

EXTENDED RIME IN OTFRID

by Joseph Wilson

In the ninth century Otfrid composed his monumental gospel poem (the *Evangelienbuch*) in some seven thousand long-lines, based on the principle of end rime between the ends of the two half-lines. Visually and syntactically, the long-lines furthermore fall into two-line strophes, but this has no effect on the rime pattern. The fundamental rime scheme is thus *aa*, complete within the single long-line, or, to consider a series of long-lines, the scheme is basically *aa bb cc*, etc. The following is a typical random passage of the poem, taken from Book II, Chapter 21:¹

- II.21,1 Oba thu ouh biginnes thaz thu zi gote thingses,
inti thu githenkes thaz thin gibet wirkes:
Thaz si in herzen thanne, thaz thir es wiht ni intfalle;
gidougno in themo muate, theiz thir irge zi guate!
- 5 In herzen si iz scono, thaz iu es got gilono,
si ther githang iu festi innan theru brusti;
Thaz io bi themo meine thaz muat si fasto heime,
then hugu in then githankon ni lazet wergin wankon!
Ni lazet faran iu thaz muat so then driagarin duat;
- 10 umbi kerit sih thaz muat selb so mo ther hals duat;
Thaz duent sie allaz zi thiu, ther liut se lobo thar bi thiu,
joh sie se eren thuruh thaz; bi thiu nist es wiht in thiu baz.
Weist thu weih thir redinon: thaz selba lob theist thaz lon;
giwisso wizist thu thaz: in thiu gisteit iz allaz.
- 15 Thanne ir betot, wizit thaz, duet iz kurzlichaz,
ni ruachit druhtin harto thero managfalton worto;
In herzen betot harto kurzero worto
joh lutoro thare, thaz iz got gihore!

As this sample illustrates, the rimes employed are of varying quality, ranging from what we would call, from our present perspective,² "perfect" rime of one, two, or even more syllables (as in lines 4-5: *muate/guate; scono/gilono*), through a multiple scale of degrees of impurity or incom-

Mr. Wilson is Associate Professor of German at Rice University.

repetition:

- I.2,1 Wola druhtin min, ja bin ih scalc thin,
 thi arma muater min eigan thi ist si thin!
 Fingar thinan dua anan mund minan,
 theni ouh hant thina in thia zungun mina,
 5 Thaz ih lob thinaz silutentaz,
 giburt sunes thines, druhtines mines;

There are numerous other similar passages with such obviously non-accidental rime repetitions. To consider any one line of such a series, e.g., line 1 (*min/thin*), in isolation would manifestly be misleading.

In the second place, the quality of the basic rime pair, so fundamental in all the investigations, is itself often directly affected by the part it plays in this extended rime with neighboring lines. Frequently an imperfect rime pair is supported by rime with adjoining lines, as in this example:

- I.6,4 joh spilota in theru muater ther ira sun guater.
 Sprah thi sin muater: „heil wih dohter,

In this instance, the poor rime *muater/dohter* is clearly supported by the preceding *muater/guater*. Conversely, one could say that the *muater* of line 5 has a better rime connection to the preceding line than to its own ostensible rime partner *dohter*. Another example of this fairly common type is found in IV.12,15, where the riming series is *thrati/dati||noti/quati*. It is only a step from this type to the so-called rimeless lines, most, if not all, of which can be shown to fit this common pattern of rime with adjacent lines, as we will see below.

In Otfrid, as in much contemporary Latin, Irish, and other Germanic verse, we therefore find the important principles of “support” and “compensation” for weak or missing rime or alliteration. End rime and alliteration may even support each other, i.e., alliterating poems will compensate for a lack of alliteration in a given line by the substitution of end rime and vice versa.⁶ The latter possibility, the substitution of alliteration for end rime, has long been recognized as the principle behind certain of Otfrid’s rimeless lines. The most famous of these is the above mentioned I.18,9: *thar ist lib ana tod, liocht ana finstri*, whose alliteration is proved conclusively to be non-accidental by the fact that the line occurs also in the alliterating poem *Muspilli*. An example of the subtler instances of a weak rime supported by alliteration is I.2,58: *fon ewon unz in ewon mit then saligen selon*.

In considering the extended rime of Otfrid, it should be noted that stem rime can be more important than the rime of the final syllable, i.e., there are times when we have a riming connection between a pair like *minan/thines*. This is clearly the case in I.2,1ff. (quoted above), in which eleven out of twelve consecutive rime words are forms of *min* and *thin*: *min|thin|/*

thinan/minan||*thina/mina*, etc. This set of affairs certainly cannot be ignored when considering the rime of line 5: *thinaz/lutentaz*. Another example of a clear stem rime connection of adjacent lines is seen in the following:

I.5,22 muater thiū diura scalt thu wesān eina.
 Thu scalt berān einan alawaltendan

In this instance, the rime of *eina* with *einan* is probably the most audible of the series (*diura|eina|einan|alawaltendan*).

As mentioned, these same phenomena are found also in other early poetries and are especially common in the Latin of Otfrid's time and of the preceding centuries, strengthening the sometimes disputed connections of Otfrid with Latin versification. Let us compare two Latin examples. The first is the end of the second book of Sedulius's *Carmen Paschale*, one of the *Evangelienbuch's* most important forerunners, and the second is the end of a poem (*Hymnus de Natale Innocentium*) by Hrabanus Maurus, the *praeceptor* not only of *Germania*, but also quite personally of Otfrid himself.⁷

I. Sedulius:

- Sic aliena gerens, ut nec tua linquere posses.
 355 Hoc Matthaëus agens, hominem generaliter implet.
 Marcus ut alta fremit vox per deserta leonis,
 Jura sacerdotis Lucas tenet ore juveni.
 More volans aquilae, verbo petit astra Joannes.
 Quattuor hi proceres una te voce canentes,
 360 Tempora ceu totidem, latum sparguntur in orbem.
 Sic et apostolici semper duodenus honoris
 Fulget apex numero, menses imitatus, et horas,
 Omnibus ut rebus totus tibi militet annus.
 Hinc igitur veteris recolens exordia mortis,
 365 Ad vitam properabo novam, lacrymasque serendo,
 Gaudia longa metam: nam qui deflemus in Adam,
 Semina mittentes, mox exsultabimus omnes,
 Portantes nostros, Christo veniente, maniplos.

II. Hrabanus Maurus:

- Ergo age, tortor, adure, seca.
 Divide membra coacta luto,
 Solvere rem fragilem facile est.
 Non penetrat dolor interius
 35 Mentis in arce manet Dominus.
 Hic funeris quia causa fuit,

in Otfrid are more than just sporadic and that they fulfill a vital function. Thus Grimm correctly calls attention to the fact that I.8,4 (*in fluhti joh in zuhti theiz alles wesan mohti*) contains an additional internal rime between *fluhti* and *zuhti*, but he does not note the connection with the following line (*ouh, so iz zi thisu wurti, iz diufal ni bifunti*) nor the support both additional rimed lines give to the otherwise weak principal rime of *zuhti* with *mohti*. Nor does he show that the frequency and importance of this type of internal rime in Otfrid is very low, whereas that of the extended rime bond to adjacent lines is very high. Kleiber discusses some of the striking instances of repetitions of rime pairs (such as those I call rime refrains below), but only in connection with his theories of numerological structure, into whose service he tries to press them.¹³

Just as there is a whole scale of degrees of quality in the basic rime pair, so also there is a multiple range of types of extended rime. Without attempting to explore fully all the possible categories, let us proceed from the most obvious types to the less noticeable ones:

1. The most primitive type is the simple repetition of the same two rime words in successive lines, as in II.21,9-10 (above): *muat/duat/|muat/duat*, and similarly in lines 16-17. The identical rime words are frequently reversed:

II.14,68 thaz betont ware betoman then fater geistlichō fram;
 Want er suachit filu fram thrato rehte betoman,

That the lines are connected in a non-accidental way could hardly be disputed. The long *min-/thin-* series of I.2,1ff., mentioned above, is a stem-riming variation of the identical type.

2. A step toward differentiation is taken in the following type, in which only one word of the rime pair is repeated:

II.14,115 Giloubta iro ouh tho in wara filu harto mera,
 wanta sin selbes lera thiū was in harto mera.

Here, as often, the rime between the lines (*mera/|lera/mera*) is better than the primary rime of the first line (*wara/mera*). Another example of this is the *muater/dohter* rime of I.6,4-5 (above).

3. The most common type of extended rime is that in which the final syllables rime in two or more lines, with the previous syllables contributing to a varying extent:

III.17,7 Sie thara tho in farun, so sie ubilwillig warun,
 eina huarrun brahtun, so sio in abuh thahtun;

IV.12,15 In muate was in thrati thie egislichun dati,
 joh forspotun zi noti, fon wemo er sulih quati:

In the latter example, again, the better rime is between the lines.

4. Sometimes, as in IV.4,21-22 (above), the rime progresses through a series of gradual transformations from the first rime word to the last: *waru/eru||heri/diuri*. Similar examples are found, for instance, in II.21,1-2 (above): *biginnes/thinges||githenkes/wirkes*, and III.22,44-45: *halt/scalt||einfolt/got*.

5. Extended rime may also connect two or more lines which are not in direct succession but are, rather, separated by one or more lines:

IV.4,28 thaz er then weg mit wati mammuntan gidati;
 Thagtun sie imo scioro then weg thar filu zioro,
 thes iltun sie io zi noti thie man mit iro wati.

IV.7,5 Er saz sid themo gange in themo oliberge,
 fragetun sie nan suntar (sie was es filu wuntar):
 „Sage uns, meistar, thanne, wio thiu zit gigange;

In these two examples, the identity of the extended rime words (*wati*; [*gi*]/*gange*) establishes an especially close bond, also semantically, across the intervening line. Here, again, the more audible rime (i.e., of IV.4,30 and IV.7,5) is not the primary rime (*noti/wati*; *gange/oliberge*), but the extended one, in spite of the intervening gap. The spanning of one or even more lines for a rime connection is, of course, nothing unusual; that is what we have in the common *abab* and *abba* rime schemes. Obviously, the farther apart two rimes are located, the less the probability that they really have anything to do with each other; we must be cautious in seeking connections over larger gaps than a few lines. Even wider-spanning connections, however, can frequently be demonstrated in Otfrid. For example, at times a rime pair will be repeated several times in a passage in such a prominent manner as to become practically a “rime refrain,” the remembrance of which can bridge a gap of ten or more lines. Thus in the dedication to Ludwig there are several such, chiefly the rime pair *guat-/muat-*, which occurs ten times in ninety-six lines.

Let us apply the principles of extended rime and support and compensation to some of the well-known problematical lines of Otfrid. The most famous of these has already been mentioned, the alliterating but allegedly rimeless I.18,9: *thar ist lib ana tod, lioht ana finstri*. If we look at the line in its context, we note immediately that *finstri* rimes with the following line (*kunni/wunni*). It would be more accurate to characterize the line as basically alliterative (as proved by its use in *Muspilli*), rimeless in the primary pattern, but riming in the secondary pattern (i.e., with an adjacent line).

Another famous problem is the case of lines I.4,6-7:

I.4,5 Warun siu bethiu gote filu druidiu
 joh iogiwär sinaz gibot fullentaz,
 Wizzod sinan io wirkendan

joh reht minnonti ana meindati.
 Unbera was thiu quena kindo zeizero;
 so warun se unzan elti thaz lib leitendi.

Fullentaz and *wirkendan* are striking examples of the use of grammatically incorrect forms for the sake of rime. They should be *fullenti* and *wirkendi*, in apposition with *minnonti*, referring to the subject *siu*, but they evidently have been improperly changed to take an ending in agreement with their respective objects in order to achieve a better rime. That is, instead of correctly saying, approximately, 'sie waren sein Gebot erfüllende und seinen Befehl wirkende,' we have 'sie waren sein Gebot erfüllendes und seinen Befehl wirkenden.' Erdmann supposes that the lines originally contained the grammatically correct forms and that the lines were rimeless.¹⁴ I would agree except that the lines in that form were by no means rimeless; they rimed with each other and with the following line in an *ab ab bb* pattern (*sinaz/fullenti* | *sinan/wirkendi* | *minnonti/meindati*). If they had not rimed in this way (or in some way), Otfrid would hardly have used the lines in the first place. Apparently he first composed the grammatically correct lines, which rimed, but not in his primary pattern. He then changed to the incorrect forms for the sake of the primary rime.

The situation is similar in I.2,5 (above), where, in the midst of the *min-/thin-* tirade, we have the rime pair *thinaz/lutentaz*. Considered in isolation, it is, as it stands, a rather weak rime; furthermore, the *lutentaz* is ungrammatical in the same way as the *fullentaz* and *wirkendan* just discussed. The form should be *lutenti*, in which case the line in isolation has no rime at all, so that it is generally held to be originally rimeless and forcibly changed to give a meager rime. But a glance at the line in its context, even in the original form, shows that it has a distinct rime connection of its first rime word *thinaz* with the *min-/thin-* tirade in which it stands.¹⁵

As our last example, let us look at III.16,8-9:

III.16,8 hintarquamun thes ouh mer, wanta er ni lerneta sio er.
 Ni sahun sie nan sizen untar scularin [er].

Here the *er* of line 9 does not rime within the line; Erdmann puts it in brackets because he believes it is an error, a scribal miscopying from the previous line.¹⁶ He says that striking *er* leaves the rime of *sizen* with *scularin*, which he considers very poor but tolerable. I suggest that the manuscript is correct and that the rime is between this *er* and the *mer* and *er* of the previous line (a rather similar rime of *er* occurs in III.24,2-3: *er/begrabener* | *er/swester*).

Similarly considered in their contexts, most, if not all, of the allegedly rimeless lines of Otfrid will be seen to have this kind of secondary rime. We need not go into them here; I trust that sufficient evidence has already been given to show that in Otfrid, as in Latin and other early poetries, there are

regular secondary rime types (extended rime and stem rime), which at times compete with the primary rime scheme and at times compensate for its defects, in such a way that weak rimes are strengthened and "rimeless lines" rime.

NOTES

This paper is based on a talk given at the meeting of the South Central Modern Language Association in New Orleans, October 30, 1971.

1. All quotations from Otfrid are taken from Oskar Erdmann, *Otfrids Evangelienbuch* (Halle, 1882). Accents and dots under vowels have been omitted, since they are not essential for this discussion. They would naturally have to be considered in a more detailed treatment of rime quality, as would the much more important question of vowel length (not marked in the manuscripts).

2. We should, of course, always be aware of the subjectivity of judgments on the quality of rimes, and not project modern English or German esthetic standards onto other poetries. For the sake of simplicity, however, I speak of 'better' or 'poorer' rimes, etc., and the terms probably are justified here, even from Otfrid's viewpoint. They should nevertheless be viewed with caution.

3. For a listing of the rimeless lines, see Rudolf Koegel, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgange des Mittelalters*, I.2 (Strassburg, 1897), pp. 23-24.

4. Some of the latest major works on Otfrid, which give thorough references to the voluminous literature, are: Wolfgang Kleiber, *Otfrid von Weissenburg* (Bern and Munich, 1971); R. Patzlaff, *Otfrid von Weissenburg und die mittelalterliche Versus-Tradition* (Hermæa N.F.35) (Tübingen, 1975); and G. Schweikle, "Die Herkunft des althochdeutschen Reims. Zu Otfrids von Weissenburg formgeschichtlicher Stellung," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 96 (1967): 165-212.

5. The dispute centers around the question of whether Otfrid's end rime developed under the influence of the nascent Latin end rime. The consensus is that it did, but even the latest research (e.g., Patzlaff and Schweikle, see note 4) is divided.

6. For example, in the alliterating Old High German "First Merseburg Charm" the last line substitutes end rime.

7. The quotations are taken from J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1844ff.), vol. 19, p. 591, and vol. 112, p. 1653.

8. In passage II, a few non-riming lines have been quoted to show the transition to the riming conclusion. Note also that, as in Otfrid, the rime is primarily of the final syllable, but spreading into the stem (cf. II, lines 39-40: *cadis|dabis*).

9. The first two lines of passage I offer a good example of irregular patterning: the caesura of the first line rimes with that of the second (*gerens|agens*).

10. Koegel, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, p. 24.

11. Hennig Brinkmann, "Verwandlung und Dauer. Otfrids Endreimdichtung und ihr geschichtlicher Zusammenhang," *Wirkendes Wort* 2 (1951-52): 1-15. Brinkmann is actually not talking about the tirade in poetry, but the tirade-like repetitions of rimes in prose.

12. Wilhelm Grimm, "Zur Geschichte des Reims," *Abhandlungen der Akademie, Berlin* (1852), 521-713.

13. Kleiber, *Otfrid von Weissenburg*, especially pp. 291ff.
14. Erdmann, *Otfrids Evangelienbuch*, p. 344.
15. Also, very probably the final syllable of *lutenti* was felt to rime, if weakly, with this same tirade.
16. Erdmann, *Otfrids Evangelienbuch*, p. 426.