Chapter 6. Rhyme

6.1 Introductory

Rhyme, for the purposes of this investigation, can be defined as a set of recurrences, two or more in number, involving phonetic and/or graphematic identity or equivalence of units capable of forming syllables, which may, but need not be morphemes, within the phonemic inventory of the given language.

Both systems of versification use rhyme as an integral part of the system of recurrences described.

In both cultures, rhyme is an innovation which distinguishes the system of the tracts from a pre-existing system.

In both sets of tracts, rhyme is a major feature by which one specific metrical form is distinguished from another:

In the Irish tracts, rhyme is specifically mentioned as one of two prerequisites essential for categorizing canonical form,[1] the other being syllable count.[2] As none of the canonical forms dispenses with rhyme altogether, we can speak empirically of rhyme as being indispensable to the system.

In the Icelandic texts there is a degree of ambivalence on this matter. Óláfr Hvítaskáld suggests that rhyme is a dispensable ornament, and Snorri includes forms without it. The name given to one particular rhymeless form, *háttlausa* 'metre-less', suggests, however, that rhyme, though not regarded as an essential prerequisite for poetry as such, was regarded as significant for distinguishing one canonical form from another.

Neither rhyme system is based on line-final phonemic identity, the form that was to become standard in the remainder of Western Europe and which was well established by the time the Book of Leinster was written. In both systems rhyme is based on equivalence groups rather than on identity, but there the resemblance ceases.

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[1] The two systems vary in the extent to which one can speak of 'canonical forms', but in both cases there is a definite concept of a recognized and limited repertoire. In the case of Irish, recognition in this sense implies evaluation with consequent incorporation in a fixed syllabus of professional training and remuneration according to an established scale of charges. In Icelandic, on the other hand, it appears only to imply acknowledgement that a form is capable of bestowing prestige on the recipient due to the fact of its having been composed within a flexible framework of accepted taste or having the authority of a poet whose work as a whole is considered as having bestowed prestige.

[2] MV 1 p. 7.

Rhyme has both an aural and a visual component. Within the context of a written culture, it will most often consist of phonemic and graphematic identity[3] with cases of phonemic identity, graphematic dissimilarity and even graphematic identity, phonemic dissimilarity.

Within the context of an oral culture we can assume, with reservations, that only phonematic identity is relevant.[4] In other words, rhyme is designed to be heard, and we can expect this factor to condition the way it is adopted. As a rough rule, we can say that the more steps taken to ensure audibility, the more characteristic of oral culture.

6.2   Rhyme in Celtic

6.2.1   Rhyme in the earliest Welsh poetry

In Welsh, as opposed to Irish, there is no evidence of accentual-alliterative, non-rhyming poetry before the adoption of rhyme. The earliest evidence we have, that of the *llyfr Aneirin,* suggests that rhyme was a metrical feature as far back as the end of the sixth century. In this poetry, which appears to be syllable-counting,[5] though not isosyllabic,[6] alliteration appears, like line-internal rhyme, as a decorative element,[7] whereas end-rhyme appears to be the constitutive element. The comparative importance of rhyme at an early stage, and a concomitant unimportance of alliteration, is what one would expect from the language. Unlike Irish, with its initial tonic accent, Old Welsh appears to have had an accent on the ulti-

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3   Or equivalence, where the system relies on equivalence categories.

4   The case of Irish alliteration (cf. Ch. 7) is a warning that we cannot accept this apparently obvious statement unreservedly. It is impossible to define this system of alliteration as a system of equivalence groups in terms of phonemic or even graphematic recurrences alone; it cannot be understood without reference to concepts outside phonemics such as historical morphology and cultural conservatism.

5   This is the traditional view at least; for a view of its chief proponents and a discussion of the merits of an accent-counting analysis for the earliest Welsh poetry see Haycock 1991.

6   Details communicated by G. Isaac during a visit to Freiburg in Summer 1990, developed in an unpublished PhD thesis, according to which the irregular syllabic lines of *Gododdin* are derived from an original (Brittonic) seven-syllable isosyllabic line.

7   For Isaac this consists largely of a pattern of phonematic regulations similar to but less organized than the later systems of *cynghannedd:* a similar system is postulated for Irish, particularly as a result of a tendency to anagrammatize the names of the eulogized and other key words in early poetry, in Kalyguine 1993 pp. 89-91.

mate syllable,[8] an accent that moved gradually, at a date on which scholarship is not fully in agreement, to the penultimate.[9]

The form of rhyme adopted as constitutive in Welsh is full end-rhyme with phonemic identity of all phonemes following the initial consonant of the last syllable. If we accept that the last syllable bore stress at the period of composition, then this rhyme is one of tonic syllables, and if we accept that the relatively late manuscripts of the poems (*llyfr Aneirin* and *llyfr Taliesin)*[10] provide an accurate enough record of the original metrical system, then we can point to Welsh as the earliest of the vernaculars under discussion to adopt this form of fully-stressed, fully rhyming line-ending marker.

This early adoption of rhyme is consistent both with the accentual structure of the language and with its cultural situation. The accentual structure mentioned above emphasizes word endings: just as in Latin, similar grammatical structures can be expected to produce rhyming endings, which will be brought into prominence by the accentual structure of the word.[11] In addition, the Welsh had been literate and Christian since Christianity became general in the Roman Empire. (It is notable that the warriors whose successes against the Saxons are recorded in the *llyfr Taliesin* should be referred to as a form of collective identity as *y bedyd* 'the baptized'.[12]) Their Christianity was well-established, and concomitantly too their relationship with the written word, well before the earliest date suggested for the composition of rhyming poetry; exposure to Latin models may thus have served to have assisted the adoption of a metrical feature intrinsically congenial to the language.

The fact that Welsh poetry appears to be based on syllable count can be explained on similar lines, if we accept that the accent, not being bound to the word-nucleus as in Irish or Icelandic, does not play such a prominent part in metrical structure; isosyllabic verse is at least more congenial to Welsh than it is to Irish. It is also not to be ruled out that exposure to Latin grammatical analysis and to written analysis of texts influenced the form of versification, and might have favoured an early adoption of syllable-based metre.

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[8]   Or, if we follow Pilch (1991 p. 146), an accent divided between the two final syllables of the word.

[9]   For a summary of arguments see Jackson 1953 pp. 682-9.

[10]   The evidence is not altogether conclusive, bearing in mind the fact that the manuscripts of the earliest Welsh poetry are of relatively late date, the Book of Taliesin dated in the early 14th century, the Book of Aneirin to the 13th (Bromwich 1991 pp. 5-9).

[11]   A typical example is the rhyme of adjectival endings in -*awt* in *Gweith argoet Llwyfein* (Ifor Williams 1968 p. 6), *trebystawt, parawt,* deriving from participial forms (cf. Latin *paratus*).

[12]   cf. Ifor Williams trans. J. Caerwyn Williams 1968 p. 30 *sv. bedyd.*

6.2.2   Rhyme in Irish

Ireland, on the other hand, never had any direct contact with the bureaucratic
Latinity of the Roman Empire and its adoption of Christianity was by conversion
rather than, as in the case of the Brythons, by assimilation. As we have observed,
their use of stanzaic-syllabic verse with end-rhyme in the vernacular postdates the
arrival of Christianity and the concomitant Latin learning.

The use of syllable-counting and isosyllabic metre has in itself been ascribed to
the influence of Latin metres, though Calvert Watkins and his followers[13] would
contest this. However, not even Calvert Watkins would maintain that end-rhyme
is indigenous. To account for its adoption faces us with the following problems:

1)   Why did the adoption take place?
2)   What was the medium of transmission?
3)   What adaptations took place as the system was transferred?

As answers to 1) the same factors can be taken into consideration as we consid-
ered for metrical transition as a whole, i.e.

a)   linguistic uncongeniality
b)   cultural prestige
c)   personal inspiration

while the factor of medium influence can be considered under 2).

The situation here is more complex than may at first appear. First, we need to try
to imagine what exactly the social position was of those responsible for the inno-
vations, for as such they are described even in the time of the metrical tracts, in
the vernacular poetry. Did the Christian rhyming poet displace a heathen alliterat-
ing *fili*? Or were they one and the same? How integrated was the innovator within
the world of writing? Did he read his Latin models or merely hear them? This
question also has an important bearing on our suggested answers for question 3).

The traditional view of the poet in early Christian Ireland is that of the essen-
tially heathen *fili*, the 'memory man', acting as preserver and interpreter of law[14]
and lore handed down within his family through succeeding generations. He has a
vested interest in seeing that this lore is couched in terms sufficiently obscure that
only the initiate can unravel them, and seeing that no-one is initiated who can
become a rival to himself and his family. After the Conversion,[15] he maintains his

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13   Watkins 1963, Travis 1973, R.P. & W.P. Lehmann 1975.

14   For literature on the question of monastic origin of Irish law see the references in
        McCone 1989 p. 141 n. 34.

15   For a reading of St. Patrick's victory over the druids at Tara in Muirchu's *vita* of
        St. Patrick as a literary account based on Biblical narrative see McCone 1990
        pp. 33-4.

stronghold in the court of the king, fighting a desperate rearguard action[16] against the new writing-based learning[17] threatening the security of his privileged position. His adversary is the monk, armed with the technology of the written word, capable of infinite dissemination, and with its concomitants the gloss and the commentary, making even the most obscure text available to anyone who has taken the pains to master the new technique of reading.

Once the new technology gained hold, however, this picture of a fundamental opposition between monastic scholar and secular *fili* is unlikely to have held good; the two functions were complementary rather than mutually hostile, and the same person could quite conceivably have embodied them both.[18]

Culturally, then, we can imagine the composer of vernacular rhyming poetry to have been in an intermediary position between a non-literate secular society and a literate monastic one, always bearing in mind that these two societies were not separated by a fixed boundary, not necessarily by any boundary at all, but were, just as in any political entity of mediaeval Western Christendom, complementary aspects of the same *civitas*.

If this is so, then it means that there was nothing to prevent a vernacular poet from coming into contact with Latin end-rhyme poetry in the manner I have suggested. What, then, would the nature of this contact be?

End-rhyme independent of accent was a feature of Latin hymnody at the time of the Conversion. This hymnody would be transmitted in two different fashions: by book and by performance in liturgy. Those members of the community who were in a position to read a collection of hymnody (as attested in the Antiphoner of Bangor, for example) would also be in a position to appreciate the graphematical element of rhyme. For those hearing it in the liturgy (a wider circle, but including those just mentioned) it would be the acoustic features that dominated; in the case of the illiterate, of course, only these features could be appreciated.

6.2.2.1   Irish (consonant-class) rhyme

Certain of these factors may go some way to suggest explanations of why the development of rhyme in Irish seems to have run in a direction contrary to that seen in Romance. For, while the first rhyming sources in Old French employ

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[16]   cf. McCone 1990 pp. 19-21.

[17]   Thus the example of *Bretha Crólige* cited by McCone (1989 p. 128) in which a legal text describing a *druí* as one of a 'trio of undesirables hateful to God', who "traditionally enjoy high status but do not deserve to be granted it because of their pagan ways" is particularly poignant; it shows the weapon of the legal text, once apparently oral and the instrument of the *druí* for ensuring the continuation of his power, now firmly in the hands of the "monastic lawyers" (op. cit. p. 129) and being used against precisely those whom it had once served to maintain.

[18]   cf. McCone 1990 pp. 27-8.

assonance, and full end-rhyme gradually replaces the looser form,[19] the contrary
process seems to take place in Ireland. Early rhyming sources appear to employ
full rhyme, whereas in later development assonance of consonant groups (so-
called "Irish Rhyme") becomes standard.

The tracts of our period make no attempt to define Irish Rhyme; modern defini-
tions are all ultimately based on empirical observation. This means that, while we
may have a clear idea of how the system functions, we are on less certain ground
when we wish to establish reasons for its development.

The development seems to have been favoured by a combination of factors:

a)   The pre-existing alphabet, ogham, which may well have formed part of a
     poet's training prior to the Conversion, embodies principles of phonemic or-
     ganization.

b)   Vernacular poets from the Conversion on may have been members of com-
     munities in which rhymed poetry in Latin was sung regularly, singing being a
     process which highlights vowels and emphasizes aspects of articulatory simi-
     larity in consonants.

a) The influence of Ogham
The ogham alphabet, which apparently developed under the influence of Latin,[20]
was part of the standard curriculum of the student poet according to the Tracts.[21]
One of the more noticeable features of the alphabet is the close relationship
between graphematic similarity and phonematic similarity; groups of phonemati-
cally related characters can be identified by the fact that the written[22] forms all
share a common feature. The basis of the classification appears to be the classifi-
cation of sounds into vowels, semivowels and mutes as in classical Latin gram-
mar, with a fourth group of miscellanea,[23] though within this classification
irregularities occur. However, the grouping appears to show a certain awareness
of phonetic articulation as a criterion of analysis. This awareness is to be found in
a much more refined state as the basis of Irish rhyme. The division of phonemes
into equivalence-groups on the basis of manner of articulation seems to have been
inherent in the education of the oghamist, and may have been part of the training
of the poet.

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[19]   For the development of this assonance and its relationship to Latin hymnody see
       Lausberg 1955 rep. 1977 pp. 108-9. Lausberg assumes that the final-syllable always
       carries the verbal accent in Old French.

[20]   McManus 1991 pp. 27-34.

[21]   cf. MV 2 pp. 29, 32, 34, in which the learning of a distinct set of ogham is prescribed
       for each of the first three years of poetic training.

[22]   Ogham appears to have been intended as an epigraphic script, and the earliest
       sources are entirely from stone inscriptions; it appears later, however, in manuals of
       instruction (such as that to be found in LL pp. 177-8), where it seems to have a
       similar status to that of *runica manuscripta.*

[23]   McManus 1991 pp. 28-9.

Whether this apparent early interest in phonetic classification is the result of tendencies already present in the pre-Conversion poetic tradition or is to be regarded as an import is a matter of debate. There is some indication of what V. Kalyguine has referred to as an "anagrammatic tendency"[24] in the early poetic traditions of Gaul, Wales and Ireland. This manifests itself in the incorporation into verse texts of repeated strings of individual phonemes, a technique that in reg-ulated form becomes the basis of Welsh *cynghanedd.*[25] Kalyguine would argue that anagrammatical texts occur in pre-literate stages of culture, and that this proves the existence of a highly-trained professional caste able to separate out phonemes in their various combinations without the benefit of written analysis.

The evidence for verse on this basis in Irish is slight, though its existence can-not be ruled out altogether. A sensitivity on the part of the trained oral poet to phonematic analysis could be regarded as providing a fertile ground for innova-tions in metrics which required phonematic categorization, but recognition, as required by the anagrammatic principle, and categorization, as required by Irish rhyme, are nonetheless two distinct forms of analysis. The analysis of ogham, that is the writing-based analysis, is considerably closer to that required for Irish rhyme than is the oral recognition of phonemes in anagram. There are thus no compelling reasons to assume an oral basis for the rhyme in this direction.

b) Hymnody

The ecclesiastical liturgy provides ample opportunities for the oral reception of verse texts. In particular, a monastic community would be daily involved in singing stanzaic texts previously learnt by rote. Singing, of whatever kind, involves close attention to the articulation of the phonemes of the text set to music, as follows:

Vowels, being the carriers of the tone, assume a greater prominence in the per-ception of a sung text than they would in the spoken word. This is even more the case in melodic performance of texts than in recitative, (stanzaic texts lend them-selves more to melodic performance, as opposed to the parallelistic metre of the Latin Psalter, which is more likely to have been performed as recitative). In the melodic performance, with a fixed duration assigned to each musical note, and that in turn applied to the individual syllable, singly or in groups of notes follow-ing distinct rules of proportion, the effect of stress-accent is subsumed under the laws of musical rhythm. The more the use of *melismata* is permitted, the longer the musical duration of the syllable may be, the more pronounced will be the enhancement of the vowel tone at the expense of the consonantal. Line-ending vowels, corresponding frequently with natural pauses in the music, are further accentuated. Recitative, on the other hand, distorts syllabic structure less, permit-ting variation of duration and of stress. On the other hand, as in melodic perfor-mance, recitative throws weight onto the ending, in this case not of the verse-line, bt of the textual unit, which forms a cadence both musically and metrically.[26]

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[24]   1993 pp. 88-91.

[25]   cf. above, n. 7.

[26]   cf. E. Jammers 1957 for the role of music in mediaeval poetic performance, specifi-cally of Eddic poetry, and Jón Helgason, "Edda song", in *Gardar* 3, 1972 pp. 15-49.

Voiceless stops can carry no tone, and cannot be sustained; they therefore require precise articulation, particularly in final position.

Liquids on the other hand can carry full tone, and can be sustained indefinitely, breath permitting.

Fricatives can be sustained to a limited degree, requiring more breath than vowels or liquids because of the aspiration;[27] unvoiced fricatives can carry no tone, while voiced fricatives have similar characteristics to those of liquids, apart from the difficulties caused by the aspiration.

If we assume that the poets responsible for the transfer of rhyme into the sphere of vernacular poetry were *fir léigind,* 'men of reading', in other words those with a grounding in Latin letters, and therefore *de facto* closely affiliated to the monastic Church, we could suggest that the following factors combined to influence the way in which they adapted Latin models to suit the needs of the vernacular:

a)   The loss of many grammatical endings had rendered end-rhyme less easy to achieve than it was in Latin.

b)   The pre-existence of a system of versification in which the word accent was highly relevant.

a) led them to seek a solution in which more rhyming syllables were made available, b) led them to adopt a form of rhyme in which the tonic syllable was included.[28]

These factors would provide the motivation for a development of rhyme away from that inherited by the Latin tradition; the nature of the change could be explained by the following factors:

Possible familiarity through tradition with a system of versification laying particular stress on the recognition of sequences of consonants, not only in initial position.

Acquaintance with two separate alphabets, both resting on the phonematic basis of Latin, heightening awareness of phonetic structures, particularly within the vernacular.

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[27]   cf. Haefliger 1983 p. 62. (My thanks to Richard Watson of Freiburg for drawing my attention to this publication.) It should be borne in mind that in efficient tone production the air leaves the front of the mouth with as low a velocity as possible; the velocity tends to diminish as the volume of the tone increases, and more of the energy of the column of air is absorbed in the production of sound-waves. It is thus impossible to sustain a voiced fricative with the same volume of sound as a nasal or a vowel.

[28]   If this is so, it means that what was achieved in Old French by accident, ·i.e. by the co-incidence of the final syllable, which bore no particular stress in the Latin models, with an Old French final-syllable stress, thus lending prominence to the rhyming syllable, had to be striven for in Irish, in that end-rhyme came to include the initial syllable (proclitics excepted) and all following.

Repeated exposure to liturgical song, both as performer and audience,[29] heightening awareness of the linkage of written, visible text into acoustically perceptible medium, of the phonematically relevant and less relevant aspects of metrical features, in particular of those emphasized by musical performance and those submerged by it.[30]

There is no native oral component by which we can explain the development of Irish rhyme. Even the motivation of song rests on a tradition imported with Christianity, and thus with its concomitant, written analysis. The adoption of the system is thus, on the basis of present evidence, best explained as the reaction of a literate community to the demands imposed by the attempt to transfer the form of a literate prestige-culture into the vernacular, and thus as a manifestation of a letter-based culture.

6.2.2.2   *Deibide* rhyme

A second problem in Irish is presented by the establishment of what has come to be termed *deibide*-rhyme, mentioned, but not defined, in the MV tracts as *rinn ocus ardrinn*. This in its strict form is final-syllable rhyme alternating between monosyllabic and disyllabic words; by virtue of the initial position of the Irish stress-accent, this has the effect of producing rhyme between stressed and unstressed syllables alternately, as the Middle Irish terms *rinn* and *ardrinn* themselves exemplify.

This is not a development that can be explained away by the relative difficulty of providing end-rhymes in Irish. Rhyme of the *rinn-ardrinn* type appears from the earliest sources onwards to have been used systematically rather than sporadically, indicating that it was seen not as an optional device for facilitating composition, but as an integral component of specific metres. Admittedly, a certain degree of regularization does take place during the period under discussion, but this only affects the number of syllables in the cadence; earlier forms allow rhyme between one syllable in the *rinn* cadence and three in the *ardrinn*, later texts adhere to the principle that the *ardrinn* cadence must be exactly one syllable longer than the *rinn*

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[29]   The distinction is inappropriate in terms of a monastic community, in which every member will be called upon to participate in song according to the dictates of the liturgy, whether as cantor or as member of the congregation. The member of the congregation can be regarded as audience when it is the impact of song on his ears that is paramount, as for example when listening to the intonation of the Gospel, or to his opposite number in the antiphonal singing of Psalms or Sequences, as performer when responsible for producing song himself, but the two functions are complementary rather than mutually exclusive in this setting.

[30]   It should be remembered, on the other hand, that the liturgy did not merely involve members of the organized religious community, but also the laity. The effect of liturgical song on these members of the congregation would be primarily if not exclusively acoustic. The effect of this acoustic reception on the metrical habits of the laity is discussed in Chs. 7, 8 & 10.

cadence. There is nothing in this development to indicate that the *deibide* rhyme-form was ever regarded as a device of convenience, however.

It would appear at this stage that a satisfactory answer to the problem of the *deibide*-rhyme's origins, oral or written, has yet to be found.

It is tempting to suggest that there might be a connection between the Irish form and the presence of alternating monosyllabic and polysyllabic rhyming words in certain poems in the earliest Welsh texts, as for example the following from the Llyfr Taliesin:

> E bore duw Sadwrn cat uawr a vu
> or pan dywre heul hyt pan gynnu.
> dygrysswys flamdwyn yn petwar llu
> godeu a reget y ymdullu.[31]

Here we see rhyme, as in the earlier, looser forms of *deibide*, alternating between monosyllabic and polysyllabic cadences.

Whether this form of rhyme in Welsh can be regarded as similar to *deibide* rhyme is debatable. To obtain a regular pattern of stressed versus non-stressed end-syllables, all polysyllabic words would have to be stressed with the penultimate accent now obtaining in Welsh. It is generally accepted, however, that the accent shift from ultimate to penultimate had not taken place by the time these poems took their present shape.[32] Rhyme of this sort in Welsh does not involve regular alternation of accent, only of word-boundary.

Setting aside the linguistic problems, we have no indication that Irish poets borrowed from Welsh; *deibide* would be an isolated instance.

A further possibility, and one which I consider more in accordance with the apparent clerical origin of the metre, is that it was inspired by antiphonal psalmody in Latin. A possible model could be provided by texts such as the following, from the Antiphonary of Bangor, with the alternating syllable-count 5/7:

> Sancti venite   corpus Christi sumite
> sanctum bibentes   quo redempti sanguinem
> Salvati Christi   corpore et sanguine
> A quo refecti   laudes dicamus deo.[33]

Though we lack evidence for 7th century Irish liturgical music,[34] we can at least assume, from its inclusion in an *antiphonarium*, that the text was one designed to be divided, either between one *cantor* and the congregation, or, as still practised in

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[31]   "Gwaith Argoed Llwyfain", in I. Williams/J.E.C. Williams 1968 p. 6.

[32]   Jackson 1953 p. 699.

[33]   Raby 1959 pp. 70-1, my lineation.

[34]   The points made by Jammers (1957 repr. 1978, p. 118-20) concerning the use of song, and in particular of the practice of intoning (im Gesangston verlesen, p. 120) should in my opinion be applied *mutatis mutandis* to Irish. Particularly relevant is his comment, p. 118, "[...] daß der katholische Kirchengesang seit jeher zwischen *melodia* und *pronunciatio* unterscheidet...(daß) die *pronunciatio lectionum* aber nicht ein Sprechen, sondern das *musikalisch geordnete Rezitative,* den *accentus* bedeutet."

monastic circles today, between alternating halves of the community. The portions assigned to the antiphonal groups would then be distinguished, as is still the case with Gregorian and Gregorian-based antiphony, by cadences of alternating length. Traditionally, antiphonal Gregorian chant has a shorter cadence at the caesura, a longer one at the verse-end; a practice similar to this is not inconceivable for early Irish monasticism, and would have provided the starting-point for *deibide* as found in early texts. Present in antiphonal hymnody/psalmody was, beside the postulated alternating cadence, the couplet-form which distinguishes *deibide* from the *rannaigecht*-type metres, this form being provided by the alternation of cantor and congregation.

According to this theory, *deibide* can be regarded as having been adopted into the vernacular as a specific form from the outset; there is no need to postulate a lost transitional period in which it developed from being a device of convenience into an autonomous form with its own specific regulations. Both characteristics of the *deibide* form, the division into couplets from which it derives its name and the strict alternation of cadences, are inherent from the start, by nature of the model from which it was derived. According to this theory, *deibide* is a vernacular mix of the two main types of liturgical singing, the antiphonal unrhymed psalm and the strict-metre rhymed hymn.

6.3   Rhyme in Germanic

By the time of the first written source of skaldic poetry (accepting the dating of this, the skaldic stanza of the Karlevi stone, as around A.D. 1000), rhyme existed in three different Germanic language areas in three different manifestations. Together, the three form points on a common scale represented by the relationship of rhyme syllable and word-accent, as follows:

a)   Old High German (Otfrid von Weissenburg): line-end rhyme involving the final syllable, irrespective of natural accent,

b)   Old English (primarily the *Rhyming Poem,* with sporadic occurrences elsewhere[35]): line-end rhyme involving the tonic and all subsequent syllables,

c)   Old Icelandic *(dróttkvætt)*: rhyme of the tonic syllable alone.

This represents three stages of adaptation of the end-syllable principle of Latin rhyme to the Germanic first-syllable tonic accent.[36] These three stages are the result of the differing relationships of the works in the three languages to the writ-

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[35]   For a list of these see Brinkmann 1960/77 p. 169.

[36]   I am assuming here (cf. Ch. 3) that in all cases rhyme was a form which came to be adopted later than a native alliterative form. G. Schweikle (1967) argues against this generally accepted viewpoint, and indeed against the assumption that the origins of rhyme are to be found anywhere in Latinitas.

ten Latinity of Western Europe, Otfrid having the closest relationship, the skalds of Iceland the most distant.

6.3.1   Otfrid

Otfrid's high regard for Latin literacy and his lack of regard for native oral tradition are evident in the epistle *ad Liutbertum* which appears among the prefatory materials of his *Liber Evangeliorum:*

> [...] nam dum agrestis linguae inculta verba inseruntur Latinitatis planitiae, cachinnum legentis prehebent. Lingua enim velut agrestis habetur, dum a propriis nec scriptura nec arte ullius temporibus expolita.[37]

> '[...] for when the unpolished words of a rustic language are sown in the smooth ground of Latin, they give occasion for loud laughter to readers. This language is indeed regarded as rustic because it has at no time been polished up by the natives either by writing or by any art.'

It is clear that an author with the above attitude to the vernacular and to its oral culture is not liable to make more concessions to what he sees as its constraints[38] than absolutely necessary for the purpose of his translation. It thus need not surprise us to find that he uses final-syllable rhyme,[39] despite the apparent unsuitability of this form for a language with first-syllable stress.[40]

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[37]   Text and translation from Magoun 1943 repr. 1978, p. 99. I have silently omitted various glosses placed by Magoun within parentheses in the text of the translation.

[38]   It already appears to cause Otfrid a degree of chagrin that the vernacular does not permit him to assign the grammatical numbers and genders of nouns according to the Latin equivalents when translating:

"Huius enim linguae proprietas nec numerum nec genera me conservare sinebat. Interdum enim masculinum Latinae linguae in hac feminino protuli, et cetera genera necessarie simili modo permiscui. Numerum pluralem singulari, singularem plurali variavi; et tali modo in barbarismum et soloecismum coactus incidi."

'The nature, indeed, of this language permitted me to preserve neither the number nor the genders. Sometimes, indeed, I have rendered a masculine of the Latin language by a feminine in this and in like manner I have perforce mixed other genders. I have varied a plural number with a singular and a singular with a plural and thus quite often have perforce fallen into a barbarism and a solecism.' (Magoun, ed. cit. p. 97.)

[39]   There is as yet no unambiguous answer to the question as to the origin of Otfrid's rhyme. For a survey of literature and account of the varying hypotheses see Ernst 1975, pp. 3-8.

[40]   A. Wolf, in the discussion to the Freiburg symposium on metrics and media, 16-18.6.88, proceedings in Tristram 1991, suggested that these final rhymes would have been accented in performance. This implies that Otfrid applies to his vernacular the system of Latin pronunciation with oxytonic stress imported by Alcuin; cf. Lüdtke 1991 p. 92: the performer would be expected to bend the vernacular's native

Otfrid's disregard for the vernacular springs from a respect for a Latinity which is purely Christian. To suggest that he drew on a Germanic substrate of rhyming charm-verses, as does Schweikle, is incompatible with this respect for Latinity. Like the Irish rhyming poetry, Otfrid's work is the product of a lettered environment, based on Latin.

6.3.2   Old English

There is no rhyming verse in Old English to compare with Otfrid; our sources are the *Old English Rhyming Poem,* short rhyming passages embedded in other poems, and the highly irregular rhyming lines of the late Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. With the exception of the latter, the alliterative pattern of the standard Germanic long-line is retained as the basic structural principle, rhyme being superimposed.

The rhyme-system of the *Rhyming Poem,* representative of the bulk of Old English rhyme, can be summarized as follows:

Half-lines rhyme in pairs, the a-line rhyming with the b-line. Rhyme can extend over more than one pair of half-lines, but always in pairs; a new rhyme-series can never start at a b-line.[41]

Identity begins with the first vowel of the last stress-bearing syllable of a given half-line and continues to the end of the line. It is phonematically and graphematically complete in stressed syllables.[42] Allowance is made for vowel reduction in unstressed syllables, including the second elements of falling diphthongs within rhyme-pairs where graphematical identity appears not to be required, though phonetic identity is present.

In the case of nominal compounds, identity begins with the first vowel of the second nominal element, as in 1.15 *sæge/sincgewæge,* 1.24 *ol/ealdorstol.*[43]

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accentual structure to accommodate it to a metrical form imported from Latin. According to Gutenbrunner 1968 repr. 1977 however, there was a levelling out of the accent during this period, so that the amount of bending needed may have been slight; see in particular his note on p. 368 "Beim Franken setzt sich also Silbe neben Silbe; wirklich unbetont sind bei ihm nur die Vortonsilben und die Proklitika". Sung (melodic!) performance would of course have accentuated any such tendency for syllables to be levelled and thus lend added prominence to unaccented rhyme-syllables.

[41]   The exception is the defective line 35, in which scribal error has apparently resulted in the omission of the b-line.

[42]   Exceptions; 1.30 *beofode* (cf. the form *bifode* in *Dream of the Rood)/hlifade,* 1.40 *dyre/feor,* (just how approximate these rhymes were depends on our assessment of the dating of the poem and of the extent to which monophthongization of the diphthong represented by the graphemes <eo> had already taken place), 1.60 *hente/ scyndeð* (deliberate break to underline meaning of *scendan* 'destroy'? cf. ll.76, 79 and note in Macrae-Gibson pp. 54-5), 1.66 *græfe/hafað,* 1.84 *bescyrede/generede* and use of /i/ and /y/ as identity group in ll.73,76.

[43]   This element would generally be considered to bear secondary stress, cf. Ch. 7.2, 8.2. It is possibly more profitable to consider the two nominal elements as separate

As we have no contemporary tracts dealing with rhyme in Old English, we are not in any position to make hard-and-fast generalizations about any all-embracing rhyme-system within the language. The sample is far too small, for example, for us to consider the high degree of identity occurring in our sources to have possessed any general validity to those practising rhyme at the time. We cannot rule out the existence of equivalence groups, although they appear not to be present in our sample.[44]

Bearing in mind the above proviso, we can assign Old English rhyme the following position:

As in the case of Otfrid, OE rhyming poetry is a product of a literate written culture, but one with an established tradition of religious verse in traditional alliterative metre. There was thus no need for an innovative rhymed verse to establish specifically Christian content.

This is consistent with the type of rhyme adopted, which builds on previous alliterative tradition rather than competing with it. The form is better adapted to the needs of a language with a fixed stress-accent on the nucleus than Otfrid's is, since the rhyme commences on this stressed nucleus. Rhyme in Old English can be described as the result of a process of assimilation, in which the demands of end-rhyme familiar from written Latin are reconciled to the requirements of vernacular oral performance.

6.3.3   Icelandic

If rhyme in Old English may be said to represent something of a compromise between native and imported elements, and between the demands of visual reception and of oral performance, Old Icelandic rhyme, as portrayed by Snorri and even by the Latinist grammarian Óláfr Hvítaskáld, makes no such concessions.

This rhyme (I will refer to it subsequently by the Icelandic term *hending*) consists of phonemic identity or equivalence of all vowels and consonants following the initial consonants of a given stressed syllable up to the next syllable boundary. No subsequent phonemes are relevant. It exists in two forms differentiated by the degree of equivalence required. In *aðalhending*, as defined by our tracts, phonemic identity of vowels is required.[45] In *skothending*, on the other hand, all vowels, whether singly or in groups, are treated as members of the same equivalence

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nouns from the metrical point of view, thus bearing equal stress, than to postulate rhyme between primary and secondary stresses as part of the metrical system. Egill Skallagrímsson's *Höfuðlausn*, traditionally but not conclusively dated to the mid-tenth century, with a comparable metre, allows rhyme between nominal compounds and simplexes.

[44]   Assuming that the poem is of sufficiently late date for graphematic <*i, y*> to be phonetically identical, see Macrae-Gibson p. 2.

[45]   In practice, certain restricted equivalence groups are to be found, as delineated by Árnason 1991 pp. 8-10.

group. Both forms of *hending* demand strict identity of the following consonant or consonants up to the syllable boundary.[46]

End-rhyme is also accounted for in both tracts within the terms of the metre *runhenda*. As defined by Óláfr Hvítaskáld, this is an extension of *aðalhending* to cover all syllables from the nucleus to the word boundary, with full identity from the vowel following the first consonant onwards. Óláfr Hvítaskáld regards this as principally a Latin form of rhyme[47] which also occurs in Norse verse.

It can be seen that the Icelandic tracts only make very limited use of equivalence categories in rhyme, and that this largely accords with poetic practice. In *skothending*, the equivalence group is so large as to cover any vowel or combination of vowels; elsewhere, as far as the tracts are concerned, identity is required. This system contrasts strongly with the Irish system, not mentioned specifically in the tracts, but still empirically determinable for the examples they contain, in which a comparatively large range of strictly limited equivalence groups controls the use of consonants. This difference can be regarded as an indication of the greater extent to which the Icelandic system was adapted to oral composition, performance and analysis, as opposed to the letter-based system of the Irish.

The main areas of difference between rhyme in the two cultures can be summarized as follows:

1) Icelandic, unlike Irish, does not necessarily include syllables following the tonic.
2) The presence of non-rhyming syllables after the tonic in Icelandic weakens the effectiveness of rhyme as a line-end marker, and it is only used as such in specialized cases.
3) Rhyme in Icelandic is freed from the function of end-marking, and therefore not fixed in the system as a whole to one specific metrical position. (The stress accent, to which it is linked, is similarly not fixed to specific positions in the system as a whole, though specific forms may specify the position of both accent and rhyme.)

These features demonstrate the high degree of adaptation of Icelandic rhyme as described in our tracts to an oral mode of performance, since:

1) Disregard of all syllables after the word-nucleus results effectively in rhyme being monosyllabic, the single syllable in question always bearing stress-accent. This factor contributes, at least in spoken performance, to an increased audibility of the rhyme-word.
2) This increase of audibility in its turn allows greater flexibility in positioning; the exposed position of the final syllable of an end-stopped line is not necessary to guarantee it audibility.
3) As a result, rhyme which is not confined to specific metrical positions is still prominent enough to be perceived as a metrical recurrence.

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[46]   Óláfr Hvítaskáld's examples are *snarpr, garpr* for *aðalhending, vaskr, röskr* for *skothending* (ed. arn. vol. 2 p. 82).

[47]   ed. arn. vol. 2 pp. 82-4.

The etymology of the term used in Icelandic for rhyme, *hending*, indicates the degree to which its function is perceived as being that of internal binding; end-rhyme as practiced by the Classical orators and subsequently is on the other hand a means of external demarcation. This internal binding is an important factor in fixing a non-written text; the lack of absolute binding of rhyme to a given syllabic position allows it to be better adapted to the requirements presented by the convoluted syntax of the verse, this in its turn being a feature of the need within an oral structure for fixity to ensure accurate transmission.

There is a degree of discrepancy here between the use of rhyme as practised by Snorri in the poem *Háttatal* and in the way it is analysed, both in the commentary and by Óláfr Hvítaskáld in *Málskrúðsfræði*. This discrepancy is possibly yet another indication of the tension between an underlying oral tradition and the writing-based principles of analysis the commentators have had instilled into them as a concomitant of their training in literacy. Nonetheless, we have little evidence to determine the status of rhyme within an oral skaldic metrical system. It is symptomatic that Óláfr Hvítaskáld, despite his sturdy defence of the principles of Norse poetry throughout *Málskrúðsfræði*, and despite his willingness to give classical figures of rhetoric a completely new definition in terms of, and to legitimate, his native tradition, nonetheless is prepared to regard rhyme in terms of an optional, additional decoration of an established structure, in terms of the smoothing of the ship once the planks have been nailed, the alliteration serving as the nails with which the timbers are fastened.[48] This is consonant with the generally accepted view of skaldic poetry as being a development from, rather than a rival to, pre-existing poetry based on the Germanic long line; one could interpret Óláfr Hvítaskáld's remarks about the construction of a ship as being an indication that he considered non-skaldic poems to be metrically valid, if not so highly finished as their courtly cousins.

The term *hending*, on the other hand, seems to relate to a function within the oral tradition, in which a given metrical unit, in this case the individual stanza, was to be locked together as tightly as possible in order to avoid falsification. Just as in certain early Irish poetry, syntax and alliterative patterns overlap to ensure that linkage of some kind held every significant element in place, so also in skaldic poetry, with the difference that here the overlapping systems are threefold. The basic metrical structure is guaranteed by the presence of the alliterating staves. Within each line-unit, coherence is guaranteed, despite frequent syntactic disjunction, by the locking structure of the rhymes. Thus individual lines are held together by rhyme, couplets by alliteration, and these units are in turn held together by the convolutions of syntax. Variability of rhyme position within the line can thus be regarded as a means of ensuring that cohesive elements can be placed where they are most desirable, that is on either side of syntactic disjunctures.[49] This would also account for the placing of *aðalhending* in the even-numbered

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[48]   ed. arn. vol. 2 pp. 148-50.

[49]   Whether this is so in skaldic practice is another question, and one that must remain uninvestigated for the moment.

lines of the stanza.[50] In the odd-numbered lines, disjunctures can be bridged by alliteration. In the even lines, alliteration is bound to the first stressed syllable, and no further alliteration can occur. This means that it is impossible to use alliteration to bridge syntactic disjunctures within these lines. It seems thus not to run counter to expectations that the acoustically more significant form of rhyme-linkage occurs in these uneven lines.

6.4   Conclusions

Both Irish and Icelandic have evolved forms of rhyme that are at variance with the pattern found in other Celtic and Germanic languages in the Middle Ages. Both are inflected languages bearing word-nucleus stress, in which rhyme, being primarily an end-marking feature, is less congenial than alliteration. Tracts in both languages use rhyme as a means of distinguishing canonical metrical forms.

Despite these similarities, the manifestations of rhyme described by the tracts in their respective languages are considerably at variance:

Irish has not abandoned the word-final position. It has developed a complex system of equivalence-categories based on consonantal phonematic classes. The congeniality of the system is increased only slightly by the adoption of this system; it increases the number of rhymes available without contributing to their distinctiveness or audibility. The availability of musical performance may have facilitated the adoption of the system, though it seems likely that a degree of involvement with the written letter as evinced by the phonematic systematisation of the ogham alphabet was a vital contributory factor. Nothing speaks against its having developed in a script-conscious monastic environment.

Icelandic rhyme is comparatively well adapted to the requirements of a language bearing stress on the word-nucleus, in that rhyme concentrates entirely on this nucleus, omitting only its consonantal onset if present. In its most restrictive form *aðalhending* it makes practically no use of equivalence groups; where these are used, as in the vowel-equivalence which forms the basis of *skothending*, they are of far greater simplicity than those to be found in Irish.

It would be foolhardy to suggest that the form of rhyme found in the Irish tracts was purely the manifestation of a written culture, while that described in Icelandic tracts was of purely oral origin. There do seem to be strong indications, however, that the presence of writing had a greater influence on the development of the Irish form of rhyme than it did on rhyme in Iceland.

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[50]   It should be noted that this alternation is a form of regularity that did not exist throughout the period, being less strictly observed work generally attributed to the older skalds.