

ENJAMBEMENT AND ORAL COMPOSITION

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In the 1977 volume of *TAPA* Dee Lesser Clayman and Thomas Van Nortwick presented the results of their statistical analysis of enjambement in Greek hexameter poetry, on the basis of which they challenged Milman Parry's conclusion that a direct relationship exists between a hexameter poem's enjambement characteristics and the method of its composition.¹ Their criticism of Parry's work is three-fold: (1) because the sampling technique he employed was faulty, Parry's statistics are unreliable; (2) Parry did not conduct proper statistical tests in order to determine the significance of his results; (3) although he limited his study to three Greek hexameter poems, Parry assumed, mistakenly, that his conclusions were valid for all Greek hexameter poetry.² Clayman and Van Nortwick should be commended for their attempt to bring greater precision to this area of investigation, as well as for pointing out the limitations of Parry's sampling method and for pursuing the examination of enjambement beyond the three Greek epics studied by Parry. Certain defects in their method, however, greatly weaken the force of their argument. Since these flaws may not be readily apparent to scholars who are not currently involved in the study of enjambement or who are unfamiliar with the methods of statistical analysis employed by Clayman and Van Nortwick, it is desirable to continue this discussion, both in the hope of achieving greater clarity and in order to suggest areas in which there is still work to be done.

Parry's enjambement statistics for the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are based upon twelve 100-line samples, six taken from each of the epics, while Clayman and Van Nortwick make use of a random sample of 10% of the

¹Dee Lesser Clayman and Thomas Van Nortwick, "Enjambement in Greek Hexameter Poetry," *TAPA* 107 (1977) 85–92; Milman Parry, "The Distinctive Character of Homeric Enjambement," *TAPA* 60 (1929) 200–220. A discussion of the chi² test upon which Clayman and Van Nortwick base their statistical argument can be found in F. P. Jones' and F. E. Gray's "Hexameter Patterns, Statistical Inference, and the Homeric Question: An Analysis of the La Roche Data," *TAPA* 103 (1972) 192–94.

²Clayman and Van Nortwick 87–88.

total number of lines in each epic. Although Clayman and Van Nortwick attribute the surprising discrepancy between Parry's statistics and their own to Parry's faulty sampling technique,³ it is clear that other factors are involved. In the case of lines with no enjambement, it appears that different definitions of a "sentence" used in determining enjambement account for the disparity in the statistical results. Clayman and Van Nortwick accept Parry's criterion for classifying a verse as one with no enjambement: "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."⁴ It is not clear, however, that they agree with his definition of the "sentence" itself: "I define the sentence as any independent clause or group of clauses introduced by a coordinate conjunction or by asyndeton . . ."⁵ Since a verse is considered to be without enjambement only if the succeeding verse begins a new "sentence," this definition is crucial. For Parry, a verse containing a complete clause should be classified as having no enjambement if the following verse contains a clause or group of clauses introduced by a coordinate conjunction or by asyndeton, even if the first verse does not end with a period, question mark or semicolon in our texts. In other words, according to Parry's definition, a new "sentence" may begin after a verse terminated by a comma, and thus a line may be without enjambement even if it does not receive final punctuation indicating a full stop. In the Allen *OCT* of the *Iliad* I count 6266 verses, or 39.3%, which terminate in full-stop punctuation, in the text of the *Odyssey*, 5191, or 42.7%.⁶ The closeness of these figures to those derived by Clayman and Van Nortwick for verses having no enjambement (*Iliad* 38.5%, *Odyssey* 43.5%)⁷ strongly suggests that they have counted only those verses which receive full-stop punctuation, a criterion which Parry rejects explicitly.⁸ Naturally, the

³Clayman and Van Nortwick 89.

⁴Parry 203, quoted by Clayman and Van Nortwick 85–86. There Parry defines "unperiodic" and "necessary" enjambement in the following manner: "Second, 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. To this type of enjambement we may apply Denis' term *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; in both of these cases enjambement is *necessary*."

⁵Parry 203.

⁶T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera* 1 (Oxford 1920³).

2 (Oxford 1920³).

3 (Oxford 1917²).

4 (Oxford 1917²).

⁷Clayman and Van Nortwick 88, Table II.

⁸Parry 203–205. G. S. Kirk, "Studies in Some Technical Aspects of Homeric Style II. Verse

results obtained from these two methods of counting will be very different. For example, in the *OCT* of *Il.* 1.1–100 there are 39 verses with full-stop punctuation. In addition to these, Parry would count verses 2, 24, 38, 43, 50, 53, 70, and 93 as having no enjambement.⁹ If indeed Clayman and Van Nortwick count only lines with full-stop punctuation, it is not surprising that they find many fewer lines with no enjambement than does Parry. It would have been helpful if the authors had given some indication of the ways in which their method of classifying enjambements deviates from Parry's and of the extent to which this deviation was taken into account in their criticism of the reliability of Parry's statistics. Since they do not, we can credit them only with having demonstrated that they are able to arrive at different results by counting different things.

We should note in passing two other problems that occur in Clayman's and Van Nortwick's tabulation of statistics for verses with no enjambement in their Table II. Assuming that I am correct in thinking that for Clayman and Van Nortwick verses with no enjambement are only those having full-stop punctuation, there is a discrepancy between the figures which their sample yields for verses with no enjambement in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and the actual percentage of verses with full-stop punctuation in the *OCT* (Clayman and Van Nortwick: *Iliad* 38.5%, *Odyssey* 43.4%; *OCT*: *Iliad* 39.3%, *Odyssey* 42.8%). Although correction of the relatively small deviation does not require drastic alteration of the results given in Table II, one revision is necessary. If the actual percentage of verses with final full-stop punctuation in the whole *Iliad* is used rather than the percentage derived from Clayman's and Van Nortwick's sample, the difference between the frequency of verses with no enjambement in the *Idylls* of Theocritus and that frequency in the *Iliad* is no longer significant at the .01 level. Therefore the asterisk indicating this level of significance should be removed from the entry for the *Idylls*.

The second problem in Table II is that the percentage given for verses with no enjambement in the *Phaenomena* of Aratus is incorrect. On the basis of the number of verses with no enjambement which Clayman and Van Nortwick find in this text (369), the correct percentage is 32.0% rather

Structure and Sentence Structure in Homer," *YCS* 20 (1966) 105–51, finds a percentage of lines with no enjambement in *Iliad* XVI virtually identical to that reported by Clayman and Van Nortwick in their Table II. His method, however, differs from Parry's, and he states (119) that in determining verses with no enjambement he has adopted a "looser criterion (which is close to, but not identical with, that implied by the punctuation of XVI in OCT)."

⁹I count one fewer than does Parry in his table on page 204.

than 40.0%. This corrected percentage is significantly lower (beyond the .01 level) than the percentage of verses with no enjambement in the *Iliad*.

The statistics in Clayman's and Van Nortwick's Table II for enjambement in the *Idylls* of Theocritus appear particularly damaging to Parry's theory. Yet the authors never indicate whether they have allowed for the extreme stylistic differences between the *Idylls* and the Homeric epics, and as a result it is difficult to judge the validity of the comparison.¹⁰ Stylistic traits in the *Idylls* which influence their enjambement characteristics are stichic dialogue (*Id.* I, IV, V and XV) and interrupting refrains (*Id.* I and II). These are the most obvious structural factors bearing upon the question. In order to remove this bias from the percentages for the Theocritean poetry I have analyzed the enjambements in the *Epyllia*, poems more appropriate for comparison with the Homeric epics than are those *Idylls* that have extensive dialogue and numerous refrains.¹¹ In this analysis I have adhered as closely as possible to Parry's principles for determining enjambement types. The following table gives my results:

<i>Idyll</i>	<i>No Enjambement</i>	<i>Unperiodic Enjambement</i>	<i>Necessary Enjambement</i>
XIII	28 (37.3%)	30 (40.0%)	17 (22.6%)
XXII	79 (38.9%)	56 (27.5%)	68 (33.5%)
XXIV	58 (41.4%)	28 (20.0%)	54 (38.6%)
XXV	95 (33.8%)	107 (38.1%)	79 (28.1%)
<i>Total</i>	260 (37.2%)	221 (31.6%)	218 (31.2%)

My statistics for the *Epyllia* indicate fewer verses with no enjambement and more verses with unperiodic enjambement than do those which Clayman and Van Nortwick obtained from the *Idylls* that they examined.

¹⁰In note 5, p. 88, Clayman and Van Nortwick explicitly state that, except for the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Argonautica*, the statistics in Table II are based upon the whole text.

¹¹*Idylls* XIII, XXII, XXIV and XXV. I do not count the verses 57-74 (dialogue) in *Idyll* XXII. My statistics for that poem are based upon 203 lines of text. The text I have used is that of A. S. F. Gow, *Bucolici Graeci* (Oxford 1961).

In preliminary tests of short passages throughout the *Iliad* I began to suspect not only that Clayman's and Van Nortwick's statistic for verses with no enjambement in the *Iliad* was too low, but also that their statistic for verses with necessary enjambement in that poem might be too high. Being unfamiliar with any reliable method for testing results based upon random sampling, I have been forced to adopt a relatively unscientific approach, that is, the analysis of enjambement types in four books of the *Iliad* (III, XI, XIV and XIX). While this material does not constitute a random sample, I think it is sufficiently large and diverse to eliminate the danger of its greatly misrepresenting the poem as a whole. Clayman's and Van Nortwick's statistics for enjambements in the *Iliad* are not at all supported by my larger sample:

<i>Book</i>	<i>No Enjambement</i>	<i>Unperiodic Enjambement</i>	<i>Necessary Enjambement</i>
III	283 (55.9%)	124 (24.5%)	99 (19.6%)
XI	383 (45.2%)	255 (26.5%)	240 (28.3%)
XIV	251 (46.3%)	147 (27.1%)	144 (26.6%)
XIX	168 (41.4%)	107 (26.4%)	131 (32.3%)
<i>Total</i>	1085 (47.1%)	603 (26.2%)	614 (26.7%)

As indicated above, Clayman and Van Nortwick appear to exclude from the "no enjambement" category those verses that do not end with full-stop punctuation, yet conform to Parry's definition of a sentence. Since such verses could not possibly be classified with those having necessary enjambement, we would have expected them to swell Clayman's and Van Nortwick's figure for verses with unperiodic enjambement. That, however, is not the case. The high percentage of necessary enjambement which they find in the *Iliad* (37.7%) seems absolutely inexplicable. In the four books that I examined, even the highest percentage of necessary enjambement within a single book (XIX, 32.3%) does not approach that which they claim to be the average for the *Iliad* as a whole. The criteria which they used in determining this type of enjambement can hardly have been identical to those employed by Parry.¹² While it has seemed unnecessary to investigate

¹²The percentage of necessary enjambement that Kirk finds in *Iliad* XVI is also high

this in detail, Clayman's and Van Nortwick's statistics for the *Odyssey*, also based upon a 10% random sample to which they have applied their definitions of enjambement, are equally suspect.¹³

The numerous problems affecting Clayman's and Van Nortwick's statistics raise considerable doubt about the validity of their conclusions. In order to resolve this matter I have applied Parry's criteria in counting the enjambements in all of the poems in Clayman's and Van Nortwick's Table II, with the exception of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, for which E. Lyding has provided statistics also based upon Parry's method.¹⁴ In the following table

(33.1%). Here again, it is derived by a method different from Parry's. It seems possible that Clayman and Van Nortwick, while maintaining Parry's terminology (see note 2, p. 86), derive their statistics by employing criteria for classification similar to Kirk's.

¹³Additional support for Parry's position is found in E. Lyding's unpublished doctoral dissertation, *Homeric Enjambement* (Bryn Mawr College, 1949). In this work, Lyding has undertaken a typological analysis, by grammatical category, of all enjambements in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Although studying a different aspect of this topic, in her tabulation of results she makes constant reference to Parry's structural classifications of enjambement types. The following table presents a comparison of Lyding's statistics for enjambement types in the whole *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with both Parry's and Clayman's and Van Nortwick's statistics for their samples of these poems:

	<i>No Enjambement</i>	<i>Unperiodic Enjambement</i>	<i>Necessary Enjambement</i>
<i>Iliad</i>			
Parry	48.5%	24.8%	26.6%
Lyding	47.0%	26.3%	26.7%
Clayman and Van Nortwick	38.5%	23.8%	37.7%
<i>Odyssey</i>			
Parry	44.8%	26.6%	28.5%
Lyding	50.0%	22.5%	27.5%
Clayman and Van Nortwick	43.5%	24.6%	32.0%

In her discussion of the differences between her results and Parry's, Lyding observes: "Although his figures indicate that enjambement is more frequent in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad*, a study of all the enjambements in both poems reveals, as we shall see, that enjambement is more frequent in the *Iliad* than in the *Odyssey*. In confining himself to six hundred lines from the *Iliad* and six hundred lines from the *Odyssey*, Parry by chance hit upon lines from the *Iliad* which contain less than the normal amount of enjambement" (p. 2).

¹⁴Lyding, Appendix.

I use the symbols + and – to indicate a difference that is significant at the .05 level; ++ and -- indicate a difference that is significant at the .01 level.¹⁵

	<i>No Enjambement</i>	<i>Unperiodic Enjambement</i>	<i>Necessary Enjambement</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Iliad</i>	7356 (47.0%)	4141 (26.3%)	4196 (26.7%)	15,693
<i>Odyssey</i>	++6049 (50.0%)	--2725 (22.5%)	3336 (27.5%)	12,110
<i>Theogony</i> ¹⁶	--354 (34.6%)	++399 (39.0%)	270 (26.4%)	1,023
<i>Works and Days</i>	385 (46.6%)	201 (24.3%)	241 (29.1%)	827
<i>H. H. Ven.</i>	139 (47.4%)	71 (24.2%)	83 (28.3%)	293
<i>H. H. Ap.</i>	240 (44.0%)	159 (29.1%)	147 (26.9%)	546
<i>H. H. Dem.</i>	+198 (40.0%)	112 (22.7%)	++184 (37.2%)	494
<i>H. H. Merc.</i>	260 (44.8%)	++188 (32.4%)	132 (22.8%)	580
<i>Shield</i>	--178 (37.1%)	140 (29.2%)	++162 (33.6%)	480
<i>Argonautica</i>	--1903 (32.6%)	--1283 (22.0%)	++2649 (45.4%)	5,835
<i>Phaenomena</i>	--437 (37.9%)	--213 (18.5%)	++504 (43.7%)	1,154
Callimachus' <i>Hymns</i> ¹⁷	-393 (42.9%)	211 (21.6%)	++333 (35.5%)	937
<i>Idylls</i> (<i>Epyllia</i>)	--260 (37.2%)	++221 (31.6%)	+218 (31.2%)	699

¹⁵While Lyding does not indicate which text of the *Iliad* she used, it seems safe to assume that she based her statistics upon the text of T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera* 1 (Oxford 1920); 2 (Oxford 1920); 3 (Oxford 1917); 4 (Oxford 1917). In the preparation of this table I used the following texts:

In this table we see that there is a marked decline in the frequency of lines with no enjambement in the later poems (*Shield*, *Argonautica*, *Phaenomena*, Callimachus' *Hymns*, and *Idylls*). The frequency of this type of line in Callimachus' *Hymns*, while not significantly lower than that in the *Iliad* at the .01 level, is nevertheless consistent with the tendency toward a decrease in the percentage of verses with no enjambement in the later poems. Also in these late poems we find a significant increase in the frequency of necessary enjambement.

In two of the later works, the *Argonautica* and the *Phaenomena*, the percentage of unperiodic enjambement is significantly lower than that in

T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera* 5 (Oxford 1912). Because of the textual problem, I do not count line 236 of the *H. H. Dem.* The statistics for that poem are based upon 494 lines of text.

F. Solmsen, *Hesiodi Opera* (Oxford 1970). In the *Theogony* Solmsen adds lines 501a and 723a, and deletes line 774, yielding 1023 lines of text. In the *Works and Days* he deletes lines 120 and 169, and adds line 736a. This results in 827 lines of text.

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

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

R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* 2 (Oxford 1951). Because of textual problems it is impossible to determine the enjambement types of lines 176, 177, 200, and 201 in the *Hymn to Delos*. This reduces to 937 the total number of lines which I count in the *Hymns*.

A. S. F. Gow, *Bucolici Graeci* (Oxford 1952).

¹⁶G. P. Edwards, *The Language of Hesiod in its Traditional Context* (Oxford 1971) 96, produces enjambement statistics for the Hesiodic poems which are close to mine:

	No Enjambement	Unperiodic Enjambement	Necessary Enjambement
<i>Theogony</i>	33.0%	39.1%	27.9%
<i>Works and Days</i>	43.0%	27.2%	29.7%
<i>Shield</i>	34.3%	29.5%	36.2%

The substitution of Edward's figures for mine in the table would require no change in the indications of statistical significance.

¹⁷G. R. McLennan, "Enjambement in the Hymns of Callimachus," *Hermes* 102 (1974) 200-206, obtains somewhat different results:

	No Enjambement	Unperiodic Enjambement	Necessary Enjambement
Callimachus' <i>Hymns</i>	(--)40.2%	25.2%	(++)34.6%

The symbols in parentheses are those which would be required if McLennan's statistics were substituted in my table. He finds fewer verses with no enjambement and more verses with unperiodic enjambement than I do. While these differences point out the need for more precise standards in determining enjambement types, they do not affect the conclusions reached in this paper.

the *Iliad*; in one, the *Idylls*, it is higher. While the statistics may indicate a tendency toward the decreased use of unperiodic enjambement in the later poems, this tendency is not without exception, and therefore cannot be used alone to differentiate early poetry from late, or oral poetry from literate. Clayman and Van Nortwick are correct in objecting that Parry overemphasized this one type of enjambement as a distinguishing characteristic of oral poetry.¹⁸

Clayman and Van Nortwick follow McLennan in stressing the effect of “subject matter and individual stylistic preference” upon enjambement patterns.¹⁹ It is obvious that poems composed largely of catalogues will exhibit enjambement patterns different from those of epic narrative;²⁰ this fact, however, leads not to the conclusion that comparison of enjambement characteristics cannot be used to help determine oral composition, but rather that, in selecting poems to be compared, one must consider whether there are any elements in the poems which might vitiate that comparison. As can be seen from McLennan’s analysis of enjambement in each of the Callimachean *Hymns*, individual stylistic preference may also affect enjambement characteristics, especially in short texts. Yet my statistical results do suggest that there is an underlying difference between the use of enjambement in earlier and later hexameter poetry.

Earlier hexameter, which displays a high degree of formulaic content, is characterized by a high percentage of verses with no enjambement, and a low percentage of verses with necessary enjambement. In later hexameter, which has little, if any, formulaic content, precisely the opposite obtains. Clearly a poem’s enjambement characteristics are determined, to a large extent, by the presence or absence of formulae. Since it is precisely in these formulae that the moulding force of the oral tradition lies, Parry was correct in positing a correlation between enjambement characteristics and method of composition.

Before any final judgment is reached on the relationship of enjambement to oral composition it would be profitable to take into account Lyding’s data on the numerous grammatical types occurring within the unperiodic and necessary classifications of enjambement in the Homeric epics.

¹⁸Clayman and Van Nortwick 90.

¹⁹Clayman and Van Nortwick 90. McLennan 203.

²⁰Clayman and Van Nortwick point out the high percentage of unperiodic enjambement in the *Theogony*, which contains many catalogues (p. 90). Lyding (Appendix) also finds a very high percentage of unperiodic enjambement (37.2%) in Book II of the *Iliad*, which contains the *Catalogue of Ships*.

Comparison of this with similar information derived from later Greek hexameter poetry may reveal that enjambement is affected by syntactic differences that cannot be measured by tests of a purely quantitative nature.²¹

²¹I would like to thank Professors Mabel Lang, Gregory Dickerson, James McDonough, Jr., and especially Richard Hamilton for the valuable suggestions which they gave me in the preparation of this article.