

# Haustlǫng

*How syntax and rhyme interact in early Old Norse dróttkvætt*

## 1. Introduction

Through his work, Þjóðólfr ór Hvini may have defined two Old Norse meters, known to posterity as *dróttkvætt* and *kviðuhátt*, during the reign of Haraldr hárfagri (c. 850–c. 932).<sup>1</sup> His *kviðuhátt* poem, *Ynglingatal*, does not mention Haraldr, but it gives his Yngling-family a divine ancestry. No older poem exists with regular *kviðuhátt* features, and *Ynglingatal* may have been a model for all later poetry in that meter. Scholars assume that the meter of Þjóðólfr’s other main poem, *Haustlǫng* ‘autumn-long’, is in an early evolutionary state. I argue, however, that it is in the standard *dróttkvætt* meter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and that the apparent irregularity in the *dróttkvætt* rhyme is due to a conditional poetic license that relates syntax and rhyme. It allows odd-numbered lines that are **clause-lines** to be without rhyme. A clause-line is a metrical line, syntactically capable of beginning a half-stanza. It has specific properties that need to be described.

In this article, I establish the existence of this license and the normalcy of *Haustlǫng* among poems of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In Section 2, I describe the *dróttkvætt* rhyme and I explain how to recognize clause-lines. In Section 3, I demonstrate that the license was effective both in *Haustlǫng* and younger poems of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Afterwards, in Sections 4 and 5, I detail the difference between these poems and poetry in what I call **proto-dróttkvætt**, and I show that *Haustlǫng* has none of the features that make *proto-dróttkvætt* different.

## 2. Preliminaries

The *dróttkvætt* meter derives from a pan-Germanic alliterative meter. It has some innovations; among them is a syllable rhyme. Each metrical

<sup>1</sup> I thank my two reviewers for their helpful criticism and comments, one of whom made me aware of Klaus Johan Myrvoll’s *JEGP* 2020 article and its relevance to this article.

line, called a ‘stanza-word’ (*vísuorð*) by Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) in *Háttatal*<sup>2</sup> (Anthony Faulkes 2007:3–4), has six metrical positions; each position is usually occupied by one syllable. The rhythm is variable, except that the penult is always rhythmically strong, while the final syllable is in an unstressed ending, usually an inflectional ending. The penult rhymes with some syllable in the first three metrical positions. In even-numbered lines (even lines), the rhyme is full-rhyme (*aðalbending*), in which both the vowel and consonants rhyme; in odd-numbered lines (odd lines), the rhyme is half-rhyme (*skoðbending*), only the consonants rhyme; the half-rhyme does not include the vowel.<sup>3</sup> The vowels are usually different, but they can be identical.<sup>4</sup> In odd lines, the penult usually alliterates and some other syllable in the line as well; the first and third syllable alliterate if the penult does not. In even lines the first syllable alliterates. This description of rhyme and alliteration in *dróttkvætt* is traditional and as given by Snorri Sturluson in *Háttatal* of Snorra-Edda (Faulkes 2007:4) in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. An example that Snorri gives is the following:

jorð kann frelsa fyrðum  
friðrofs konungr ofsa

The first syllables in the words *frelsa*, *fyrðum*, and *friðrofs* alliterate. The monosyllables *jorð* and *fyrð-* have a half-rhyme, while *rofs* and *ofs-* have a full-rhyme.

The *dróttkvætt* meter has a regular stanza structure, but its features are not well known or understood. Manuscripts, containing poems, assume that each stanza has eight lines, but no contemporary manuscript exists until after c. year 1200. An eight-line *dróttkvætt* stanza is always divisible into two so-called half-stanzas. Each half-stanza is a syntactic unit containing one or more full statements. It must begin with what I call a clause-line,<sup>5</sup> containing either a beginning of a main clause or of a subordinated clause. If the clause is a main clause, a finite verb must be in one

<sup>2</sup> *Háttatal* is a poem by Snorri Sturluson listing variants of Old Norse meters. It is also a name of a chapter in Snorra-Edda where the meters are explained. I frequently refer to *Háttatal*, an edition of the poem and its commentary in Snorra-Edda by Anthony Faulkes (2007).

<sup>3</sup> If a rhyming syllable ends in a vowel, the half-rhyme will have no consonant and be the interesting ‘empty rhyme,’ see Kristján Árnason (1991:107).

<sup>4</sup> This applies at least in the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> century; see Myrvoll (2014:130–131).

<sup>5</sup> A more descriptive name for a clause-line could cause confusion by indicating that it was not a technical term.

of the first four metrical positions<sup>6</sup> and also occupy one of the first two sentence positions.<sup>7</sup> If the clause is subordinated, the first sentence position<sup>8</sup> must contain a connective (a particle that connects clauses, sometimes a combination of a pronoun and a conjunction, for instance: *hann es* ‘he who’).<sup>9</sup> Section 3 gives many examples of clause-lines. They are easily recognized by a finite verb or by a connective at their beginning.

Word order within a half-stanza is usually convoluted. Parts of clauses are separated, sometimes words are split as well (in *tmesis*). The beginning of the first clause, however, is always at the beginning of the half-stanza. These features of half-stanzas were already present and regular in the earliest known *dróttkvætt* type of poetry.

Hans Kuhn, in 1933, noted and discussed the above-described use of verbs and connectives in *dróttkvætt*. He related it to a verb-second principle (V2), a well-known feature of Germanic languages, see Þórhallur Eyþórsson (1997 and 2009) and Kristján Árnason (2002 and 2009); see Haukur Þorgeirsson (2012) for a recent discussion of the V2 word order and Eddic poetry. Hans Kuhn did not define the concept of a clause-line, but I believe that he, and later scholars, would agree that every *dróttkvætt* half-stanza begins with such a line. These lines can, and often do, appear as line number three of a half-stanza.

Haustlǫng is a *dróttkvætt*-poem by Þjóðólfr ór Hvini. Scholars take the meter of Haustlǫng to be undeveloped regarding rhyme in odd lines. The following is how Finnur Jónsson describes it:<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> A finite verb in a main clause must not alliterate, unless it is line-initial, and the verb-placement depends on the rhythm, see Þorgeir Sigurðsson (2016). These details are not discussed here.

<sup>7</sup> At most, one constituent may precede the verb. The constituent (occupying one sentence position) may fill up to three metrical positions and be more than one word.

<sup>8</sup> Only after year 1000 could a connective be in the second sentence position at the beginning of a half-stanza. An example from the 11<sup>th</sup> century: Sigvatr Þórðarson, Erfiðrápa Ólafs Helga 27.5 *sult, þás silfri hjaltat*. Such lines are never without a rhyme (my observation).

<sup>9</sup> A clause can have a connective in the first sentence position and a finite verb in the second. In this article it does not affect any arguments whether such clauses are classified as subordinated clauses or as main clauses.

<sup>10</sup> My translation: From a metrical perspective, the poem has an antiquated position. The even lines do certainly have — or had — full-rhyme, and the last rhyme is always in the penultimate syllable of the line; but rhyme-free odd lines are present in such a number that it must be assumed that the poet thought he could furnish them as he wished, with or without rhyme. However, some of the odd lines that now have no rhyme might be distorted.

I metrisk henseende står digtet på et alderdomligt standpunkt. Vel har de lige linjer — eller har haft — helrim, og det sidste rim står altid i linjens næstsidste stavelse; men rimfrie ulige linjer er i et sådant antal tilstede, at det må antages, at skjalden har ment, at han kunde indrette dem som han vilde, med eller uden rim. Enkelte af de ulige linjer, der nu intet rim har, turde dog mulig være forvanskede. (Finnur Jónsson 1920:441)

Ragnarsdrápa by Bragi Boddason is the only extant *dróttkvætt* poem older than Haustlǫng. Both poems are shield poems, in which the poet tells mythological stories depicted on a shield. Haustlǫng is not as archaic as Ragnarsdrápa, but both poems lack rhyme in many of their odd lines, and because of this, scholars see Haustlǫng as standing in-between the 9<sup>th</sup> century proto-*dróttkvætt* of Bragi and **early *dróttkvætt*** in poems of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. However, I shall show that different from Ragnarsdrápa, Haustlǫng only allows odd lines to be without rhyme that are clause-lines. This also applies to younger poems of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The revelation of this conditional license is the main novelty of this article. One of its consequences is that the distinction between Haustlǫng and older poetry (proto-*dróttkvætt*) becomes sharper.

The Old Norse text presented here is always that of Finnur Jónsson's 1912–1915 edition of *dróttkvætt* poetry, except where I note otherwise. I use Finnur's dating of poems and his numbering of stanzas. Line number 5 of a stanza is the first line of the second half-stanza. The notation 3.7 means: the third line of the second half-stanza of stanza number 3. By referring to Finnur, I do not side with him on all issues with his edition, but I make it clear that my work was not enabled by any new or improved edition of the source material. I have, however, benefitted greatly from Klaus Johan Myrvoll's doctoral dissertation in 2014 and from his *JEGP* 2020 article, as is apparent from my quotations. Professor Myrvoll is currently one of the editors of a new collaborative edition, *SkP*. It started in year 2007 and is still in the making. This edition has in almost all cases the same rhymes as I present here. It provides an English translation and background material for all the poems and poets that I mention.

### 3. The missing rhyme

A noticeable deviation in both Haustlǫng and Ragnarsdrápa from Snorri's description of *dróttkvætt* is a frequent absence of rhyme in odd lines. In Ragnarsdrápa, rhyme is missing in some 50% of the odd-numbered lines

(odd lines).<sup>11</sup> In Haustlǫng, a normal *dróttkvætt* rhyme is absent in 21% of the odd lines, as I demonstrate shortly. I shall show, however, that in Haustlǫng, the rhyme is only absent in clause-lines, while this is not true for Ragnarsdrápa. Furthermore, I shall show that this applies to all *dróttkvætt* poems of the 10<sup>th</sup> century; only the percentage of lines with absent rhyme is different. It is 11% in the poem Vellekla, but only 3%–4% in three poems at the end of the century. Following are the details for each poem, and *Table 1* gives an overview.

In Haustlǫng, odd lines are without rhyme 12 times (out of 40) at the beginning of half-stanzas (lines number 1 and 5). Here and elsewhere, finite main verbs and connectives are bolded. The connectives are also in italics:<sup>12</sup>

- 1.1 Hvé **skalk** góðs at gjǫldum
- 2.5 **settisk** orn, þars æsir
- 3.1 Tormiðluðr **vas** tívum
- 3.5 Margspakr **of nam**<sup>13</sup> mæla
- 7.5 **loddi** rǫ við ramman
- 8.5 þá **varð** Þórs of-rúni
- 10.5 **gǫrðusk** allar áttir<sup>14</sup>
- 11.5 þú **skalt** véltr, nema, vélum
- 13.5 **Þat's** of fátt á fjalla
- 14.1 Eðr **of sér**,<sup>15</sup> es jǫtna
- 18.5 þar **hné** grundar gilja
- 19.1 **Ok** hǫrð brotin herju

<sup>11</sup> See Myrvoll (2014:110).

<sup>12</sup> The lines without rhyme are the same as listed by Klaus Johan Myrvoll (2014:112), except I assume line 11.3 *leiðipír ok lava* (text as in Faulkes 1998:32) has half-rhyme, see a discussion in Section 5 on crossing rhyme in Haustlǫng. Like Myrvoll (2014:348), I use Faulkes' (1998:32) text for line 10.5 *gǫrðusk allar áttir*.

I assume, like Myrvoll (2014), that in Haustlǫng words with *g* vs. *gn* rhyme. Haustlǫng has three examples of such rhyme (in lines 2.1, 5.3, and 16.7). Ragnarsdrápa has one such rhyme with *mǫgr* vs. *Hǫgna* in line 2.4. These two poems provide four out of nine instances of such rhyme in the *dróttkvætt* corpus until 1200. Two of the remaining four are from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, see Myrvoll (2014:81).

<sup>13</sup> The filler-word *of* (remains of a prefix) and the following verb are one constituent.

<sup>14</sup> Text as in Faulkes (1998:32).

<sup>15</sup> The *of* is a prefix. The finite verb is in the second sentence position.

All of the above lines are clause-lines as is normal for first lines of half-stanzas. Haustlǫng has five lines that are without rhyme and are not at the beginning of a half-stanza. Two of them are part of a refrain, and they are therefore identical.

- 9.3 **þás** ellilyf ása<sup>16</sup>  
 10.3 þá **vas** Ið með jǫtnum  
 13.7 Baugs **þák** bifum fáða  
 18.7 **en** berg-Dana bægdī  
 20.7 Baugs **þák** bifum fáða

All the above lines are clause-lines, which means that they have a finite verb (bolded above) in the first or the second sentence position, and also in one of the first four metrical positions, or else they begin with a connective (bolded and italicized above).

Odd lines that are not at the beginning of a half-stanza (the third lines) are commonly clause-lines, but their percentage is different for different poems. In Haustlǫng, some 50% of these lines are clause-lines, which is typical (see discussion following *Table 1*). It could be a coincidence that five lines in Haustlǫng are of this type. This is, however, not likely, because other poems in the 10<sup>th</sup> century have the same feature; the third line is never without rhyme unless it is a clause-line. The number of poems with more than ten extant half-stanzas (and thus more than 20 odd lines) is not large. In the following, I list all lines without rhyme in these poems and demonstrate that all of them are clause-lines.

Glymdrápa by Þorbjörn hornklofi, presumably on Haraldr hárfagri and dated to c. 900, has 16 extant half-stanzas and 32 odd lines. The following odd line is without a normal *dróttkvætt* rhyme:

- 4.1 **Þar svát** barsk at borði<sup>17</sup>

Hákonardrápa by Guthormr sindri, composed for King Hákon the good, who reigned c. 936–961, has 14 extant half-stanzas and 28 odd lines. One of them is without rhyme:

<sup>16</sup> This line appears to have the interlinear full-rhyme: *þás* vs *ás-a*, but I assume it to be coincidental, since the metrical type in question was not introduced until after year 1000. See Kuhn (1969) and Myrvoll (2014:230).

<sup>17</sup> *Þar* : *bar-sk* could rhyme, but rhyme in metrical positions 1 and 3 is not normal for Haustlǫng and later poems.

5.5 þann es áðr frá Írum<sup>18</sup>

Gráfeldardrápa, on King Haraldr gráfeldr from around year 970, has 22 preserved half-stanzas. The following four lines are the only lines without rhyme in Gráfeldardrápa; all are clause-lines.

- 1.3 því **biðjum** vér þagnar
- 10.3 **varð** í gogn at ganga
- 11.1 **Fellumk** holf, þás hilmis
- 11.7 séa **getr** þar til sælu

The poem Máhlíðingavísur from 983–984 has 34 half-stanzas. Most lines have normal rhyme, except the following five:

- 3.3 þar **ák** lífhǫtuð launa
- 12.5 nú **séumk** hitt, at hlaupa
- 12.7 leitt **erum** rauðra randa
- 13.5 **þás** á fyrða fundi
- 16.5 **nema** Arnketill órum

The poem Vellekla is from c. 986. It has 57 half-stanzas. The following 13 lines are without normal rhyme:

- 5.3 **þýtr** Óðrøris alda
- 6.1 **Nú's** þats Boðnar bára
- 12.3 því **kom** vǫxtr í Vínu
- 13.7 því **bregðr** ǫld við aðra
- 16.5 nú **grær** jørð sem áðan
- 17.1 Nú **liggr** alt und jarli
- 20.7 **vægðit** jarl fyr jǫfri
- 28.1 **Vasat** í gogn, þótt gerði
- 28.7 (**kvaddi** vígs) ok Vinða
- 30.7 Týr **vildi** sá týna
- 31.7 alt **vann** gramr of gengit<sup>19</sup>
- 37.1 Hvar **viti** ǫld und einum
- 37.3 þat **skyli** herr of hugsa

<sup>18</sup> In a chapter on compromises, Kuhn (1983:79) says *ð* and *r* could be equivalent in rhyme, but this is not normal.

<sup>19</sup> It might be claimed that *vann gramr* and *gengit* form a half-rhyme (with rhyme over a word boundary *vann-g*). This is, however, unlikely because the finite verb *vann* is in a weak metrical position that never carries rhyme in the metrical type in question (Sievers A3 type). See a discussion and examples of rhyme over word-boundaries in Myrvoll (2014:133–145). Myrvoll does not count this line among lines having such rhyme (see his table on p. 138).

11% of odd lines are without rhyme in *Vellekla*; this is the highest proportion in a poem after *Haustlǫng*.

*Húsdrápa* by Ulfr Uggason from c. 983 has one line without rhyme in 14 half-stanzas.

1.3 hann **vilk** at giǫf Grímnis

*Hákonardrápa* by Tindr from c. 987 has 20 half-stanzas. One odd line is without rhyme:<sup>20</sup>

10.5 mikinn **gerði** herr hjörva<sup>21</sup>

*Þorsdrápa* has 40 half-stanzas. It is the last poem of the 10<sup>th</sup> century with more than ten half-stanzas in Finnur Jónsson's chronological 1912–1915 edition.<sup>22</sup> Four lines are without rhyme:

11.1 **Ok** sífuna síðan

10.5 ógndjarfan **hlaut** Atli

19.1 Glaums niðjum<sup>23</sup> **fór**<sup>24</sup> gǫrva

20.3 undirfjalfrs at afli

Line 20.3 appears not to be without rhyme, and it is not a clause-line. Reichart (1948:390) chooses the reading *alfi* rather than *afli* from two of the three main manuscripts, and so does Myrvoll (2014:354–355). Line 10.5 has *arfi* and not *Atli* in its manuscripts, and *arfi* is adopted by Myrvoll, *loc. cit.* This means that only two lines are without rhyme and both are clause-lines.

I have now discussed all *dróttkvætt* poems of the 10<sup>th</sup> century with more than 20 odd lines extant. Odd lines without rhyme did not disappear suddenly at the end of the century, but they became infrequent in the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>25</sup> and were abnormal in Snorri's time around the year 1200.

<sup>20</sup> I do not list line 10.7. It reads in Finnur's (1912–1915) edition: *mærðar fúss á Mæri*. It is garbled in its only manuscript: *numnar fus á mæti* and Finnur's restored text has little value.

<sup>21</sup> It could be claimed that the pair *her-r* and *hjør-va* forms a half-rhyme. However I assume that rhyme cannot be in the fourth metrical positions. Most, perhaps all, of the examples that exist of lines with such rhyme are in clause-lines and do not need rhyme.

<sup>22</sup> Poems by Hallfrøðr vandræðaskáld are presumably from c. 1000.

<sup>23</sup> *Glaums niðjum* 'Glaumr's descendants' is one constituent (the two words fill one sentence position).

<sup>24</sup> The half-rhyme *fór* and *gør-va* in line 19.1 is not normal because *fór* is not in one of the first three metrical positions.

<sup>25</sup> The percentage of odd lines without rhyme in king-sagas went from 7.7% in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century to 1.1% in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, according to Myrvoll (2014:130).



In *Table 1*, I summarize the above discussion. Haustlǫng has 80 odd lines of which 17 lines are without rhyme, or 21%. Of these 17 lines, five are the third line of a half-stanza. I list the corresponding information for all the poems:

<i>Name of poem</i>	<i>Number of odd lines</i>	<i>Without rhyme, number</i>	<i>Without rhyme, percent</i>	<i>Lines 3 and 7 without rhyme, number</i>
Haustlǫng	80	17	21%	5
Glymdrápa	32	1	3%	0
Hákonardrápa (Sindri)	28	1	4%	0
Gráfeldardrápa	44	4	9%	3
Máhlíðingavísur	68	5	7%	2
Vellekla	114	13	11%	7
Húsdrápa	28	1	4%	1
Hákonardrápa (Tindr)	40	1	3%	0
Þórdrápa	80	2	3%	1

*Table 1:* Percentages of odd lines without rhyme, all of whom are clause-lines.

The total number of lines without rhyme in the table is 45. Of these, 26 are the first line of a half-stanza. The remaining 19 are the third line of a half-stanza.

The third line of a half-stanza is often a clause-line. In Haustlǫng, Glymdrápa, Hákonardrápa (Sindri), Vellekla, and Hákonardrápa (Tindr) around half of the third lines are clause-lines. In Þórdrápa and Húsdrápa they are around 35%. In Gráfeldardrápa the percentage is near 60%. In Máhlíðingavísur it is over 80%. It is, nevertheless, remarkable that all the 45 odd lines without rhyme in *Table 1* are clause-lines. The odds are very low for it being a coincidence.

The following odd-numbered lines without rhyme are in Ragnarsdrápa from the 9<sup>th</sup> century. These lines are not clause-lines, and I use them to exemplify the type of lines without rhyme that are neither in the poem Haustlǫng nor any of its successors.

- 2.3 meyjar hjóls enn mæri
- 3.3 með dreyrfáar dróttir
- 9.7 jǫfrum ulfs at sinna

Because of the above lines, I can state that there is a qualitative difference between the missing rhyme in odd lines of Ragnarsdrápa and Haustlǫng,

but only a quantitative difference between Haustlǫng and younger poems (a different percentage).

Poems provide a better metrical evidence than *lausavísur* (singular *-vísa*, free-standing stanzas). The reasons are mostly obvious. One of them is that they usually come from more reliable sources (sagas of kings or Snorra-Edda rather than sagas of Icelanders). To strengthen the message in this section, I shall, however, list odd lines without rhyme in Gísli Súrsson's *lausavísur*.<sup>26</sup> He and the poet Kormákr are both from the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and their *lausavísur* have a particularly large percentage of such lines. In 132 odd lines in Gísli's *lausavísur*, the following 22 lines are without line-internal rhyme:

- 3.5 **þás** vér í sal sǫtum
- 5.3 hraun fylvingar, hremmir
- 7.3 ráðit **hefr** margra manna
- 7.5 **lǫtum** vér, þótt vága
- 9.7 svá **rak** snjallra bræðra
- 18.3 Gefn **drepr** fyr mér glaumi
- 18.5 **kømr** þegars ek skal blunda
- 18.7 oss **þvær** unda flóði
- 19.1 Sagt **hef** ek enn frá órum
- 21.1 Hverr **of veit** nema hvassan
- 21.7 **drýgjum** vér til dauða
- 23.5 **ok** með sér en svinna
- 24.5 þá **munt**, Ullr, ok Ilmi
- 24.7 þat **hagar** okkr til auðar
- 26.1 **Skuluða** it, kvað skorða
- 27.1 **Hugðak** þvá mér Þrúði
- 28.1 **Hugðak** geymi-Göndul
- 28.5 **væri** hendr á henni
- 28.7 svá **vakði** mik Sága
- 30.5 **áðr an** mik þeirs mínu<sup>27</sup>
- 34.3 (stór **fingum** ben) brynju<sup>28</sup>
- 36.7 koma **mun** dals á drengi

<sup>26</sup> Klaus Johan Myrvoll (2020) concludes that most of Gísli's *lausavísur* are authentic by examining their formal properties.

<sup>27</sup> *an* and *mín-* do not rhyme. The second metrical position is unstressed and does not rhyme in this metrical type (A3 Sievers type).

<sup>28</sup> I do not take *ben* and *bryn-ju* for a rhyme, because *ben* is in the fourth metrical position.

Line 5.3 appears not to be a clause-line, which is due to an editorial mistake, corrected by Myrvoll (2014:351) with a reference to *Íslenzk fornrit* VI, 48. The line has rhyme in all its manuscripts. Thus, 21 lines are without rhyme or 16% of the odd lines in Gísli's *lausavísur*. Ten of these lines are the third line of a half-stanza. In Gísli's *lausavísur*, around 60% of the third lines are clause-lines. The likelihood of picking ten clause-lines by coincidence from these is less than 1%.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4. Haustlǫng versus proto-*dróttkvætt*

Now that I have, in Section 3, established that lack of rhyme in odd lines does not distinguish Haustlǫng from younger poems in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the question arises whether the poem has other poetic features that do. I will show in the following that it does not.

I divide *dróttkvætt* poetry into three groups. The first group, I call proto-*dróttkvætt*. The only poem in this group is Ragnarsdrápa by Bragi Boddason. It seems that features of proto-*dróttkvætt* lasted longer in *lausavísur* than in poems. Five eight-line *lausavísur* by the Orcadian Earl Torf-Einarr from around the year 900<sup>30</sup> have features of proto-*dróttkvætt*, and some *lausavísur* by Egill Skallagrímsson and by Kormákr Ögmundarson as well, while Gísli's *lausavísur* almost lack them completely.<sup>31</sup> The second group, I call early *dróttkvætt*. Most poetry from the 10<sup>th</sup> century belongs to this group, and I argue that so does the poem Haustlǫng. The third group, I call **classical *dróttkvætt***. In this group is the *dróttkvætt* poetry that Snorri Sturluson described and prescribed for his readers. I use the year 1000 as a dividing line between classical and early *dróttkvætt*.

Snorri Sturluson gives a description of obsolete features of *dróttkvætt* in stanzas 54–58 of *Háttatal* (Faulkes 2007:24–26). He explains the abnormality of each stanza and attributes them to old poets, including Torf-Einarr, Bragi, and Egill. These features are the following:

- 1 Odd lines in proto-*dróttkvætt* did not need any rhyme. I have already discussed this item.
- 2 Even lines did not need full-rhyme (they normally had half-rhyme

<sup>29</sup> If the likelihood for picking one clause-line by coincidence is 0.6, the likelihood for doing so ten times is  $0.6^{10} = 0.006$  which is 0.6%.

<sup>30</sup> I use Finnur Jónson's dating in his 1912–1915 *dróttkvætt* edition.

<sup>31</sup> An exception is in Gísli Súrsson's *lausavísa* 28.6 *í hjörregni þvegnar*, with alliteration on *hjør-* in the second metrical position of an even line (see item 3).

instead). This is not allowed in early *dróttkvætt* and not in Haustlǫng. See the quotation from Finnur Jónsson in Section 2 (Preliminaries).

- 3 Even lines could have an alliterating syllable in the second metrical position. This is not a feature of early *dróttkvætt*, and not of Haustlǫng.
- 4 Line-internal rhyme could be between the first and the third metrical position in proto-*dróttkvætt* (and does not involve the penult). Such rhyme is not in early *dróttkvætt*, and it is not in Haustlǫng. See quotation from Finnur Jónsson in Section 2.

All the items above are features of Bragi's Ragnarsdrápa, but I use *lausavísur* by Egill Skalla-Grímsson (number 6) and Torf-Einarr (number 4) to exemplify them.

Item number 3 appears in the following half-stanza by Egill that Snorri quotes in *Skáldskaparmál* of his Snorra-Edda, where it is stanza number 140 (Faulkes 1998:40).

Upp **skulum** órum sverðum,  
ulfs tannlituðr, glitra,  
**eigum** dǫð at drýgja  
í dalmiskunn fiska.

Lines 1 and 3 are clause-lines and without rhyme, which is in order in early *dróttkvætt*. Lines 2 and 4 have full-rhyme as is required in early *dróttkvætt*, but line 4 has alliteration in the second metrical position, which is a proto-*dróttkvætt* feature (item 3). Snorri seems to base his stanza number 56 in Háttatal (the poem) on this stanza regarding rhyme in even and odd lines. He says the odd lines have no rhyme (*háttlausar*) and he calls the meter Egill's meter (*Egils hátt*).

Egill's half-stanza has a continuation in *Egils saga*, which I use to exemplify item number 2 (it is *lausavísa* number 6; Finnur Jónsson's 1912–1915 edition dates it to year 924).

**leiti** upp til Lundar  
lýða hvern sem bráðast,  
**gerum** þar fyr sjöt sólar  
seið ófagra vagra.

Lines 1 and 3 are clause-lines, and do not need rhyme in early *dróttkvætt*, but lines 2 and 4 have only half-rhymes, allowed in proto-*dróttkvætt* (item 2), whereas full-rhymes would be required in early and classical *drótt-*

*kvætt*. Lines 3 and 4 have the characteristics of a meter Snorri defines and calls Torf-Einarr's meter (no rhyme in odd lines and half-rhyme in metrical positions 3 and 5 of even lines).

I use the following half-stanza from Torf-Einarr's *lausavísur* number 4 to demonstrate items number 1, 2, and 4.

Eru til míns fjørs margir  
menn of sannar deilðir  
ór ýmissum óttum  
ósmábornir gjarnir;

Lines 1 and 3 are without rhyme and line 1 is a clause-line. The lack of rhyme in line 3 is a proto-*dróttkvætt* feature (item 1). Lines 2 and 4 have half-rhymes instead of full-rhymes, which is another proto-*dróttkvætt* feature (item 2) and line 2 has the rhyming syllables in metrical positions 1 and 3 (*menn* : *sann-*), which is one more proto-*dróttkvætt* feature (item 4).

Rhyme that links metrical lines (crossing rhyme, see next section) is a feature of both proto-*dróttkvætt* and early *dróttkvætt*. Snorri attributes it to Bragi by stanza 58 in *Háttatal* (he says the stanza is in Bragi's meter). The first half of stanza 58 is as follows (Finnur Jónsson 1912–1915 BII:77):

Es til hjalma hyrjar  
herjum styrjar væni,  
**Þar svát** jarl til ógnar  
egnir tognu sverði;

Snorri explains that lines 1 and 3 are without rhyme, but their penult rhymes with a syllable in the following even line<sup>32</sup> (*hyr-* : *her-* and *ógn-* : *egn-*). The half-rhyme in lines 2 and 4 is in positions 1 and 3, which is a proto-*dróttkvætt* feature (item 4). Lines 1 and 3 are clause-lines and they do therefore not need to have rhyme in early *dróttkvætt*.

Snorri saw all the features in items 1–4 as antiquated. He did not allow odd lines to be without rhyme, even if they were clause-lines (he did not use that term), and additionally it seems that Snorri thought that in previous times, but no longer, rhyme between lines could compensate for a lack of rhyme. I discuss this further in the following section.

<sup>32</sup> In Snorri's words: "Hér er í fyrsta ok þriðja vísuorði it síðarsta málsorð haft til hendingar, en missir þess orðs ins fyrra er gera skyldi skothending, en við þetta hendingar-orð eru í öðru ok inu fjórða vísuorði hendingar" (Faulkes 2007:26).

## 5. The crossing rhyme

The normal rhyme in *dróttkvætt* is between the penult of a line and some syllable in the first three metrical positions in the same line (line-internal rhyme). In *Ragnarsdrápa*, *Haustlǫng* and in many poems of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, a rhyme occurs occasionally between an odd line and the following even-numbered line. It usually involves the penult of the odd line and some of the first syllables in the even line, often leading to rhyme of four syllables. This rhyme is, however, not used consistently in any *dróttkvætt* poetry, and when it occurs, it can be hard to determine if it is coincidental. I follow Myrvoll (2020) in calling all varieties of rhyme between *dróttkvætt* metrical lines, a **crossing rhyme**.

Crossing rhyme appears several times in *Ragnarsdrápa*. The following are lines 18.3 and 18.4. They have a half-rhyme between them (the rhyme is *-kk*):

18.3–18.4    hrøkkviáll of hrókkinn  
              hekk Vǫlsunga drekku

If the rhyme is full-rhyme, it is more likely intentional. The following couplet consists of lines 16.3 and 16.4 from *Ragnarsdrápa* (*ǫ* and *a* are equivalent in rhyme).

16.3–16.4    á Eynæfis ǫndri,  
              Jǫrmungandr at sandi

In old poetry, Snorri Sturluson seems to view crossing rhyme as an alternative to normal line-internal rhyme in odd lines (see previous section). Klaus Johan Myrvoll (2020:230) follows him in this and calls the rhyme a **compensatory rhyme**.<sup>33</sup> The second couplet that I quoted above from *Ragnarsdrápa* 16.3–16.4 exemplifies such rhyme. However, in proto-*dróttkvætt*, odd lines without internal rhyme are in order, and, in early *dróttkvætt*, all odd lines are either clause-lines or they have a normal internal rhyme, also those that participate in crossing rhymes. The odd lines are therefore always in order without the crossing rhyme, and do not need to be compensated.

I give the details for *Haustlǫng*. It has four couplets with a crossing rhyme and a normal classical *dróttkvætt* rhyme.

<sup>33</sup> Here, I use the technical term *compensatory rhyme*.

- 4.5–4.6      ving-rǫgnir lét vagna  
vígfrekr ofan sígask<sup>34</sup>
- 9.1–9.2      Sér það sagna hroeri  
sorgæran mey föera
- 12.7–12.8    ern at oðglis barni  
arnsúg faðir Marnar
- 19.3–19.4    hvein í hjarna möeni  
hein at Grundar sveini

Haustlǫng has the following three examples of a compensatory rhyme according to Myrvoll (2014:125) (two of them are in a refrain). These crossing rhymes are compensatory because the odd line does not have a line-internal rhyme.

- 7.5–7.6      **loddi** rǫ við ramman  
reimuð Jǫtunheima,
- 13.7–13.8    Baugs **þák** bifum fáða  
bifkleif at Þórleifi.
- 20.7–20.8    Baugs **þák** bifum fáða  
bifkleif at Þórleifi.

The rhymes above are *ramm-* : *reim* and *bif-* : *bif-*. They may be coincidental. The odd lines are, however, clause-lines and they are in order without a crossing rhyme.

Additionally, Haustlǫng has the following half-stanza, which has a unique and remarkable crossing rhyme. The rhyme is a flawless disyllabic end rhyme, and it is interlaced, between two odd lines, and two even lines. The text below is from Faulkes (1998:32).

- 11.1–11.4    **unz** hrynsævar hræva  
hund ǫl-Gefnar fundu  
leiðþír ok læva  
lund ǫl-Gefnar bundu.

<sup>34</sup> *-gn* and *-g* do not normally rhyme in *dróttkvætt*, but they do in *Ragnarsdrápa* and in *Haustlǫng* (see footnote 12). The crossing rhyme in this couplet may, however, not be intentional.

The third line in this stanza is not a clause-line and needs to have rhyme. The word *leiðíþi-r* has a morpheme boundary, and I assume that it rhymes with *læ-va*.<sup>35</sup>

Crossing rhyme occurs in most poems of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. It became less frequent in the 11<sup>th</sup> century; see *Table 2* below (see also overview by Faulkes 2007:80 and a more detailed overview by Hollander 1946:891–909<sup>36</sup>).

Myrvoll (2020:231) divides couplets with crossing rhyme that is not a compensatory rhyme into two groups. In the larger group, the line-internal half-rhyme in the odd lines, and the line-internal full-rhyme in the even lines, participate in the crossing rhyme. He calls this a **retained rhyme**. It could also be called a rhyme of four syllables (*Vierreimer* ‘four-rhymer’, a name used by Hans Kuhn 1981:297). Examples of it are the four couplets from *Haustlǫng* that I listed on page 27.<sup>37</sup> The smaller group includes all other possibilities of syllable rhyme between lines. Myrvoll calls them **adhesive rhyme**. An example is given below, from *Vellekla* 1.3–1.4. The following three syllables rhyme: *vǫrð*, *fyrð*-, and *fjarð*-.

1.3–1.4      foldar vǫrð á fyrða  
                  fjarðleggjar brim dreggjjar

The data in *Table 2* is from Myrvoll (2020:232).

Century	Number of couplets	Couplets with retained rhyme (“four-rhymers”)	Couplets with adhesive rhyme	Couplets with compensatory rhyme
9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup>	1649	161 (9.8%)	39 (2.4%)	55 (3.3%)
11 <sup>th</sup>	1940	83 (4.3%)	11 (0.6%)	11 (0.6%)
12 <sup>th</sup>	1630	61 (3.7%)	–	–
13 <sup>th</sup>	653	22 (3.4%)	–	–

*Table 2:* Crossing rhymes in *dróttkvætt* poetry.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> See a discussion by Myrvoll (2014:61) on Kristján Árnason’s (2007:102) proposal of allowing *-r* to act as a half-vowel in a similar line. Myrvoll prefers to use a morpheme boundary. This is an example of an ‘empty rhyme.’

<sup>36</sup> Hollander is very liberal when deciding what rhymes, and he identifies too many crossing rhymes. His lists are nevertheless useful.

<sup>37</sup> These are lines 4.5–4.6, 9.1–9.2, 12.7–12.8, and 19.3–19.4.

<sup>38</sup> Poetry in *Njáls saga* and *Grettis saga* is not included in these figures.



In early *dróttkvætt*, as noted earlier, the compensatory rhyme always involves clause-lines. If this was not true, odd lines that were not clause-lines would have shown up in *Table 1*. The disappearance of the compensatory rhyme in the 11<sup>th</sup> century is as expected, because clause-lines without rhyme were phased out in that century.<sup>39</sup> Both the retained rhyme and the adhesive rhyme were, however, legitimate after year 1000. As seen from the table, retained rhyme did not disappear even if its frequency was reduced while adhesive rhyme disappeared along with the compensatory rhyme. The retained rhyme involves a rhyme of penults in an odd and an even line, while the adhesive rhyme does not. The continued popularity of the retained rhyme, may be due to a general appreciation for rhyme at line endings.<sup>40</sup>

The discussion on crossing rhymes is not the only one that is affected by the conditional license on rhyme, but I discussed crossing rhymes specifically because of their relevance to the distinction between proto- and early *dróttkvætt*. In Section 4, I listed four features of early *dróttkvætt* that made its meter more demanding than the meter of proto-*dróttkvætt*, and I noted that Haustlǫng had all of them. In this section, I argued that crossing rhymes were not among these features, and that they did not legitimize odd lines without rhyme.

## 6. Concluding remarks

I do not discuss the relationship between clause-lines and stanza divisions in the *dróttkvætt* meter, or a V2 word order in Old Norse, otherwise than by noting the following: Clause-lines were, probably, already subjected to strict constraints in proto-*dróttkvætt*. Early *dróttkvætt* did not burden them further, or only optionally, when it introduced more demanding rules for rhyme in the *dróttkvætt* meter. What is certain, is that a poetic license came into being that made rhyming in *dróttkvætt* a little easier, while it also related stanza structure, syntax, and rhyme. This license was a feature of the poem Haustlǫng and all poems of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Haustlǫng shared all other features of rhyme and alliteration with these poems, which means that Haustlǫng could have been their model.

<sup>39</sup> After year 1100 the percentage of odd lines without rhyme is less than 1% (Myrvoll 2014:129).

<sup>40</sup> Some support for this comes from noting that the *runhent* meter originated in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and had an end rhyme between odd and even lines. Several varieties of it are preserved from the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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### ÚTDRÁTTUR

‘Haustlǫng — Hvernig rím og setningaskipan tengjast í dróttkvæðum’

**Lykilord:** Haustlǫng, rím, setningaskipan, frumnorræna, dróttkvætt

Braglinur undir hefðbundnum dróttkvæðum hætti sem staðið geta fremst í vísuhelmingi eru af sérstakri setningafræðilegri gerð. Þetta á einnig við í frumgerð dróttkvæðs háttar á 9. öld. Í þessari grein sýni ég að í slíkum línunum þurfti ekki að vera rím í kvæðinu Haustlǫng og í yngri kvæðum. Þetta skáldaleyfi gildi fram á 11. öld. Í öðrum línunum þurfti að vera rím. Frá þessu eru engar undantekningar í helstu kvæðum 10. aldar, ekki heldur þar sem rímað er á milli braglína. Haustlǫng notar umrætt skáldaleyfi oftar en önnur kvæði aldarinnar en öll nota þau það að einhverju marki. Aðrar reglur Haustlangar um rím og stuðla eru þær sömu og í yngri dróttkvæðum og því gæti Haustlǫng verið upphafleg fyrirmynd þeirra.

### SUMMARY

**Keywords:** Haustlǫng, rhyme, syntax, Old Norse, *dróttkvætt*

*Dróttkvætt* is an Old Norse court meter, originating in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. It has a regular line-internal rhyme of syllables. The first line of any four-line *dróttkvætt* half-stanza is well known to have a specific syntactic structure. Often, the third line has this structure as well. In these lines, the line-internal rhyme is optional in old poems. This conditional license has not been noted previously. It is valid in the poem *Haustlǫng* and in younger poems of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, but it expires in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

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