others included just secular pieces. Moreover, contemporary poetic theory identified different roles for secular and religious compositions. The principal function of religious writing was to praise God and to instruct and inspire the laity; secular verse was mainly intended to educate, amuse and persuade (Dyck 1991, 92).

Though the term "religious writing" is primarily intended to signify hymns sung during church services, many other kinds of poem belong under this heading. In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Iceland only religious poetry was printed, but many other pieces were preserved in manuscript. Spiritual verse was in fact a diverse and complex category that as yet has attracted relatively little attention. Many pieces were intended for evening readings in private homes. Some hymns were linked to the days of the week and to particular times of each day, such as morning, evening and meal-times. Others were associated with occasions such as church-going

or receiving communion. Others still were sung before journeys or at marriages, and such pieces can be difficult to distinguish from occasional verse. Finally, there were poems that offered comfort in times of grief or support during other adversities.

Hymns constitute the most important genre in seventeenth-century Scandinavian poetry and developed in the wake of the vernacular biblical translations produced in these countries during the previous century. Of all the poetry composed in Scandinavia at this time best known today are the hymns (see Johannesson 1984, 479). At the same time the heyday of Lutheran hymn writing clearly intersects with the age of literary baroque (Kemper 1986, 87; Gunnar Kristjánsson 1995, lvi). As we have noted, Hans-Henrik Krummacher (1976) criticized Manfred Windfuhr and others for presenting an unduly one-dimensional view of the baroque period, with too much emphasis on linguistic decoration and figures of speech, and too little attention paid to less complex compositions. While Windfuhr sought to define “different” pieces of this kind as late humanist or to link them with pre-Enlightenment or antibaroque sensibility, Krummacher argues that Windfuhr’s definition of the baroque was too narrow, in that the genre could accommodate the kind of plain style that often seemed most appropriate for religious verse. Poets of this period recognized a style known as *sermo humilis*, a concept developed by St Augustine in Book 4 of *De doctrina christiana* (Krummacher 1976, 408). They were free to draw on a variety of styles including *sermo humilis* (Krummacher 1976, 421; see also Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 174–175). Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664) underlines the point, suggesting that rhetorical figures and linguistic decoration had a role in religious verse; he makes the case in his introduction to a religious work that was itself for the most part simple and unadorned in form. Though baroque works tend to be marked by formal elegance and stylistic elaboration, other seventeenth-century writings tend to reject linguistic refinement and eloquence on the grounds that such qualities might serve to compromise truth (Krummacher 1976, 427). In effect, an author would avoid an elaborate style for fear that truth might be distorted by or even disappear beneath a flurry of fine phrases.

In Denmark and Sweden, changes in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century hymn composition informed by new stylistic priorities

associated with the baroque are identifiable. There was debate in Sweden as to whether religious writing ought to be stylistically elaborate or plain. Many Swedish clerics were familiar with classical rhetoric and drew on this knowledge when writing sermons and contemplative pieces. The same was true of religious poetry and hymns, with rhetorical influence and other artistic effects becoming increasingly evident during the seventeenth century, following the example of Germany (Johannesson 1987, 256).

Though seventeenth-century prosodic renewal was particularly important for secular poetry, it also influenced the religious compositions of learned poets, finding expression in the metrical revitalization of old hymns and in the free translation of equivalent German pieces (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3 1983, 133). However, the composition of straightforward “modern” hymns also continued, and in this way old and new forms coexisted throughout the century (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3 1983, 124). There was controversy over *Svedbergska psalmboken* [the Svedberg hymnal], published in Sweden in 1694. Critics claimed that the hymns were too elaborate in style and thus unsuitable for Christian worship. In Denmark Thomas Kingo was invited to revise the Danish hymnal. The *Vinterparten* [Winter part] of the volume was completed by 1689, but his modifications were not to everyone’s taste, with critics complaining that the book now contained too many modern art hymns (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3 1983, 335). There is no record of any such disputes in Iceland except when Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson, in his introduction to the 1589 hymnal, speaks of those “who criticize all poetic effects and alliteration in hymns and religious verses [. . .] and claim that it does not matter how every word is translated and sung in church as long as it is readily understood” (*Sálmabók* 1589, 5).¹ The notion that style and presentation are much less important than the comprehensibility of the basic message is one that Guðbrandur opposed, arguing that Icelandic poets should respect their native language by making use of its stylistic effects where appropriate, including the traditional resources of alliteration.

1. lasta allann skalldskap og hliodstafa grein í psalmmum og andligum vjsum [. . .] og meina að ei varde með huörnu mote það er vtlagt sem í kyrkiunne syngiast skal þegar það verdr skilid.

Devotional Writings and the Medieval Christian Inheritance

Meditative or devotional literature is a genre closely linked to hymn composition. Krummacher (1976) has argued that devotional texts were very influential on the language and style of new hymns and thus on the works of the major baroque poets in Germany. These works, both translated and original, were widely read and used in Iceland but have been little researched. In Protestant countries the immediate post-Reformation period saw a diminution in the occultism associated with religious poetry, but at the end of the sixteenth century works were published that were clearly still influenced by the mysticism of the medieval church. Similarly, soon after the Reformation there was strong pressure on writers to explain the faith in a personal way. Martin Moller (1547–1606) is prominent among those who sought to address this priority by recalling patristic tradition, and his *Meditationes Sanctorum Patrum* (1584–1591) and *Soliloquia de Passione Jesu Christi* (1587) were very influential on seventeenth-century poets. Krummacher argues that *Wahres Christentum* (1605–1609/1610) by Johann Arndt (1555–1621) and the same author's prayerbook *Paradiesgärtlein Voller Christlicher Tugenden* [A paradise garden full of Christian virtues] (1612) influenced not only hymn writers such as Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676), Johann Heermann (1585–1647), and Johann Rist (1607–1667), but also many other German poets of the time (Krummacher 1986, 98). Other influential writers of meditative texts were Philipp Nicolai (1556–1608) and Johann Matthäus Meyfahrt (1590–1642); also Johann Gerhard (1582–1637), whose Latin works were soon translated into the vernacular: *Meditationes sacrae* (1606), *Enchiridion consolatorium* 1611, *Exercitium pietatis quotidianum* (1612; *Tägliche Übung der Gottseeligkeit* in German), and *Schola Pietatis* (1622). There were Icelandic translations of works by all these writers except Meyfahrt. Arngrímur Jónsson's translation of Moller's *Soliloquia* was published in 1599, followed by Guðbrandur Þorláksson's version of his *Meditationes* (Hólar, 1607).² Philipp Nicolai was a friend of Arngrímur (Halldór

2. The book includes Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás's eulogy on Nicolai and Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson.

Hermannsson 1922, 78) and Guðbrandur translated his *Theoria vitæ æternæ oder historische Beschreibung des ganzen Geheimnisses von ewigen Leben* (Hólar, 1608) as *Spegill eilífs lífs* [Mirror of eternal life] (see also Páll Eggert Ólason 1926, 144–149). Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason of Hólar translated three works by Johann Gerhard: *Meditationes sacrae* (*Fimmtíu heilagar hugvekjur* [Fifty pious meditations]) (1630), *Exercitium pietatis* (*Dagleg iðkun guðrækninnar* [Daily practice of piety]) (1652) and *Enchiridion consolatorium* (*Enchiridion, það er handbókarkorn í hvörju að fram settar verða hugganir þær sem menn skulu setja í móti dauðanum* [. . .] [Enchiridion, that is a short handbook in which are presented the consolations that men should use to confront death]) (1656). Eiríkur Hallsson (1614–1698), pastor at Höfði on Höfðaströnd, translated Johann Arndt's *Paradiesgärtlein* as *Paradísaraldirgarður* [Garden of paradise] but his version did not find favor with Bishop Þórður Þorláksson (Böðvar Guðmundsson 1993, 463–464). Arndt's *Wabres Christentum* or *Sannur kristindómur* [True Christianity] was nevertheless published in 1731 in a translation by Þorleifur Árnason (1687–1727) (see Einar Sigurbjörnsson and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2004, xxiv, fn. 58). Séra Hannes Björnsson, Hallgrímur Pétursson's successor at Saurbær on Hvalfjarðarströnd, translated sermons by Johann Arndt as *Nokkrar predikanir út af pínu og dauða Drottins vors Jesú Kristí* [Some sermons on the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ]), which was printed at Hólar in 1683. We can see, therefore, that meditative works quickly achieved a significant profile in Iceland.

Arne Møller's research (1922) on Hallgrímur's *Passíusálmar* reveals an important link between meditative texts and Icelandic hymns, since much of Hallgrímur's vocabulary and many of his ideas derive from Møller's *Soliloquia de passione Jesu Christi* (*Eintal sálarinnar* [The soul's monologue]. Interest in Hallgrímur's hymns about death also reveals their indebtedness to another of Møller's meditative works, *Manuale de praeparatione ad mortem* (*Manuale, það er, Handbókarkorn huornenn madur eige að lifa christelega og deya gudlega* [Manual, that is, a brief handbook on how to live a Christian life and die a godly death]), published in Hólar in 1611, 1645, 1661 and 1753 (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 1989, 185ff.). As a familiar literary genre, meditative writing may well have helped to

ensure that religious poetry in Germany and Scandinavia had so much in common. It is also important to recognize that meditative texts preserved the medieval literary tradition whereby authors sought ideas and forms of expression in patristic and other Christian texts. Scholars such as Krummacher believe that the links between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious poetry are closer than previously recognized, and also that its medieval patristic links were sustained long after the Reformation (see Krummacher 1976, 462). Arne Møller agrees, claiming that Icelandic evangelical Passion poetry developed in much the same way as did medieval Catholic verse (Møller 1922, 189), in that the Passion hymns by Hallgrímur and others drew on translated works of edification, just as medieval devotional verse had been nourished by homilies and saints' lives. As evidence of the links between Catholic and Lutheran religious texts, Møller showed that a number of Johann Heermann's most important hymns are based on Martin Moller's *Meditationes sanctorum patrum*, and are really literary recreations of "Anselms Taler, Bernhards Prædikener eller af Taulers Tanker" [Anselm's discourses, Bernhard's sermons or Tauler's thoughts] (Møller 1922, 190). The same is true of Paul Gerhardt's compositions based on material from St Bernard, and of the prayers from *Paradiesgärtlein* [The garden of Paradise] by Johann Arndt, one of Paul Gerhardt's contemporaries. Møller notes that these are just individual examples of links, and further research may well reveal that the same is true for seventeenth-century hymn writing in general. Krummacher's work (1976) on Gryphius's religious verse certainly confirms Møller's view. This present study of Hallgrímur Pétursson is not the place to examine in detail the links between Icelandic post-Reformation hymn writing and medieval saints' lives, but the contexts for religious verse discussed here help to explain how much these two genres have in common in terms of thought, language, and style.

Versifying Biblical Texts

Hallgrímur Pétursson's religious poetry includes metrical versions of biblical texts. These pieces are always placed first in eighteenth-century editions of Hallgrímur's works, as if to confirm that publishers regarded such an arrangement as a proper indication of respect for

Holy Writ. Indeed, throughout Europe poets were engaged in versifying biblical texts. This poetry has received little scholarly attention, due to its perceived lack of authorial originality or personal engagement. Yet Krummacher (1976) argues that biblical versification was neither fruitless nor futile and that modern readers could appreciate its virtues by modifying their perspectives and preconceptions. The ideas underpinning these verse recreations need to be recognized, notably belief in the power of the holy word and in the importance of making the scriptures available in every kind of format, in the spirit of Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (AV). Krummacher emphasizes that making the word of God accessible in verse and music had generally been thought of as very important and that people regarded biblical texts as sacred and unique. When due account is taken of the additional beauty that verse and music can bring to such texts, the scriptures were viewed as the ideal material out of which the finest works of literary art could be created. Melancthon may have been one of the first scholars to emphasize that music and verse could augment the force of the divine message, particularly among the young and uneducated. This claim is repeatedly cited in prefaces to published works of the period, and one of its clearest expressions can be found in the introduction written by Johann Mathesius (1504–1565) to Nicolaus Herman’s *Historien von der Sündflut*, published in Leipzig in 1584:

In themselves Holy Scriptural texts are certainly the loveliest music that gives consolation and life in the face of death’s agony, and can bring true delight to the heart. But when a sweet and ardent element is added, such as a fine melody that is also God’s creation and gift, then the song gains a new force, and reaches deeper into the heart [. . .].³

3. Die Text der heiligen Schrift sind zwar an jm selber die allerlieblichste Musica / die trost vnnd leben in todes nöten gibt / vnd im hertzen warhafftig erfrewen kan. Wenn aber ein süsse vnd sehnliche weise dazu kömpt / wie denn ein gute Melodey auch Gottes schön geschöpff vnd gabe ist / da bekömpt der Gesang ein neue krafft / vnd gehet tieffer zu hertzen [. . .] (Bl. A3v ff; cited from Krummacher 1976, 116) .

This idea would have come as no surprise to Icelanders at this time. Indeed, in his preface to the 1589 *Sálmabók* [Hymnal] Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson makes much the same point:

And though the word of God is clear in itself and easily learnt and the sweetest of all artful song and eloquence, with a divine power that can comfort the suffering and those of anguished conscience, and truly gladden the hearts and minds of people, all reasonable hearts may agree and acknowledge that when the smooth eloquence of words, a beautiful melody and pleasing alliteration are combined, then that song takes on a new force and reaches deeper into the heart, moving and arousing it to God.⁴

So similar is the wording that Guðbrandur must have known Herman's introduction (or some similarly worded European equivalent), and he certainly kept a close eye on German and Danish publications, making sure that the most important ones were brought to Iceland. On the other hand, Guðbrandur adds the notion of "málsnilld orðanna" [the smooth eloquence of words], an idea often found in his prefaces, and by which he doubtless means what the Germans at the time called "Wohlredenheit," another term for rhetoric. He also speaks of "sæt hljóðagrein," by which he means alliteration, and in the preface he urges his fellow countrymen to keep faith with it.

The Danish baroque poet Anders Christensen Arrebo (1587–1637) began to compose poems based on the Psalms of David after falling out of favor at the Danish court and losing his episcopal position in Trondheim. The work was published in 1623 and is Arrebo's most important contribution to Danish hymn writing (Malling 1971, 40–41). At much the same time séra Jón Þorsteinsson of the Vestmannaeyjar (1570?–1627) was composing his best-known work, *Davíðssaltari*, an Icelandic metrical version of Psalms from

4. Og þó að guðs orð það sé í sjálfu sér létt og auðnæmt og sú allra sætasta sönglist og málsnilld, hafandi guðdómlegan kraft til að gefa huggun særðum, sorgfullum samviskum og réttilega að gleðja hjörtu og hugskot manna, þá mega þó öll sanngjörn hjörtu játa það og meðkenna, að þegar þar kemur til samans mjúk málsnilld orðanna og fagurlegt lag og sæt hljóðagrein, þá fær sá söngur nýjan kraft og gengur djúpara til hjartans og hrærir það og uppvækur til guðs (*Sálmabók* 1589, 6).

the *Guðbrandsbiblíá* text (Óskar Halldórsson 1996, 56). The Psalms were indeed regarded as the inexhaustible biblical source and sacred model for Lutheran hymns (Johannesson 1984, 480), though other scriptural material was also versified. For example, Jón Þorsteinsson of the Vestmannaeyjar composed *Genesisálmar* and Hallgrímur Pétursson's *Samúelssálmar* were based on 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel:

I have turned the first book of Samuel into hymns, using the simplest words and music [. . .] Next I would have wished to serve young people and other simple folk, who have the sensitivity, intelligence and appetite to love verses and other short pieces, so that they might make a habit of learning and following God's Word, rather than other sarcastic and ironic verses of no value [. . .] I have not deviated from the text or made omissions and nor have I attempted ingenious poetry.⁵

Hallgrímur thus distinguishes between verse that follows the (scriptural) text closely and what he calls “djúpfundinn skáldskap” [ingenious poetry]. However, he clearly does not consider it beneath his dignity to versify biblical texts because they can help young people and “other simple folk” [öðrum einföldum] to engage with wholesome subject matter.

Also popular both in Iceland and Europe was the versification of meditative texts and prayer books. One such prayer book by Johann Habermann (an Icelandic translation by Oddur Einarsson was published in 1636) was frequently recast into German verse (Krummacher 1986, 105), while in Iceland séra Sigurður Jónsson of Presthólar (d. 1661) versified the meditations of Johann Gerhard and also composed a set of hymns from the same author's *Exercitium pietatis* (*Dagleg iðkun guðrækninnar* [Daily practice of devotion]) (see above). Sigurður's hymns were printed in 1652 and over the next century competed strongly in popularity with Hallgrímur's *Passíúsálmar* (Óskar Halldórsson 1996, 56).

5. Þessa fyrstu Samúelisbók hefi ég upp á sálma sett með einföldustu orðum og tónum [. . .] Þar næst hefi ég viljað þéna ungdóminum og öðrum einföldum, sem næmi, skynsemi og lyst hafa að elska vísur og kveðlinga, svo þeir heldur temji sér að læra og iðka guðs orð, enn aðrar fáfengar spotts og háðvísur [. . .] Þá hefi ég þó efnið ekki yfirgefið né frá vikið, og ekki djúpfundinn skáldskap stundað (Hallgrímur Pétursson I 1887, 184).

The Arrangement of Contents in *Hallgrímskver*

The edition of *Hallgrímskver* [Hallgrímur's booklet] published in 1773 has three main sections. The first contains “nokkra sálma og kvæði út af heilagri ritningu” [some hymns and poems based on Holy Scripture], the second section has “nokkra guðrækilega og andríka sálma” [some pious and inspired hymns], and in the third we find “ýmislega kveðlinga til guðræknisiðkunar og siðbóta” [various short verses for the practice of piety and improvement]. The guiding principle in distributing material among the three sections appears to be that the first section would contain just biblically-based hymns (the literal level), followed by hymns that are accompanied by a spiritual interpretation (the allegorical level), and, finally, hymns promoting morality (the tropological level).

Each section is then subdivided. In the first the hymns are organized in such a way that those based on Old Testament texts precede others based on the New Testament. In the first part of the second section we find hymns relating to sea voyages, morning and evening, New Year (discussed in chapter 12), the Golden ABC, good advice, fortune's fickleness and the world's evil ways (discussed in chapter 10), and, last, hymns of prayer and penitence. The second part of the second section features “nokkrir iðrunar, huggunar og þakklætis sálmar” [some hymns of penitence, solace, and gratitude], among them a version of Psalm 23 that might more appropriately have been included in the biblical hymn section; there is also an “endurminning Kristí pínu” [Recollection of Christ's Passion] that certainly belongs in this section, where biblical texts are used more as a basis for interpretation than was the case with the hymn about Christ's death. Also included here is the consolatory hymn “Þú kristin sála þjáð og mædd” [You Christian soul, suffering and weary] and “Þakklætissálmar fyrir afturfengna heilbrigði, kveðin 1663” [Hymn of gratitude for restored health, composed 1663]. We also find two hymns based on the letters of Hallgrímur's name, including “Harmagrátur þess mótlætta og af Guði huggaða” [Tears of sorrow of one who has both suffered adversity and been comforted by God]. The fourth part of the second section “inniheldur sálma um dómsdag og kristilega burtför” [contains

hymns about Doomsday and Christian death], in which Hallgrímur's hymns about death can be found alongside hymns "sem skáldið orti síðast á sinni sóttarsæng" [that the poet composed on his death-bed]. The third section is structured as follows: the first part contains verses for summer and winter, morning and evening prayers for young people, and "Hugbót," "þá húsin brunnu í Saurbæ 1662" [Comfort for the mind, when the houses burnt down at Saurbær 1662] (discussed below, chapter 14); there are also penitential poems and a single *dróttkvætt* verse. The second part of the third section "inniheldur heilræði og uppvakningar til kristilegs framferðis, sýnir einnig hvörsu fallvalt og lítilsvært að sé heimsins ágæti og yfirlæti" [contains good counsel and invocations to Christian conduct, and also shows how unstable and worthless is the world's excellence and arrogance]. Also included here are the good counsel verses "Ungum er það allra best" [It is best of all for the young], lines about Luther's *Katekismus*, other advice pieces, but also a work whose title in *Hallgrímskver* suggests that it ought to be regarded as a transience poem. There follows "Oflátungalýsing" [A description of a dandy] and also "Um ágirnd og aurasafn" [On greed and hoarding money] that the present study treats as a satirical poem like "Aldarhátur."

The third section of the third part contains "lukkuóskir, útfararminningar og annað smávegis" [good luck wishes, funeral eulogies and other short pieces] along with commemorative and congratulatory works that are treated in the present study as occasional verse. The final piece in the volume is "Barnaspurningar" [Children's questions], a work that ends with "Bergmál" [Echo], which will be discussed below.

These details confirm that material in this eighteenth-century edition has been systematically arranged. Though the present study is differently configured, we should recognize the eighteenth-century arrangement as a fresh (in its day) attempt to organize Hallgrímur's verse coherently in order to help readers understand the relationship of the individual elements to the overall corpus. The present discussion now turns to those works by Hallgrímur that cannot be classed as occasional pieces, transience poems, satires, or works about death or consolation.

Biblical Hymns and Plain Style

The first four hymns in *Hallgrímskver 1773* are based on Old Testament texts (the Creation, from Genesis 1; the story of Baalam from Numbers 23–24, and two hymns about the prophet Jonah), followed by seven “söngvísur” [song verses] about Christ’s miracles as told in the Gospel of John (six verses) and the Gospel of Mark (one verse). The final two hymns treat, respectively, Jesus’ Passion, death and resurrection.

The first hymn about the Creation is composed in the same meter as Luther’s famous “Ein’ feste Burg ist unser Gott” [Óvinnanleg borg er vor guð; A mighty fortress is our God] (Páll E. Ólason 1924, 133; the melody is also thought to be by Luther). As so often with Hallgrímur, the structure is clear and coherent. The opening lines identify the theme: “Í upphafi fyrir sitt eilíft orð / almáttugur Guð skapti [. . .]” [In the beginning by his eternal Word / Almighty God created [. . .]] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:3–5). Though the hymn was based on the Creation narrative in Genesis, Hallgrímur was clearly influenced by the opening of John: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (AV), which is also a creation narrative, a Christian recapitulation of the Genesis story focusing on the centrality of the logos. Hallgrímur draws attention to this text, for example, when he states that “Jesús er eilíft orðið eitt [. . .] án þess að gjört er ekki neitt” [Jesus is the one eternal Word [. . .] without it nothing is done] (see John 1:3ff.). The created world is described in its uncorrupted state, an idyllic region where everything is in pristine order:

Sól, tungl og stjörnur setti hann
sjálfur á festing skæra,
líka svo fuglinn léttfæran,
um loftin kann sig hræra,
í flóði fiskakyn,
fénað og dýrin hin,
skepnur skriðandi um fold,
skapti seinast af mold
mann og hans kvinnu kæra.

Himinninn klár og hýr þá var,
 hreinan gefandi ljóma,
 jörðin án mæðu ávöxt bar,
 með alls kyns aldinblóma,
 skepnurnar allar eins
 ei kenndu nokkurs meins,
 maðurinn hafði um heim
 herradóm yfir þeim
 í sælu, réttlæti og sóma.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:3–4)

[Sun, moon and stars he set
 himself in the radiant firmament,
 also the supple fowl,
 that can fly through the air;
 then in the flood fish,
 cattle and other animals,
 creatures moving on the ground;
 finally of earth he made
 man and his dear mate.

Then heaven was luminous and warm,
 radiating pure light,
 the earth bore fruit endlessly,
 with every kind of flower;
 so also with all creatures,
 they knew no harm,
 man around the world
 ruled over them,
 in happiness, justice and honor.]

The description of the Creation (*narratio*) takes up two and a half stanzas, and is followed by three verses of interpretation (*argumentatio*) and a final stanza (*conclusio*). The main interpretative focus is on “orðið” [the Word]; it is God’s Word that maintains the Creation and the world, and that Word is Jesus—and at the end the poet introduces an element of wordplay: “Ó, hvað oft verð ég orðlaus hér / eymdir mínar því valda / líknar orð, Jesú, legg þú mér

[. . .]” [O, how often am I speechless here, / my sufferings are the cause of it; / a word of solace, Jesus, grant me [. . .]] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:5). In this way everything is linked—God’s creative Word, the Word made flesh, and the poet’s own words as he seeks to serve God through praise. The repetition of the opening line increases the emphasis and seems to prepare for the penultimate stanza in praise of Jesus:

hann öllu heldur við,
hann sannan gefur frið,
hann slítur hryggðar bönd,
hann bætir meinin vönd,
fögnum þeim friðar sjóði.

Jesús er gleði eilíf ein
öllum þeim á hann treysta
[. . .].
(Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:5)

[he upholds everything,
he grants true peace,
he breaks sorrow’s bondage,
he heals sore harms;
let us praise that source of peace.

Jesus alone is eternal joy
For all who trust in him
[. . .].]

In his other biblical hymns Hallgrímur makes extensive use of internal rhyme. The biblical text itself is versified largely without recourse to figures of speech, though we find occasional verbal elaboration reminiscent of kennings and *rímur* vocabulary, and internal rhyme creates sonic effects and rhythmic patterns, as in verse 13 from the hymn “Um Balaam” [On Balaam]:

Hér um *skýrir* hann sem *stýrir* hauðri og *geim*:
“Þó þér *bjóði* buðlung *rjóði* brenndan *seim*,
lát þá sjálfa hverfa *heim*,

hvergi skaltu fara með þeim.”
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:7)]

[Here he explains who rules earth and heaven:
 “Even if a prince were to offer you burnished red gold,
 let them head home by themselves,
 you should not go with them.”]

Another example comes from “Um þann mann sem þrjátíu og átta ár lá sjúkur” [On the man who lay sick for thirty-eight years] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:22–25):

aumur *neyð* þunga *leið*,
 eftir lækning blíðri *beið*,
 bölið trúi eg hann særi.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:23)

[Wretched he sore distress endured,
 for soothing healing waited,
 I believe that suffering pains him.]

“Stutt innihald pínunnar og dauðans Drottins vors Jesú Kristi” [A brief account of the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ] is a twelve-stanza hymn, said to have been written before the *Passíusálmur* were composed.⁶ It begins “Mér er af hjarta minnisstætt” [I remember in my heart] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:41–44). The cruelty of the executioners and the suffering of Jesus are heavily emphasized (by means of *accumulatio*):

[. . .] Hann hefir dregið, hrakt og hrjáð
 harðsvíruð Júða drótt,
 með lygum, spotti, hróp og háð
 hrækjandi á hann skjótt [. . .]
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:41)

[They have pulled, pushed and torn him,
 the heartless race of Jews,

6. The title of the hymn in manuscripts JS 208 8vo and Lbs 1724 8vo makes this claim.

with lies, ridicule, shouts and scorn
spitting on him straightaway [. . .]

Særður í kulda, klæðlaus, þó
Kristur sat langa tíð
á meðan öll til böðullinn bjó
bana-verkfærin stríð [. . .]
(Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:42–43)]

[Wounded in the cold, unclothed, yet
Christ sat for a long time
while the hangman prepared all
the hateful death-tools [. . .]]

Little is made of these events, though. It is not until the penultimate verse that the soul is addressed and only in the last stanza is Jesus praised.

In a hymn on Christ's resurrection Hallgrímur follows the biblical text very closely, adding little by way of interpretation. To that extent the poem resembles Petter Dass's "Evangeliesangen til første paaske-dag" [Gospel song for the first Easter Day] (Dass 1980, 3:270–271). Dass's treatment of the same subject matter is different in his "Katekismesangene" [Catechism songs] (Dass 1980, 2:259–264), which are much expanded though in the same meter. Within the poem's overall rhetorical structure, figures of speech are introduced, as when Samson typologically prefigures the victorious Christ, who is spoken of as the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of Zion. Laila Akslen argues that in this way Dass ensures that the poem resembles a eulogy for a contemporary figure and his heroic deeds (Akslen 1997, 156). Hallgrímur's treatment, by contrast, is very spare, with a joyous tone established straightforwardly at the outset: "Hjartað fagnar og hugur minn / Herrann Jesús er upprisinn" [My heart rejoices and my mind, / the Lord Jesus is risen] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:44–51). The hymn is sung to the tune "Gæskuríkasti græðarinn minn" [My most loving healer] and the meter can be traced to the hymn "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern" [How beautifully shines the morning star] by Philipp Nicolai (d. 1608) (see Lie 1967, 469–470). The rhythm is lively, its pace and energy matching the narrative substance. The present tense

of the first stanza lends the message greater immediacy; thereafter the narrative material is in the past tense, with an eye for both major and minor elements and recognizing the importance of conversation, questions, and atmosphere. The disciples' wavering faith and doubts find clear expression: "sjónhverfingar það sögðu einar [. . .] líklegt það engum virðast kann [. . .] engan trúnað þeir á það lögðu" [they said these were just illusions [. . .] no one could think of this [the Resurrection] as likely [. . .] they refused to believe this] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:48–49). The poem's artistry is revealed in the internal rhyme at the end of each verse, in the alternation between direct and indirect speech, and in the robust declaration in the last line. Important moments in the narrative, such as the famous inquiry of the women ("Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" Mark 16:3, AV), appear in the first line of each stanza for additional emphasis. Both meter and rhyme are put to good use, as with the pairing of words that describe the emotional situation: "hraðir" / "gláðir," "hryggvar" / "dyggvar," "hljóðar" / "móðar" and so on:

Hraðir, gláðir, gjaldið þiggja, þar að byggja;
síðan sögðu
líka sem Júðar þeim ráðin lögðu.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:45)

[Hasty, happy, accept the payment, give thought;
 then they spoke,
 just as the Jews advised them.]

Heimska, gleymska kvað þá báða kóngur dáða;
kenndi síðan,
Kristur svo hefði hlotið að líða.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:49)

[Stupid, heedless, the King of Glory deemed them both to be;
 said then
 that Christ had needed to suffer.]

As these examples confirm, in working with his biblical source, Hallgrímur's artistry finds particular expression in internal and

end rhyme. Rhetorical influence is sometimes discernible, though the poet's main priority is to allow the text to speak for itself in transparent vocabulary.

Inspired Hymns: Interpretation and Verbalization

Hallgrímur also composed hymns that were not based on any specific scriptural text, concentrating instead on particular aspects of faith. This is not to say that they are without form or structure, for Hallgrímur creates ingenious limits by inscribing his name or other key words into the opening letters of each verse. The verse beginning “Hæsta lof af hjartans grunni” [Highest praise from the bottom of my heart] (in the second part of the second section of *Hallgrímskver*) is, like many of Hallgrímur's other poems, an acrostic, each of whose stanzas begins with one of the letters that form the poet's first name. Though traditionally popular, such poems became particularly fashionable during the seventeenth century. Hallgrímur may have developed the hymn's meter himself; in each stanza the lines have four feet, with the first three lines featuring end rhyme, and the final word of each last line ending with “tíð” [time]. The hymn's overall structure is very clear, with each of the ten verses devoted to a particular period in the life of the poet or the history of the world. Each stanza ends by naming one of the four periods of human life: childhood, youth, maturity, old age. Then come the contrasts of good and bad times, life and death, and finally (and crucially) Judgment Day and eternity. The poem opens as follows:

H æsta lof af hjartans grunni
 hér syng eg með raust og munni
 Jesú þeim mér ætíð unni
 og aðstoð veitti á barndómstíð.

A lla tíma að mér gætti,
 ekkert svo mig skaða mætti,
 öll mín Jesús blíður bætti
 barndómshót á æskutíð.

L ífi eg enn og lof þér segi
 lausnari minn á nótt og degi,

nákvæm Jesú náð sig hneigi
nú til mín á aldurstíð.

L íkams burðir þegar þrjóta
þinnar vildi eg gæsku njóta,
láttu mig, Jesú, hressing hljóta
ef hjara skal eg á ellitíð.

(Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:195–196)

[H ighest praise from the depths of my heart
I sing here to Jesus with mouth and voice;
he always loved me
and helped me when young.

A ll the time protected me,
so nothing might me harm,
so gentle Jesus did redeem
the rashness of my youth.

L ive, I do, and speak your praise,
my Redeemer night and day;
may gentle Jesus grant me grace
now that I'm mature.

L ord, when the body's strength fails,
I wish to enjoy your bounty,
May I, Lord Jesus, refreshment gain
If old age be granted me.]

Jesus is either addressed in the first person or referred to in the third. The hymn expresses both prayer and praise. Immediately in verse 1 we note the contrast between high and low, with the highest praise coming from the depths of the narrator's heart. Nouns are important in the hymn, with at least one key example in each stanza. They explain everything that Jesus has granted the narrator: “aðstoð” [help], “náð” [grace], “hressing” [refreshment], “góðvild” [good will], “tryggð” [devotion], “elska” [love], “hylli” [favour], “sæla” [happiness], “miskunn” [mercy], whilst in the final stanza “lofgjörð” [praise] balances out all the earlier nouns, for this is the praise

that the poet longs to bring to Jesus in eternity. Verbs also have a distinctive function. The imperative mode dominates the final section of the hymn, with “Ráð þú” [advise], “minnstu” [remember], “sjá til” [see], “uppvek” [awake], “reikna” [account], and “leyf mér” [allow me]. In each verse the imperative alternates with subjunctives that create a more conditional tone, as with “hneigi” [bow], “láti” [let], “sé” [be], “styrki” [strengthen], “villi” [err], “stilli” [calm], “haldi” [hold], “finni” [find] and “vægi” [spare], while at the poem’s opening, indicative forms (present and past) predominate: “(ég) segi” [I say], “(Jesús) unni” [(Jesus) loved], “veitti” [offered], “gætti” [protected], “bætti” [cured], “[(ég) lifi og segi” [(I) live and say], “ég vil njóta” [I wish to enjoy], “ég sleppi (ekki)” [I will (not) let go (of you)] and “þú (Jesús) lofar” [you (Jesus) promise]. Short sentences and pointed use of nouns create rhythmic energy throughout the hymn. The poem is a typical example of the baroque poet’s fondness for order, enumeration, regulation, and harmony.

The hymn beginning “Heilagi læknir, Kristur kær” [Holy healer, beloved Christ] is also an acrostic, ten verses long; the initial letters from each stanza again form the name “Hallgrímur.”⁷ The formal structure is more complex due to the use of *anadiplosis* (the last word of one line repeated at the beginning of the next line) throughout the poem. The hymn is sung to Luther’s tune “Vater unser im Himmelreich” [Faðir vor sem á himnum ert; Our Father, which art in heaven], and features a traditional German meter (Lie 1967, 389). The first two verses are as follows:

H eilagi læknir, Kristur kær,
 kærleikann gef mér fyrr og nær,
 nær sem ég hugsa um þín orð,
 orð þín mér vondum girndum forð,
 forða mér vítis plágu og þín,
 þínist þá ekki sálin mín.

Á þér hefi ég trausta trú,
 trúfastur jafnan reynist þú,

7. The hymn is not included in the 1773 *Hallgrímskver*, but does appear in a list of poems attributed to Hallgrímur that is included at the end of the 1770 version.

þú veist mitt sinni, herra *hreinn*,
hreinni því finnst hér enginn *einn*.
 Einn Guð og þrennur minnstu *mín*,
mína sál langar heim til þín.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:231–232)

[H oly healer, Christ beloved,
 love grant me far and near;
 whenever I ponder your words
 your words from evil passions save me,
 save me from plague of hell and suffering,
 suffer then my soul will not.

A lways I have in you strong faith,
 faith-fast you have shown yourself;
 you know my mind, Lord Jesus most pure,
 purer to be found here is no one;
 one God and three, remember me,
 my soul longs to return home to you.]

In the final verse the dominant figure becomes *anaphora*, but there is also wordplay on the meaning of the verb “að ráða” and the noun “ráð”:

R að þú mér, Drottinn, rétt á frón,
 ráð mér, Jesú, það er mín bón,
 ráðin Jesú mér reynast vel,
 ráðunum Jesú eg mig fel,
 ráð, helgi andi, raunum mín,
 ráði mér eilíf gæskan þín.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:233)

A dvice me, Lord, here on earth
 advise me, Jesus—that is my wish,
 advice from Jesus proves good for me,
 in the advice of Jesus I conceal myself,
 advise me, Holy Spirit, in my sorrows,
 may it advise me, your eternal goodness.

“Herra Jesú, mín hlífð ert þú” [Lord Jesus, you are my protector] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:263–265) is yet another acrostic hymn that forms the name “Hallgrímur,” and is written in the same meter as *Passíusálmur* 42. Like many other baroque poets, Hallgrímur highlights the contrast between faith in Jesus and love of the world, choosing the former and rejecting the latter: “Afhaldið heims / og auðlegð seims / aldrei mér látið hefur” [indulgences of the world / and riches of gold / have never let go of me] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:263), is followed by “Ríkdómsins hér / ei óska mér” [For the wealth here / I have no wish]. Yet poverty is no more desirable: “örbirgð ei lát mig pína” [may poverty not torment me] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:264). Above all the hymn is an address to Christ. The verse that begins with the name of Jesus aims to praise him, highlighting his name by means of *anaphora*:

Jesús með dáð,
 Jesús með náð,
 Jesús í lífi og dauða,
 Jesús mín hlíf,
 Jesús mitt líf,
 við Jesúm eg blíf,
 Jesús er bótin nauða.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:264–265)

[Jesus with prowess,
 Jesus with mercy,
 Jesus in life and death,
 Jesus my shield,
 Jesus my life,
 with Jesus I hold fast,
 Jesus is sorrows' remedy.]

Then, in the penultimate stanza, the poem addresses the world (again in the form of an *apostrophe*):

Veröld, veröld
 þitt vols og völd
 vel máttu öðrum léna,

afsegi eg þér
 að unna hér,
 hef heitið mér
 hæstum guði að þéna.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:265)

[World, world,
 your arrogance and powers,
 well may reward others;
 I refuse
 to love you here;
 I have promised myself
 the highest God to serve.]

This same vision can be found in Kingo’s “Far, verden, far vel” [Go, world, fare well] (Kingo 1975, 3:214–218), and in many other baroque poems.

Yet another acrostic poem creates Hallgrímur’s name (this time in the genitive case) from the initial letters in each of its ten stanzas, forming “Hallgríms andvarpan” [Hallgrímur’s sigh]. The themes are sin and mercy, repentance and praise. It is striking how many contrasts feature in the poet’s imagery about Christ and himself: “ég er manneskjan alsaurug” [I am a human wholly stained] and “aum mannkind” [a wretched human being] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:218–219). The subject matter controls the rhetorical structure. The poem is a confession of sins, and therefore the narrator’s own wretchedness needs to be depicted vividly in order to establish an appropriate contrast with the Redeemer’s majesty. He is “heilla ljúfasti herra minn / hjartans útvaldra yndi” [my blessed gentlest Lord, / joy of the heart of the chosen], “sætasti brunnur svölunar / signað herbergi vellystar” [sweetest well of refreshment, / cross-signed chamber of comfort]:

Réttlætis fagur kvistur klár,
 konungur dýrðar sæti,
 engla fegurð um eilíf ár,
 útvaldra sálar kæti,
 allra trúaðra elska og von

er Jesús guðs og Maríu son—
 gef þess ég jafnan gæti.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:220)

[Branch of justice, fair and bright,
 sweet King of Glory,
 beauty of angels for eternity,
 joy of the souls of the elect,
 of all believers love and hope,
 is Jesus, son of God and Mary;
 may I always cherish this.]

The poem's themes are familiar, and it is thus the poet's task to find arresting ways of expressing them. The structure is logical with a confession of sins followed by images of the poet's wretchedness at home and then prayers for forgiveness, healing and purification ("mig hvítfága eins og mjöll" [cleanse me like snow]). Gradually the narrator's misery gives way, first, to poignant images of the Redeemer, with their relationship like that of father and child ("minnstu á barnkind þína" [remember your child]), and, then, to praise, whose climax is reached in the final stanza.

Finally, there is an acrostic poem in which the first letter from each verse forms the name "Jesus." Every stanza begins with a noun describing Christ's qualities, and those elements are drawn together at the end: "ilm, eilífð, sannleik, veg, sigur skær / svo nafn Jesú útleggjum vær" [fragrance, eternity, truth, way, clear victory, / thus the name of Jesus we translate] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:273). The melody is, again, that of "Vater unser im Himmelreich," a hymn composed by Luther that appears in an Icelandic translation in the 1589 hymnal; Dass and Kingo also composed in this meter (Páll E. Ólason 1924, 118–119; Lie 1967, 389). The first verse, about fragrance, is based on the idea that Jesus has reconciled man with God and "hann biður fyrir oss" [he prays for us].⁸ Revelation describes how beside the throne of God are "golden vials full of

8. See Romans, 8:26–27 (AV): "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

odours, which are the prayers of saints” (Rev. 5:8; AV), with the smoke from the incense rising up before God along with their prayers (Rev. 8:4). The poet seems to have known these words. The man’s address represents his prayer while Jesus prays for mankind: “andvarpan sanna syndugs manns / svo gerir fagra bænin hans” [the true sigh of a sinful man / makes his prayer fair]. The prayers rise up to heaven like the fragrance of incense just as the sun brightens the heaven and the stars:

Ilmur er Jesús eðla skær,
 oss við guð föður sætta fær,
 andvarpan sanna syndugs manns
 svo gerir fagra bænin hans
 eins og þá sólin uppljómar
 allan himin og stjörnur.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:272)

[Jesus is the pure fragrance,
 with God the Father can reconcile us,
 as with the true sigh of a sinful man,
 so works his beautiful prayer,
 as when the sun illumines
 the whole sky and the stars.]

The German baroque poet Philipp von Zesen (1619–1689) based an eighteen-line sonnet on the same idea of Jesus’ name releasing a fragrant aroma (Zesen 1980, 24),⁹ with the phrase “denn Du reuchst süß und schön” [since you smell sweet and fair] iterated thrice. Scholars have noted that seventeenth-century religious poetry is marked by a distinctive “konkretism” [concreteness] in which the physical and mental, the sensate and the spiritual, are linked (*Dansk litteraturhistorie* 3 1983, 346). The poets describe tangible phenomena and then assign to them a spiritual meaning. Windfuhr (1966) refers to this as decorative imagery and draws attention to its striking sensuality. Flowers, precious materials and stones, sweetness and perfumes are the main elements in the comparison, and thus

9. “Jesus Christ Durch Buchstaben-versetzung reuchst süß” [The name Jesus Christ smells sweet when spelled out].

the poet is able to depict the Garden of Eden as a wondrous place that would arouse benevolent feelings in listeners/readers (Meid 1986, 43).

Similar subject matter is treated in the hymn “Heilagur andi guðs míns góða” [The holy spirit of my good God] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:268–271), which presents an account of the characteristics of Jesus. In this instance the poet does not confine himself to the letters of the name, and the hymn’s eighteen verses make it longer than other pieces discussed in this chapter. The meter is the same as in “Hæsta lof af hjartans grunni” [Highest praise from the depths of the heart], four feet featuring feminine full rhyme in the first three lines and masculine rhyme in the final line where the same pronoun (“minn” [my]) is repeated in all verses. The initial *invocatio*, addressed to Jesus, expresses the wish that the Holy Spirit will so inform and enrich the poet’s language that Christ can be praised with appropriate reverence. Among identifiable baroque characteristics is the reference to the sweetness in Jesus’ name: “Sætleik ber af sykri öllu / þitt signað nafn á hvert vér köllum” [Sweeter than all sugar, / your sacred name on which we call]. It is also a sign of the political times that Hallgrímur calls Jesus “einvalds herrann” [absolute Lord]. The poetic climax comes in the final stanzas, the penultimate given over to praise while the final one is a prayer featuring *anaphora*:

Dýrð sé guði, drottni mínum,
dýrstum föður á himnum fínum
með eingetnum syni sínum
sem er herra Jesús minn.

Bænheyr þú mig, blíður og sætur,
bænheyr þú mig, guð ágætur,
bænheyr þú þitt barn sem grætur,
bænheyr þú mig, Jesú minn.

[Glory be to God, my Lord,
dearest Father in the heavens fine,
with his only-begotten Son
who is my Lord Jesus.

Hear my prayer, gentle and sweet one,
 hear my prayer, excellent God,
 hear the prayer of your child who weeps,
 hear my prayer, my Jesus.]

Hallgrímur's knowledge of classical rhetoric is again revealed in "Leið mig minn Guð og lát mig ei" [Lead me my God and let me not] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:187–190).¹⁰ In this hymn, as so often elsewhere, the poet makes use of *accumulatio*, as in "líf mitt, samvisku, sál / sjón, heyrn, orð, verk og mál" [my life, conscience, soul, / sight, hearing, words, works and speech] and in rhetorical questions such as "Hvað skal manneskjan mögla þó / móti skapara sínum?" [Yet why shall mankind complain / against its Creator?] and "Mín sál, hvað viltu mæla þá / móti skikkun þíns herra?" [My soul, what do you wish to say / against your Lord's system] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:188). Jesus is named at the beginning of verses 5, 7, 8, 9 as Redeemer, helper of the soul, helper in time of need and life-giver. Verses 5 and 6 feature wordplay around "endurlausnari" [Redeemer], "lausn" (twice) [solution], "leystur" [released], "leystu" [[they] released] and also "lastanna flækjur" [sins' tangles], and (in the next verse) "leystu," "löstum" [vices], "lausnin" [the solution], "leys" (twice) [will you release] and "ljóst" [light, clear]. The word "löstur" is clearly used for both its form and meaning, for it sounds well alongside "lausn" and "leysa" and it is thematically appropriate that men are released from such webs of sin. This technique of combining words with similar sounds but different meanings is known as *paronomasia*. In the verse that begins with "sáluhjálpari," the poet plays with various forms of "sál" [soul] at the opening of each line; in the verse that begins with "hjálpari" [helper] we find "hjálpaðu" [please help], "hjálpræðis" [of salvation], "hjálparlaus" [helpless], "hjálpar" [helps] and "hjálpa" [(to) help]; and in the verse that begins with "lífgjafari" [life-giver] the lines start with "lífinu" [in life], "lífsfaðir" [Father of life], "lífs meinum" [life's harms],

10. The melody (again) is that of Luther's well-known "Ein' feste Burg" [Óvinnanleg borg er vor guð; A mighty fortress is our God] (Páll E. Ólason 1924, 133).

“lífs” [life’s], “líf” and “lífi” [life], and “lífðu” [they lived]. Repeating the same word with different grammatical inflections and contexts is known as *annominatio* (or *polyptoton*), a familiar figure in medieval religious poetry and thereafter much used in European and English baroque verse. Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík refers to such figures in his draft treatise on poetics (AM 986 4to II, 34). Here is Hallgrímur’s use of it:

Sáluhjálparinn sæll Jesú
 sál mín þér ætíð fagnar
 sálunni miskun sýndir þú
 sálin þér lofgjörð magnar
 sál minni sýn þú lið
 sála mín þarf þess við
 sálin er sjúk og móð
 sál unn þitt blessað blóð
 er sálunni sætast gagnar.

Hjálpari minn og herra hýr
 hjálpa þú þræli þínum
 hjálpræðis blessuð heillin dýr
 hjálpa þú veikleik mínum
 hjálparlaus hjari eg hér
 ef hjálpar þú eigi mér
 hjálpa mót holdi og heim
 hjálpa mót óvin þeim
 sem veldur vítis þínum.

Lífgjafi minn og líknin fín
 lífinu virstu vægja
 lífsfaðir ertu lífi mín
 lífs meinum ger þú hægja
 líf og sál lofi þig
 lífs meðan sparir mig
 líf mitt lífi í þér
 lífðu Jesús í mér
 lífi lát löstu ei bægja.

(Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:189–190)

[Blessed Redeemer Jesus,
 my soul always welcomes you,
 to the soul you showed compassion,
 the soul magnifies praise for you;
 to my soul you offer help,
 my soul needs this,
 the soul is sick and tired,
 grant the soul your blessed blood,
 it helps the soul most sweetly.

My Helper and happy Lord,
 help your slave;
 help-means' [salvation's] dear and blessed happiness,
 help my weakness;
 helpless I rot here
 if you help me not;
 help against the flesh and the world,
 help against the enemy
 who causes hell's torments.

My Life-Giver and mercy blessed,
 my life may you spare;
 Life-Father you are in my life,
 life's harms lessen;
 may life and soul praise you,
 while in life (you) spare me;
 may I live my life in you,
 Jesus, may you live in me,
 let not sin drive away life.]

Rhyme, Rhythm and Form

The seventeenth century saw a proliferation in the number of meters available to and used by poets. Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík's draft treatise on poetics includes a chapter devoted exclusively to meters used in early Icelandic poetry and in *rímur*. However, European meters were also widely used, including those that Hallgrímur found in baroque poetry. His contemporary Andreas Gryphius

(1616–1664) composed a collection of poems called *Tränen über das Leiden Jesu Christi* [Tears over the suffering of Jesus Christ] (Gryphius 1964, 2:95–147, see p. 319). Each section has its own distinctive meter. The fourth section (“Deß Herren Jesus Gang über den Bach Kidron” [The Lord Jesus walks across the Kidron stream]) features the following quatrains:

Nachdem der Held / der aller Welt /
 Schuld / Angst / vnd Fluch abwendet /
 Das Oster-Mahl / mit seiner Zahl
 Durch Lob vnd Danck geendet.

Ließ Er die Stadt / die in dem Rath
 Schon seinen Todt geschlossen
 Vnd wandt sich nach der schwartzen Bach
 Die Kidrons-Thal durchflossen.
 (Gryphius 1964, 2:111)

[After the Hero of the World
 guilt, fear and curse warded off,
 the Easter meal with its number
 ended in praise and thanks.

He left the city where the council
 his death had decided,
 and made his way to the dark stream,
 the Kidron valley traversed.]

This meter is often used by Thomas Kingo, Petter Dass, the German baroque poet Friedrich von Spee (1591–1635) and the aforementioned Philipp von Zesen. For example, Dass uses it in “Det første bud í *Katekismesangene*” [The first commandment in the Catechism songs] (Dass 1980, 2:47ff.), though not with the internal rhyme added by Gryphius. Kingo employs the meter in one of his “epistelsalmer” [epistle hymns]: the 1689 hymnal includes his epistle and gospel hymns (works based on the epistles and gospels for each Sunday). The epistle hymn for the first Sunday in Advent (Kingo 1975, 4:14–15) begins:

VAag op, min Siæl, thi Stunden er
 Af Søvn og Slum at stande,
 Og Salighedsens Tiid er nær,
 At glæde vore Lande!
 Vor sorrigs Nat er gangen plat,
 Vi skal nu snart befinde,
 Fra Davids Stool Rætviisheds Sool
 Vor JESum at oprinde.
 (Kingo 1975, 4:14)

[Wake up, my soul, it is time
 from sleep and slumber to stand,
 and the time of bliss is near,
 to gladden our land!
 Our night of sorrow is over,
 we shall now soon find
 from David's seat the sun of righteousness,
 our Jesus, to have risen.

Hallgrímur employed the same meter in his poem “Hugbót” [Comfort for the mind], composed after the Saurbær fire in 1662. Whereas Kingo only uses internal rhyme in lines 5 and 7 (“nat” / “plat,” “Stool” / “Sool”), Hallgrímur employs it in every odd line (as in German hymns). Hallgrímur's stanzas are eight lines in length, or (in other words) two verses in one:

Guð er minn guð | þó geysi nauð
 og gangi þannin yfir
 syrgja skal spart | þó missta eg margt
 máttugur herrann lifir
 af hjarta nú | og hreinni trú
 til hans skal ég mér venda.
 Nafn Drottins sætt | fær bölið bætt
 blessað sé það án enda.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:170–171)

[God is my God, though trouble may erupt
 and overwhelm in this way;

mourn shall I little, though much I have lost,
 the Lord Almighty lives;
 now with heart and true faith
 to him I shall turn.
 The Lord's sweet name will heal the bale,
 blessed be that [name] without end.]

Hallgrímur uses much the same meter in *Passíusálmur* 42:

Í sárri neyð | sem Jesús leið
 sagði hann glögg: Mig þyrstir.
 Svo ritning hrein | í hverri grein
 uppfylltist ein.
 Um það mig ræða lystir.

[In sore need, as Jesus suffered,
 he spoke clearly: I thirst.
 Thus the pure writ in each respect
 was fulfilled.
 Of this I wish to speak.]

The meter can also be found in the 1589 *Sálmabók*, in a translation of a hymn by Hans Sachs (1494–1576), “Christe, wahrer Sohn Gottes frohn” [Christ, true Son of God], that begins in Icelandic “Ó, Jesús þér æ viljum vér” [O Jesus, for you we always wish] (Páll E. Ólason 1924, 150). Séra Ólafur Einarsson may also have translated and composed in this same meter (*ibid.*, 211–212).

Hallgrímur Pétursson was well informed about traditional Icelandic metrics. Not only was he familiar with *Snorra Edda*, but he also knew old *dróttkvætt* verses and probably also Eddic poems (see Stefán Karlsson 1986; Kristján Eiríksson 2005). Much as European baroque poets adopted classical meters, seventeenth-century Icelandic writers sought to make use of early Icelandic prosody. Accordingly, we find Hallgrímur composing a *dróttkvætt* verse about Christ that is modelled on lines from *Snorra Edda* (see Vésteinn Ólason 1969). In his *Háttatal* Snorri indicates that “Þessi háttur er kallað greppaminni” [this meter is called “riddle rhythm”]:

Hver fremur hildi barra?
 Hver er mælingum fjarri?
 Hver gerir höpp stærri?
 Hver kann auð að þverra?
 Veldur hertogi hjaldri
 hann er first blikurmanni
 hann á höpp að sýnni,
 hann vélir blik spannar.
 (*Snorra Edda* 1973, 301; see 1931, 233)

[Who wages harsh war? Who is far from niggardly? Who achieves greater success? Who knows how to diminish wealth [be generous with gold]? The duke brings about war, he is furthest from being a miser, he has clearer success, he cheats the light of the palm [gives away gold].]¹¹

Hallgrímur's verse is as follows:

Hver græðir hjartans kvíða?
 Hver kætti menn grætta?
 Hver sótt hindrar hætta?
 Hver snauðan vann dauða?
 Jesús huggar, hryggð lógar
 hann gæddi sorgmædda,
 hann lífi heilsu gefur,
 hann snauðan vann dauða.

[Who heals heart's worries?
 Who gladdens weeping men?
 Who protects from dire sickness?
 Who defeated dismal death?
 Jesus comforts, destroys sadness,
 he helps the sorrowing,
 he gives health to life,
 he defeated dismal death.]

11. Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, trans. Faulkes 1987, 191.

Hallgrímur was not alone in imitating medieval Icelandic verse in the seventeenth century (see Sverrir Tómasson 1996b, 65–67).¹² Stefán Ólafsson of Vallanes composed “Veðravísur” [Weather verses] in *dróttkvætt*, in which questions and answers follow each other in quick succession. To some extent Stefán’s verse resembles pieces known as “echo poems:”

Hvað blæs nú? Hríð geisar.
 Hví dignar? Ský rigna.
 Það er þokkabót.
 Hvort frystir? Hart líst mér.
 Hvaðan gustar? Að austan.
 Villist vindarót.
 Mun hláka? Meinfjúk er.
 Má ríða? Í háhliðum.
 Þar mun fönn við fót.
 Hversu vegnar? Hross svigna.
 Hvenær skánar? Þegar hlánar.
 Hljóðnar hryggðin ljót.
 (Stefán Ólafsson II 1886, 146–147).

[What is blowing now? A snow-storm rages.
 Why is it wet? Clouds are raining,
 on top of all else.
 Is it freezing? Hard, I think.
 Which way is it blowing? From the east.
 Wind direction confused.
 Will it thaw? It’s a big snowstorm.
 Can anyone ride? On high slopes.
 There will be snow under foot.
 How goes it? Horses stumble.
 When will things improve? When it thaws.
 Ugly sorrow falls silent.]

Echo poems were a popular baroque genre. The German poetics

12. There are also poems in this meter about Mary, the Mother of God (see *Íslenzk miðaldakvæði* 1938 II, 217 and 219).

scholar Schottelius (1612–1672) describes them thus: “A real echo or pure resonance is one which must resound and echo in such a way that no changes to the letters and even fewer to the sounds will be noticed.”¹³ Its origins can be traced to Martin Opitz, who composed a sonnet in this form, and Georg Rudolf Weckherlin (1584–1653) followed suit with an elaborate commemorative poem (Meid 1986, 58). Another celebrated echo poem is “Heaven,” by the English poet George Herbert (1593–1633), in which he mimics the secular echo poem for religious purposes (King 1982, 102–103). Jón Ólafsson of Grunnavík mentions such poems in his draft treatise on poetics:

Echo, gagnraust or dvergmál, occurs when one, two or more syllables at the end of a line answer each other with almost the same word, but nevertheless with its own beautiful and appropriate meaning. Everyone knows what it is with “segi,” “eigi,” “kalla,” “alla,” “skrýða,” “víða,” etc., and in each case a word can be found which fits the meaning. I have only seen this effect in prose and not in Icelandic verse. It obviously would not be found in quatrains or anywhere where the ends of lines are similar, for then the words would echo in the same way. But perhaps in *dróttkvætt* verse and the meter called *ljúflingslag*.¹⁴

Though Jón states that he has never seen an Icelandic echo poem, he mentions “logogríphi og echo” [puzzles and echo poems] in his discussion of poetry in his *Hagþenkir*, indicating that both types of discourse can be found in Icelandic (Jón Ólafsson 1996, 46).

13. Ein rechtes *Echo* oder reiner *Wiederhall* ist / welcher also gegenshallend und wiederhallend antworten muß / daß keine Enderung der Letteren / vielweniger des Gethönes vermerket werde (Schottelius II 1967, 946; quotation from Meid 1986, 57). Justus Georg Schottelius’s *Teutsche Vers- oder ReimKunst* (1645) and *Ausführliche Arbeit Von der Teutschen HauptSprache* (1663) influenced the Danish poetics scholar Søren Poulsen Gotlænder Judichær (Dal 1960, 81–85).

14. Echo, gagnraust eður dvergmál, er þá ein, tvær eður fleiri samstöfur í línuenda svara á móti viðlíkt sem með sama orði sú er þó hafi í sér fallesta og efninu viðfældna meiningu. Allir vita hvað þetta er sem segi, eigi, kalla, alla, skrýða, víða etc. og hver einn getur orð til fundið sem vel komi við meininguna. Ei hefi ég séð þetta í íslenskum vísam og ei nema í lausu máli. Því auðséð er að því verður ei í ferskeyttum hætti fyrir komið eður neinum sem enda eins línu orðin því þá yrði echo í hið sama. En í dróttkvæðum kannski og ljúflingslagi (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 1999b, 34).

Hallgrímur's "Bergmál" is preserved in many manuscripts and printed in *Hallgrímskver*, where it is sometimes entitled "Dvergmál" [Echo]. German echo poetry was frequently in sonnet form (with five feet in each line) and Hallgrímur's lines also have five feet:

Mun guð marga til dómsins kalla? Alla.
 Eru allir trúaðir á þeim degi? Eigi.
 Er nokkur sjálfkrafa saklaus fenginn? Enginn.
 Hvernig gengur þeim er heiminn villa? Illa.
 Hvað er það sem herrann þeim sendir? Endir.
 Hvað heyra þeir svo sárlega sýti? Ite.
 Hvar mun þeim reiðast rúm að kveldi? Í eldi.
 Nær komast þeir úr kvöl margfaldri? Aldri.
 Hvílíkt heyrast hjá þeim hrópið? Ópið.
 Guð láti þangað fara fáa menn! Amen.

Hver eru laun sem guð vill frómum færa? Æra.
 Fara þeir nokkuð frá náð margfaldri? Aldri.
 Er þeim þá búin eilíf vita? Ita.
 Hvað gefa þeir þá í herrans höndur? Öndu.
 Hvað munu þeir þá í fögnuði segja? Eja.
 Halda þeir lengi það sælu sætið? Ætið.
 Hver verður endir á því gengi? Engi.
 Guð veit ég þeir lofa þar þráfalt; ávallt.
 Guð gefi oss að vera þeim þó hjá. Ójá.
 Guð gefi oss að sjá þar þá menn. Amen.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:336–337)

[Will God call many to judgment? All.
 Are all believers on that day? No.
 Is anyone automatically taken as innocent? No one.
 How will they fare who deceive the world? Badly.
 What is it that the Lord sends them? The end.
 What do they hear who mourn so sorely? Go.
 Where will they sleep that evening? In fire.
 Will they ever escape the many torments? Never.
 What sort of cry is heard from them? A scream.
 May God send few there! Amen.

What reward does God wish to grant the pious? Honor.
 Do they ever depart from manifold grace? Never.
 Is eternal life ready for them? Yes.
 What do they then commit into the Lord's hands? Soul.
 What will they then say in joy? Hurrah.
 How long will they then remain in that blessed place?
 For ever.
 What will be the end of this? No end.
 God, I know, they praise continually. Always.
 God grant that we will be there with them. O yes.
 God grant that we see those people there. Amen.]

Rhyme is a common feature in the most popular seventeenth-century verse forms, whether of native or foreign origin. By its nature it challenges the meaning of words, in that it can both draw out and conceal such meaning. Óskar Halldórsson notes that early modern Icelandic poets in general have long tended to use rhyme to excess. It was most prominent in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century verses, dance poems and exorcism pieces, and Óskar acknowledges that meters grew so complex that poetry became little more than a prosodic exercise (Óskar Halldórsson 1972, 33–34). Such a view recalls earlier judgments on baroque poetry in Germany and elsewhere, namely that substance had been overwhelmed by style. Óskar adds that exuberance of rhyme was most evident in secular poetic genres but it also featured in religious verse of the period.

The penitential hymn that begins with “Aví minn Drottinn dýri” [Hail my beloved Lord] offers an example of the diversity of rhyme in Hallgrímur's verse. The poem is composed in the same meter as “Hætta er stór í heimi” [Danger is great in the world], using the same melody but a different pattern of rhymes.¹⁵ In “Hætta er stór í heimi” the latter part of each verse features four perfect vertical rhymes, whereas in Hallgrímur's poem there are four vertical half rhymes. Thus, the fourth verse of “Avi minn Drottinn” ends as follows:

15. The melody is “Ó, Jesú eðla blómi” [O, Jesus, noble flower], a hymn by Stefán Ólafsson; see Jón Þorkelsson 1886b, 333. The poem is printed in *Litla vísnabókin* 1757.

sál náði sól friðar
 sæl greiði heil ráðin
 kvöl eyðist, kul græði
 Kristí ástin fljót.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:191–192)

[Peace's sun saves the soul,
 sanctified may it give good counsel,
 torment remove, cold breeze cure,
 Christ's quick love.]

The internal rhymes in the first and third feet (in each of the first three lines here) are all of one kind (vowel + *l*) as are those in the second and fourth feet (vowel + *ð*). The last verse ends as follows:

lof, heiður ljúft greiðist
 lífgræði af þjóðum,
 haf, faðir, hlíf góða
 hér oss fyrir nú.
 (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:192)

[praise sweet, honor shall be paid
 to the life-healer from peoples;
 raise, Father, a good shelter
 here before us now.]

Many other examples could be cited of prosodic complexity in Hallgrímur's spiritual poetry, especially varieties of internal rhyme, as in the hymn "Um guðs forsjón" [On God's foresight] (Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:271). The poem begins "Hugur slagar hættur ýmsum benda" [the mind staggers, dangers alert various people]. The accompanying melody, identified in about half of the extant manuscripts, is "Herra, þér skal heiður og lotning greiða" [Lord, to you shall honor and veneration be paid]. Though attributed to Stefán Ólafsson, the hymn was in fact composed by Petter Dass who, according to Lie (1967), pioneered the use of this meter. In Hallgrímur's hymn internal rhyme features more prominently than in Dass's, however:

Guð ótrauður góðs er huga mínum
gagnið, *auður*, hreysti í öllum þínum
lukkan *snauðum*, lausn úr *nauðum*
lífið *dauðum*, uppreisn *sauðum* sínum.

Allar skepnur eins úti sem inni
einn guð seður þó þær séu ógrynni
hvergi er *slíkur* hvað viðvíkur
hönd forríkur sá upplýkur sinni.
(Hallgrímur Pétursson 1887–90, 2:271)

[God is an endless boon for my mind,
benefit, wealth, bravery in all torments,
joy for the poor, relief from troubles
life for the dead, succour for his sheep.

All creatures, whether indoors or out,
one God satisfies them, though countless they are,
there is none other like him,
the Wealthy One opens his hand.]

Windfuhr (1966) notes that the favorite baroque poetic resources were rhyme, metaphor, and assonance. He cites as an example a fragment from a poem by Sigmund von Birken (1626–1681):

ES *fünken* / und *flinken* / und *blinken* Buntblümichte Auen
Es *schimmert* / und *wimmert* / und *glimmert* Frü = perlenes
Tauen. (Birken 1645, 34)

[Spark / and flicker / and flash flowering meadows,
Shimmer and / whimper / and glimmer early pearls of dew.]

The poetry of Philip von Zesen also features many such sonic effects: internal rhyme, alliteration and assonance (Meid 1986, 95). Similar verbal decoration can also be found in baroque religious poetry, as in a work by Johann Klaj (1616–1656) about Jesus' journey to heaven and hell:

Es drummeln die küpfernen Drummel und summen /
 Es pauken die heiseren Pauken und brummen /
 Es lüdeln und düdeln die schlriffenden Pfeifen [. . .].
 (Schöne 1988, 313)

[with copper drum thumping and bumping /
 with scratchy kettle-drums chattering and clattering /
 with skirling pipes tooting and hooting [. . .].]

This interest in sound and rhyme was more than just a game or source of sonic diversion. Some poets and scholars of poetics associated the phenomenon with grammatical and occult theories, according to which each individual tone and sound generated had an inherent meaning, and such notions deserved to be explored because of the posited close links between the German language and the original language of mankind (Meid 1986, 95). There may be a parallel phenomenon in seventeenth-century Icelandic poetry in that Icelandic poets had an excellent model in *dróttkvætt* verse and recognized the close links between their own language and the original Old Norse language.¹⁶ We know that Hallgrímur's poetry is marked by extensive use of internal rhyme and half rhyme, comparable in its way with the interest shown in sound by European baroque poets, and the rhymes can also be viewed as an imitation of *dróttkvætt* variants. Thus while it is important to recognize European influence on seventeenth-century Icelandic poetry, we should also recognize native poets' interest in rediscovering their own early poetic traditions.

The Baroque Religious Text

“Allt eins og blómstrið eina” [Just as a flower] (*Ljóðmæli* 1, 4–7) is Hallgrímur Pétursson's best known hymn apart from the *Passíusálmar*. It can be found together with the *Passíusálmar* in the poet's autograph manuscript, and has been sung over the graves of many Icelanders over the centuries. Its subject is death, and it offers

16. The idea that Icelandic is essentially the Old Norse language is articulated by the author of *Íslandslýsing* (Oddur Einarsson 1971, 80–81) and by Arngrímur the Learned (Arngrímur Jónsson 1985, 96–105).

a Christian perspective on mortality and the life everlasting. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the structure of this famous hymn, the ways in which it reflects rhetorical tradition, and the qualities that make it a baroque poem.

The work is in two parts, the first of which has no mention of religion, whereas in the second spiritual perspectives dominate as a bleakly pessimistic vision of life turns into the expectation of victory. There is no introduction or circumstantial detail at the start of the poem, which begins with a comparison (with the linking phrase “allt eins og” [just as]). Verses 1–7 tell of man’s situation in the face of death. Many images are assembled to convince the reader that death is inescapable. The first is that of a single flower and confirms that this is a baroque poem. The beauty of the flower is of little importance compared with its primary function as an image of transience; it withers and dies like human life itself. Natural phenomena such as grass, herbs, roses and bamboo are described. The poet offers images of things that live and move. They are tangible and “concrete,” not least when the poet refers to the “inngang í heimsins rann” [entrance to the world’s house], that is, the human birth canal. Set against this single pathway from the mother into the world, Hallgrímur identifies the many ways that lead out of the world, that is, the many forms that death can take. Phenomena that seem to be part of life’s reality, such as young people running, beauty, promotion, and power, are just figments of the imagination and delusions, because men head off “í villu og svíma” [into error and confusion] (verse 6). Reality resides in death that will arrive and cause everything to wilt, decay, and die.

The first seven verses are a dramatic exposition of this truth, intended to deconstruct conventional notions of reality, not least the text’s own reality, as we note when the poet foresees his own disintegration and destruction at the end of verse 7 and confronts the fact that, notwithstanding all his literary creations and other deeds, he himself will eventually “aftur að verða mold” [again become dust]. This verse is the first occasion when “sjálfíð” [the self] is mentioned. The previous stanzas provide a general description of the human condition, but in verse 7, death’s spear is directed towards the narrator, who recognizes his own defeat and is ready to depart this life. We see here the clear difference between a modernist

and a baroque text (see Sejersted 1995, 142ff.). While both move towards “núllpunktinn” [nothingness], the ultimate annihilation of meaning, it is at this point that the baroque text finds God, who lends all aspects of human life an entirely new meaning.

In verse 8, and not before, God enters the poem and everything immediately changes. The narrator recognizes that he has no power over life or death, that everything is in the hands of the Creator who “giveth and taketh away,” and that the melancholy truths enumerated earlier are now set in a broader context. Those previous images prove to be just fragments of a larger reality. To literal and symbolic meanings a salvational (anagogical) perspective is added, according to which both life and death derive from God, and whatever is unavoidable belongs to a higher reality that generates new meaning. Therefore the text moves into a mode of praise, serenity, and scripturally based religious certainty. The sentence “Ég veit minn ljúfur lifir / lausnarinn himnum á” [I know my beloved one lives, the Redeemer in heaven] (*Ljóðmæli* 1,7) derives from Job (19:25), and any reader of the hymn familiar with that scripture will recognize the subtext about Job’s suffering and doubts, and will know that this confession occurs at the end of a long and difficult struggle. A hymn that began in darkness and despair takes on a new tone, and in the last four verses a sense of spiritual security and splendor emerges, underpinned stylistically by repetitions, lists, and contrasts. This corresponds with Sejersted’s observation that in the baroque text, downplaying the religious meaning leads not to the absence of God but to the certainty of his presence: “by drawing attention to itself through ornamentation, the text signals not emptiness but a universal, unassailable sense of fullness.”¹⁷

The first part of the hymn is characterized by vivid images of *vanitas* and the second part by rhetorical energy, in which the first-person pronoun “ég” [I] becomes steadily more prominent in true proportion to the significance of the figure who now takes his place on the stage: Jesus, “sigrarinn dauðans sanni” [the true conqueror of death]. The figures of speech deployed by Hallgrímur are familiar: *paradox* in “með sínum dauða hann deyddi / dauðann

17. Gjennom å fremheve sig selv som ornamentikk, viser teksten ikke til tomheten, men til en altomfattende, uangripelig meningsfylde (Sejersted 1995, 143).

og sigur vann” [by his death he destroyed death and secured victory]; *repetitio* at the beginning of verse 11, “*hann* er mín hjálp og hreysti / *hann* er mitt rétta líf / *honum* af hjarta eg treysti / *hann* mýkir dauðans kíf” [he is my health and courage, / he is my true life, / in him with my heart I trust / he softens death’s assault] (*Ljóðmæli* 1,7); and, finally, *apostrophe*, when an imaginary figure is summoned and addressed. In this instance it is death personified, who receives this spirited greeting, full of confidence in victory: “dauði, ég óttast eigi / afl þitt né valdið gilt / í Kristí krafti eg segi / kom þú sæll, þá þú vilt” [death, I dread not / your dominion or proven power; / in Christ’s strength I say “welcome, whenever you wish”] (*Ljóðmæli* 1,7). With this address the hymn reaches its rhetorical and thematic climax. There is nothing more to say. Hymns often end in prayer, but in this instance it would have detracted from the poem’s overall impact. The three last verses consist of elegantly managed praise, which concludes when the narrator suddenly turns toward the foe that, earlier in the hymn, had seemed unconquerable and destructive—and confronts him unblinkingly.

