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Chapter 8. Syllabicity, cadence and wordboundary

8.1 Syllabicity

The term *stanzaic-syllabic* implies two levels of metrical recurrence both relying on the syllable: a lesser unit of recurrence, the verse-line, is grouped into a larger, the *stanza*, syllable count being relevant to the definition of both. Varying line-lengths within a stanza are permissible but not obligatory. Where varying line-lengths do occur, the sequence is fixed and is the same in each stanza. The boundaries of a stanza-form can be clarified by secondary, form-giving, but not necessarily metrical features, such as rhyme, syntax or coterminous melody. Both systems under examination are generally accepted as being variants of *stanzaic-syllabic* form.

8.1.2 The significance of syllabicity in the oral-written context

Both sets of tracts being examined inherited the same tradition of syllable-definition, typified by the somewhat vague definition produced by Donatus:

> Syllaba est conprehensio litterarum vel unius vocalis enuntiatio temporum capax[1]

a definition which he perceives within the framework of the existing quantitative, *mora*-based metrical system of classical Latin as his final comments make clear:

> longa syllaba duo tempora habet. brevis unum. syllaba apud metricos semipes nominatur.[2]

This definition of the syllable, based as it is on the temporal component, and thus on the language in oral form, would thus appear at first sight to be an admirable instrument for the analysis of oral form. Nonetheless, we must assume that the adoption of the syllable, as opposed to the accent, as the basic unit of metrical analysis measurement in the tracts examined was more liable to have been a concomitant of written than of oral culture. The reasons are the following:

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1 Keil IV p. 368.

2 ibid. p. 369.

1. The syllable however defined remains an arbitrary unit, incapable of support without a framework of abstract analysis. Phonetic analysis of a given metrical utterance will reveal contours of intonation and dynamic interpretable as stress-accent, *caesura* and syntactic breaks. There will be no breaks in the sound-wave continuum capable of indicating with any form of reliability where syllable-divisions occur.

2. The abstract concept of the syllable as defined by Donatus *et al.* is thus entirely dependent on a scheme of linguistic segmentation that cannot be conducted on the oral plane. It is based on the concept of the letter as *minima pars orationis.*

3. The analysis of the syllable on the basis of time, or of the presence of a vowel, is based on a circular argument. Donatus admits the presence of semivowels, which can be prolonged in time, but differ from vowels in that they form no syllables. A vowel is thus effectively defined as a syllable-forming letter, and a syllable as a vowel-containing group of letters. There is no adequate phonetic explanation in the classical definition as to why groups such as /nr/, /lg/, capable of bearing a *mora's* duration, should be denied syllabic status. The definition is only viable in conjunction with the segmentation provided by the written alphabet.

The problems this definition can raise for the oral metricist are made evident by the existence of syllabically ambivalent words, where elements exist which seem neither happily monosyllabic nor unambiguously disyllabic.

Arguably, the closer a given, supposedly syllable-based metrical system is to the principles of oral analysis, the more likely it is to take cognizance of such ambivalent phenomena and make allowance for them. To the analyst of the written page they can be assigned strict categories on a graphematical basis, such that *flour* would be regarded as strictly monosyllabic, *flower* as disyllabic, despite the fact that, for example, speakers of Southern British standard will pronounce both as monosyllabic, speakers of East Midlands dialects will pronounce both as disyllabic, and few will be found to make any distinction between the two.[3] The conventional treatment of clusters developing epenthetic vowels in Irish and Icelandic (e.g. the forms *calg* and *prestr* [4]) as monoyllables is an indication of the constraint of the system.

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3 This is reflected in the fact that British standard dictionaries give identical phonetical transcriptions for both.

4 Both the Middle Irish form *calg* and the 11th century Icelandic *prestr* developed epenthetic vowels during the transition into the modern language. These vowels remain unmarked in Irish, whereas final postconsonantal -r has become standardized as -ur, giving Modern Icelandic *prestur.* They appear both to be treated as monosyllables in the metrics of the period concerned.

8.1.3 The significance of syllabicity in stress-time languages

Both Middle Irish and Early Icelandic were languages in which stress, however defined, played a principle part in the formation of rhythm and intonation contours. If we wish to refer to them in terms of the traditional dichotomy between syllable-time and stress-time, then both are more susceptible to analysis as stress-time than as syllable-time languages.[5]

It is comparatively difficult to perceive isosyllabicity in these languages as an audible form of metrical recurrence. Identity of syllable-count will neither produce isochrony, nor rhythmical regularity, nor regularity of intonation. The stress-accent has the effect of producing a high level of contrast between individual syllables both on the level of quantity and of vowel-quality, exacerbating the problem mentioned above, that enclitic vowels may be indistinguishable from epenthetics.

A strict syllabic metre in a language of this type would thus appear to be a construct dictated and/or upheld by factors outside the structure of the language. These may consist of archaism, metre being preserved from a period before the language developed its accentual structure,[6] or of political or aesthetic subjugation as discussed in Chapter 6 above, and metres may be supported by their presence in liturgy and their being set to definite melodies by means of which their regularity is enhanced (cf. Chapter 3).

The most powerful support of non-audible metre is the grapheme. Once the concept of the written symbol has been introduced into a metrical system, it permits a simultaneous analysis on two planes, the audible and the visible. This is the more true when the import of writing brings with it an evolved system of segmentation such as that practised by the Latin grammarians. This segmentation, involving the definition of syllables by tying them to vowel-phonemes, enables the literate analyst to overcome the acoustic problem presented by the effects of the stress-accent on enclitic vowels. On paper, no vowel is reduced.

8.1.4 Syllabic analysis

8.1.4.1 Syllabic analysis in Irish

The metrical tracts use syllable count as the primary method of analysis. For their purposes the syllable is taken for granted and not further defined. The possibility that there may be subdivisions within the overall category of syllable is not discussed. The only categorization that does take place is that of syllabic groupings, as listed in Chapter 5, wherein a name is given for numbers of syllables between

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5 But see Cable 1991 ch. 1 for a qualified view of this theory.

6 This is the argument adopted by Calvert Watkins 1963 pp. 212-9.

one *dialt* and eight *bricht*. As has been observed in Chapter 5, these categories can either be applied to the syllabic lengths of cadences or of verse-lines.

In particular, the metrical tracts do not mention the fact that in order to establish regularity of syllable count it is sometimes necessary to manipulate syllables in some form or other. Thus MV 1 does not mention elision and appears to avoid it. It was nonetheless apparently an element of poetic practice in the period; Ceallach's *Dagaisti* contains an example in the opening line:

Sluindfet duib dagaisti in dána,

where the final *i* of *dagaisti* elides with the article *in*, and the elision is repeated in the final stanza

is iat sin ardaiste in dána,

while further examples are to be found in the final line of stanza three

romtha a rath

and in the opening line of stanza six:

dechnad mór at millsi a laide

involving in each case the possessive *a*, and again in the final line of the same stanza

aiste is ferr i nHere

involving the copula *is*.

It is clear from a view of this poem as a whole that elision is not automatic whenever vowels coincide; Ceallach's requirement appears to be that an unstressed vocalic final must coincide with an unstressed vocalic initial; even in the combination of three vowels in the third line of stanza four

fegaid mar atá a aeb

there is no elision, the final of the verb substantive *atá* being both long and stressed, the vowel of the noun *aeb* being likewise. It is thus clear that to Ceallach at least, elision is a process governed by definite rules involving vowel length, stress or both. However, the writer of MV 1 does not feel it necessary to explain this either in his syllabic analyses of metres or in his disquisition on syllabic groupings.

The tract *Trefhocul*,[7] concerned with metrical faults and metrical licences,[8] appears more inclined to permit poets to distort the language to enable them to comply with the strict demands of the syllabic metre than to permit relaxations of the requirement of strict syllable-count. Thus among the licences permitted are

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7 LL pp. 165-72.

8 For a detailed discussion of these see now Kalyguine 1993 pp. 48-64.

mallrugud 'retardation', in which a vowel is doubled or hiatus introduced to adjust the syllabic count, *delidin litterda* 'metathesis of letters', in which the order of letters may be readjusted to gain an extra syllable (the example given being the writing of *slíocht* as *silocht*), *condail,* the addition of redundant syllables. If we admit Kalyguine's argument[9] that the Irish metrical system was influenced at an early stage by the tendency towards systematic obfuscation by a seer class jealous of its secret knowledge, then manipulations such as the above would have been in character before the adoption of the syllabic metre; this is suggested by the inclusion in the list of licences of *Trefhocul* of a phenomenon such as *cendfochrus,* the alteration of an initial consonant to permit alliteration or for arcane purposes.[10] If this is the case, then it can be said to have received fresh impetus from the introduction of the graphematical system of syllabic analysis.

In MV 1 it can be seen that a hierarchical scale of analysis is followed, in which the syllable is the prime method of distinction between metres. If two metres can be distinguished by syllable count alone, then no further criteria are adopted. It is only where two evidently disparate forms have an identical syllable count that further criteria of distinction are sought for. The second level of distinction is also syllable-based: the cadence.[11] By giving the number of syllables in the line as a whole together with those within the cadence the tractarian can, with a few exceptions, distinguish all the examples within his tract from each other, and once this can be done he is satisfied.[12] In the one instance within the tract where this is insufficient, the tract-writer extends the analysis to include the positioning of rhyme, in this case the form of line-end / line internal rhyme known as *aicill.*[13]

The overall impression of such Irish material as we have from the period, and it is admittedly little, is that the syllable is accepted as a unit of metrical standardization without regard for its acoustic realization. Analysis is made in terms of strict syllable-count, and practitioners must see how they can comply with the requirements of this mode of analysis. Poems, whether they are designed for oral performance or for inclusion in the books of the school-texts, are expected to conform with a fundamentally writing-based standard. This standard dictates that one syllable as analysable in the written text on the basis of the rules imported with Latin literacy is in all cases to be equated with one metrical position.

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9 Kalyguine 1993 pp. 44-8.

10 cf. DIL *sv.,* Kalyguine 1993 p. 52.

11 e.g. MV 1 pp. 10-1 stanzas 14, 15 & commentary.

12 In this he set a lasting pattern; the system is that still generally in use among Irish metricists. Donncha Ó hAodha is to my knowledge the first to introduce systematically further criteria of distinction, in that he uses a combination of accent count and syntactic structure to distinguish metres in the category *duanbairdne* which are identical in both syllable-count and in cadence.

13 *Snéddechnad* is given as having *aicill* in the first line-pair only, whereas *Dechnad trebruid* has this form of rhyme in both halves of the verse; cf. MV 1 pp. 7-8 stanzas 7, 8 & commentary.

8.1.4.2 Syllabic analysis in Icelandic

The Icelandic metricists inherited precisely the same definitions of the syllable as did the Irish, as can be seen by the fact that Óláfr Hvítaskáld draws his account directly from Donatus. They also follow the Irish pattern in that the fundamental unit of analysis is the syllable. However, here the resemblance ceases.

Though the syllable may be said to have prime place in the hierarchy of analysis, it does not occupy this place unchallenged as in Irish.

In *Háttatal*, for example, form does not consist in absolute strictness of syllable count. Whereas the compiler of the Irish *Trefhocul* advises poets on how to distort words so that they supply the necessary syllable-count, Snorri is concerned to show how the syllable-count may, under certain circumstances, be departed from without breaking the metre. Thus in stanza 7, he deals with the problem of over-heavy syllables:

> Þat er leyfi háttanna at hafa samstǫfur seinar eða skjótar, svá at dragisk fram eða aptr ór réttri tǫlu setningar, og megu finnask svá seinar at fimm samstǫfur sé í ǫðru ok inu fjórða vísuorði, svá sem hér er:[14]

> 'It is metrical license to have slow or fast syllables, so that the right count of the metre is dragged forwards or backwards, and such slow ones may be found that there are only five syllables in the second and fourth lines as here:'

The four lines concerned being the following:

> **hvatr** hvind*hlés* skatna [...]
> ***hræs*** þjóð*ár* ræsa [...]
> **ǫld** dreyr*fá* skjǫldu [...]
> **sterkr** *járngrá* serki.

The analysis of these lines presents problems. As Kuhn[15] and Faulkes[16] have pointed out, the lines in question all contain words (in italics above) which lost a syllable during the skaldic period. By restoring the dissyllabic pronunciation current in c. 850 of the italicized syllables above, lines two and six can be restored to six-syllable regularity. However, in lines four and eight, two syllables per line admit of such expansion; we either have to reconstruct a hypersyllabic line or be illogically selective. It would appear that in this example at least, contraction does not solve the problem entirely.

What we do notice about the lines given by Snorri is that each has in first position a syllable with either a long vowel (ǫ) or double consonant (hv, hr, st) in initial position. The vowel is in each case (disregarding word and syllable boundaries) followed by a sequence of at least three consonantal phonemes, and the following syllable is in each case both long and stressed:

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14 Faulkes 1991 p. 7, my translations here and in all other extracts from this source.

15 1983 pp. 69-70.

16 1991 p. 7 & note.

hvatr **hv**ind-, hræs **þj**óð-, ǫld **dr**eyr-, ste**rkr j**árn-

Here it seems quite possible that Snorri, although apparently following a syllabic analysis, was instinctively assigning the first two syllables of these lines to three metrical positions, assigning additional morae to the consonant clusters, which then can be allocated to the second metrical position in each case.

Conversely, in the eighth stanza and its preamble, Snorri examines the phenomenon of hypersyllabic lines:

> Nú skal sýna svá skjótar samstǫfur ok svá settar nær hverja annarri at af því eykr lengð orðsins:
>
> 'Now I shall show such short syllables and positioned so close to each other that the length of the word is increased'
>
> Klofinn spyr ek hjálm fyrir hilmis
> hjara<r> egg; duga seggir;
> því eru heldr þar er sk<e>kr skjǫldu
> skafin sverð lituð ferðar;
>
> [...] Hér er þat sýnt, hversu flestar samstǫfur megu vera í vísuorði með dróttkvæðum hætti, ok af þessu má þat vita at átta eða sjau megu vel hlýða í fyrsta ok þriðja vísuorði.
>
> 'here can be seen how many syllables may be in one line of *dróttkvætt*, and from this you may realize that eight or seven are quite permissible in the first and third line.'

As Faulkes points out,[17] Snorri's explanation appears confused here. In his first three examples, the graphematical form of the line seems to be hypersyllabic and leads him to explain the circumstances under which two syllables may be made to fill one metrical position. Three possibilities present themselves:

elision, as would be possible in the group *því eru,*
contraction, in which a vowel is dropped where this does not prevent the pronunciation of the succeeding consonant, as in *spyr ek (spyr'k),*
resolution, in which a short syllable in stressed position is generally compensated by an additional short syllable in the following metrical position, as in *klofinn.*[18]

The first two of these three phenomena are only graphematically hypersyllabic; provided that they are given the required form of realisation in performance they do not acoustically disturb the pattern of six metrical positions. This is recognized by Snorri, who in the following section of the commentary, without further examples of his own, refers briefly to *bragarmál* 'poetic pronunciation':

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17 Faulkes 1991, note to st. 8 on p. 51.

18 The problem is discussed in detail by Kuhn (1983 pp. 55-6, 67-72); see now also Cable 1991 *passim.*

> Fjórða leyfi er þat at skemma svá samstǫfur at gera eina ór tveim ok taka ór annarri hljóðstaf. Þat kǫllum vér *bragarmál*, svá sem hér, er kvað Þórarinn máhlíðingr:
>
> Varðak mik þars myrðir
> morðfárs vega þorði.[19]
>
> 'The fourth licence is that of shortening syllables so as to make one out of two or to drop the second vowel. This we call 'poetic pronunciation', as in this poem by Þórarinn from Gullslopes [...]'

In the example quoted, it is made graphematically clear that *varða ek* 'I defended' is to be pronounced with elision of the adjacent vowels, and that the 'second vowel' in the combination *þar es* 'he who' is dropped to produce a contracted form. Apart from the graphematical form, there is no difference between this *bragarmál* and the "quicker pronunciation" in the preceding examples.

The hypersyllabic third line of Snorri's eighth stanza:

> því eru heldr þar er sk<e>kr skjǫldu

presents problems of a different nature. Two of the three excess syllables presented by graphematic analysis can be removed by elision and contraction respectively of *því eru* and *þar er* (using the archaic form *þar es*). This leaves us with an extra syllable which we either have to emend (Faulkes points out that by changing the plural *eru* to archaic singular *es* syllabic regularity can be restored) or otherwise account for. Faulkes suggests that Snorri might have considered the extra syllable(s) to have constituted a form of anacrusis, falling as they do before the first stress of the line.[20] Árnason, on the other hand, sees no need to establish strict syllabic regularity here, and uses the verse to support the view that the strictness of syllable count apparent in *dróttkvætt* is a secondary feature concomitant on the three-accented structure of the line in a sharply syncopated language.[21]

The fact that Snorri gives his eighth stanza as an example of hypersyllabicity rather than subsuming it under the heading *bragarmál* suggests that he was torn between two parallel modes of analysis, the written-based and the acoustic. When

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19 Faulkes 1991 p. 8.

20 Faulkes 1991 p. 51.

21 This position is summarized in Árnason 1981 as follows:
"[...] there is reason to believe that the basic character of the rhythm was not simply a mechanic counting of syllables, but that stress and quantity played a central role, and that it is an incidental fact that the number of syllables in most dróttkvætt lines was six." (p. 103)
suggesting instead that:
"[...] the basic form of a dróttkvætt line was a combination of three trochees, where the heavy beats had to be carried by heavy stressed syllables [...] but that the variant structures listed above (sci. p. 103-5) were allowed, as defined by a fairly restrictive set of metrical rules, so that a certain amount of tension in rhythm was allowed in other places than in the cadence." (p. 106).

he explains that it is possible to compose adequate *dróttkvætt*-lines with seven or eight syllables, he is operating on the written plane, and this is reflected in the forms transmitted in the manuscripts, where contractions are not indicated. Graphematically, the lines of stanza eight can be analysed as consisting of nine and seven syllables alternately. Orally, it can be performed so as to give the acoustic impression of six regular metrical positions.

In the example of *bragarmál*, on the other hand, a written form has been selected which creates no tension between graphematical and acoustic forms; the contractions are indicated graphematically. In other words, the graphematical form is a transcription of a hypothetical oral performance, in which the graphematical norms of the written language are disregarded.

This tension between the syllable in its graphematical form and the syllable as metrical position is one of the key points in which Snorri's syllabic analysis differs from that of the Irish MV 1. In the Irish work, as we have seen, there is a strict equation whereby one graphematical syllable equals one metrical position.

In Snorri, on the other hand, much more allowance is made for the acoustically indefinable nature of the syllable. Although educated in a writing-centred milieu, (and *Háttatal*, as an early work of the poet, is likely to be more imbued with the cultural ideals of the learned circle of Jón Loptsson of Oddi than later works) Snorri is describing a poetic system which evolved in an oral milieu to suit the demands of acoustic analysis. In this system, the strict equating of graphematical syllable with metrical position is inadequate. Instead, we have a threefold classification of syllables:

seinar samstǫfur, 'slow syllables', capable of being extended into a second metrical position,
samstǫfur, standard syllables, (not marked terminologically as a special class by Snorri) capable of occupying one metrical position and neither more nor less,
skjótar samstǫfur, 'rapid syllables', capable of being attached to an already occupied metrical position,[22]
and in addition to this classification:
bragarmál, the option of modifying pronunciation in performance. None of these options are present in the analysis of MV 1.

That this threefold classification is not Snorri's invention is made clear by the fact that the same system of categorisation is inherent in *Háttalykill*, as the following examples demonstrate:[23]

seinar samstǫfur, st. 8b, l.1

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22 Kuhn warns against an all too simplistic interpretation of the *skjótar samstǫfur* as merely possessing half the value of a long syllable, or of assuming that resolution took the form, familiar to Latinists, wherein one position normally occupied by a long quantity could instead be taken by two short: "Die Verschleifung ist nicht mit einem bloßen: 2 kurze Silben = 1 langen erklärt" (1983 p. 56) and quotes instances where one position could be occupied by one short and one long syllable. (loc. cit.)

23 Text as in Jónsson 1912-15 in each case.

Harðr ráð ok ríki
in which the word *Harðr* occupies the first two metrical positions,

skjótar samstǫfur, st. 6b, l.1
Segik at fell, en flagða
in which the two syllables *Seg-ik* both occupy the first metrical position (by resolution), and by inference the unmarked term
samstǫfur since in the bulk of the text the syllable coincides with the metrical position.

Similarly, *Háttalykill* also makes use of:

bragarmál, as in st. 6a, ll.1, 7,
Rétt's at rekkum þótti
and
satt'r at siklingr þótti.

Here, as in *Háttatal*, the effect of the devices is to produce a line with six acoustically defined metrical positions. This adds weight to the suggestion that Snorri was working in accordance with received practice, a practice dictated by the aesthetics of oral performance and acoustic reception, but described according to the analysis of the written page.

8.1.5 Line length

The syllabic-stanzaic metres presented by Snorri and by the tracts of the MV [24] differ in the degree to which variation of line length (in terms of metrical position as elaborated above) is permitted within the stanza.

In *Háttatal* the position is as follows:

- The majority of forms employ the same length of lines throughout.
- No form employs more than two different line-lengths.
- There is never a greater difference than two positions in the length of lines used within any one form.
- Where different line-lengths occur they invariably alternate.

It should be stressed that the above regularity refers to metrical positions, not necessarily to syllables.

Within the MV tracts, on the other hand, the following can be observed:

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24 The eddic metres given by Snorri as stanzas 95-102 are excluded, as is all the accentual-alliterative verse to be found in MV 2-3.

- Forms involving more than one line-length are in the majority.
- Up to three different line-lengths may be found per quatrain.[25]
- Differences in line-length of up to four metrical positions are common. One extreme example, *deibide baisse fri tóin,* varies to the extent of six positions, having lines of three, seven, seven and one syllables respectively.[26]
- Where two different line-lengths are used in a quatrain, they need not necessarily alternate.

The accentual alliterative systems of Icelandic and Irish do not tolerate wide divergences in line length (perceived in terms of number of accents per metrical unit). The stanzaic-syllabic system would appear to have developed further from the foregoing system in Irish than in Icelandic. This might tentatively be ascribed to the effects of written culture on two levels; culturally, by making patterns in varying forms available for imitation, metrically, by supplying the means to offset the problems varying line-length imposes on acoustic reception.

8.1.6 Conclusions

The place and function of syllabic analysis is clearly different in the two tracts chiefly compared in this section. The major differences are the following:

1. Hierarchy
The syllable is the overriding means of categorisation in MV 1; other means of distinction are only brought to bear when syllabic analysis fails. Snorri, on the other hand, gives a much more equal distribution of distinguishing criteria, in which the syllable is combined with rhyme-position and position of alliteration.

2. Syllable/metrical position
In MV 1 the syllable as defined graphematically is invariably equated with the metrical position. In Snorri, there is no invariable 1-1 correspondence between graphematic syllable and metrical position, but rather an analysis which respects the effect of varying syllable-types on the acoustic effect of the orally performed work of verse.

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25 If one includes the criterion of cadence, then quatrains may be found containing four different line-forms, as in MV 1's *deibide do-cheil a chubaid,* in which the lines have 6,4,7 & 7 metrical positions, but the two heptasyllables differ in that the first has a monosyllabic, the second a trisyllabic cadence. Cf. Ó hAodha 1991 p. 242.

26 cf. Ó hAodha 1991 p. 240. As there is only this one example of the metre, it may be that it was a composition for the nonce; nonetheless, the tract-writer obviously did not find it incompatible with the system he was attempting to describe.

Both these differences support the contention that the metrical system portrayed in MV 1 is one evolved under the influence of written culture and made to conform with written norms, in opposition to the system portrayed by Snorri, in which a writing-based method of analysis is being brought to bear on an orally-evolved system.

8.2 Cadence

Metrical cadence can be defined for our purposes as a rhythmical regulation of line-endings. It is a phenomenon that can only be observed in verse-types in which there is no strict rhythmical regulation of the line as a whole.[27]

Regulation of the metrical cadence is to be found in both Icelandic skaldic verse and in Irish verse; in Icelandic it occurs exclusively in stanzaic-syllabic forms, whilst in Irish it is not restricted to such forms, but is also found in various stichic and alliterative-accentual metres.

8.2.1 The cadence in Irish tracts

The cadence as such is not explicitly defined in any of the Irish tracts under examination. However, it is implicit in the system of categorisation adopted by all three MV tracts.

This system of categorisation depends on the ambivalent system of nomenclature elucidated in the section *do deachaib* 'concerning metrical feet' in MV 1 (p. 20). A 'metrical foot' in this section of the tract simply means a unit of a given number of syllables, irrespective of word boundary and irrespective of function within the larger metrical unit. This can be seen from the first example given:

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27 Thus in tonosyllabic metres, the line-ending is rhythmically regulated. Nonetheless, there can be no analysis of cadence, since the rhythmic regularity extends to the whole line; there is thus no point within the line at which the specific regularity defined as cadence can be said to begin. Instead of *cadence* we must thus in the case of tonosyllabic metres refer to a (tonosyllabic) final foot.

In the case of Latin quantitative metres it is arguable that the concept of cadence applies despite apparent rhythmical regularity of the verse. Thus the fifth foot of the classical hexameter is the only foot in which the alternation dactyl/spondee is not admissible; the foot must be filled by a dactyl. It could be argued that this additional feature of regularity constitutes the first element of a cadence consisting of the two final metrical feet of the line.

Dialt cetomus: 'first the monosyllable':

bran find fíí drong
derg rind ríí glonn

Dialt i ncec foccal don raind seo, recomrac i ncec cethramain, feles i cechtar a da lethi, bricht uile a meit

'A monosyllable in each word of this stanza, a disyllable in each quarter, a tetrasyllable in each of its two halves and an octosyllable in it as a whole.'

Had the *recomarc* not been established in this way, it would be difficult to do so empirically from the subsequent example:

Recomarc da*no* .i. 'next the disyllable, i.e.'

Cride dur docum cille.
dreím dardún diupa lainde.
lam dargnuis gabra singe.
snam linde lepaid cailli.

Bearing the previous example in mind we can establish here that it is not the individual words that are to be perceived as *recomarcach* 'disyllabic', but the line-endings, each consisting of a disyllabic word with prototonic stress.

The next higher unit, *iarcomarc*, is exemplified as follows[28]

Coárfas gaim goeth glas.
Cía íarfas dommefrass (sic!)

Here we see that *iarcomarc* 'trisyllable' refers to line-length irrespective of word boundary; the trisyllabic unit is made of mono-, di- and trisyllabic words, with the stress falling on the ultimate, penultimate or antepenultimate; it is end-marked in each case by rhyme.

In this section of the tract, the monosyllable *dialt* and the disyllable *recomarc* are the only units that seem to be assigned to the line-ending, rather than denoting the number of syllables in a line. The position in the tract as a whole is different. Here, where the terms *dialtach* 'monosyllabic', *recomarcach* 'disyllabic' and *iarcomarcach* 'trisyllabic' are employed as distinguishing terms in categorisation, they refer to line-endings. *felesach* 'tetrasyllabic' and all designations of higher units refer to line-lengths, as in the term *dechnad mbrechtfelesach* 'octo-tetrasyllabic *dechnad*' for the following:

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28 in MS H; but cf. the readings in B and in MV 2 from which one might deduce that the unit consisted of a monosyllabic word followed by a disyllable:

Ri nime nert fine fearr talman [...]

A Fhlainn, at lúam in gaiscid grinn
  co Maistin maill;
at glan, at gáeth, is garg do rinn
at laech, a Fhlainn.[29]

Examination of the cadences in the examples given in MV 1 reveals the following:

The cadence consists of an initial accent followed by the requisite number of unstressed syllables (none for the monosyllabic cadence, one for the disyllabic, etc.).

The quantity of vowels (short or long) and quality of consonants (palatalized or velar) are not taken into account in the formation of cadences,[30] as can be seen in the following example:

Amlaíb archingid
átha airtheraig
  Érenn íathaige
dagrí Dublinne
déne dúthaige
  tréne tríathaige.[31]

Cadences of up to three syllables are common; MV 1 contains no forms with longer cadences than this. Forms of the metre *dían*, not exemplified in MV 1 but present in MV 2 and 3, show four-syllable cadences as the following

Maelsechlaind mac domnaill daithghil
dorn atailtin tulgatanaígh
daig nadaim crannchar mocara
anfadh mara murbradanaígh[32]

The cadence, in modern orthography, generally begins with a word-boundary and consists of a single word; scribal practice at the time of the manuscripts obscures this boundary visually by attaching proclitics to the following word, compare:

Nim-thorba gaim, graif nim-gaib[33]

with

Nimthorba gaim graif nimgeib[34]

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29 MV 1 p. 9, text as in Ó hAodha 1991 p. 227.

30 Where cadences also participate in rhyme, as in the majority of metres, there will be agreement. This is due to the requirements of rhyme, not a specific regulation of cadence.

31 MV 1 p. 15, text from Ó hAodha 1991 p. 235. The poem is a panegyric on an unspecified king Amhlaíbh (Óláfr) of Dublin; for his possible identity see Ó hAodha ad loc.

32 MV 3 p. 71.

33 MV 1 p. 12, text as in Ó hAodha 1991 p. 230.

34 The same, text as in MV 2 p. 42, the version on which the reading of the above edition is based.

showing the negative infixed first singular object pronoun *nim*

and

Críst con-icc mo chrí[35]

with

Cr-[36] connicc mochrí[37]

showing the first person possessive *mo* immediately preceding the cadence, and the prepositional prefix *con* preceding the verb-stem.

8.2.3 The cadence in *Háttatal*

In *Háttatal*, there is one standard form for the cadence. It is disyllabic, consisting of a first syllable which is invariably both long in quantity (i.e. consisting of a long – or double – vowel and single or double consonant, or a short vowel and double consonant) and stressed, followed by a short unstressed syllable (i.e. consisting either of a single short vowel or a short vowel and single consonant), as in the following:

Lætr sár Hákun heitir
(hann rekkir lið) bannat
(jǫrð kann frelsa) fyrðum
friðrofs konungr ofsa.[38]

Where monosyllabic cadences are used, they are clearly understood to be truncated forms of the disyllabic standard. This is implied in the term for such metres, *stýfð* 'chopped', *hneppt* 'reduced', but also in the fact that all such monosyllabic cadences, even in the less strict metres in the third *kvæði* (sts 68-94), contain long syllables, and could thus theoretically form the first element of a standard cadence.

In the stricter metres, Snorri allows no exceptions to the short vowel rule,[39] while the single consonant rule has the following exceptions:

graphematic ll as in st. 5 l.4

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35 MV 1 p. 10, as in Ó hAodha p. 228.

36 The *nomen sacrum* is suspended by the manuscripts.

37 The version of MS H, as in MV 1 p. 10.

38 *Háttatal* st. 1, in which Snorri sets out regular *dróttkvætt*, text as in Faulkes 1991 p. 3.

39 stanzas 1-67. It is characteristic of the "lesser metres" in the following section that the principle of a long syllable in the cadence is adhered to less strictly than in the foregoing metres.

dreng ofrhugaðr þengill

graphematic nn, as in the sixth line of the same stanza:
hauk munnroða aukinn

the mediopassive ending sk as in st. 9 l.3:
Fæsk gagn. Fylkir eignask

and the genitive of *þengill* and *lítill*, as in st. 21 l.1:
Lung frá ek lýða þengils

and st. 27 l.8
[...] Vara siglt til lítils.

The cadence begins with the last accented syllable in the line, irrespective of wordboundary. In cases where nominal compounds participate in the cadence, the second, cadence forming-element is considered to be stressed, as can be seen in the placement of *hending* in lines such as 14,8: orðróm konungdómi; 16,3: (ýr dregsk) við skotskúrum; 63,8: heila grundar meginundir.

8.2.4 The cadence in *Háttalykill*

Snorri's use of the cadence in *Háttatal* is comparable with that in that poem's predecessor *Háttalykill*. The latter, as far as its fragmentary state of preservation allows us to assume, adheres to the principle of the disyllabic cadence in those forms which are closest to standard *dróttkvætt*. Of 37 forms preserved sufficiently well for us to be reasonably sure of the poet's intentions, 26 make regular use of the disyllabic cadence. In these 26 forms, the same rules and exceptions apply as stated above. Where forms require metrical features[40] not specified in standard *dróttkvætt*,[41] both Snorri and *Háttalykill* occasionally relax the requirements for the cadence. This can be seen in comparing the rhymed form *runhent* with Snorri's equivalent; in each case a monosyllable *stýft* cadence is used, and in each case the rule that the monosyllabic cadence represents the first syllable of the standard cadence, and is thus both long and stressed, is relaxed, short stressed syllables occuring in both examples,

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40 In practice these extra requirements take the form of full rhyme, internal or line-ending, or the incorporation of a particular rhetorical figure such as the antithesis characterizing *refhvǫrf*.

41 One should distinguish here between two forms of metrical variation within the framework of *dróttkvætt*. In the first, there is no variation in the number of regular features required; there are still three alliterations, two *aðalhendingar* and two *skothendingar* per *fjórðungr*, but their positions are more exactly regulated, as for example in *detthent*, where three alliterations must fall on adjacent accents: Tvær man ek hilmi hýrum/ heimsvistir [...].

Háttalykill st. 24a giving the following line endings:
hag/dag; setr/betr; her/sker; láð/ráð

and *Háttalykill* st. 24b,
kapp/happ; bauð/auð; var/skar; hildr/mildr

comparable with *Háttatal* st. 82
svá/á; ann/ann; er/ver; skýrstr/dýrstr.

As might be expected of a later work, Snorri shows a slightly greater tendency to observe regularity of cadence in these metres than his predecessor. This is particularly striking in the case of the metre *klifat* 'repeated' (the name is apt in view of the eightfold repetition of the rhyming syllable), which appears to be a conscious regularisation of *Háttalykill* st. 12a, to the extent of using one of the same rhyme-syllables as its predecessor. Thus *Háttalykill* st. 12a concludes as follows:[42]

ǫðlingr gerðist ótrauðr
auðbjóðr þjóðum;
auðar lét auðbrjótr
auðit þeims sverð rauð

whilst *Háttatal* 48 opens thus:

Auðkendar verr auði
auð-Týr boga nauðir,
þar er auðviðum auðit
auðs í gulli rauðu

adhering strictly to the form of the standard disyllabic cadence throughout the stanza. This is the only example in which Snorri's regularisation fundamentally reorganizes the cadences of a *Háttalykill* metre, other examples[43] being no more than minor tidying-up exercises.

On the basis of these observations we have no grounds for assuming that the regularity of cadence found in *Háttatal* is anything other than a continuation of preceding standard practice.[44]

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42 Both 12a and 12b are imperfectly transmitted, the second half of 12a being the only *helmingr* fully preserved. As there is no title to the stanza, we cannot be entirely sure that it was intended as an example of the *klifat* form used by Snorri, though the resemblances between the two strongly suggest that it was.

43 cf. Ht 75 with Hl 15a, (*náhent*) Ht 51 with Hl 31a *(inn mesti stúfr).*

44 cf. Kuhn 1983 p. 66.

8.2.5 Cadence in *dróttkvætt*

The regularity of the disyllabic, trochaic cadence in both Icelandic *clavis* texts requires explanation in view of the fact that it is a unique feature in Germanic versification. Three possible explanations present themselves:

1) Functional
According to this model, whose only proponent to date is Perkins, *dróttkvætt* originated as a metre for rowing chants. He bases his analysis on Finnur Jónsson's comment[45] that *dróttkvætt* consists of *fornyrðislag*[46] with an added trochaic cadence, and points out that

> labour chants often contain regularly recurring constants which were uttered at the moment of the worker's greatest exertion in a rhythmical work-process, for example, as the hammer blow was actually made or when the axe was sunk into the tree.[47]

This 'recurring constant', originally being no more than an inarticulate grunt or meaningless phrase, would then, it is assumed, have evolved into the cadence observed in our examples above.

This theory has been little discussed to date. If found acceptable,[48] it would place the disyllabic cadence firmly within the realm of the oral.

2) Borrowing
Regular cadence is a feature of Latin hymnody at a stage where the rhythm was only stabilized at the line ending. It could theoretically have been borrowed into Icelandic through contact with any people given to performing Latin hymnody in such a way as to make this cadence audible, or to imitating this hymnody in their vernacular. In this case, one must assume that the feature was borrowed by the Vikings' contacts under the influence of writing-based Latin culture, and passed on orally.

3) Line-end regularity
If we follow Árnason's contention that *dróttkvætt* evolved as an accentual system based on a succession of three-accent units, the regularity of cadence can be explained on grounds inherent in the structure of the language. In a language with

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45 F. Jónsson 1920-24 vol. 1 p. 403.

46 i.e. the story-telling metre, the eddic metre most fully corresponding to the standard Germanic long line.

47 Perkins 1984-85 p. 166.

48 As a former oarsman and coxwain, I have my problems imagining any form of cadence being used at the "moment of maximum exertion". One attempts nowadays to spread the exertion over the whole period the oar-blade is in the water, so that the analogy of the axe or hammer-stroke is misleading. In the course of the stroke two moments are particularly crucial; the point at which the blade is "locked" into the water, and the moment at which it is struck out. If Viking techniques were in any way comparable, a work-chant serving the purpose would have to have a double stressed cadence.

prototonic accentuation in which the majority of words consists of a monosyllabic stem with a monosyllabic inflection, the most common pattern for this three-accent unit will be that of three trochees. The phenomenon of the regular trochaic cadence then results from the tendency of regularities to assert themselves at the end of the unit of recurrence. This again suggests that the disyllabic cadence of *dróttkvætt* is not inconsistent with an origin of the verse-form within an oral stage of the culture. Árnason's analysis explains the structure and regularity of the cadence; it does not explain how the unit of recurrence as a whole came to be standardized as having three accents or, to adopt Jónsson's analysis, how the third trochee came to be added to what in Germanic verse as a rule consists of a two-accent half-line.

8.2.6 Conclusions

The place of cadence in the two sets of tracts varies as follows:

1. Origin
In Icelandic there is no regularity of cadence in the original metrical system; it is an innovation coterminous with the introduction of stanzaic-syllabic form. In Irish, cadence exists in both stichic and stanzaic-syllabic verse.

2. Variability
In Icelandic, the disyllabic cadence is standard. A catalectic form is permitted, but this form is quite definitely derived from the original disyllabic standard. Other variations do not appear. In Irish, the trisyllabic cadence appears to be standard in certain types of stichic verse. In stanzaic-syllabic verse there is no standard cadence. Monosyllabic and disyllabic cadences are the most common[49] and are of equal status, neither apparently being a derivative of the other.

3. Structure
The cadence in Icelandic, in addition to its standard disyllabic form, is doubly marked, by stress and quantity. Only stress and syllable-count are relevant in Irish.[50]

The standardized, doubly marked Icelandic cadence is eminently suitable as an acoustic line-ending marker.

Irish cadences, being more variable and relatively less marked are less obvious as line-ending signals. However, Irish line-endings are marked by rhyme, and thus arguably require less forcible marking in the cadence.

When we examine the combined phenomenon of syllable-counting, recurrence-units and regular cadences as components of a metrical system, we note that:

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49 The bulk of Middle Irish verse is written in *deibide,* which alternates monosyllabic and disyllabic cadences.

50 cf. Árnason 1981 p. 108.

The degree of variation in the number of syllables/metrical positions in the recurrence unit is far less in Icelandic than in Irish. In the system as a whole as presented by Snorri there is a variation between three and eight metrical positions. In MV 1 the permitted variation in line-length is between one and eight positions, in MV 3 between one and ten.

In no single form in Icelandic is there a variation of more than two metrical positions: the maximum variation within a single form in both MV 1 and MV 3 is six positions.

Where there is variation within a form in Snorri's system it always[51] takes the form of a longer odd line alternating with a shorter even line. In Irish, there is no standard position for the long lines in variable-line-length metres.

These three factors combine to mean that far greater flexibility is required of acoustic recipients in Irish than in Icelandic, if they are to be in a position to analyse the poem in terms of recurrence-units. There is no higher degree of line-end marking in Irish to compensate for the more exacting system.

Taken in context of the syllabic structure of the stanzas and of the metrical system as a whole, we may thus say that the use of cadence in Icelandic is marginally more suitable to oral performance and acoustic reception than it is in Irish.

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51 Except in certain eddic metres, and the form *kviðuháttr* used by Snorri for his concluding stanza and by Egill in *Sonatorrek* and the panegyric to Árinbjörn. This latter form may be analysed as a one-stress phrase followed by a cadence, standard in the even lines and *stýft* in the odd lines. It is presumably this attribute that first led Hallvard Lie to analyse the form in terms of seven-syllable Langzeilen; cf. Ch. 2.