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## Chapter 5. Terminology and categorization

### 5.1 Introductory: types and scales of classification and terminology

#### 5.1.1 Oral-based and written-based analysis

The terminology and schemes of classification followed by tracts can give us an insight into the view of metrics prevailing at the time of the tractarian. In the case of Irish and Icelandic we see marked differences of principle. These differences may be ascribed to the continued influence of an oral *ars poetica* in Iceland, whereas in Ireland the oral aesthetic had been largely submerged by writing.

We can summarize the differences to be expected between oral-based *artes* and written-based ones as follows:

1. In an oral metrical system only aurally perceptible features can be reflected in classification or terminology.
2. In a writing-based system, features only perceptible aurally will be given less emphasis than in an oral system.
3. In written analysis there will be a greater degree of abstraction than in an oral *ars poetica*.

Levels of abstraction in metrical analysis can be seen in descending order in the following scale:

#### A. Analysis of abstract form using abstract symbols

This category contains all notational representations of metrical form, whether as diacritics,<sup>1</sup> musical notation,<sup>2</sup> typographical<sup>3</sup> or alphanumeric.<sup>4</sup> As an example we can take the Sievers notation. By means of the alphanumeric "A1", we are referred to a written catalogue, in which metrical forms are denoted by abstract notation,

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. Kuhn 1983 p. 31, Küper 1988 pp. 283-4.

<sup>2</sup> Heusler 1952, Pope 1981.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. in the emphasis of recurrences within a printed example of metrical text by selection of appropriate type, insertion of asterisks etc; cf. EIM p. vi.

<sup>4</sup> Sievers' categories, or the numerical syllabic notation traditional in Ireland, cf. EIM pp. 74-6.

which can then be matched to metrical realisations. The signs as used have no referents outside the field of metrics and are extremely precise.

A system such as this cannot exist without writing or some similar means of recording notation.

#### B. Use of restricted lexical elements

Typical examples of this method of classification are the metrical tracts of late Antiquity and their mediaeval successors; we may take the forms delineated in Servius' *De centum metris* as our example. As in the Sievers analysis, designations refer to a catalogue of abstract metrical forms, but here the nomenclature used has a lexical significance; in terms such as *dactylic hexameter*, *iambic dimeter*, *ionic trimeter*, the numerical element indicates not merely a classifier's subcategory, but also a characteristic of the verse, namely the number of recurring units, while the first indicates, again according to pre-established convention, the nature of these recurring units in a manner not purely abstract or arbitrary.

The terminology of the most precisely-applied terms in the Irish tracts is, in the above sense, extremely highly restricted, and at the same time highly abstract. This can be seen *inter alia* in the terms for the sixth and seventh classes in the *Mittelirische Verslehren*, *rannaigeacht* and *deibide*. Both terms are a comment on the structure of the metrical form; *rannaigeacht*, from *rann*, 'quatrain', could appositely be translated 'stanzaic', presumably referring to the inner coherence of the xaxa-rhyming stanza,<sup>5</sup> *deibide*, 'divided', referring to the ease with which the aabb form can be divided metrically into two halves.

#### C. Specific use of non-restricted lexical elements

A lower level of abstraction is present in a term such as the Icelandic *dunhenda hátt*, 'resoundingly-rhymed metre'. Here there are no abstract or purely numerical elements, and the degree of semantic restriction in the lexemes used is low. Thus *hátt* 'mode, habit, conduct' is widely applicable outside the field of metrics, the origin of the term *hent*, 'rhymed' in the verb *henda*, 'grasp', makes the visualisation of rhyme as the clasping together of metrical elements plainly clear, while the verb *duna*, used to describe the noise of a gale in the forest or waves on the shore, seems designed to convey the acoustic impression of the metre.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> I here use the term "*rannaigeacht* metres" only for those forms classed under the general heading of *rannaigeacht* in the mediaeval tracts, and not, as in EIM, to designate all quatrain forms with the basic rhyme-forms xaxa. In all *rannaigeacht* forms designated as such by the tracts full Irish rhyme *lánchubaid* 'pure rhyme' is obligatory at the end of the even lines, whereas some less strict form of rhyme, with the generic name *salchubaid* ('impure rhyme' as suggested by G. Mac Eoin is to be preferred as a translation to EIM p. 89, 'beam, joist' unadvisedly followed by Tranter 1991 p. 261) is often to be found at the ends of the odd lines. Typical examples are *Dagaisti* st. 5 and MV 1 st. 36, where in each case the 'impurity' consists of the use of *uaitne*, in which the stressed syllables agree in length only.

<sup>6</sup> The metre presumably derives its name 'resounding' from the emphatic effect of its distinctive feature, which is that the last accented syllable of the odd lines must be repeated as the first accented syllable of the even lines, as in Snorri's example *Hreintjörnum gleðr horna,*  
*horn ná líft at þorna* (Faulkes 1991 p. 15 st. 24).

#### D. Non-specific use of non-restricted lexical elements

The lowest stage on the scale of abstraction is then taken up by terms which make no attempt to analyse, and can be of more or less general application, such as *laíd* 'lay' in Irish, *ljóðaháttir* 'song metre' in Icelandic, *leoð* 'song' in Old English.

### 5.1.2 Analysis of syllabic-stanzaic and pre-syllabic forms

Each of the stanzaic-syllabic systems was preceded by an indubitably oral-based precursor. Particularly in the case of Ireland, this precursor had its own specific set of terminology, which overlapped with that of the later system. We possess only one tract dealing purely with syllabic-stanzaic metres (MV 1), and even the stanzaic *clavis*, Ceallach's *Dagaisti*, shows influence of the pre-stanzaic period.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the tracts assembled by Thurneysen as MV cannot be used for our purpose in their entirety, and any list of terminology abstracted from them in secondary literature<sup>8</sup> must be treated with caution: my analysis of terminology in Irish is therefore restricted to MV 1<sup>9</sup> and *Dagaisti*.

In Icelandic, both syllabic-stanzaic and non-isosyllabic metre is presumed to originate before the inception of writing; the terminology of the former can therefore be said to be an elaboration of, rather than a departure from, the latter. Nonetheless, we cannot assume that the tracts we possess are uninfluenced by the imported standards of written analysis.

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<sup>7</sup> e.g. in the use of the name *anamain*, applied elsewhere to accentual-alliterative forms, but used in *Dagaisti* to denote a form which is isosyllabic and isoaccentual, with alliteration, assonance and Irish rhyme. The degree of overlap can be seen in the fact that a metre which is nearly identical is classified by MV 3 (st. 124) as a form of *rinnaird* (cf. EIM p. 57).

<sup>8</sup> In practice this means to date the lists contained in the *Erläuterungen* in MV itself and its list of metres, as well as the indexes of terminology in the primers of Kuno Meyer and Gerard Murphy, invaluable as they are for a study of Irish metrics in general.

<sup>9</sup> I was greatly assisted in the interpretation of this tract by the guidance of Dr. Donncha Ó hAodha, at seminars in Freiburg and privately in Galway.

## 5.2 Terminology

### 5.2.1 Terms for poetic art in general

#### 5.2.1.1 Irish

In MV we find the following:<sup>10</sup>

*aí*<sup>11</sup> 'poetic inspiration, learning, metrical composition'<sup>12</sup>

*airchetal*<sup>13</sup> verbal noun of *ar-cain* 'sings, chants, recites'<sup>14</sup>

There would appear to be some justification for regarding these terms as having at some prior stage referred to two aspects of the tradition of oral lore; *aí* as static, placing emphasis on the hallowed content<sup>15</sup> of a text preserved as verse, the poet as 'oral reference-book', poetry as an art; *airchetal* as dynamic, referring to the continuance of preservation by means of performance as instruction, the poet as 'oral school-book', poetry as a medium. Neither term need be regarded as originating in anything other than an oral tradition.

*bairdne* 'bardic craft, bardic composition, bardic metre'. The etymologies proposed by Vendryes<sup>16</sup> draw attention to the function of the bard as performer of praise in public; in this respect he contrasts with his counterparts in Germanic society, the OE *scop* and the ON *skáld*, whose names suggest an emphasis of

<sup>10</sup> Thurneysen gives a summary of these terms in MV pp. 127-9. As overall term for the poetic art Thurneysen gives *filidecht*, op. cit. p. 127. This term does not appear in either of the sources referring purely to stanzaic-syllabic poetry, its place being taken by *bairdne*. Arguably, *filidecht* has a wider range of meaning than being a designation of the poetic art, encompassing the field of divination, of the works of *fili* as seer. (Cf. DIL sv. *filidecht*.) *Bairdne* can likewise not be regarded as an overall term. The twofold division of poetic practitioners means that there is no single term for the poetic art as defined by its practitioner comparable with *skáldskapr* in Icelandic.

<sup>11</sup> The following definitions are taken directly from, or based on those given in, DIL, in every case *sub verbo*.

<sup>12</sup> "aussi: 'savoir, connaissance, débat judiciaire'" (Vendryes. A-19, sv. *ae*). Vendryes considers no etymology as yet proposed worthy of support.

<sup>13</sup> Sic. MV, without lenition-marker. DIL gives both *aircetail* and *airchetail*. "Etymologically the -c- should be lenited < \*are-cantlo-. The unlenited form and the meaning 'teaching' etc. are due to confusion with *forcetal* 'teaching' < \*uor-cantlo-. Such confusion of *air* and *for* is common." (Mac Eoin, private communication.)

<sup>14</sup> But cf. Vendryes, A-40 sv. *airchetal*, 'enseignement, instruction'.

<sup>15</sup> This is more explicit in one of the 'dubious' cognates listed by Vendryes: OHG *êwa* 'loi, règle religieuse, mariage' (cf. MdnHG *Ehe*).

<sup>16</sup> sv. *bard*, B-18,19; according to Vendryes, likely cognates are Sanskrit *brah*, Lat. *gratus*, Icel. *bragr*. However, of the three, only *gratus* is accepted by Pokorny (cf. Pokorny 1956 p. 478 under 4. *g<sup>u</sup>ar*, "'die Stimme erheben', bes. 'loben, preisen, willkommen heissen', aber auch 'schelten; jammern'.")

their functions as satirists. *Bairdne* as such is thus art to be performed orally in public, or more neutrally, the art of one accustomed to thus performing, and need not be assigned to the domain of writing.

*dán* 'artistic faculty, art, especially the poetic faculty, the art of poetry', the etymological sense apparently being that of 'gift'<sup>17</sup>

*écse* 'revelation, lore, learning, esp. poetry, poetic composition'

*segda* 'favourable circumstances' [...] 'a kind of metre'.<sup>18</sup> The etymology of this term is doubtful. Perhaps we may accept Vendryes' derivation, as a combination of *sed/seg* 'force' with an adjectival suffix *-dae*,<sup>19</sup> and assume that the term arises from the view of a poem as something the making or recitation of which can bestow tangible benefit. One is thus inclined to ascribe the term to a primitive stage of society, presumably oral. However, caution is indicated. The *lorica* is such a benefit-bringing form, to which pre-Christian tendencies can be ascribed, and which can thus be regarded as at least partially originating in a past undisturbed by the concept of the letter. However, our earliest Irish *abecedarium* *Altus Prosator* was also regarded as conferring magical protection on those who could recite it perfectly,<sup>20</sup> and it is a truism worth repeating that there can be no *abecedarium* without the concept of the (written) alphabet.

*sóus* 'knowledge, science, learning, poetic lore'. If the etymology *so* + *fis* is accepted,<sup>21</sup> forming a compound with the sense 'beneficial knowledge' then the alliterating pair *segda ocus sous* form a similar combination to that of *ái ocus airchetail*, involving a dynamic and a static aspect of the same component. In this case we have beneficial force, *segda*, as dynamic aspect, and beneficial knowledge, *sous* as static aspect, the latter presumably referring to the latent power of the poet's unspoken knowledge (received orally from his forbears and not yet transmitted further) and the former to the beneficial action of this knowledge when shaped in poetic form once more and

<sup>17</sup> cf. Pokorny 1956 p. 225.

<sup>18</sup> But cf. Thurneysen, MV p. 127, who interprets it in a general sense. Vendryes is non-committal; "adj. fortuné, chanceux, heureux [...] Parfois substantivement. Le nom du mètre poétique *segda* est peut-être le même mot" (S-69, 70, sv. *segda*). Possibly a compound of *sed* 'force' and *da* 'good'? (Cf. Vendryes S-68 sv. *sed/seg*.)

<sup>19</sup> If we accept a derivation from *sed* here we must in any case assume that the *g* results from scribal alteration or change in usage; the form was not current until the 12th century (Mac Eoin, personal communication).

<sup>20</sup> [...] do mol se an t-Altus go romhor mar an cedna, agus do fhagaib se do buaduib air; gebe dogebhadh uair gach lai é, nac daimeóntai coidhce hé.

'And having commended the Altus very highly he [the pope] granted that whosoever should recite it daily should never be condemned to hell.' (Kelleher 1913 p. 238, trans. p. 239).

<sup>21</sup> Vendryes S-176, sv. *sóus*.

transmitted. There is thus no reason to ascribe either of these terms to the realms of writing.

### 5.2.1.2 Icelandic

*kveðskapr* 'that which is recited'

*skáldskapr* 'skaldic art'

*versagjörð* 'verse-making'<sup>22</sup> in the passage already referred to in Chapter 4:

En þó setja núverandi klerkar í versagjörð allar samstöfur annathvârt einnar stundar eða tveggja.

'But yet modern clerics ascribe to all syllables in their verse-making either one *mora* or two.'

This seems to refer specifically to the composition of verses in Latin, as suggested by the distinction between *vers* and *skáldskapr* in §14 p. 138, more explicitly *vers* and *norrænn skáldskapr* §14 p. 140.

*bragr* 'poetic eloquence' (appears only in compounds *bragarbót* 'poetic compensation', *bragarmál* 'poetic diction')

*óðr* 'ecstatic utterance' (appears once only, in the phrase *óð at stæra* 'to increase *óðr*', in Ht st. 25)

The sample is too small to permit any conclusions to be drawn from it alone, but appears to be a faithful reflection of general appellations, in which the two termini *bragr* and *óðr* appear as the words most frequently to be found as the poets' own characterisation of their art,<sup>23</sup> *skáldskapr* and *kveðskapr* being confined to expository texts. (It is characteristic that the legal text *Grágás* uses *skáldskapr* throughout, and Óláfr Hvítaskáld in his grammatical tract uses *skáldskapr* and *kveðskapr* as variations.)

<sup>22</sup> *Málscrúðsfræði* § 6 (ed. arn. p. 86).

<sup>23</sup> Kreutzer 1974 pp. 11, 14.



## 5.2.2 Terms for a complete poem

### 5.2.2.1 Irish

The Irish tracts have no designations for complete poems. The following, mentioned by Thurneysen, do appear, but not as generic terms for a poem as a whole:

*dúan* 'song, poem', "general term for a verse composition intended to be recited or sung" (DIL sv.), the sense in which it appears in *Dagaisti* st. 4, but used in MV 1 as a designation of a class of stanzaic form.<sup>24</sup>

*laíd* 'lay', used in MV 2 & 3 as a designation of a class of stichic form.

*broсна* appears to refer to metrical composition in the sentence "Aisti ollaman bairdni inso anuas, 7 forcain cach a brosnacha fóí" 'The metres of the ollave of bards [are listed] above, and each recites his *brosnacha* below him', as in various other examples given *sub verbo* in DIL. The non-metrical meaning is that of 'bundles, faggots'. It is at least conceivable that this meaning could be extended to stanzaic-syllabic verse, as consisting of lines of verse 'broken'<sup>25</sup> like twigs to a specified length and 'tied' by rhyme and syntax.

### 5.2.2.2 Icelandic

In the Icelandic texts, the most frequent term for a complete poem is *kvæði* 'something recited', the only other term used is *mál* 'speech' occurring as an element in the title *Grímnismál* referring to a poem in the Eddic corpus and not necessarily to be regarded as a generic term. Also occurring as an element in a title<sup>26</sup> is the term *drápa*,<sup>27</sup> indicating a complete poem of a specified form, comprising<sup>28</sup> *upphaf* 'opening', *stef* 'refrain', *stefjamél* 'section' and *niðurlag*<sup>29</sup> 'conclusion'.

<sup>24</sup> cf. Watkins 1976 pp. 270-277.

<sup>25</sup> cf. Vendryes sv. *broсна*, B-97, 'se rattache aux nombreux termes signifiant 'briser, casser', qui commencent par *br-*'; cf. *brú* 4, B-100.

<sup>26</sup> *drápan steflausá*, in the commentary on *Háttatal* st. 35, *tögdrápulagas* title of st. 68.

<sup>27</sup> For the suggestion that the *drápa* was seen as a construction described using words applicable to the building of houses see Tranter 1991 pp. 255-6, Kreutzer 1974 pp. 247-57. It should be noted that Snorri's terminology is significantly less concrete or architectonic than that quoted elsewhere.

<sup>28</sup> The following terminology is taken from the commentary preceding *Háttatal* st. 71.

<sup>29</sup> The terms *upphaf* and *niðurlag* in the one example from Snorri refer to the beginnings and conclusions of the individual sections of the *drápa*. (loc. cit.)



## 5.2.3 Terms for stanzaic construction

### 5.2.3.1 Irish

MV refers to the stanza throughout as *rann* (masculine) 'stanza', except in 1 p. 7, where the term used is *comairg*, 'outcry, battle-cry', also 'invocation, commemoration'.<sup>30</sup>

The stanza can be divided into:

*lethrann* 'half-stanza', (otherwise simply *leth* 'half').

*cethrama* 'quarter', which is coterminous with

*rann* (feminine) 'portion, line of verse' as used in MV 1 p. 7.

No further division greater than that of the individual syllable *sillab*, *dialt*, exists in this area, the majority of stanzas thus being regarded as four-unit entities, as suggested by modern Irish typographical convention.<sup>31</sup> A particularity of the Irish terminology is the provision of specific names for these units, depending on the number of syllables contained in them, as the following illustrates:

*Ceist iarum: cade techta dechnada máir?*

*Cetri randa cac[h]*<sup>32</sup> *comairg* i suidiu, *id est* da bricht *ocus* da luibencosach, condot ocht ndialt fichet insin; *ocus* i recomrac forba cacha rainde and dogres.

'A question now; what is the form of *dechnad mór*?

There are four portions to each stanza here, that is two octosyllables and two hexasyllables, so that there are twenty-eight syllables, and the last word in each portion is a disyllable.' (p. 7)

The terms for groupings of syllables are subsumed under the generic term *deach* 'metrical foot' as follows:<sup>33</sup>

*dialt* 'monosyllable'

*recomarc* 'disyllable'

*íarcomarc* 'trisyllable'

*feles* 'tetrasyllable'

*clóenré* 'pentasyllable'

<sup>30</sup> cf. Vendryes *sv. comarc* (C-166) 'invocation, cri de guerre, signal', and *sv. arc-* (A-86) 'demander', with the compound *imchomarc* 'enquête, interrogation, salut', cognate with Welsh *cyfarch* 'greet'.

<sup>31</sup> The most common MS convention is that of setting out two *rann* (in the sense of 'line' or 'portion') to one manuscript line, the divide between the two being sometimes, but not invariably, indicated by a *virgulum*.

<sup>32</sup> Thurneysen's emendation for *cath*.

<sup>33</sup> Spellings standardized as in EIM. For provenance and variant spellings see MV pp. 129-30; for examples see the portion of MV 1 giving stanzas with line lengths from one to eight syllables, pp. 20-22.

*luibencosach* 'hexasyllable'  
*claidemnus* 'heptasyllable'  
*bricht* 'octosyllable'.

As the above extract exemplifies, the terms were not only used to define the lengths of "quarters", but also, to indicate the nature of cadences.<sup>34</sup> They do not show the same strictness of organization that the categorization of metrical forms reveals, only *recomarc* and *íarcomarc* showing any signs of being related members of a system.<sup>35</sup> This lack of system suggests that the origin of the terms, if not their later application, lies outside the field of stanzaic metrics, a suggestion borne out by those instances where the words are attested elsewhere sufficiently frequently to give an indication of usage.<sup>36</sup> Though an origin in written learning seems improbable, the terms do not have a strong oral component, and in terms of our investigation can be considered neutral.

### 5.2.3.2 Icelandic

The most frequent term used by Snorri for 'stanza' is *vísa*; the term is used once by Óláfr Hvítaskáld.<sup>37</sup> On one occasion Snorri uses the term *erendi*,<sup>38</sup> 'breath',<sup>39</sup> stressing the performance aspect of the stanza as a length of recital between two breaths.

The Icelandic stanza was considered by Snorri as being divided into two *helmingar*, 'halves', each of these into two *fjórðungar*, 'quarters', and each of these into two *vísuorð*, 'stanza-words', these corresponding with the lines of modern Icelandic typographical convention. Each *vísuorð* was composed of a specific number of syllables *samstǫfur*, this word (*stafa* 'stave, letter' + *saman* 'together') suggesting written origin.<sup>40</sup> There are no specific terms for lines of various lengths or for cadences.

<sup>34</sup> In practice, the units up to *íarcomarc* seem to have indicated cadences (cf. *ollbairdne aichlech iarcomarcach*, MV 1 p. 11 n. 2) and those from *feles* onwards, line-unit lengths (cf. *dechnad mbrechtfelesach*, MV 1 p. 9).

<sup>35</sup> cf. the section on *dúnadh* at the outset of MV 2 p. 29, EIM p. 43 n. 4 and, for a discussion of *dúnadh* referring to MV 2, Henry 1964, esp. pp. 91-5.

<sup>36</sup> a) *luibenchosach*, DIL 'unprepossessing', (only one reference outside metrics),  
 b) *bricht* 'spell, charm, incantation'.

<sup>37</sup> ed. arn. p. 152. It is interesting to note that Óláfr Hvítaskáld adjusts the definition of his originals, designed for prose or stichic poetry, to make it refer specifically to stanzaic form; loc. cit. n. 14.

<sup>38</sup> Faulkes 1991 p. 1 l.21.

<sup>39</sup> More exactly *ór* 'out' + *önd* 'breath'.

<sup>40</sup> This would appear to lend plausibility to the view that the strict syllabic analysis of skaldic metres was first practised by Snorri himself.

## 5.2.4 Terms for patterns of recurrence within the stanza

### 5.2.4.1 Irish

*aiste* lit. 'quality, characteristic' thus 'metre', 'metrical form'

*tomus* lit. 'act of measuring, measure', hence 'pattern of construction, metre'<sup>41</sup>

*fodail* 'division'

Additionally, in the sense 'form', MV 1 has:

*cruth* in the phrase "it núacrutha na haistí seo ar it nualítride arancadar et" 'these metres are new forms, since it is the newly-lettered who have invented them.'<sup>42</sup>

The following terms for specific recurrences are found in MV 1 & 4:

*cubaid* 'harmony, rhyme'. In *rannaigeacht*-type metres with the rhyme-scheme abab a distinction is made between *salchubaid* 'impure rhyme' (the a-rhyme) and *lánchubaid* (the b-rhyme).

*rinn* 'end' appears to denote any metrically marked line-conclusion; it is most familiar in the pair *rinn* & *airdrinn*, denoting respectively the monosyllabic and disyllabic rhyming cadences which alternate to produce the rhyme characteristic of the *deibide* metres. It occurs as a technical term only in MV 4 among our texts, but is implicit in the title of the *rinnaird* group of metres.

*tairmforcenn* 'termination', on the other hand, otherwise used as a term for inflexional endings, appears here to denote cadence,<sup>43</sup> as the following suggests:

Dorimter dano dá cenn\* dechnad\* mar\* ann id est sneiddechnad ocus dechnad trebraid; ocus ní sai[ni]get i tomsib na tarmarcnib, sainigit im morro i forgneib\* cuibdius\*.<sup>44</sup>

'Two types of *dechnad* *már* are distinguished, that is loose *dechnad* and woven *dechnad*; and they do not differ in the measure of the terminations, but they differ in the manifestation of rhyme.'

It is noticeable that the following terms describing recurrences present in the stanzas quoted do not occur in the commentary.

<sup>41</sup> "t. .i. *mensura* laisin Laitneoir" ' *tomus* id est *mensura* with the Latinists'. DIL sv. *tomus*.

<sup>42</sup> Thus Ó hAodha 1991 p. 218, see also *ibid.* p. 219 n. 57.

<sup>43</sup> cf. the equivalent use of the verb *forcenna*, pp. 9, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Text following MV p. 7; for the translation I have adopted the following variants from Thurneysen's apparatus, indicated by asterisks; *cenél deachnada móir*, B<sup>a</sup>, *forgnuis cuibdiusa* B, B<sup>a</sup>.

*uaim* 'stitching' for alliteration

*aicill* 'anticipation' for rhyme of one line-ending to a line-internal word in the following line

*fidrad frecomuil* 'staves of joining', i.e. interstanzaic alliteration, appears in the opening list of bardic accomplishments, and is the only hint in the tract that alliteration of any sort might be metrically relevant.

#### 5.2.4.2 Icelandic

*hátt* lit. 'manner of conduct', thus metrical form

*kveðandi* lit. 'recitation' but used by both Snorri and Óláfr Hvítaskáld to denote the pattern of construction, e.g.

Hér er stafasetning sú er hætti ræðr ok kveðandi gerir<sup>45</sup>

'Here is that phonemic regulation, which controls the form (*hátt*)<sup>46</sup> and creates the metre (*kveðandi*).'<sup>47</sup>

whereas in the description of rhyme, where they appear in parallel:

Önnur stafasetning er sú er fylgir setning hljóðs þess er hátt gerir ok kveðandi<sup>48</sup>

'The second phonemic regulation is that according to which those sounds are positioned, which create the form (*hátt*) and metre (*kveðandi*).'

I would suggest that in these references *hátt* refers to form in the sense of distinct, named and recognized part of the skaldic repertoire,<sup>49</sup> *kveðandi* to form conceived

<sup>45</sup> Faulkes 1991 p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Thus Faulkes, ed. cit. p. 114 (glossary, *sv. hátt*).

<sup>47</sup> But see *ibid.* *sv. kveðandi* and the range of meanings presented there; for this particular instance Faulkes prefers 'poetical effect, sound of poetry; referring to alliteration'.

<sup>48</sup> Faulkes 1991 p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Kuhn (1981 p. 294) suggests that the term *háttlaus* applied to one specific skaldic metre (Snorri's no. 67) proves the primacy of alliteration to the system. One could also deduce from the usage, that if *háttlaus* means 'without internal rhyme', that being what constitutes form, then *hátt* in practice means specifically 'internal rhyme and its positioning'. In fact, this does not conflict with my reading, as the positioning of these elements was one of the more frequent means of distinguishing one named form from another, so that *hátt* = 'named form' and *hátt* = 'positioning of rhyme' are virtually synonymous. Snorri's terminology is thus to be understood as follows: Various forms are to be distinguished by rhyme, which therefore creates form within metre; alliteration, on the other hand, provides the basic framework around which

as a set of recurrences followed by a given poet, whether prescribed or self-invented. Thus to refer to *dróttkvætt* is to invoke the concept of *hátt*, to refer to a six-syllable line with alliteration, internal rhyme and cadence is to invoke that of *kveðandi*.

Terms for recurrences in the Icelandic tracts centre on the twin features of alliteration and rhyme around which the stanzas are constructed.

A term for alliteration in the abstract does not exist in these tracts.<sup>50</sup> Instead, the three alliterating phonemes are seen in concrete terms as elements in a construction; *höfuðstafr* 'head-stave' being used of the primary alliterant, which falls on the first accent of the even lines and is regarded by Snorri as being the foundation of the metre ('Sá stafr ræðr kveðandi'); *stuðull* 'support' being applied to the secondary alliterant (two in the case of regular *dróttkvætt*) which occurs in the odd line preceding the primary alliterant with which it alliterates.

Rhyme<sup>51</sup> is subsumed under the generic term *hending* 'grasping', cf. *henda*, 'catch', which in our texts can apply equally to internal or end-rhyme; thus the end-rhymes in the metres of the *runhent* group are referred to as *aðalhending* without further specification. Two subcategories of *hending* occur in the texts:

*aðalhending*, 'chief rhyme', phonemic<sup>52</sup> identity of tonic vowel and subsequent consonants of a stress-bearing syllable up to the following vowel or word-boundary, *skothending* 'shot (=inserted?) rhyme', phonemic identity of all consonants following the tonic vowel of a stress-bearing syllable, the vowels themselves being non-identical.

In addition Snorri uses separate terms to denote not the type of rhyme, but its position in the *vísuorð*, namely: *frumhending* 'forward rhyme' for the first of the two internal rhymes in each line of *dróttkvætt*, which is variable in position, *viðrhending* 'counter-rhyme' for the latter of the two rhymes, always falling *í þeirri samstöfu er ein er síðar* 'in that syllable where only one is following', i.e. position five.

The flexible rhyme *frumhending* is assigned the following names according to position: *oddhending* 'point-rhyme', applied to a rhyme syllable in position one, ('Í upphafi orðs'), *hluthending* 'share-rhyme' in any other position.

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the various forms can be constructed, and therefore *creates* metre, but *controls* form. Metre (*kveðandi*) is the overall term, created by the overriding instance, alliteration, whereas form (*hátt*) is the subordinated principle, created by the subordinate instance, rhyme.

<sup>50</sup> Thus Óláfr Hvítaskáld equates alliteration with *paromoeon*, but does not give a single Norse word as a translation; ed. arn. p. 148.

<sup>51</sup> For the specifically Icelandic use of rhyme see Ch. 6.

<sup>52</sup> That the identity is phonemic and not graphematic is attested as early as Stanza 2, line 2, with the *aðalhending*: *braks/ax* (fleinbraks limu axla).

## 5.3 Patterns of classification

### 5.3.1 Irish, general

Irish metrical tracts, and in particular MV 1, show a strikingly sophisticated system of metrical classification. This is a reflection of a system whereby practitioners of the poetic arts were ordered (theoretically at least) into a strict hierarchy, where the rank of the hierarchy was determined by mastery of specific metrical forms.

Two distinct types of name-formation are used;

a) the base-lexeme is modified or subdivided by prefixing one or at most two lexical morphemes, nominal, adjectival or prepositional, e.g.:

*bairdne* 'bardistry'  
*casbairdne* 'complex bardistry'  
*snédchasbairdne* 'swift complex bardistry'

b) the base-lexeme is postmodified by up to three adjectives or adjectival phrases, e.g.:

*rannaigeacht* 'stanzaic'  
 " *gairit* 'shortened stanzaic'  
 " " *chetharcubaid* 'four-rhymed shortened stanzaic'  
 " " " *dialtach* 'monosyllabic four-rhymed shortened stanzaic'

The distribution of these two types is significant, as the examples hint. Categorization by prefixing goes together with an 'impressionistic' denomination of metrical form, as in the example above, where no indication is given of the nature of the 'complexity' or the 'swiftness' demanded of the metres *casbairdne* and *snédchasbairdne*. Where terms are postmodified, however, the elements used generally have a specifically metrical significance and can be used to form contrasting pairs; for *rannaigeacht gairit* (short stanzaic) there is a corresponding *rannaigeacht fhota* (long stanzaic), and they differ in one respect only; the longer form has four lines of seven syllables, the shorter has a first line of three syllables, the rest seven. Similarly, for the form *dialtach* (monosyllabic), there is a form *recomarcach* (disyllabic), the term referring in each case to the line-ending cadence.

Post-modification is to be found above all in categorizing two groups of metres, *rannaigeacht* and *deibide* (the latter term, 'divided', refers to the fact that the stanza consists of two rhyming couplets, and therefore can be split metrically, whereas the *rannaigeacht* form rhymes abab and thus cannot be divided). These metres are the standard forms for religious and scholarly verse, as opposed to the panegyric use of *bairdne* and similar forms using prefixing; it is thus no coincidence that it is these forms that are characterized by a method descended from the type of analysis used in the handbooks of classical Antiquity.

### 5.3.2 Classification in Icelandic - Snorri's *Háttatal*

*Háttatal* is the only source offering a categorization in any way comparable with that in Irish. The following principles of nomenclature can be seen:

a) Prefix + *hendr/henda/hent*<sup>53</sup> (18 cases in all)

The prefix is in each case an adverbial modifying the participle *hendr* as follows:

- 24 dunhent
- 29 detthent
- 32 riðhent
- 35 skjálfhent in forna
- 36 þríhent
- 41 liðhent
- 42 rétthent
- 43 in minni alhenda
- 44 alhent
- 45 stammhent
- 46 samhent
- 52 skothendr
- 53 liðhendr
- 64 hrynhenda óbreytt
- 65 draughent
- 74 stúfhent
- 75 náhent
- 76 hnugghent
- 80 (- 94, 15 varieties) runhent

Stanza 64 can be seen by metrical analysis to be the third in a group of four associated stanzas, a 'hrynhent-group', introduced by the words

Nú skal rita hrynjandi háttu; þessi er hinn fyrsti<sup>54</sup>

'Now [I] shall write the toppling metres; this is the first'

and followed by stanza 62. This stanza is followed in turn by an explanation of the principles of *hrynhent* namely:

Í hrynhendum háttum eru optast átta samstöfur í vísuorði, en hendingar ok stafaskipti fara sem í dróttkvæðum hætti. Þetta kóllum vér dróttkvæða hrynjandi.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Past participle inflected: *henda* (fem.) as independent adjectival noun, *hendr* as adjectival attribute of *hátt* (masc.) 'metre' or *hent* as predicative adjective. The forms in following lists are normalized when not postmodified.

<sup>54</sup> Faulkes 1991 p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*



'In *hrynhent* metres there are usually eight syllables in the *vísuorð*, but the rhymes and alliterations go as in *dróttkvætt*. We call this *dróttkvætt-hrynjandi*.'

There follows stanza 63, in which the above conditions are met, with the added restriction that the *frumhendingar* must all be of the *hluthending* type, i.e. not occurring in position 1. In a scheme similar to that in MV 1 we might thus expect this metre to bear a name of the postmodified pattern, e.g.

Dróttkvæðr háttir hrynjandi hluthend.

Instead, the commentary merely informs us ingenuously:

Er þessi hrynhenda kǫlluð trollsháttir.<sup>56</sup>

'this *hrynhenda* is called troll's metre.'

Similarly, the following stanza (65) might permit us to increase the '*hrynhent* - group' to four, it being in effect a heptasyllabic<sup>57</sup> *hrynjandi*, or, following the above scheme,

dróttkvæðr háttir hrynjandi in minni

However, the stanza is simply introduced, without any unambiguous link with the preceding group, with the words *Þetta er draughent* 'this is ghost-rhymed'.

The appellations *trolls háttir* and *draughent* are typical of a group of names in *Háttalykill* from which the modern reader can reconstruct no characteristics of the metre whatsoever. The number of such terms in *Háttatal* is relatively large; it includes the seven metres known purely by the name of the skald to whom they are attributed,<sup>58</sup> and those named after supernatural beings (as well as *trollsháttir* and *draughent* there are *draugsháttir* (30)<sup>59</sup> 'revenant's<sup>60</sup> metre' and *flagðaháttir*

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> i.e. one syllable short; however, the term *styft* 'truncated' is not applicable here, since that term applies only when the final syllable is removed from a feminine cadence.

<sup>58</sup> st. 54-8, 79, 98.

<sup>59</sup> The pair *draugsháttir* 'ghost's metre' and *draughent* (lit. 'ghost-rhymed') illustrate just how impossible it is to draw any logical conclusions from the literal meanings of the names. In this case the form ending in *hent* retains the rhymes of standard *dróttkvætt*: the variation is one of syllable-count. Conversely, in the form without the name-element *hent*, i.e. without specific reference to rhyme in the terminology, it is precisely in the regulation of the rhymes, (restricted to positions 1 & 5 in the even lines) that the peculiarity of the metre consists.

<sup>60</sup> The *draugr* was the living corpse, of superhuman strength, exemplified by the figure of Glámr in *Grettis saga*.

'ogress's<sup>61</sup> metre'(34)).<sup>62</sup> As all but 30 are syllabically increased versions of *dróttkvætt*, one could be forgiven for assuming that the main metrical function of the Icelandic ghost was that of lengthening *dróttkvætt*.

b) (adverbial + ) past participle of process

In this group, the title of the stanza suggests that a certain alteration has been performed on a basic stanza as follows:

- 12 *stælt* 'stealed'
- 13 *hjástælt* 'side-stealed'
- 14 *tiltekit* (name repeated in 39) 'seized'
- 25 *tilsagt* 'explained'
- 28 *tvískelft* 'twice shaken'
- 33 *veggjat* 'walled'
- 48 *klifat* 'repeated'
- 77 *hálfhneppt* 'half-shortened'
- 78 *alhnept* 'fully-shortened'

c) Adverbial + *mælt*

The final element of all components of this group suggests the manner in which a poem is to be, or can be, delivered:

- 9 *sexánmælt* 'sixteen-spoken'
- 10 *áttmælt* 'eight-spoken'
- 47 *iðurmælt* 'repeatedly-spoken'
- 68 *togmælt* 'drawn-spoken' (overall term for 68-70)
- 70 *hagmælt* 'fluently-spoken' (specific term, division of above)

The form *sexánmælt* consists of sixteen complete subject + verb units, both here and in the two examples given in *Háttalykill*. These are precisely those units that Óláfr Hvítaskáld refers to as *fullkomin málsgrein*, translating Priscian's expression *sententia perfecta*.<sup>63</sup> Snorri, however, refers to these and other syntactic units that we might think of as sentences not as *málsgrein* 'sentence', but as *mál* 'utterance'. By doing so, he is drawing emphasis away from the structure of the sentence, as analysed on the page, and emphasizing instead the acoustic aspect, the sixteen breaks in delivery by which the syntactical pattern is orally characterized. In doing so he is being led away, by the traditional, orally conceived title of the form, from a writing-based analysis to one based on patterns of perceived sound.

<sup>61</sup> The "Grendel's mother"-type figure with whom Grettir wrestles in ÍF 7 p. 212 (ch. 65) is described variously as *tröllkona* and *flagðkona*.

<sup>62</sup> Other examples in this category, in which no word in the title, explicit or implicit, is even in the slightest degree reminiscent of any metrical feature of the stanza are 37, *inn dýri hátt*, 71, *grœnlenski hátt*, and 73, *nýi hátt*.

<sup>63</sup> ed. arn. vol. 2 p. 90 & n.

d) forms in N (common) + *hátt* 'metre'

- 26 *orðskviðuhátt*
- 27 *álagshátt*
- 37 *inn dýri hátt*
- 63 *trollshátt*
- 67 *háttlausa*
- 71 *grænlenzki hátt* / *grænlenzki hátt*
- 72 *inn skammi hátt*
- 73 *nýi hátt*

## e) Personal names

Stanzas 54-58 are named after the skalds Ragnarr, Torf-Einarr, Egill, Fleinn and Bragi respectively.

## f) Miscellaneous nominal forms:

- 11 *fjórðungalok*
- 12 *langlok*
- 16 *drøgur*
- 17 *refhvørf* (generic for 17-23)
- 31 *bragabót*
- 40 *greppaminni*
- 49 *stúfr* (generic for 49-51)
- 59 *kimlaband* (generic for 59-61)
- 66 *munnvørp*

Snorri tends to organize in triads wherever possible, but this is rarely reflected in the nomenclature he uses. One triad, for example, Sts 9-11, groups together stanzas containing sixteen, eight and four complete utterances, but the terminology of the first two, *sextánmælt* and *áttmælt*, is at variance both in principle and in vocabulary from that of the third, *fjórðungalok*. The same is true of the next triad, *stælt*, *hjástælt* and *langlokum*, while to expect a common phenomenon from the termination *lok* in the third stanza of each triad would be mistaken.<sup>64</sup>

This incongruity cannot be explained as the result of an incapacity of the author of the tract to think in consistent categories. It is clear that he has done what he could to organize the metrical forms in the poem into logically coherent units; wherever possible he has also let this coherence be reflected in the terminology of the metres.

<sup>64</sup> Two different uses of the verb *loka* 'shut' are concerned; in *fjórðungalok* there is a closure at the end of each *fjórðung*, in *langlokur* the six internal lines are enclosed in the first and last. (cf. Mdn Icel. *samløka* 'sandwich'.)

Thus four sets of triads are depicted as units not only metrically<sup>65</sup> but in nomenclature; these are the groups *stúfar* (49-51), *kimlabǫnd* (59-61), the double-triad of *refhvǫrf* metres (17-19, 20-22) and the *runhenda* group.

These groups show an ascending scale of complexity in categorization. In the case of *stúfar* and *kimlabǫnd* the form is:

comparative of size + generic

as follows:

| comparative | generic          |
|-------------|------------------|
| 0           |                  |
| meiri }     | stúfr /kimlabǫnd |
| mesti       |                  |

In the case of *refhvǫrf* a further degree of categorization is introduced:

generic + comparative of size + ordinal numeral

as follows:

| generic    | size       | ordinal     |
|------------|------------|-------------|
|            |            | 0           |
|            | in mesti { | ǫnnur       |
|            |            | hinn þriði  |
| refhvǫrf { |            |             |
|            |            | 0           |
|            | in minni { | ǫnnur       |
|            |            | hinn þriði* |

Finally, the fifteen metres classified under *runhenda* are categorized by a system of co-ordinates as follows:

| bálkr | rétt R. | minni R. | minnsta R. |
|-------|---------|----------|------------|
| 1.    | 80      | 81       | 82         |
| 2.    | 83      | 84       | 85         |
| 3.    | 86      | 87       | 88         |
| 4.    | 89      | 90       | 91         |
| 5.    | 92      | 93       | 94         |

<sup>65</sup> As for example in the *hrynhent* group, where the commentator classes all three as *hrynjandi* despite the ensuing disparity of nomenclature.

In other words any of the fifteen stanzas can be pinpointed by giving the number of the *bálkr* to which it belongs, and the degree of 'declination' from the ideal of *rétt runhenda*, stanza 90, for example, being *minni runhenda hins fjórða bálks*.<sup>66</sup>

On the scale of abstractness set out at the beginning of this chapter, this system ranks higher than any except those comprising group a), being comparable with that adopted by Sievers. Where Sievers uses letters as categories and cardinal numerals as subdivisions, Snorri uses ordinal numerals as categories and degrees of comparison as subdivisions. This degree of abstractness is found nowhere else in *Háttatal* and exceeds anything to be found in the Irish tracts.

In the case of *runhenda*, the end-rhymed metre that was in the process of becoming accepted in place of the more traditional internally-rhymed metres, Snorri had sufficient scope to demonstrate his powers of analysis as an individual. In the remainder of the tract his freedom was curtailed, to a greater or lesser extent, by tradition. The extent of the contrast between the most abstract and systematic on the one hand, and the most concrete and least systematic on the other, within the same tract, demonstrate the extent to which a tract firmly set within the age of writing, and compiled by a poet/author imbued with the learned tradition of Western Latinity, is still firmly conditioned by an underlying oral tradition.

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<sup>66</sup> To obtain this stanza name I have merely combined the title of the section: *Nú hefr upp enn fjórða bálk runhendinga* with the title of the stanza *Nú er minni runhenda*.