

ENJAMBEMENT IN GREEK HEXAMETER POETRY

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In a seminal article that appeared in *TAPA* 60, Milman Parry attempted to give clearer definition to the distinctive movement of Homeric verse by examining Homer's use of enjambement.¹ The patterns of enjambement which Parry discovered in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* seemed to him to grow directly from the process of oral composition and to differ markedly from those of later hexameter poems. It is our intention to present new statistics on enjambement based on larger, randomly selected samples from a wide range of hexameter poets for the purposes of re-assessing Parry's conclusions.

Parry defined three ways in which the sense at the end of one verse can stand to that at the beginning of the next. In Parry's own words, "First, the verse end can fall at the end of a sentence and the new verse begin a new sentence. In this case there is no enjambement. Second,

¹ M. Parry, "The Distinctive Character of Enjambement in Homeric Verse," *TAPA* 60 (1929) 200-20, reprinted in *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* edited by A. Parry (Oxford 1971) 251-65.

Since Parry there have been only three articles written on enjambement in Homer. A. B. Lord, in "Homer and Huxo III: Enjambement in Greek and Southslavic Heroic Song," *TAPA* 79 (1948) 113-24, compares Parry's findings for Homer to patterns of enjambement in modern Slavic oral poetry; M. W. Edwards, in "Some Features of Homeric Craftsmanship," *TAPA* 97 (1966) 115-79, explores the relationship between sentence structure and enjambement in Homer; and G. S. Kirk, in "Studies in Some Technical Aspects of Homeric Style II. Verse Structure and Sentence Structure in Homer," *YCS* 20 (1966) 105-51, analyzes enjambement in the sixteenth book of the *Iliad* and modifies Parry's system of categorizing enjambement (see below, note 2).

Enjambement studies of other Greek hexameter poems have been done by G. P. Edwards, *The Language of Hesiod in its Traditional Context* (Oxford 1971) 92-100; G. R. McLennan, "Enjambement in the *Hymns* of Callimachus," *Hermes* 102 (1974) 200-06; and B. Peabody, *The Winged Word* (Albany 1975) 125-43, on enjambement in Hesiod's *Works and Days*.

the verse can end with a word group in such a way that the sentence, at the verse end, already gives a complete thought, although it goes on in the next verse, adding free ideas by new word groups." This kind of enjambement Parry calls "unperiodic." "Third, the verse end can fall at the end of a word group where there is not yet a whole thought, or it can fall in the middle of a word group." This kind of enjambement Parry calls "necessary."²

Parry counted the occurrences of enjambement in 600-line samples of each of the Homeric poems, the *Argonautica*, and the *Aeneid*. In the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* he examined the first 100 lines of every fourth book, in the *Argonautica*, the first 100 lines of each of the four books plus two extra 100-line samples from books 1 and 4. His statistics are summarized in Table I.³

Parry's statistics show that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have a much higher percentage of verses in unperiodic enjambement than the *Argonautica*, which contains far more necessary enjambement. These figures led Parry to conclude that unperiodic enjambement is an element of the so-called "adding-style" which is the natural consequence of oral verse-making; and conversely, that necessary enjambement is more

² Parry 253 (*TAPA* 203). Kirk 106-12 has suggested very useful modifications of Parry's categories which highlight the relationship between syntax and enjambement. Kirk refines the criteria for the category of "no enjambement" to include any line that could reasonably be punctuated with a strong stop; he gives Parry's "unperiodic enjambement" the less confusing name of "progressive enjambement," and splits Parry's "necessary enjambement" into three categories: the first, which Kirk calls "periodic enjambement" includes verses ending with a pause which marks the conclusion of a subordinate, antithetical, or correlative clause or phrase; the second, which he calls "integral enjambement," includes those verses in which the verse end does not coincide with the end of a separate phrase or clause but usually intervenes at a point of natural articulation in the sentence; the third category, "violent enjambement," includes those rare cases of enjambement in which the verse end causes a break between words which belong closely together.

Since we are challenging Parry's conclusions we have restricted ourselves to Parry's terminology. A table showing counts of Kirk's "periodic enjambement" found in our samples appears in Appendix A for the benefit of others who may wish to pursue the study of enjambement using Kirk's categories.

Peabody has also modified Parry's categories in an attempt to describe the historical development of different types of enjambement in Greek hexameter. This diachronic approach is qualitatively different from the basically synchronic one taken by Parry, although as Peabody notes, 409 note 59, the two methods are not incompatible.

³ Reprinted from Parry 254 (*TAPA* 204). The data on enjambement in Vergil's *Aeneid* have been excluded from our analysis of enjambement in Greek poetry as irrelevant.

TABLE I. PARRY'S ENJAMBEMENT STATISTICS

<i>Iliad</i>	I	II	III	<i>Odyssey</i>	I	II	III
<i>A</i> 1-100	48	31	21	α 1-100	35	33	32
<i>E</i> 1-100	50	24	26	ϵ 1-100	50	30	20
<i>I</i> 1-100	52	18	30	ι 1-100	46	21	33
<i>N</i> 1-100	48	31	21	ν 1-100	43	30	27
<i>P</i> 1-100	48	19	33	ρ 1-100	55	14	31
Φ 1-100	45	27	28	ϕ 1-100	40	32	28
Average	48.5	24.8	26.6		44.8	26.6	28.5
<i>Argonautica</i>	I	II	III	<i>Aeneid</i>	I	II	III
I 1-100	31	18	51	I 1-100	36	11	53
I 681-780	38	20	42	III 1-100 . . .	40	16	44
II 1-100	33	15	52	V 1-100	37	12	50
III 1-100	41	14	45	VII 1-100 . . .	33	13	55
IV 1-100	35	13	52	IX 1-100 . . .	45	11	44
IV 889-988 . . .	31	16	53	XI 1-100 . . .	38	13	49
Average	34.8	16	49.1		38.3	12.5	49.2

I = no enjambement; II = unperiodic enjambement; III = necessary enjambement.

characteristic of literate poetry because its complexities require a longer composition time.

Unfortunately, Parry's statistics are unreliable. First of all, Parry did not select his samples randomly. True random samples of a large body of text are best achieved with the aid of random number tables. Since enjambement types seem to occur in clusters in hexameter poetry of all periods, only six subsamples consisting of 100 consecutive lines are bound to misrepresent the whole.

Secondly, Parry limited his study of Greek hexameter poetry to only three poems from two periods. His linking of unperiodic enjambement to oral composition and necessary enjambement to literate composition assumes that the enjambement style of the Homeric poems is typical of all "oral" Greek hexameter poetry, and that Apollonius' enjambement style is typical of all literate Greek hexameter poetry. Parry did not test these assumptions by comparing the *Iliad* with the *Theogony*, for example, or the *Argonautica* with Aratus' *Phaenomena*. Finally, Parry failed to use any standard tests of statistical significance such as the Chi-square Test, the Spearman Rank Order Correlation, or the

Pearson Product-moment Correlation to determine whether or not the differences he observed might be due to chance alone.⁴

In the interests of testing Parry's conclusions against more reliable statistics, the authors have gathered the following new data:

TABLE II. NEW ENJAMBEMENT STATISTICS

The quantities marked with an asterisk differ significantly from those of the *Iliad*, i.e., there is less than one chance in 100 that the deviation could be due to chance alone.⁵

	No Enj.	Unperiodic Enjambement	Necessary Enjambement	Total
<i>Iliad</i>	601 (38.5%)	372 (23.8%)	589 (37.7%)	1562
<i>Odyssey</i>	*562 (43.5%)	319 (24.6%)	*415 (32.0%)	1296
<i>Theogony</i>	*314 (30.7%)	*424 (41.5%)	*284 (27.8%)	1022
<i>Works and Days</i>	338 (40.8%)	232 (28.0%)	*258 (31.2%)	828
<i>Hymn to Venus</i>	115 (39.2%)	*96 (32.8%)	*82 (27.9%)	293
<i>Hymn to Apollo</i>	201 (36.8%)	*169 (31.0%)	*176 (32.2%)	546
<i>Hymn to Demeter</i>	163 (32.9%)	132 (26.7%)	200 (40.4%)	495
<i>Hymn to Hermes</i>	213 (36.7%)	*205 (35.4%)	*162 (27.9%)	580
<i>Shield</i>	*150 (31.3%)	*163 (34.0%)	167 (34.8%)	480
<i>Argonautica</i>	*309 (30.8%)	206 (20.6%)	*487 (48.6%)	1002
<i>Phaenomena</i>	369 (40.0%)	278 (23.9%)	*507 (43.9%)	1154
Callimachus' <i>Hymns</i>	331 (35.4%)	*276 (28.6%)	337 (36.0%)	935
<i>Idylls</i>	*850 (42.4%)	*563 (28.1%)	*590 (29.5%)	2003

⁴ Each of these tests of "significance" is described by F. P. Jones and F. E. Gray, "Hexameter Patterns, Statistical Inference, and the Homeric Question: An Analysis of the La Roche Data," *TAPA* 103 (1972) 187-209.

⁵ The statistics below are based on the whole text except in the case of the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Argonautica*, where analyzing the whole was impractical and unnecessary.

The new, larger samples of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Argonautica* differ interestingly from Parry's. For the Homeric poems we found less unperiodic enjambement and more necessary enjambement. The difference in necessary enjambement in the *Iliad* is statistically significant.⁶ The other differences could be due to chance alone. In our sampling of the *Argonautica* we found somewhat less necessary enjambement than Parry did, but significantly more unperiodic enjambement.

The differences between Parry's statistics and our own are probably due to our different samples and sampling techniques, although other factors may be involved.⁷ These differences strike a first blow at Parry's linking unperiodic enjambement with oral composition. His statistics support the thesis, but ours do not. He reports "significantly" more unperiodic enjambement in the Homeric poems than in the *Argonautica*. Our statistics indicate no significant difference at all

For the Homeric texts one-tenth of the lines on each page of the Oxford Text, and for the *Argonautica* one-fifth, were counted using a table of random numbers to select the particular lines. On every fourth page one line was determined normally and the two following lines were counted. This procedure was followed in order to ensure that the statistics would reflect the tendency of enjambement types to occur in clusters.

The texts used were:

T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera* 1 (Oxford 1920³).

Homeri Opera 2 (Oxford 1920³).

Homeri Opera 3 (Oxford 1917²).

Homeri Opera 4 (Oxford 1919²).

Homeri Opera 5 (Oxford 1912).

H. Fränkel, *Apollonii Rhodii Argonautica* (Oxford 1961).

A. S. F. Gow, *Bucolici Graeci* (Oxford 1952). Only those *Idylls* indicated by Gow to be genuine were included: 1-7, 11-18, 22, 24, 26, 28-30.

J. Martin, *Arati Phaenomena* (Firenze 1956).

R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* 2 (Oxford 1951).

F. Solmsen, *Hesiodi Opera* (Oxford 1970).

⁶ For the different values of necessary enjambement in Parry's sample of the *Iliad* and ours $\chi^2 = 24.07$ for one degree of freedom, i.e., such a difference is likely to occur by chance less than one time in 1000. This is much less than .05, the probability which is the generally accepted standard of statistical significance.

⁷ Some differences are bound to occur on account of different ways of treating equivocal cases; see Kirk 119 where he speculates on why his statistics differ from Parry's. It is well to keep in mind that statistics by nature describe trends most accurately for large populations and least accurately for small ones. In counting small samples, differences in the perceptions of those doing the counting create important differences in the results, but when the population counted is large enough, the idiosyncrasies of the counter appear to have no statistical significance. For example, the statistics for enjambement in the three Hesiodic poems set out in Table II above differ in detail from those published by Edwards 96, but χ^2 tests show that none of the differences is statistically significant.

between the rates of unperiodic enjambement in the *Iliad* and *Argonautica*. On the basis of this finding we are justified in suspecting that there is no special relationship between unperiodic enjambement and oral composition.

The suspicion is confirmed by data on unperiodic enjambement in other hexameter texts both early and late. The truth is that the rate of unperiodic enjambement in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, far from being unusually high, as Parry believed, is actually lower than that of any other hexameter poems sampled except the *Argonautica*. Since Parry counted only the Homeric poems and the *Argonautica* it is easy to see how he was led astray.

The new statistics also disprove Parry's linking of necessary enjambement to literate composition. In his study of enjambement in the *Argonautica* Parry rightly recognized a general Hellenistic trend toward increased use of necessary enjambement,⁸ but he gave this trend too much weight. Literate poets are free to manipulate the technicalities of their verse in any way they choose. Their preference for necessary enjambement over unperiodic tells us nothing about the "oral" quality of either one.⁹ It is only necessary to notice that the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Hymn to Demeter* all contain significantly more verses with necessary enjambement than verses with unperiodic enjambement to realize the fallacy of Parry's argument.¹⁰

Enjambement statistics are also unreliable indicators of the date of a hexameter poem. The order of the poems in Table II is chronological, based on evidence other than enjambement.¹¹ There are clearly no

⁸ The *Phaenomena*, *Argonautica* and Callimachus' *Hymns* all have significantly more necessary enjambement than unperiodic enjambement. Theocritus' *Idylls* are an exception to this rule.

⁹ This point was first made by G. R. McLennan 203.

¹⁰ This Homeric bias in favor of necessary enjambement is visible even in Parry's own statistics, although the differences there are not statistically significant.

¹¹ Recent scholarship puts the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the late eighth century (e.g., Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* [Cambridge 1962] 282 ff.). M. L. West, *Hesiod's Theogony* (Oxford 1966) 40-48, places the *Theogony* before the *Iliad*, and the *Works and Days* shortly after, but this view has been criticized by Edwards 203 ff. On the date of the *Shield* see Edwards 196-97. Allen, Halliday and Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns* (Oxford 1936²), discuss the dates of each of the longer hymns in the introduction to their commentary on each hymn. On the *Hymn to Demeter* see also N. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford 1974) 5-12; on the *Hymn to Hermes*, N. O. Brown, *Hermes the Thief* (Madison 1948) 102-32. The Hellenistic poems, which are contemporary with one another, are listed alphabetically by the author.

discernible trends in the two types of enjambement. If the poems are rearranged according to the relative amount of unperiodic enjambement the order from "oldest" to "most recent" is this: *Theogony*, *Hymn to Hermes*, *Shield*, *Hymn to Aphrodite*, *Hymn to Apollo*, *Callimachus' Hymns*, *Works and Days*, *Hymn to Demeter*, *Idylls*, *Odyssey*, *Phaenomena*, *Iliad*, *Argonautica*. To rank the *Theogony* earliest is not improbable, but the rest of the order is absurd. If the criterion for ordering the poems is the relative amount of necessary enjambement the results are scarcely more probable: *Theogony*, *Hymn to Hermes*, *Hymn to Aphrodite*, *Idylls*, *Works and Days*, *Odyssey*, *Hymn to Apollo*, *Shield*, *Callimachus' Hymns*, *Iliad*, *Hymn to Demeter*, *Phaenomena*, *Argonautica*.

The conclusion must be that enjambement cannot be used as evidence for judging the influence of oral composition on style or for establishing any relative chronology among hexameter poems. Unusual enjambement patterns in all periods stem from the requirements of subject matter and individual stylistic preference. The relatively high percentage of unperiodic enjambement in the *Theogony* is the result of the many catalogues in that poem, while the same characteristic in the *Hymn to Hermes*, which has no catalogues, seems to be part of a general trend in the narrative toward rapid, unbroken movement, with few internal stops and infrequent use of ornamental adjectives.¹² The relatively high amount of necessary enjambement in the *Hymn to Demeter* can be traced to the poet's preference for a sentence pattern which places verbs in the first position in the verse following the line which contains the rest of the clause.¹³

The new statistics taken all together indicate that the freedom to vary enjambement was established very early in Greek hexameter tradition, as far as we can know it.¹⁴ Parry, and more recently Peabody, may well be right in assuming that the oral tradition must have developed from syntactically simpler forms, such as those in unenjambéd verses,

¹² See T. Van Nortwick, "The Homeric Hymn to Hermes: A Study in Early Greek Hexameter Style," (Diss. Stanford 1975) 61, 76-78, 89.

¹³ In the *Hymn to Demeter* 10.3% of all lines begin with a verb preceded by necessary enjambement. This figure may be compared with 2.6% in the *Hymn to Hermes*, 4.2% in the *Hymn to Apollo* and 1.1% in the *Hymn to Aphrodite*.

¹⁴ The freedom to vary enjambement was never very great. In hexameter poetry of all periods, both varieties of enjambement occur, each representing at least 20.6% of all lines and at most 48.6%.

to the more elaborate forms required for necessary enjambement. Unfortunately, Parry's enjambement test applied to extant texts does not prove that this is so.¹⁵

APPENDIX A

Periodic Enjambement

An explanation of periodic enjambement appears in note 2 above. As in Table II, an asterisk indicates a significant deviation from the *Iliad*.

	Periodic Enj.	% of Total	Total
<i>Iliad</i>	309	19.8%	1562
<i>Odyssey</i>	*159	12.3%	1296
<i>Theogony</i>	*94	9.2%	1022
<i>Works and Days</i>	*64	7.7%	828
<i>Hymn to Aphrodite</i>	49	16.7%	293
<i>Hymn to Apollo</i>	*81	14.8%	546
<i>Hymn to Demeter</i>	*57	11.5%	495
<i>Hymn to Hermes</i>	*86	14.8%	580
<i>Shield</i>	*29	6.0%	480
<i>Argonautica</i>	*128	12.8%	1002
<i>Phaenomena</i>	*127	11.0%	1154
<i>Call. Hymns</i>	*69	7.4%	935
<i>Idylls</i>	*141	7.1%	2003

¹⁵ The authors wish to thank Prof. M. Edwards of Stanford University.