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Published in:
An Introduction to Poetic Form

DOI:
[10.4324/9781003244004-5](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003244004-5)

Publication date:
2022

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Yeung, H. (2022). Toeing and Breaking the Line: On Enjambment and Caesura. In P. Gill (Ed.), *An Introduction to Poetic Form* (1 ed., pp. 38-50). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003244004-5>

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Toeing and Breaking the Line: On Enjambment and Caesura

Heather H. Yeung

1. Introduction: Morphology¹

Let us begin with two common definitions:

1. Noun: Enjambment; Verb: to Enjamb. The carrying-over of a poetic unit of sense from the end of one poetic line to the beginning of the next.
2. Noun: Caesura. a break of or pause in the unit of sense *within* the poetic line.

Modern Anglophone poetry, i.e. poetry written in English(es) from Chaucer to the present, is distinguished from prose by its use of the ‘line’. The poetic line interrupts, breaks, or marks in other ways the progress of grammar and syntax, and thence supports the creation of a specifically *poetic* meaning and argument. Poetic effects are born out of interrelationship of the rival forces of the spatial line-unit and the temporal lexical, grammatical, or syntactic-unit (sometimes called ‘unit of sense’) ordered into verses or verse-paragraphs. In accentual syllabic, syllabic, and ‘free’ or strophically ordered verse alike, the line or lines of a poem are created out of language – enjambment and caesura are the two primary extralinguistic features whose effects demonstrate to us the linguistic and rhythmical possibilities of that line whilst themselves being neither lexical nor related to interpunction, or sharing effects with assonance or apostrophe. Enjambment and caesura exist, instead, significantly *outwith* the marks on the page which constitute the poem, poetic form, and poetic syntax. Enlivening meter and meaning, they are unmarked but ‘appear’ when we make sensible the poem in the process of reading. Thus the poetic line ‘makes’ itself not only through its meaning but also in the resonance and rupture of its ‘breaks’.

The following five interlinked propositions provide a working definition of the poetic line and its breaks:

1. Modern poetry is language ordered in lines whose primary material of composition is words. The grouping of these lines is not governed by the rules of grammar or syntax, and punctuation can often be absent or misleading; poetry is in this way distinct from

¹ Please do note that all poems referred to throughout this essay are (at time of writing) available online via *poems.org*, the Academy of American Poets’s website, or *poetryfoundation.org*, the UK Poetry Foundation’s website.

prose. The language with which poetic lines are composed is often heightened, viz. embellished with figurative and rhetorical effects.

2. The lines of a poem have a visible beginning and end which contributes to the overall spatial organisation of the poem. Their beginning is often (but not always) a sentence-beginning. Their end may be terminal (marked by a full-stop), but more often than not is not so. When the end of a poetic line is not grammatically terminal, the poem's unit of sense moves across its end to the beginning of the next line. This is 'enjambment', and can occur multiple times in a single poem, and will always occur at the end of a poetic line until the grammatical unit is concluded. In poetry written from the twentieth century onwards such an effect might even lead to the poem's being enjambed into the white space of the page and thus concluding inconclusively. The opposite of this is an effect sometimes found in contemporary poetry whereby the title of the poem is also its first line and enjambes into the poem's body, creating a heightened sense of a poem's *in medias res* beginning, or questioning the nature of the title as 'capital' or 'frame'.
3. The poet's control of the beginning and end of a poetic line in combination with either metre or rhythm is often not enough to ensure that the line itself is not dull or monotonous. The longer the poetic line, the more important, and more likely, it is that some form of caesura occurs within it. *Within* the poetic line it is often important to create a rhythm of starting and stopping distinctive from that of prose, of placing emphasis on more than one word in the line by pausing either before or after those words. This is commonly understood to be 'caesura'.
4. Whereas in contemporary editions of poetry (in which punctuation has been carefully edited) enjambment is easy to identify, caesura, whose poetic sense the Anglophone line inherited from and developed out of the metrical rules of Latin and ancient Greek poetics, adapting their applications to the quantitative syllabic meter of Latin and Greek to the accentual syllabic meter of Early Modern English, is more difficult to definitively identify. To 'see' enjambment is often as simple as *not* seeing terminal punctuation or noticing that a phrase or sentence does not end with the end of a line; to 'see' caesura, on the other hand, one must read the line and notice its rhythmic and syntactic patterning and where this creates pauses or breaks. On the question of caesural emplacement you will often find that literary critics disagree. The longer the poetic line, the higher the possibility the reader encounters both 'true' and 'false' caesura, the former being the ultimately logical moment of pause or break, the latter,

moments of slight (or light) pause ultimately subordinate to the line's 'true' caesura(s).

5. The pace at which the poetic lines appear to move is created out of a combination of the silence of enjambed and caesural effects and the relative ease or difficulty of the reader in speaking (internally or aloud) the sound world of the poem.

The above propositions are necessarily interlinked, and cover the practical or technical means by which we might observe and evaluate the effects of these two major invisible morphological features of poetry: enjambment and caesura.

2. Metapoesis

Complex and nuanced also are the means by which poets themselves address these important extra-linguistic poetic effects – the language of poetic form doesn't only serve a scientific, morphological purpose, it also operates on a figurative level of which poets are often preternaturally conscious. Thus are caesura and enjambment 'animated' in some poetry, while they also 'animate' the potential linguistic monotony of the poem. This figurative level is often spatial and embodied, and is a way through which the inscape and 'instress' of poetry (to use Gerard Manley Hopkins's terms (*Collected*, 503-525)) is connected to and made distinct from the 'real', 'phenomenal' world (for the seminal account of the 'phenomenal world' of the poem, see Jonathan Culler's work on lyric ('Reading', and *Theory*)). It may also be metapoetic: a means through which the poem becomes painfully or playfully self-conscious of its construction. Poets play with the sense of 'verse' as 'versus' or 'turning point' and 'strophe' as a 'turn' or movement around the lines. Across the *oeuvre* of Seamus Heaney, the poet borrows from this connection between line and land, likening each of his enjambed line-endings to the 'boustrophedon' of a plough at the end of a field. Each line thus becomes a furrow into which grain is sown, the poet is the person who holds the digging instrument, or pen, the poem the ploughshare (*Preoccupations*, 41-60).²

The same sort of metapoetic playful philological and figurative logic can be found in the poetic working not only of enjambment but also caesura. For the former in addition to the

² Such images permeate Heaney's poetry, as well as his essays. In the 'Glanmore Sonnets' (in *Opened Ground: Selected Poems 1966-1996* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), the analogy between pen and plough is made explicit, as well as in the infamous 'Digging' (in *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966): 7) the exegesis of which Heaney makes in 'Feeling into Words', in *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-78* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980): 41-60.

above we can see immediately a link to the idea of the writer's works as a body or 'corpus', in which the limbs (from the French – *jambe*, or leg) reach or stretch over each other and turn, connected by the body (or principal form) of the poem. In Heaney's "Follower" (1966), the movements of the bodies of the horses and plough at the end of each furrow is connected to the effects of enjambment, the phrase 'round and back' enacting itself across the line-break: "the sweating team turned round / And back into the land" (ll. 9-10)³. This mode of equating enjambment with a body may also compass the movement of a different animal body *along* a space – as in Thom Gunn's "Considering the Snail" (1961): "He / moves in a wood of desire"(ll.5-6) in which the pronoun designating the poetic subject appears to move so slowly 'he' only achieves a verbal being with the start of the next line – or a movement in concert with the reading direction of a poem on the page *downwards*, as in Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting" (1919)' whose speaker "escaped / down some profound dull tunnel" (ll.1-2).

As enjambment 'embodies', it can also populate the poetic topos. Another of its effects of extension is to give a sense of abundance, overflowing, and complexity – a sentence, an argument, a list, or an epic catalogue continues apparently unendingly across a series of lines. This is an effect for which John Milton is notorious, in both his epic world-building and also his shorter lyrics where the running-over of the lines is mimetic of the diegetic superabundance and masculinist empire-building tendencies which characterise his work. We also frequently encounter such an effect of superabundance (albeit with a different politics) in the Romantic poet John Keats. In the ode "To Autumn" the line-breaks frequently "o'er-brim" with sensual syntax, "set budding more, / and still more" (ll. 8-9), pushing the work into the realm of aesthetic difficulty; in "Ode to Psyche", "wrung / By sweet enforcement" (ll.1-2) *wrings out* suspense between pain and pleasure through the manipulation of the line-break (both poems 1819). Taking to an extreme the possibility of fluidly enjambed lines are suites of poems such as Louis MacNeice's "Flowers in the Interval" (1952), where a syntax is suspended and enjambed over so many lines (and indeed across a series of poems) that enjambment, and the anticipation of the conclusion of the grammatical line across so many poetic lines, becomes a habit and thence the dominant mood of the poem over and above the catalogue of descriptions of the beloved who is the poetry's subject matter and addressee. In Carolyn Kizer's odic "A Muse of Water" (1959), where "white streams flow / Artesian" (ll. 8-9), the verb, and the post-partum female body's

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seemingly unending production of breast milk, moves in both suspended time and fluid abundance across the line break, in contrast with the caesuras later in the poem which occur often between moments of exclamation as pregnant, breathless, pauses.

These are, of course, scant examples amongst many, demonstrating some of the ways in which the enjambed line combines the metapoetic and the mimetic. Other poets, particularly those who write in accentual syllabic metre, begin differently: with the idea of the metrical ‘foot’. They then extend this figurative, formal, idea of the poem’s shifting body politic to its limbs, or enjambments, and its overall ‘life’ and ‘death’. We have the ‘galloping’ of the horses’ feet and the metrical feet extending at the end of each line with the narrative pace in Robert Browning’s trochaic “How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix” (1845). In the penultimate stanza the linear and limbic extension and swift movement through a landscape comes halts with a terminal line (l.54) – the end of the poetic narrative and the start of the final stanza’s reflection. In John Milton’s sonnet “On the Late Massacre in Piedmont” (1655) the sounds of the just-living are made to extend over the landscape and soundscape, or, the poetic topology:

. . . Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heaven. (ll. 8-11)

The unit of sense runs across two line breaks. The ‘moaning’ living of the 8th and 9th lines are carried into the space beyond the 8th line, naturally ‘redoubling’ in an implied echo-effect, then unnaturally extending over the 9th line (unnaturally or ‘forced’ because here the line-break ruptures the unit of grammatical sense). The forced enjambment draws attention to poetic artifice and also expands the physical world of the 8th and 9th line towards the metaphysical of the 10th; this ‘break’, too, the poem implies, is a terminal rupture – the ‘moaning’ bodies populate not hills but Heaven, are therefore by implication beyond life. After this caesura, the poem re-starts.

3. Existence

Caesura extends this idea of the poem-as-body (or ‘corpus’; work); the way in which it works figuratively is perhaps more painful than enjambment, as it is likely that its etymology comes from the Latin ‘caedo’, to cut open, and which is linked to the apocryphal caesarean incision

associated with Julius Caesar's birth (we will note briefly later the difficulty of this metapoetics when gender comes into play). 'Caesura' is thus a 'cut' in the 'body' of the line, linked to the implication of the production of 'new life' after the cut. More often than not, such a 'cut' operates as a pause; in the work of a dexterous poet working with a long line, there may be more than one such pause, and there may also be some 'false' and 'true' pauses. Note again the central (complete) line quoted above from Milton. Here there is a short pause (or false caesura) after the first foot ('The vales'), and again after the next foot ('redoubled'). This is typical, as caesura often acts in concert with the extension of rhythm and grammar. The strongest break in this line is where the comma is marked, which is a *late* position for a caesura, but this late positioning and previous hesitation underlines the meaning of the line, which is to produce (as we have noted above in relation to the effect of the enjambment of the same line) an expansive sense of a long drawn-out movement from physical to metaphysical realms. The 'fatal' cut in the poem occurs after 'Heaven' is reached; there is nowhere further (in this poetic universe) for the bodies to go. Here caesura serves an existential, even metaphysical, function.

In a similar way, in Shakespeare's King Lear's final soliloquy (1606), the caesuras mark repetition, change, and ultimately death, pointing finally towards an extra-linguistic absolute: "Do you see this? Look on her! look! her lips! / Look there, look there! [*He dies*]" (A.V Sc.3 ll.3500-1). Whereas in Milton's line there is a hesitation with the soft pauses, and something definite about the 'true' caesura, here are too many possible true caesuras; in a sense this is a clear example of the effects of over-breaking a line: after the first foot, the second, the third, until the end. The lines are riddled with as much articulate, exclamatory, space as language. The breaks in the line become the break of reason into mad gesture and inarticulacy, and, as the closing apostrophe loses sense through an excess of repetition, the break of the speaking living body into dumb death. The line, and Lear, are broken and reach a terminus. Such existential 'breaking' of the accentual syllabic line reaches an apotheosis in the hyper-apostrophic poetry of the Victorian poets such as Swinburne, Tennyson, and the Brownings. Around the time of Ezra Pound's infamous statement, "to break the pentameter, that was the first heave" (l.54), as well as the World Wars, the existential and betimes apostrophic medial 'breaking' of the poetic line becomes an effect so rife as to be commonplace.

However, if this sense of rupture is taken less painfully or fatally, it may also be thought of as an anthropogenic creation of place from poetic space. Indeed, in his *Defense of Poesy* (c.1580), the Elizabethan poet and courtier Sir Philip Sidney remarked on the importance to the English poetic line of "caesura, or breathing place in the midst of the verse"

(Sidney, n.p.). It is worth noting how Sidney, so early in the development of modern English verse, softens the meaning of caesura to something more akin to genius (*locus*) or inspiration ('breathing place') than severance ('caedo', or fatal cutting), and yet that it is related to a sense of the poem itself as body, or as profoundly embodied and phenomenologically indebted. This meaning of 'caesura' haunts other means by which more contemporary poetic lines than Sidney's are controlled without violent rupture, such as the 'opening' of the poem (and 'heart') to the line *as* breath and the 'field' of the page in Charles Olson's highly influential "Projective Verse" (1950). We must always bear in mind, however, how, in theoretical resonance and poetic practicality even to this day 'caesura' can, at times paradoxically, carry with it both the sense of a fatal cut and of a breathing space, and in all cases, the longer the poetic line, the more we might expect frequent use of caesura, as breathing space for or fatal cut in the body of verse.

Caesura can be gestured towards lexically; note the highly formally self-conscious final lines of Gerard Manley Hopkins's sonnet "The Sea and the Skylark" (1877):

Our make and making break, are breaking, down
To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime. (ll.13-14)

These are lines which break articulately (a neat metapoetic shift at the end of this sonnet, which is typical in many ways of the genre), straining against the strictures of the meter. This breaking, however, is effected through a combination of alliterative movement, repetition, and caesura/enjambment. Lexis that connotes brokenness or multiplicity – "break", "breaking" and "dust" – is followed by pauses in the line, whereas lexis connoting creation or movement is not. Caesural effect moves from mimetic break, to hesitation, to continuation or bridging; a fluid undermining of readerly expectation which is characteristic of Hopkins' line. Indeed, the case of the enjambment here is such that not only is the break mimetic (the verb moving 'down' to the next line), but also that the meaning of this clause divided by the line-break changes as we move from the first to the second lines. Such movement is in part influenced by the Welsh poetic line's ordering through 'consonant chime' (*cynganedd*), and a move towards the rhythm- and sound-indebted line that he is perhaps most famous for (the idea of a 'sprung rhythm' which marked a radical rejection of the strictures of classical Anglophone accentual syllabary on this poet's part).

When the poetic subject is affective rather than an object or concept, enjambment works to make and to underline meaning, and sometimes to complicate apparent meaning. In

the first three lines of Audre Lorde's "Who Said It Was Simple" (1973), the dominant affect of anger is also the tenor to the vehicle of the tree; what is first made to seem surprising, then all-consuming and disrupting, and then destructive, underlines the effects of the steady decrease in line length and gradual decomposition of the meaning within the line units (the first line is a full clause enjambling into a secondary clause, the second line enjambes across a clause with the verb – to shatter – also shattering, or breaking, the line), the implication of which is that regardless of how full and apparently complete, or small and apparently incomplete, things may be, that all can be further affected by anger. On formal and metaphorical levels, each stage builds on and complexifies the last; the "tree of anger" (l.2) is a tree whose very roots break its branches and prevent its flowering and fruiting. There is a complexity here, as the poet's use of enjambment ensures this accretion of anger's force and inarticulacy – across the three lines, even as (and perhaps *because*) the length of each line also diminishes, as too, the poem implies, does the tree's yield. And yet this is the beginning of the poem; a tortuous and self-contradictory start whose line-breaks steadily become 'difficult' (viz. no longer work in concert with syntax), which helps to emphasise the irony set out by the title. The breaking of the line, here, signals both pain and protest, as well as demonstrating a certain deftness on the part of the poet, a will to make it complex rather than easy for their reader.

Poetry makes complicated things out of words. But it is when we attend to what words are not – the breaks and spaces of enjambment and caesura – that we can see the greatest effects of these complexities. It is important for us, in recognising a single moment of 'breaking the line' as a crux, to read this crux alongside the other, perhaps lesser or anticlimactic, breaks. Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson's short poem "Hope" is part of a sequence, "Impressions" (1895) which engages with and poetically illustrates different affective states; the line length ebbs and flows around the iambic metre, and a cursory glance at punctuation might suggest that there is nothing complex about the way in which the poetic sketch progresses. The first two lines are indeed somewhat mimetic of the image that the poem produces – the medial pause of the first line producing an expected ebb and flow in relation to the "[w]ild seas" (l.1), the w-based alliteration enjambes softly across the line, a countercurrent to the contained clauses of this poetic list. The second line of the poem (with no 'true' caesura) allows for an extension of the sense of the line which allies itself mimetically with the "gloom" with which the line ends. At first glance the medial caesura of the third line appears to reinforce the mimetic work of the first two lines; the poem really begins to 'writhe' and we are no closer to coming towards the definition of 'hope' the title

hints at. The breaks after “desperately”, and then after “raves”, simple at first, are in fact the moment where the syntax of the poem splits, producing two possible readings of the ‘blotting’ in the fourth line: in the first possibility, what blots is the desperately clinging man, and in the second it is raving Boreas. Neither quite makes sense; the syntax (and the function of the caesura and line break) is murky. Yet the final line of the poem makes it clear that this movement from writhing, through gloom, to total unclarity, is purposive: literally and figurative ‘hope’ is implied by “light”. But after the dramatic “flash of light” comes another caesura which brings another redefinition, this time wholly anticlimactic: the light is not a light which saves, but a “gleam” from “afar”. Hope, the poem implies, is to be found in between the sudden illumination and the striving to reach the far shores; it is the caesura central to the poem which produces drama, and the final caesura is salutary, even recuperative.

At its most dramatic, caesura can force a full break of the line in a sort of rugged and disturbing enjambment. We see this force at work in W.B. Yeats’s sonnet “Leda and the Swan” (1924), in which the third line of the sestet is divided thus: “And Agamemnon dead. / Being so caught up” (l.11). The prolepsis of the clause which concludes at the start of this line cannot go any further forward. This caesura is a quite literal climax, which elides capture, rape, orgasm, and conception, and which ‘engenders’ the children of Leda and Zeus who give rise to epic (Helen of Troy) and tragic (Clytemnestra) literature. The line breaks after the third iambic foot, and is, literally, broken on the page. The gerund which follows the blank space (is this caesura, or enjambment, or both?) allows for reflection on the dramatic future, but also brings us back to the moment of the rape which is the ongoing subject matter of the sonnet. In this broken line lies possibility, as well as a multiplicity of different violent ruptures. The volta of the sonnet combines with a caesura so dramatic that it also forces enjambment. Although perhaps this is what we ought expect from a poem whose subject-matter compasses the mythic rape of a girl by a swan or god, and, by analogy, the violent birth of canonical Western Civilisation, its habits of warmongering and Empire-building, as well as its habitual domestic, dynastic violences.

4. Conclusion

Enjambment in accentual syllabic, syllabic, and free-verse alike produces three main effects each of which is qualitatively different in each poem you might read. In each case when we read the poem aloud we suspend our breathing across the line-break in order to ensure that

we are saving enough breath to complete the clause of the poem with which we, in reading, are currently engaged.

1. Over-running: this is perhaps the most common and identifiable form of enjambment, which exists across all modes of poetic writing equally. Here, the line extends into the next, as if a single line cannot contain everything that the poem wishes to encompass. Rhetorically, this mode is often linked to the poetic catalogue. The poetic effects that this might produce are feelings of abundance, sensory maximalism, or a more diplomatic ‘bridging’ effect between various components of the poetic syntax.
2. Over-reaching: distinct from the over-running line, the line whose enjambment over-reaches can feel less fluid or ‘natural’, since even though poetic sense is not entirely disrupted such enjambment creates a sense that the meaning is suspended across the line-break. Often this is because a line will begin with a subject and end on a verb, whose object only appears in the next line. Rhetorical effects related to such splitting might include hendiadys. The poetic effects that this might produce are suspense, attenuation, hesitation, ambivalence.
3. Disrupting: here the breaking of the line does not occur in relation to syntactic progression at all; the effect thus is one more often of rupture rather than of hesitation, however when used consistently across a poem (as is often the case in Anglophone syllabic verse) an overall effect of extreme tentativeness, or slowness, might be produced.

Caesura, over and above its function to vary the overall rhythm of a poem, preventing monotony and underlining poetic argument, works in three main ways:

1. Hesitation: this effect of caesura, related to its relative strength (or weakness), is also connected to the Sidneyan sense of the caesura as a ‘breath’ or ‘pause’ in the line, rather than a break absolute. Thus, the ‘soft’ medial caesura and its effect of light pause, breath, or hesitation before the sense of the poem continues.
2. Propulsion: a stronger effect of caesura, where the break in the centre of the line also enacts a role as a bridge or tipping point in the syntax. This builds on the light breath,

producing either a dramatic pause or prelude to – often – a crescendo in the poem, or a ‘volta’-like moment of rhetorical flourish and redefinition.

3. Rupture: at its most dramatic, caesura can force a full break of the line, in terms of sense, mood, and scene, as well as of sound-world and rhythm. This can result in a sense of either violence or radical loss. Often this sort of caesura is marked by a full-stop in the centre of the line, with the poem subsequently ‘re-beginning’; at times (for the most part in poetry written after 1900) such caesura can tip into enjambment, as the line itself is visibly broken.

Between these three modes might also sit the effect of the caesural break after an apostrophe (either non-linguistic (ah!) or deictic linguistic address (oh god!)), and before the ‘sense’ of the poem begins. The intensity of the affect subsequently explored within the poem resounds *outwith* language: there is a pause, bridge, or break, and subsequently ‘reason’ – language with grammatical order – kicks in. Dependent on our interpretation of the poem, such caesura might carry with it any of the above three modes, or, as in many of the poems of Emily Dickinson, for instance, more than one of these modes simultaneously.

When we encounter a ‘received’ genre or a poem which takes on a particular subject matter or argument, we can predict some of the uses to which the extra-linguistic features of the line might be put. Since their poetic forms and arguments are predicated on turns and counterturns, the ode and the sonnet are forms in which we can anticipate not only highly wrought uses of enjambment, but also marked terminal stops, within and at the end of the lines. These genres build up the flow of their arguments towards false and true conclusions. The breaking of the line allows for flow, but also for moments of pause when the poetic argument might divide, allowing for a sometimes virtuosic layering of meaning and suspension of syntax within the poem. In the ballad and the dramatic monologue, associated with enunciation and orality rather than argument and textuality, we might expect enjambment and caesura to support the overall ‘story’ of the poem. The uses of breaks and overflow in the line are more likely in these poetic genres to *support* rather than *complexify* the poetic meaning, and are also more likely to signal moments of pause in performance, viz. to work more readily with a ‘story’ rather than ‘argument’ in mind. In an elegy we might expect caesura to function ‘existentially’ in concert with the speaker’s grief, and for enjambment to mirror an overflow of emotion or demonstrate the abundance of remembered attributes of the lost figure.

On a metapoetic level caesura is bound up in the idea of the fatal cut (thus, often, how epic or heroic caesura function), but also how it is related to the idea of the apocryphal birth of (Julius) Caesar by caesarean section. The rupture that caesura creates indicates not one but two bodies: the ‘sectioned’ maternal (female) body, and the infant body thence ‘produced’. It bears with it, too, the sense of the *Lex Caesaria* (a Roman law which prevented the burial of a pregnant woman; caesura in this sense was pragmatic, civic, and – for one of the two bodies implied by caesura – post mortem). Hereby the gender politics hidden in the figure of caesura (as mentioned previously) are exposed. By a Classical extension of its most famous figuration, what is produced from the surgical rupture of the feminine body is a future emperor, future imperialisms. But how much do we think of the ruptured body if we consider it constituent, rather than remainder? This lets us read caesura differently in many Anglophone poems which incorporate the breaking of the line as an explicit effect to underline moments of rupture and birth. A counterpoint to many of our previous masculinist examples, which write, albeit sometimes problematically, the female body back into this metapoetic discourse include Yeats’s “Leda and the Swan” and (for the post-natal) Kizer’s “Water”. A virtuoso engagement with caesura and enjambment’s metapoetic potential is Mina Loy’s “Parturition” (1914) throughout whose medial and terminal line breaks arrange the poetic space, and serve different functions variously: of parody of rhythm of speech, hesitant pause, emphasis, and even imply rather than a pause the blank of repression, omission, or censorship.

Caesura and Enjambment, the palpable unspoken invisibles of poetry, from two important aspects of the critic’s toolkit. As we must attend to their metapoetic dimensions, it behoves us to attend more acutely to the international politics of the line and its breaks, to think more finely about the multiple, nuanced and different traditions of poetic lineation and what it thus means to ‘break’ a line. ‘Caesura’ and ‘Enjambment’ are certainly important constituent extralinguistic effects within the Western poetic tradition(s), but we must bear in mind in an age where forms are borrowed cross-culturally with some profligacy that we do not mistake these for other modes of controlling the line which bear morphological similarity. For example: the medial break of the Germanic alliterative line, the hemistichich *bait* (or *bayt*) of Classical Arabic poetry, the *kirije* of the Japanese haiku, and the flexible bi-partite Russian *dolnik*. If we learn to read critically attuned to traditions of breaking the line which are *not* bound up with ‘caesura’ and ‘enjambment’, indeed when ‘caesura’ and ‘enjambment’ disappear as the dominant extralinguistic poetic modalities and are replaced by non-Anglophone, non-Western lines, breaks, and silences, we might begin to read international

resonance more acutely in modern poetry, and avoid the risk of exerting a Western-centric terminological imperium on works translated and/or taking on formal attributes from different literary traditions.

Returning to the spatial aspects of metapoiesis and thinking again of the poem as body/land/place, we might by extension also begin to attend to the fact that the use of caesura or enjambment in a given poem might produce a qualitatively different poetic sense for a female, queer, or trans bodied reader and/or for the colonised rather than the colonial body (oeuvre, and language). A poem may or may not toe the line in an expected way, not only in its linguistic, figurative, and formal meaning but also in the presence of its extralinguistic aspects. Going forwards, the question then is: first toed, what does it then mean when that line is broken?

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