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THE FABB AND HALLE'S THEORY OF METER IN POETRY AND THE LATVIAN *DAINAS*

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Summary: I have chosen to illustrate the application of Fabb and Halle's theory of meter in poetry with expressions about ravens that are formulas from three different oral poetic traditions. They represent the epics from the Balkans, English ballads and Latvian narrative and lyric *dainas*. Let it be the beginning for the exploration of commons aspects of formulae that go well beyond metrics.

Кључне речи: метар (метрика), латвијске *даине*, усмене формуле, генерисање метричких решетки, метрички правилан стих, епске песме, баладе

Апстракт: У раду је илустрована апликација Фаб–Халеове метричке теорије на примеру усмених формула о гавранима, који потичу из три различите поетске традиције. Они репрезентују балканску епику, енглеске баладе и латвијске приповедне и лирске даине. Студија је замишљена као почетак изучавања заједничких аспеката формула који далеко надилазе метрику.

The Latvian dainas are songs from oral tradition that were performed mostly in rituals and calendar celebrations. Even some of those that tell a story were sung at such occasions, as was Barons 13646 given below, which was sung at weddings. In a much transformed manner and in different contexts, the songs continue to be sung, but in this paper I will study the classical *dainas*. The narrative folk songs, simply called long *dainas*, are in the minority; many more *dainas* are ritual songs or lyric folk songs. However, the meter of both, the short and the long *dainas*, is the same.

The Theory and its Application

Counting is essential to meter, and the fundamental proposition of this theory is that counting is limited to counting by pairs or by triplets. The grouping of the syllables into pairs or triplets, as shown in example (1), con-

tinues from Gridline 0 to higher levels or Gridlines, where the heads of the pairs or triplets are projected, until a single unit remains. The result of this procedure can be seen in example (1). An illustration of the metric theory by Halle and Fabb in its basic form, using lines from Child ballad 26, *The Tree Ravens*, follows.

(1) And carried him to earthen lake

)* *) * *) * *) * *)	0	<<
)* *) * *)	1	<<
)* *)	2	<<
*)	3	

We arrive at the representation shown in (1) by following a set of rules for the English iambic tetrameter seen in (2). I am using here a very explicit set of rules from the early versions of the theory that show the essential iteration rule step by step.

(2) The grid-building rules for iambic tetrameter:

Project each syllable as an asterisk on Gridline 0

Gridline 0

Proceeding from Right to Left, apply the following rules:

i. Starting just at the Right edge insert a Right parenthesis to the Right of the nearest asterisk

ii. Skip the next asterisk

iii. Return to rule i.

The rightmost element in each group is projected to the next Gridline.

Gridline 1

Proceeding from Right to Left, apply the following rules:

i. Starting just at the Right edge insert a Right parenthesis to the Right of the nearest asterisk

ii. Skip the next asterisk

iii. Return to rule i.

The rightmost element in each group is projected to the next Gridline.

Gridline 2

Proceeding from Right to Left, apply the following rules:

i. Starting just at the Right edge insert a Right parenthesis to the Right of the nearest asterisk

ii. Skip the next asterisk

iii. Return to rule i.

The rightmost element in each group is projected to the next Gridline.[1]

Metrical verse in English is based not only on counting of syllables, but also on the placement of certain stressed syllables. The theory postulates that the metrical rules control only placement of the syllables defined as maxima. One of the definitions of maximum given by the theory is the following:

(3) The syllable bearing the word stress in a polysyllabic word is a maxima, if it is preceded and followed in the same line by a syllable with less stress. The theory also stipulates:

(4) Maxima must project to Gridline 1.

In the line in (1) there are two maxima: the first syllables of *carried* and *earthen*, and both project to Gridline 1.

Here is another line from the same Child ballad 26, *The Three Ravens*. The line is a formula, and we will look at similar formulas from different traditions: Serbian and Latvian. The line in (5) can be analyzed with a variant of the rules in (2), which includes the possibility to begin the iteration process by inserting the parenthesis not at the edge of the line but one or two syllables in.

```
(5) There were three rauens   sat   on   a   tree
      )*    *)    *    *)   *    *)   *   *)   *          0   <<
            )*         *)        *        *)              1   <<
                       )*                  *)             2   <<
                                           *              3
```

For comparison let us look at a scansion of a line that is common to several variants of the long Latvian folk song, Barons 13646, the example in (6). This narrative *daina*, whose first line says, *We are nine brothers*, belongs to the wedding cycle, and it is sung by the bride's relatives, the *panāksnieki*. As with many of the *panāksnieku* songs, this *daina* was probably sung during wedding celebrations. The song tells the story of the brothers going in pursuit of their stolen sister. It was a very popular song with more than 31 variants compiled by Krišjānis Barons is his landmark publication *Latwju dainas*.

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[1] "Given that there are many possible sets of rules which might in principle generate a grid from a Gridline, how is the right set of rules chosen? The answer is that the right set of rules is chosen by trial and error, such that a line is assigned a grid which satisfies the conditions" (Fabb, Halle, 2008: 20).

(6) Mēs	deviņi	bāleliņi	We (are) nine brothers
(*	* (* *	(* * (* *(	0 >>
)*	*)	* *)	1 <<
	(*	*(	2 >>
	*		3

We arrive at the representation in (6) by following the rules for trochaic tetrameter below. They are the same rules used for the other examples of binary *dainas* and shown at (22).

a. Gridline 0: starting just at L edge, insert a L parenthesis, form binary groups, heads L.

b. Gridline 1: starting just at R edge, insert a R parenthesis, form binary groups, heads R.

c. Gridline 2: starting just at L edge, insert a L parenthesis, form binary groups, heads L.

The line of the Latvian folk trochee can be written out in various ways. Most scholars agree that all the metrical conditions apply to the half-line, thus a line of four syllables is plausible. I have chosen the traditional form, which is used in most publications.

Stress in Latvian falls, with very few exceptions, on the first syllable of a polysyllabic word, and as the scansion in (6) reveals, the leftmost syllables from the pairs in Gridline 0 project to Gridline 1, in accordance with the grid-building rules. However, the polysyllabic word *deviņi* has its main stress on its first syllable, and this syllable, carrying the main stress, does not project to gridline 1. Given the common occurrence in the Latvian *dainas* of what we have just observed, we have to conclude that stress does not seem to be an organizing factor in the meter of the *dainas*. We are assuming that the meter of the *dainas* is syllable-counting.

Examples of Latvian Folk Songs and the Observed Restrictions on the Meter of the Trochee

The *dainas* have mostly two types of meter, trochaic and dactylic. We discussed above the iambic meter since it introduces the concept of maxima, which is present in so many other poetic traditions, and it is important for the understanding of the theory. Trochaic lines are shown in (7). The lines have eight metric syllables. As will be shown below, the constraints on the meter are verse-medially and at the end of it.

(7)

Vai, krauklīti, tu redzēji,	Did you see, little raven,

Kur aizveda mūs' māsiņu?	Where was our sister taken?

The above couplet appears often, almost as exact repetition, in many songs of this group of old wedding songs. Albert Lord seems to consider the couplet as an extended formula when he says the following about similar couplets in the Latvian tradition: "If we were to think of the couplets as formulaic expressions, since they are not exact repetitions, then the quatrains would qualify as themes, that is, as repeated passages with considerable verbal correspondence" (1989: 46).

The two lines in example (7) are common to many songs from a group of songs that Barons has classified as songs of the brothers' chase of the party that has taken the sister away, that is, the chase of those who have stolen their sister. It includes the long *daina*, whose first line is *We are nine brothers*, shown in (6), and the song given in (8) is from one of the most productive singers of the Latvian oral tradition. These singers are called *teicēji.* The song in (8) is Barons 13611 by *teicēja Priedīšmāte*, and it tells the same or a similar story as the longer ones from this cycle of songs. Notice, however, that the outcome of the bride stealing adventure is very positive, reflecting the singers time of life – end of the XIX century.

(8)
LD 13611.

Krauklīts sēd ozolā,	The little raven is (sits) on an oak tree,
Zelta kokles koklēdams.	Playing the golden kokle.[2]
Vai, krauklīti, tu redzēji,	Have you, little raven, seen
Kur aizveda mūs' māsiņu?	Where they have taken our sister?
– Tur aizveda jūs' māsiņu	– There they brought your sister
Par slidenu ezeriņu,	Across a slippery lake;
Sirmi zirgi, zaļi vāģi,	Grey horses, green carriages
Daiļi paši vedējiņi.	Handsome the carriers (groom's people).
Niedru kaulu klēti cirta,	Made (cut) the granary of reed's bones,
Pāvu spalvu jumtu juma,	Of peacock feathers made the roof.
Magonīšu cisas taisa,	Poppy flowers made the bedstraws,
Rožu klāja paladziņu,	Roses spread for bedclothes,
Kliņģerītes, mārpuķītes,	Marigolds, daisies,
Tās palika pagalvī.	Those were placed as a pillow.[3]
Tur iegula jūs' māsiņa	There went to sleep your sister
Kā sarkana brūklenīte;	Red as a bilberry (beautiful and happy);
Tur dagula tautu dēls	There lay down the suitor

2 Musical instrument.
3 Under the head.

Balts kā putu gabaliņš.	White as a piece of foam.
6c	

An example of a dactyl is shown in (9). Perhaps with the aim to have a four-line stanza similar to the trochee, this is how it is written out in the publications. Several scholars have suggested that the lineation should rather be as in (10) – a two-line stanza.

(9)

LD 13604.	
Kaŗu māt, kaŗu māt, 6	Mother of war, mother of war,
Cel kaŗu kājās, 5	Start the war (lift war on its feet);
Apmeti lēģeri 6	Set up camp
Tautiņu lejā! 120c. 5	In the valley (the land) of the suitors.

(10)

LD 13604.
Kaŗu māt, kaŗu māt, cel kaŗu kājās, 11
Apmeti lēģeri tautiņu lejā! 120c. 11[4]

In the dactyl lines the number of syllables per line are very variable, and as will be shown below, the restrictions and constraints are not the same as in the trochaic songs.

The typical *daina* has four trochaic lines of eight syllables each, as in example (11).

(11)

LD 13602.	
Iet es iešu pēc māsiņas,	I will go for my sister;
Pazīs manu gājumiņu:	My arrival will be known:
Sakapāju tautu galdu	Chopped the table of the suitors
Deviņiem gabaliem. 310a.	Into nine pieces.

This example and the example for the dactyl both belong to the same cycle of old wedding songs.

After this brief overview of the different types of *dainas*, let us turn to the important restrictions that seem to affect the meter of the Latvian folk trochees, which are: prohibition of a word boundary or requirement of a "bridge", a mid-line caesura, the "extra" syllable, and the length of syllables verse-medially and verse-finally. We will discuss each aspect below.

4 The numbers at the end of the lines indicate syllables.

The Prohibition of a Word Boundary or Requirement of a "bridge"

There is a bridge between the third and fourth syllables of a trochee line or there is no word boundary inside that group. The same is true for the seventh and eighth syllables of the trochee verse. This restriction does not apply to the dactyls, as can be seen in (9) or (10). In example (13) below, which is a line from Barons 13646 var. 10, we notice that in the second part of the verse, after mid-line, a syllable, a vowel has been elided from *ozol' galds*, which is indicated by the apostrophe. Had it been written out in full, ozola galds, it would have violated this requirement.

(13) Oša krēsli, ozol' galds Chairs of ash, table of oak

This fact has been fully attested by Fabb and Halle (2008: 240). The patterns of half-lines (or lines) that show how they are divided into words does not include the following: 3+1, 1+2+1, 2+1+1, 1+1+1+1.

The Mid-line Word Boundary (caesura)

There is a word boundary after the fourth syllable of a verse (mid-line caesura) in most of the trochaic lines. Exceptions are songs from the eastern region of Latvia, Latgale. The ternary meter songs do not have a word boundary after a certain syllable in the line, since the lines vary so much in the number of syllables.

This condition is stated in the terms of the theory by Fabb and Halle (2008: 241) as item (6) in the chapter on Latvian *dainas* as follows: "The Gridline 0 group whose head is the head of the verse must be followed by a word boundary. In trochaic (binary) verses a word boundary may not intervene between the two syllables of this group." The first part of this statement is the caesura condition, and the second part refers to the "bridge" condition discussed above, but in relation to the third and fourth syllables.

The "Extra" Vowel

For more than a century scholars have described and analyzed what has been called the padding vowel in the Latvian *dainas*. It consists of placing an additional vowel in different positions of the line to fill the place of an apparently missing syllable. It usually occupies the fourth or eigth syllable, or both syllables of a trochaic verse, as can be seen in example (14), which is a line from the typesong, Barons 13646, *Mēs deviņi bāleliņi*.

(14)

	+		
Nojājām	otru	simtu	We rode (for) another hundred
(* * (* *	(* *	(* *	0 >>
)* *)	*	*)	1 <<
(*		*(	2 >>
*			3

Here the additional vowel might be placed after the third syllable, ending the word *Nojājām*(*i*). The phonetically missing syllable could be filled with a vowel or short syllable, but usually it is "i". The placing of an extra syllable usually happens when the *dainas* are sung; sometimes, however, it is recorded in the text, as in the following formula in (15), repeated several times in more than 32 multiforms of Barons 13646:

(15)[5]

Devītā rītiņā	On the ninth morning	var. 12, 17, 18, 24
Devītā<u>i</u> rītiņā<u>i</u>		var. 11
Devītā<u>ja</u> rītiņā		var. 10

Traditionally, the padding vowel, as the term implies, has been considered as something accessory or secondary to the meter, to the number of syllables in the line, and it has been assumed that the number of syllables of the trochaic line is variable. The padding vowel was not counted. To the contrary, Valdis Zeps considers the "extra" vowel as part of the basic design of the meter of the Latvian folk songs, and, whether we place it or not, it is there and should be counted. To that effect Zeps (1989: 250) says:

"[...] phonetic *bitītēm* and *bitītēmi* are metrically identical – both are actualizations of an underlying

```
 w      s
 / \    |
x  x   x = i
```

bitītēmi [...] All cola of a Latvian folk trochee fit the general scheme of x x x = x/ "

(bitītēm = [for or with] little bees)[6]

5 Added syllables have been underlined.

6 Where (x) represents a metric syllable, an obligatory linkage is expressed by the equal sign (=), while a word boundary is symbolized by a slash (/).

The design of the dactylic lines also includes the use of extra syllables, but not in fixed positions of the line as with the trochee.

Can we add an additional syllable to any three-syllable half-line in a trochaic *daina*? We can add a syllable to almost any three-syllable trochaic sequence, as we shall see in the next discussion on syllable lengths.

The Length of Syllables Verse-medially and Verse-finally

As already mentioned in the discussion above, the greatest constraints for the trochaic *dainas* are in the middle of the lines, with the obligatory bridge between the syllables in the group that has the syllable projecting to the head of the verse, and the word boundary directly following that group. Now we have to add another one: the tendency of the last syllable in this group to be short and of the preceding syllable to be long. This is also the case for the last group of the line.

The observed tendencies have encouraged much discussion and even some search for a meter similar to classical Greek based on quantity. But by piecing together the evidence available in the literature and by examining the texts both sung and from the publications, we realize that the issue has to be addressed in a different manner, not at all as quantity that will organize the meter. In fact the syllables at the end of the half-line do not have to be exactly long or short, as we shall see.

For some time, scholars have shown the inconsistencies in the accounts about length of syllables, and so Zaube (1960: 135) writes: "Considering only length in continuous speech the m sound, for example, could be shorter than the t sound." Customarily it has been accepted that among the long syllables are also those which are formed by joining a short vowel (a, e, i, u) with the consonants l, r, m and n. This means that the first half of the following line:

(16) Seglosim kumeliņus — Let us saddle the steeds
(Barons 13646 var. 17)

is acceptable – *seglosim* ends with an *i* and an *m*, occupying a third syllable, which should be long. While a line like

(17) Seglojat kumeliņus

would not be acceptable, since the first half-line (seglojat) ends with the short vowel *a* and a *t*; the letter *t* is not among the consonants which are traditionally considered to be forming long syllables in combination with the short vowels a, e, i, u.

However, in example (18), which is one of the multiforms of the often-cited cluster of songs of Barons 13646 and which was published in Melngailis 1298 (1951: 132) together with its melody, we see the same line, but the first half-line (Seglojati) ends with an added *i* – the third syllable while considered short has nevertheless taken here an additional syllable:

(18) Seglojati kumeliņus (Without the musical notation)

While being two different aspects, the length of syllables and the addition of a vowel, in the meter of the Latvian *dainas* they are very interrelated, to the point that the length of the third syllable of the line is defined in terms of the possibility of adding another syllable to it, and having four syllables in the half-line or eight to the line. Thus the linguist Krišjānis Ancītis (1944: 442) wrote: "In folk song meter we call long all syllables which could be followed by a padding vowel." And Arturs Ozols (1961: 29), another linguist, has said: "Any word that ends with a long syllable or with such a short syllable that ends with a consonant which was once followed by a vowel could be extended by one syllable with the help of the padding vowel."

Ozols and others link this possibility, for words with an apparently short syllable in the third position of the verse to be added an extra syllable, to an earlier presence of such syllables in the language. That could be the case. But the melodic lines also impose a variable length in the text by one syllable. We do not know whether the morphological changes in the language or the establishment of the singing patterns came first. At the time when the *dainas* were collected, in the middle of the 19th century, both were in existence – a transformed language and singing patterns that required a variable length of the line and its parts. In fact, the prohibition not to have a one syllable word in the fourth position of the verse may be interpreted as stemming from the same eventual singing requirement to disregard the fourth syllable. But as it was seen in the previous discussion, the main purpose is to achieve a certain number of syllables per line, not quantity per se.

As said at the beginning, the above characterization is for the trochaic lines. The dactylic lines are variable in length by several syllables, and there is no systematic shortening or extension of the half-line to achieve the canonical eight syllables per line as in the trochee.

How does the Halle-Fabb theory account for the conditions described above?

Some very concrete solutions are already provided in Fabb and Halle's book, but, since I am using for this scansion the traditional line length of

eight syllables, additional ones should be created. All of them, however, within the general framework of the theory. In *Meter in Poetry* the authors have said:

"[...] the phonetic form in which a word or affix is stored in the memory of a speaker of a language is often substantially different from the way the word is pronounced in an actual utterance." (Fabb, Halle, 2008: 133)

The analysis of the conditions that the folk trochee has to meet suggests that we begin our grid formation by adding on Gridline 0 the asterisks for the extra syllables, according to the rule in (19).

(19) If the syllable which is the head of the verse is not one of these: a, e, i, u, as, es, is, us, directly following a consonant and it is followed immediately by a word boundary, project the syllable following the head of the verse, which is not visible, to Gridline 0.

For the end of the line the following rule (20) is applied:

(20) If the rightmost syllable is the head of the group, that is, the group is incomplete (unary), and if that syllable is not one of these: a, e, i, u, as, es, is, us, directly following a consonant, project the next syllable, which is not visible, to Gridline 0.

In Gridline 0 of (21) we have the result of the application of both rules.

(21)

				+		+			
Krauklīts		sēd		ozolā					The little raven is (sits) on an oak tree
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		

Now we are ready to apply to (21) the following grid-generating rules-for trochaic tetrameter:

(22)

a. Gridline 0: starting just at L edge, insert a L parenthesis, form binary groups, heads L.

b. Gridline 1: starting just at R edge, insert a R parenthesis, form binary groups, heads R.

c. Gridline 2: starting just at L edge, insert a L parenthesis, form binary groups, heads L.

The results of the scansion can be seen in (23).

```
                          +            +
(23) Krauklīts   sēd     ozolā         The little raven is (sits) on an oak tree
      (*     *    (*    *  (* * (* *(     0 >>
      )*          *)        *    *)       1 <<
                  (*             *(       2 >>
                   *                      3
```

We need two more rules to check for the metrical well-formedness of the line. They correspond to the first restrictions discussed above:

(24) The Gridline 0 group whose head is the head of the verse must be followed by a word boundary. In trochaic (binary) verses a word boundary may not intervene between the two syllables of this group. This rule is exactly the same as (6) given by Halle and Fabb (2008: 241) in their chapter on the *dainas*.

(25) In the Gridline 0 group which has the rightmost syllable of the verse a word boundary may not intervene between the two syllables of this group.

Halle-Fabb do not need to give rule (25) because the line in their analysis is shorter, it is a half-line from the traditionally accepted one. They do not need the previous rules (19) and (20) either. Undoubtedly, the scansion of the full-length line is more complex, but it seems to be necessary. It is an alternative for consideration.

The scansion of the South Slavic epic verses is less complex, as we will see in the next example. It is a line with reference to ravens, which I have deliberately chosen. We can already anticipate a similar meaning and function in the tree traditions evoked. “Raven the news-bearer” is the characterization given by Loma (2015) and Delić (2015: 23). The following example is taken from the cited articles.

```
(26) Polećela   dva  vrana    gavrana      Flying there come two coal-
                                           black ravens
      (*  * (* *  (*     * (*    * (*  *(    0 >>
       *    *)     *        *       *)       1 <<
           (*                      *(        2 >>
            *                                3
```

The metrical grid shown above is the result of the application of the rules for trochaic pentameter in (27):

(27)

a. Gridline 0: starting just at L edge, insert a L parenthesis, form binary groups, heads L.

b. Gridline 1: starting just at R edge, insert a R parenthesis, form ternary groups, heads R.

i. The last (leftmost) group must be incomplete.

c. Gridline 2: starting just at L edge, insert a L parenthesis, form binary groups, heads L.

We need only one additional rule to account for the caesura: (28) The binary group whose head is the head of the verse must be directly followed by a word boundary.

If the scansion of the verse has complied with the conditions imposed by the tradition, then we can say that the grid generation has achieved it purpose – a well-formed line.

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