

# A Temporal and Dynamic Approach to Enjambments in French Versified Poetry from the 17th to the late 19th Century

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**Abstract.** This study is about *enjambments*, *rejets* and *contre-rejets* in French metrical poetry. No study explains why these constructions are seen as characteristic of poetry. Moreover, the common approach in terms of (mis)alignment between metrical and prosodic or syntactic structure leaves a number of unanswered questions. Why meter is studied only in its relationships with prosody or syntax, leaving many other aspects of discourse unexamined? When the meaning in a line straddles the line break to continue into the next line, which line is concerned by the enjambment? the first, the second, or both? Does enjambment constitute a homogeneous category?

Observations of these constructions were carried out on an exploratory corpus based on Boileau's and Chénier's works. The unanswered questions above can be explained by the fact that metrical, and, above all, syntactic structures are seen as finished products. Conversely, a temporal and dynamic approach to discourse can shed some light on these issues.

The first part of this study will examine the morpho-syntactic structure before and after a pause in speech, before and after the line break in versified poetry, and justify the idea that the phenomena referred to by the terms *enjambement*, *rejet* and *contre-rejet* can be found in any discourse, including conversation. The pause at the line break is seen as a signal to process what precedes the pause without knowing what follows it.

The second part will rely on linear or dynamic grammars that have established that, in any discourse, whether spoken or written, morpho-syntactic units are processed as they unfold over time. This temporal and dynamic perspective, applied to versified poetry, involves the reader in a prospective phase of predictions and a retrospective phase of satisfaction or frustration followed by continuous readjustments, which are an integral part of interpretation. Enjambment, *rejet* and *contre-rejet* represent an ideal observatory of this dynamic, since they highlight this two-stage process.

This approach allows us to distinguish the first type of enjambment. When dealing with two lines, type-1 enjambment is only perceived at the start of line 2, through the addition of an unexpected grammatical constituent. Unlike type-1, type-2 enjambment is predictable from the end of line 1, and is generally confirmed by the beginning

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of line 2, bringing the *rejet* into focus. As for *contre-rejets*, some present events in discourse earlier than expected. Interestingly, the step-by-step process allowing predictions is supported by recent psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic studies.

I suggest in the last part an analysis of a particular *rejet* that illustrates these dynamics at work.

Keywords: enjambment, *rejet*, *contre-rejet*, metrics, rhythm, French poetry, conversational analysis, pause, dynamic grammars, on-line syntax.

## 0. Introduction

This complex topic is here examined via the so-called rhythm/meaning mismatches, based on a corpus of such mismatches in Boileau's and Chénier's works. The corpus was compiled from the cases of possible enjambments extracted by S. Ferrari from R. Renault's Malherbæ corpus<sup>1</sup> in Boileau's, Chénier's, Hugo's and Verlaine's works, using punctuation as a criterion. So far, actual cases of enjambment have only been sorted out in Boileau's and Chénier's works.<sup>2</sup> This heuristic corpus (Scheer 2004) is therefore intended to observe phenomena, not to validate a hypothesis.<sup>3</sup>

Malherbe (17th century) recommends applying a fairly strict principle of concordance between rhythm and meaning. However, throughout the classical period, these precepts are applied much more loosely in comedies and other lighter genres. Boileau thus appears to be a good representative of classicism. The eighteenth century saw the (re)introduction of enjambments, *rejets* and *contre-rejets* in high poetry, mainly pioneered by Chénier.

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<sup>2</sup> The expression "actual cases of enjambment" is debatable. This might imply that these 'mismatches' are objective textual features on which any reader would agree. In fact, these phenomena are partly determined by structural constraints, but there remains a degree of variability: 1. we cannot always be sure of certain constructions of the 17th century, particularly where word order is concerned; 2. the feeling of mismatching also depends on individual characteristics such as the reader's degree of familiarity with versified poetry, whether it is a first or second reading, and so on. The study developed here is mainly aimed at a first reading. The differences between a first reading and subsequent readings could be the subject of a specific study.

<sup>3</sup> When the linguist has to face the mist without a compass, explains Scheer 2004, a heuristic corpus is needed because multiplying the examples and classifying them can show the path towards a hypothesis to validate.

*Enjambment* is a rather vague and confusing term, since it designates a class that includes as sub-classes the *rejet*, the *contre-rejet* and... the *enjambment*. As a class, it refers to what most current studies present as a meter/prosody or a meter/syntax mismatch. As a sub-class, it is supposed to refer to a specific type of mismatch, still deprived of an accurate definition. Let us just say for the moment that, in example (1), the direct object complement in bold “le bèlement lointain” (the distant bleating) is prolonged in the following line:<sup>4</sup>

- (1) 91 J'allais, et j'écoutais **le bèlement lointain**  
 I went, and I listened to the bleating distant  
 “I went, and I listened to the distant bleating”  
 92 *De troupeaux agitant leurs sonnettes d'airain.*  
 Of flocks shaking their bells brazen.  
 ‘Of flocks shaking their brazen bells.’  
 (Chénier, *L'Aveugle*, 1790)

The *rejet* is illustrated in (2), where the short adjective “Verte” is rejected to the next line:<sup>5</sup>

- (2) 5 **Bienheureux, j' allongeai les jambes sous la table**  
 Happy I stretched out my legs under the table  
 ‘Happy, I stretched out my legs under the table’  
 6 *Verte: je contemplai les sujets très naïfs*  
 Green: I studied the patterns very naïve  
 ‘Green: I studied the artless patterns’  
 (Rimbaud, *Au Cabaret-Vert, Cinq heures du soir*, 1870)

Example (3) illustrates a *contre-rejet*, where the subject “et Brontin” starts a sentence at the end of the line:

<sup>4</sup> All poetic examples come from the *Métrie en ligne* website:  
<https://crisco4.unicaen.fr/verlaine>

<sup>5</sup> All linear translations are my own: they are deliberately literal, as the sole aim is to help identify the part that completes the syntactic structure. In every example, the part before the pause appears in bold, the part after, in italics.

- (3) 211 Il tourne le bonnet; l' enfant tire; **et Brontin**  
 He turns the bonnet; the child pulls; and Brontin  
 'He turns the bonnet; the child pulls; and Brontin'  
 212 *Est le premier des noms qu' apporte le destin.*  
 Is the first of the names that brings destiny.  
 'Is the first of the names that destiny brings.'  
 (Boileau, *Le Lutrin*, Chant I, 1674–1683)

Two types of communication are particularly conducive to these mismatches:

1. spontaneous speech: because a speech is planned at the same time as it is produced, many constituents might appear discordant; a syntactic constituent may embed several prosodic constituents or vice versa, or arrive too late, when the prosodic structure is complete (see examples 9–11 below).<sup>6</sup>

2. versified poetry: because of the metrical regularities that constrain conception and reception of versified poetry, a perceived rhythm does not always seem to coincide with meaning. These phenomena are referred to as *enjambments*, or, if better specified, as *rejets* and *contre-rejets*.

## 1. Concordance/discordance between grammatical and rhythmical constituents as a process not specific to versified poetry

The avoidance of enjambment in the high genres of classical French versified poetry is generally explained by a concordance constraint that should apply between meter and prosody or syntax.<sup>7</sup> In this framework, the first step in enjambment analysis is to identify the smallest grammatical constituent on either side of the line break, such as 'la table verte' (the green table) in example (2).

It will be argued that these mismatches are not specific to versified poetry, but rather that they are part of processes that are present in any discourse, including conversation.

<sup>6</sup> See Candea 2000; Degand, Simon 2009; Simon 2011; Simon, Christodoulides 2016; Martin 2018: 173–174.

<sup>7</sup> See Dell, Benini 2020. The back cover reads "La concordance est un phénomène essentiel à l'esthétique racinienne et à toute écriture métrique." (My translation: "Concordance is a phenomenon essential to Racinian aesthetics and to all metrical writing." The same approach can be found in Fabb 2015; Baumann et al. 2018; Martínez Cantón et al. 2021; Ruiz et al. 2017.

A close look at the corpus led to the first observation: in a sequence of two lines,<sup>8</sup> there are two different processes. In the first type, line 1 corresponds to a complete syntactic structure, at least provisionally, and line 2 is an extension of it, as in (4) and (5):

- (4) 31 **Au seuil de Joachim ils arrivent ensemble,**  
 At the threshold of Joachim they arrive together,  
 'At the threshold of Joachim they arrive together'
- 32 *Se rencontrent.* Chacun veut fuir, recule, tremble,  
 Meet. Each wants to flee, retreats, trembles,  
 'Meet. Each wants to flee, retreats, trembles.'  
 (Chénier, *Suzanne*, 1790)
- (5) 14 **Les éloges railleurs fondent sur le satyre**  
 Praises mocking fall on the satyr  
 'Mocking praises fall on the satyr'
- 15 *Qui pleure,* et des Chiens même, en fuyant vers le bois,  
 Who weeps, and of the dogs themselves, by fleeing to the woods,
- 16 Évite comme il peut les dents et les abois...  
 avoids as best he can the teeth and barks  
 'avoids as best he can the teeth and barks'  
 (Chénier, *Églogues*, X, 1790)

Translation for line 15 and 16: "who weeps, and avoids as best he can the teeth and barks of the dogs themselves, by fleeing to the woods..."

In the second type, line 1 corresponds to an incomplete syntactic structure which line 2 completes, as in (6) and (7):

- (6) 49 **Quand Boirude, qui voit que le péril approche,**  
 When Boirude, who sees that peril is approaching,  
 'When Boirude, who sees that peril is approaching,'
- 50 *Les arrête;* et, tirant un fusil de sa poche,  
 them stops; and, drawing a rifle from his pocket,  
 'Stops them; and, drawing a rifle from his pocket,'  
 (Boileau, *Le Lutrin*, Chant III, 1674–1693)

<sup>8</sup> In fact, the sequence involved can comprise more than two lines, but here I limit myself to a sequence of two lines, referred to as line 1 and line 2.

- (7) 16 **Et leurs obliques fronts, lancés tous deux ensemble,**  
 And their oblique foreheads, thrown both together,  
 ‘And their oblique foreheads, both thrown together,’  
 17 *Se choquent*; l’air frémit, le bois s’agite et tremble.  
 Collide; the air quivers, the wood shakes and trembles.  
 ‘Collide; the air quivers, the wood shakes and trembles.’  
 (Chénier, *Églogues* IX, 1790)

The two criteria are equally important: 1. at the end of line 1, the syntactic structure is incomplete, 2. the constituent which begins at the start of line 2 finishes before the end of hemistich 1. If we neglect the first criteria, the resulting construction might not be a *rejet*, as in example (8):

- (8) 11 Son cri fait tressaillir ses superbes compagnes.  
 His cry makes flinch his beautiful companions.  
 ‘His cry makes his beautiful companions flinch.’  
 12 Il arrive; il les voit; avec grâce à leurs yeux  
 He arrives; he them sees; with grace in their eyes  
 ‘He arrives; he sees them; with grace in their eyes’  
 (Chénier, *Poésies Antiques, Études* VIII, 1790)

It is a matter of fact that the grammatical constituent “Il arrive” (He arrives), line 12, finishes before the end of hemistich 1. But, no reader would see it as a *rejet* because the syntactic structure at the end of line 11 is perceived as complete, and the beginning of line 12 confirms it.

The hypothesis that type 1 (examples 4–5) and type 2 (examples 6–7) function differently will be defended by examining two phenomena:

- the morpho-syntactic structure that unfolds throughout the line, and
- the pause that stops this movement.

In spoken language, a silent pause, stopping the verbal string, signals 1) a moment for physiological activity (breathing); but also 2) the time spent on various cognitive activities: planning the following words, discursive structuring, interactional work, structuring information, focus, etc. (Dodane, Hirsch 2018). The pause can therefore be seen as a signal given by the speaker to the listener to process the sequence before the pause and interpret the cognitive activity at work. In written language, pause cues will obviously be different, non-phonetic in nature.

Punctuation is part of the cues. But versified poetry adds a decisive cue: the line break. The line break imposes a stop on the verbal string since the verbal string of the line does not extend to the right margin of the page. This pause at the line break can be seen as a signal to the reader that this is the time to process the verbal string that is the line. It is a time when the reader can

interpret the traces of some cognitive activities. The pause at the line break is a pause in processing. It gives the instruction to process the unfolding discourse in stages: what precedes the pause, then, what follows the pause.

Candea (2000: 155–178), based on a corpus of speech recorded in a French class with 13–14-year-old students, focused on the structuring silent pause.<sup>9</sup> In accordance with the natural order of speech perception, she thus analyzed the pause as structuring what precedes it, since what has not yet been produced is unknown. Among the *intra-constituent* structuring silent pauses, she distinguishes the same two types as those identified in the Boileau-Chénier corpus. In the first type, what precedes the pause appears syntactically complete. The pause sets this group apart, closes it, and thus makes it autonomous, prosodically and syntactically, as can be seen in examples (9) and (10) from Candea (2000: 170), and in (11), taken from the Rhapsodie corpus (Lacheret-Dujour, Kahane 2020: 9):

- (9) **elle commence par le gros bol** / *du papa*<sup>10</sup>  
 she starts with the big bowl of the Daddy  
 ‘She starts with the big bowl of *Dady Bear*’

- (10) **il vit un arbre** / *d’une espèce inconnue*  
 he saw a tree of a species unknown  
 ‘he saw a tree of an unknown species’

- (11) (je pense aux nombreuses victimes de la tempête)  
 (et **à toutes les familles** (*endeuillées*))<sup>11</sup> [...]  
 (I think of the many victims of the storm)  
 (**and of all the families**) (*in mourning*)  
 ‘I think of the many victims of the storm and of all the families in mourning’

<sup>9</sup> A structuring silent pause refers to (my translation) “any silent pause that is framed by a verbal sequence produced by the same speaker, and not immediately preceded by a Marker of Reformulation Work such as “uh...”” (Candea 2000: 145). The pause immediately preceded by a Marker of Reformulation Work (uh, lengthening of hesitation, repetition, false start, immediate self-correction), has not been taken into account, since Candea (2000: 145) considers it as a non-structuring pause.

<sup>10</sup> Of Candea’s annotations, I reproduce only the slash that indicates where the pause occurs. Phonetic parameters such as the length of the pause, the intonational contours, etc., play an important role in her demonstration, but they are beyond my scope. My interest lies in the temporal nature of speech flow and the mental operations that can be revealed by the organization of the utterance.

<sup>11</sup> Brackets mark intonation periods (intonational contour, pause, melodic reset after pause).

In these three examples, a pause closes what precedes it without the syntactic group being completed; it is provisionally complete, however. What follows the pause in Candea's corpus, formally a genitive attribute or an attributive adjective, is therefore an afterthought, which was not planned before the pause was produced.

We have something here that bears an uncanny resemblance to some *rejets*, as in (12) and (2):

- (12) 1 De quel genre te faire, **Équivoque maudite**,  
 Of what genre you make Equivocation cursed F ADJ  
 'Of what genre make you, cursed Equivocation,'  
 2 *Ou maudit ?* car, sans peine, aux rimeurs hasardeux,  
 Or cursed MADJ because without risk to rhymers amateur  
 3 L' usage encor, je crois, laisse le choix des deux.  
 The usage still, I think, leaves the choice of both.  
 'The usage still, I think, leaves the choice of both.'  
 (Boileau, *Satire XII*, 1705)

Translation for line 2 and 3: 'Or cursed? because, the usage, I think, still leaves the choice of both, without risk, to amateur rhymers.'<sup>12</sup>

- (2) 5 **Bienheureux, j' allongeai les jambes sous la table**  
 Happy I stretched out my legs under the table  
 'Happy, I stretched out my legs under the table'  
 6 *Verte: je contemplai les sujets très naïfs*  
 Green: I studied the patterns very naive  
 'Green: I studied the artless patterns'  
 (Rimbaud, *Au Cabaret-Vert, Cinq heures du soir*, 1870)

The pause at the line break helps to constitute the line as an autonomous unit.<sup>13</sup> Syntactically, it appears complete, at least provisionally. It is only when reading

<sup>12</sup> In line 1, the poet asks Equivocation what its grammatical genre is, while apostrophizing it with the vocative "Équivoque maudite", using the feminine form of the adjective, "maudite" (cursed). Then, in line 2, he suggests the alternative masculine form of the adjective "Ou maudit?", by justifying in line 3 that both forms are correct.

<sup>13</sup> This does not mean that the line break in itself ensures the unity of the line, which is also ensured by the metrical form of the line, matching with a possible meaning. The pause at the line break gives the instruction to deal with what is otherwise a domain of continuity, which can be proved by at least two facts: 1. sandhi phenomena take place within the line and not from one



line 2 that the reader discovers an afterthought. In (12), line 1 projects an interrogative structure that is completed at the end of the line; line 2 constitutes a kind of external expansion to the vocative “Équivoque maudite”, which thus appears beyond the point of syntactic completion of the interrogative structure.

The same analysis applies to (2): line 5 projects a declarative structure that is completed at the end of the line. Auer (2009: 3) notes that afterthought positions seem to be a feature common to all languages, even strict SOV languages.

The terms *enjambement* and *rejet* are therefore unfortunate because they suppose that:

1. the constituent after the pause was planned at the same time as the upstream string of words;
2. then, a pause is inserted.

This conception suggests that a stanza or a paragraph, or even a sentence, would be conceived from the outset, in a single step, then, during a second step, structured by the insertion of pauses. Such a retrospective structuring is not defended by any research, whether in poetics, or in linguistics, or in psycholinguistics, or in neurolinguistics. Even if this were the case, it would still be necessary to explain why the pause would have a specific function in versified poetry (and which one?), which it would not have in any other type of discourse. Conversely, it is assumed here that it has a structuring function, that it makes a complete syntactic constituent autonomous. Then, the need for an extension was felt after the syntactic constituent was completed, as happens in other types of discourse. In fact, what we have is a reflection of the cognitive process: a first constituent is planned and produced, and then, afterward, an addition is deemed necessary.<sup>14</sup> In reception, the listener relies on prosodic cues – intonational contour, pitch, final vowel lengthening, etc., and the pause

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line to another, 2. each line start coincides with the moment when the reader resets the metrical form of the line. Saying that each line break can be seen as a pause means that the pause signals the line as a stage in the unfolding discourse. Therefore, the pause has a retrospective effect on the line, demarcating it and ensuring its autonomy. Seen in this way, as an instruction to process the line, it is all the more relevant in cases of spectacular enjambments where the line boundary separates, for example, the morphemes of a word. Why should the reader process line 1 first, which ends with such strong suspense, if not because it is the poet's strategy to ensure that line 1 is interpreted before line 2.

<sup>14</sup> The notion of “increment”, crucial for conversational analysis but also adapted to written language, could just as easily be applied to versified poetry. It could account for the conditions of syntactic cohesion and semantic coherence, insofar as they are subject to the principle of metrical equivalence, i.e. line after line (stanza after stanza), and the conditions of the continuation of meaning from one line to the next, either by extension or by other means (for a presentation of the different conceptions of increment, see Auer 2007).

signals that the word string just delivered was delivered as a group. As such, it must therefore be processed as a group, before the next one is produced. For the reader of poetry, the cue is the pause at the line break. As already said, in itself, the pause cannot ensure the unity of the line, which essentially relies on its metrical form.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the line is organized as a metrical unit, and the pause signals that the line is a stage in metrical discourse. For these reasons, the reader or listener is led to interpret the word string with a pause in two stages.<sup>16</sup>

In the second type distinguished in Candea (2000: 174–175), what precedes the pause is syntactically incomplete, as in examples (13) to (16), taken from her corpus, and (17), a constructed example:

- (13) tu vas chez ta grand-mère là: **tu deviendras** /  
*bien gros et bien gras*  
 you go to your grandmother's there: **you will become**  
 very big and very fat  
 'you go to your grandmother's there: you will become very big and very fat'
- (14) et un jour il euh: s'enfonça plus dans les bois et **il trouva**: /  
*un loup*  
 and one day he uh: went deep -er into the woods and he found  
 a wolf  
 'and one day, he went deeper into the woods and he found a wolf'
- (15) est-ce que tu les as fait parler directement **non**:  
**tu les as fait parler** / *sous le style indirect*  
 did you them make speak directly no:  
 you them made speak in style indirect  
 'did you make them speak directly no: you made them speak in indirect style'

<sup>15</sup> Study of enjambment is not of a strictly metrical nature. It must account for the way in which metrical discourse is treated, and the way in which metrical constituents are felt to be more or less natural. On the other hand, the frame of this paper is not suitable for developing detailed metrical analyses. Suffice it to say that, in French metrics, as in many others, the last metrical vowel of the line shows a set of specific properties that make of it the peg or the anchor of the metrical processes of the line.

The issues addressed in DeCastro-Arrazola 2018 where the Strict End Hypothesis is tested in a large typological sample of unrelated verse corpora could be related to the point discussed here, for anyone who considers that metrical regularities are not disconnected from meaning.

<sup>16</sup> The element at the beginning of line 2 in (12) and (2) are not different from what Martin (2018: 147) names "a deferred complement": in French, "complément différé", though Martin claims it impossible to find in written language.

- (16) et là **il faut qu'on** / *sente bien* dans ton récit ces étapes  
 importantes de l' histoire  
 and there must one feel really in your narrative these stages  
 important of the story  
 'and there we have to really feel in your narrative these important stages  
 of the story'

Example (17) refers to someone who died of jealousy:

- (17) **Il était ... VERT!**  
 He was... green!  
 'He was green!'

In these examples, the group closed by the pause sets up an expectation of very specific, and therefore relatively predictable, events: a predicative complement in (13), an object in (14), a verb complement in (15), a verbal group in (16), a predicative complement in (17), all of which are predictable. The aim is to create suspense, to announce the importance of what is to come by delaying it after the pause. The element appears detached so as to be highlighted and brought into focus. The structuring silent pause, in this case, is intentionally used for stylistic purposes.

The Boileau-Chénier corpus presents such examples. Let us consider (18) to (20):

- (18) 178 **Des chantres désormais la brigade timide**  
 of singers from now on the brigade timid  
 'From now on the timid brigade of singers'
- 179 **S'écarte, et du Palais regagne les chemins:**  
 Moves aside, and of the Palace returns to the paths:  
 'Moves aside, and returns to the paths of the Palace:'  
 (Boileau, *Le Lutrin*, Chant V, 1674–1683)
- (19) 5 **Et près des bois marchait, faible, et sur une pierre**  
 And near the woods walked, weak, and on a stone  
 'And near the woods walked, weak, and on a stone'
- 6 **S'asseyait.** Trois pasteurs, enfants de cette terre,  
 Sat down. Three shepherds, children of this land,  
 'Sat down. Three shepherds, children of this land,'  
 (Chénier, *L'Aveugle*, 1790)

- (20) 11 **Des vers tumultueux de sa bouche éloquente**  
 Lines tumultuous from his mouth eloquent  
 ‘Tumultuous lines from his eloquent mouth’
- 12 *Roulent.* Seul avec lui, superbe et satisfait,  
 Roll. Alone with him, superb and satisfied,  
 ‘Roll. Alone with him, superb and satisfied,’  
 (Chénier, *L’Astronomie*, 1790)

The terms *enjambement* and *rejet* are, in type 2 too, unfortunate, although for different reasons. In production:

1. the constituent after the pause was planned at the same time as the upstream string of words;

2. the pause was also planned to detach what follows it.

But in reception, the reader is led to interpret the word string in two stages:

1. what is before the pause raises strong expectations, even specific predictions, 2. what follows the pause, having been delayed, is brought into focus.<sup>17</sup> Whether what follows the pause was unplanned (type 1) or already planned to be delayed (type 2), the pause at the line break is, in both cases, a mark of mental operations that the reader has to go through.

In the meter/syntax (mis)alignment approach, the syntactic constituent straddling a metrical boundary is the primary unit of analysis.<sup>18</sup> The metrical boundary<sup>19</sup> is usually represented by a slash (/) or pipe (|) signaling its position within the syntactic constituent. In other words, the metrical process and its

<sup>17</sup> Tynianov (1977 [1924]: 99–101) provides a clear-cut illustration of the two-stage process, by comparing the prose sequence “the horizon is clad in purple darkness” and the line sequence:

The mountains have disappeared: the horizon is clad

In purple darkness...

He explains that in the prose version, the banal expression “clad in darkness” is interpreted “simultaneously”, i.e. “in one stage”. Whereas in the line version, because of the unity of the line, the connection between subject and predicate is re-established, and the complement, rejected in the next line, is attached to the main terms of the proposition only “successively”, i.e. “in a second stage”.

<sup>18</sup> Therefore, in the context of French metrics, i.e. syllabic metrics, it is not a metrical object in itself. This remark does not necessarily apply as such to other metrical systems. Likewise, any statement in the following development must be interpreted within this framework, unless an extension to other metrical systems or poetic traditions is explicitly mentioned.

<sup>19</sup> In studies of enjambment, the hierarchical level of the metrical boundary is not always taken into account. Conversely, Dell and Benini (2020: 22–29) distinguish the type of metrical boundary in their coding of enjambments, taking into account that a stanza boundary is stronger than a line boundary, which is itself stronger than a hemistich boundary.

end are reduced to an abstract symbol. In no case can the symbol have a retroactive effect on the unit of the line or signal a two-stage process. Therefore, it can neither signal a moment for specific mental operations, nor account for predictive behavior (see section 2). Nor can this conception distinguish between the two types of *rejet*, since what distinguishes them does not depend directly on the degree of cohesion of the syntactic relationship between the two distinct parts of the syntactic constituent. What distinguishes them is a specific strategy in discourse planning. The pause, as a trace of the strategy adopted, signals the stages of discourse progression. This raises the question of the relevance of a purely formal combinatorial approach to enjambment, which considers syntax as the only decisive aspect of discourse organization.

In using oral productions as a basis for comparison, the aim is not to draw any argument from the various occurrences of performance errors, which is why the examples used here do not include hesitation pauses but only structuring pauses. That said, for decades, works on speech<sup>20</sup> have shown that phenomena such as hesitations, pauses, false starts, restarts and repetitions, long considered as ‘performance errors’, in fact, for some, obey morpho-syntactic and prosodic regularities. Since they do not arise randomly, they can shed light on the mental operations involved in the production and reception processes.<sup>21</sup> Finally, they also show that language and its use cannot constitute totally autonomous objects of study, any more than they can be separated from other activities (Auer 2005; Berrendonner 2011) and other mental capacities.<sup>22</sup> This study focuses more on the conditions of grouping and detaching linguistic units, which are primarily ensured by morpho-syntax. Nevertheless, it is less common to mention that rhythm and word order (anacoluthon, hyperbaton, etc.), to name but two, are also factors in the grouping of linguistic units. The irregular, non-metrical, rhythm in conversation, can create continuities and breaks into continuity by means of various prosodic cues (see examples 7–9). As for versified poetry, thanks to its typographic arrangement in lines and groupings of lines, thanks to metrical rhythm, i.e. to the systematic regularities that the reader is invited to perceive/construct, it represents a privileged

<sup>20</sup> For an overview of different approaches to spoken French, see Lefevre, Moline 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Blanche-Benveniste’s conclusion (2003: 168) is clear enough: “Far from having to be excluded from analyses of syntax and lexicon, the phenomena of hesitation and repetition in spoken French provide us, in these areas, with interesting information (would we dare to say that they are of a cognitive nature?), such as the primacy of syntax operations over those of the lexicon and the primacy of the choice of lexical heads over that of adjuncts.” (My translation.)

<sup>22</sup> See Papaxanthis et al. 2002; Kotz, Schwartze 2016 about predictive capacities, section 2.3.

observatory of these phenomena of continuity/discontinuity that contribute to shape units of interpretation.<sup>23</sup>

The approach developed here does not therefore concern “verse delivery”, nor does it imply any phonetic realization. What I call “a pause” has no particular phonetic correspondence and does not imply a halt in reading, even briefly. The verb “Roulent” (Roll) in example (20) is not rhythmically part of the string of words in the preceding line, which is metrically processed as a continuous string. In both production and reception, the verb is detached, delayed and brought into focus at the beginning of line 12. These features are part of the construction (verse instance), not part of the verse delivery. If however, we consider the issue of delivering the lines 11–12, the performer will have to choose among prosodic devices which ones will signal best the particular status of the verb “Roulent” but this question is out of my discussion.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, the phenomena known as enjambment and rejet are not specific to versified poetry, since similar phenomena have also been observed and analyzed in conversation. Conversational analyses as represented by Candea’s analysis of pauses are the point of departure for the present analysis. They focus first on what has been signaled as a unit by the pause, then, on what follows it. They do not pay special attention to the smallest syntactic constituent on either side of the pause, because to do so would be to deny the pause any function. Therefore, it seems that the traditional terminology needs to be revised. Terms such as enjambment, rejet and mismatch refer to an ill-defined approach to the phenomena under scrutiny.

As for the *contre-rejet*, again, the terminology is highly deceptive since its very name makes it a mirror image of the *rejet*. Let us look at figure 1 and figure 2:

<sup>23</sup> This approach follows Jakobson’s statement (1960: 356): “This function [the poetic function] cannot be productively studied out of touch with the general problems of language, and, on the other hand, the scrutiny of language requires a thorough consideration of its poetic function. Any attempt to reduce the sphere of the poetic function to poetry or to confine poetry to the poetic function would be a delusive oversimplification.”

<sup>24</sup> For a different approach, see Tsur 2012 who analyzes phonetic realizations of enjambment, as reflecting mental operations across performance.



Figure 1: contre-rejet. In the first line, the gray rectangle represents the contre-rejet. The closing square bracket signifies the end of a syntactic structure, the opening one, the beginning of a new syntactic structure that develops until the end of line 2. The slash is for the caesura.



Figure 2: rejet. In the first line, the opening square bracket signifies the beginning of a syntactic structure whose end is marked by the closing square bracket line 2. The rejet is represented by the gray rectangle. The opening square bracket line 2 signifies the beginning of a new syntactic structure. The slash is for the caesura.

Such a visual representation seems to support this conception. A more temporal approach to discourse, however, shows that this view is less well grounded. Compare B's reply in the constructed examples (21) and (22):

- (21) A Marie could have at least told John.  
B (She told him) (but the idiot wouldn't listen)

- (22) A Marie could have at least told John.  
B (She told him but the idiot) (wouldn't listen)

In (21), each of B's syntactic structures – "She told him" and "but the idiot wouldn't listen" – corresponds to a prosodic constituent, which corresponds to a speech act: B sweeps aside the reproach addressed to Marie and defends her, then blames John.

In (22b), the pause after 'the idiot' makes this constituent, which is syntactically detached from what precedes it, and prosodically from what follows it, appear as if it came too soon, as an anticipation of the blame directed at John, which might convey B's emotional outburst.

Here again, poetic examples of this phenomenon exist. Boileau, an exemplary representative of concordance, allows himself a few 'mismatches' in *Le Lutrin*, a comic poem that tells the story of villagers who want to play a trick on the priest. They decided to select randomly who would remove the lectern from the church at night:

- (23) 211 Il tourne le bonnet; l' enfant tire; **et Brontin**  
 He turns the bonnet; the child pulls; and Brontin  
 'He turns the bonnet; the child pulls; and Brontin'  
 212 *Est le premier des noms qu' apporte le destin.*  
 Is the first of the names that brings destiny.  
 'Is the first of the names that destiny brings.'  
 (Boileau, *Le Lutrin*, Chant I, 1674–1683)

The anticipation of the proper name *Brontin* on what follows mimics the discovery of the name drawn from the bonnet by the person who reads it and the surprise caused by the event in the assembly. This “phase shift” recreates the event for the reader.

To sum up this first section, the pause retroactively constitutes the word string that precedes it as an autonomous unit and reflects a moment of cognitive activity. This function justifies a two-stage analysis in conversation. In versified poetry, the two-stage analysis, based on a linguistic analysis of the pause, has made it possible to distinguish two types of *rejet*. An analysis based on the syntactic constituent straddling the line break cannot distinguish the two types of *rejet* and cannot account for the cognitive activities of which the pause at the line end is the trace.

Candea's analysis was driven by the natural perception of speech flow. The next section will be devoted to the search for a general linguistic foundation for the step-by-step process of any discourse, and of versified discourse in particular.

## 2. A temporal and dynamic approach

### 2.1 The temporality of any discourse

Temporality in music is fully acknowledged,<sup>25</sup> but is still rarely taken into account in linguistics. Too focused on written language, utterances or sentences are generally treated as finished products, not as unfolding through time processes.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, spoken language analysis is often performed on transcriptions which, once printed on a page, tend to be treated as writing.

<sup>25</sup> Large, Kolen 1998 address questions of temporal structure in music, but the results presented can also be applied to the processing of other complex, time-structured sequences.

<sup>26</sup> Humboldt's distinction between *ergon* and *energeia* could shed light on the distinction made here between finished product and processes in time.



Halliday's distinction (1985: xxiii), which seemed opportune at the time, seems too clear-cut today: "writing exists whereas speech happens". A written poem can be seen as a speech addressed by a poet to a reader who will mentally process it on the basis of the written traces of this speech.

All too often, grammars (whether normative, structuralist or generative) treat sentences as finished objects, and therefore seem ill-suited to speech and especially to rhythm. The linguist observes the written finished sentence and can therefore only describe the overall result of its syntactic structure and meaning,<sup>27</sup> but cannot explain the operations by which this result was constructed, nor the operations by which this result is re-constructed in the mind of the listener/reader.

A temporal approach implies seeing syntax as a set of rules enabling one to produce, not finished objects like the sentence, but syntactic projections that are distributed over time, i.e. that emerge, develop and then come to an end.<sup>28</sup> The temporal approach defended here consists in seeing the unfolding of discourse as "an alternation of flights and perchings" (James 1890: 1:243) or "une alternance de marches et d'arrêts" (Cornulier, p.c.; my translation: an alternation of steps and stops), or as a succession of "brief spurts of language" (Chafe 1994: 29).<sup>29</sup> The idea is that speech is an activity distributed over time, progressing in brief bursts of speech characterized as intonation units by Chafe (1994) or as perceptual chunks by Sinclair and Mauranen (2006).

In line with Brazil (1995), Sinclair and Mauranen (2006), developing a Linear Unit Grammar (LUG), also distinguish *provisional units*, which can be extended but do not raise any particular expectation, from *completed units*, defined as follows: a unit is complete when what follows it is incompatible with that unit, that is, when what follows it cannot be integrated into that unit to form a higher-ranking unit.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See Auer 2007: 4: "The most blatant examples are word pairs such as "left/right dislocation", "left/right adjoined", "left/right headed", "left/right brace" etc., in which the two-dimensionality of the linguist's piece of paper is the name-giving component."

<sup>28</sup> This is why the study of drafts is of great interest. It reveals the different stages in the construction of a discourse.

<sup>29</sup> This approach is developed in particular in Linell 1982; Chafe 1994; Brazil 1995; Auer et al. 1999; Candea 2000; Blanche-Benveniste 2003; O'Grady 2010; Blanche-Benveniste, Martin 2011; Martin 2009, 2018; Sinclair, Mauranen 2006; Mauranen 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Here is an excerpt from Mauranen 2016: 84:

*but er actually i know erm it's common as a saying in Poland that you er **men should have a son er build** a house and plant a tree yeah yeah we got the same thing to be a real man yeah do you have this sort of yes expressions i've never heard anything like that# (excerpt from ELFA).*

Similarly, Auer (1996) showed that developing syntactic gestalts offer several potential points of completion, which are moments of cognitive activities. Finally, within the framework of generative grammar, phase theory (Chomsky 2000, 2001) is an attempt to see some syntactic forms as units of interpretation before the total completion of the sentence. Concatenation and interpretation are conceived as intertwined. There are therefore complete, but also incomplete, morpho-syntactic groupings that may correspond to units of interpretation. These conditions reinforce the validity of the distinction between type-1 enjambment and type-2 enjambment.

This temporal approach is also dynamic. At each potential point of completion, listeners and readers use anticipatory strategies (What comes next?), i.e. they make prosodic, syntactic, semantic predictions, which may or may not subsequently prove to be fulfilled, and which give rise to continual readjustments.

It is sometimes objected that this dynamic process is marginal, peculiar to garden-paths such as (24) or stutter impersonations such as (25):

- (24) I saw a girl with one leg  
       over the rail of a balcony.  
       (William Carlos Williams, *Spring and all*)

- (25) She saw the as- the as- the astonished vicar.

In reality, this is not the case at all. These productions are designed to deceive. The poet/speaker first 1. directs the listener/reader towards specific expectations (the poor one-legged girl and somebody's ass); and then 2. deliberately disappoints those expectations. But to achieve this goal, the thought has to be produced into two stages. The pauses at the end of line (24) and after the syllables "as-" in (25) are essential, as they signal a moment for interpretation. A static approach to syntax, involving exhaustive constituents, leads to interpreting "one leg over the rail" and destroying the expected effect by suppressing the activity of anticipating what is to follow the pause.

In fact, this dynamic is not a recent discovery, as we find it in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, when he defines the periodic style by opposing it to the continuous style:

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The listener, processing the speech as it unfolds, accepts "a son" as a possible following to "men should have", as the verb requires an object complement. The complement is, then, provisionally complete but may or may not yet be developed. When "build" appears, any expectation of a possible extension of "a son" is abandoned, as the integration of "build" with what precedes is not possible: \*a son build.

By a continuous style I mean that which has *no end in itself* and only stops when the sense is complete. It is unpleasant, because it is *endless*, for all wish to have *the end in sight*. [...] The other style consists of periods, and by period I mean a sentence that has *a beginning and end in itself* and *a magnitude that can be easily grasped*.

What is written in this style is pleasant and easy to learn, pleasant because it is *the opposite of that which is unlimited*, because the hearer *at every moment thinks he is securing something for himself* and that *some conclusion has been reached*; whereas it is unpleasant neither to foresee nor to *get to the end of anything*. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.9.2–3)

The italicized passages define the period as complete: it has a beginning, and above all, an end in itself; it has a precise meaning and makes it possible to predict what is to come. This is precisely what the pause is designed to signal.

Based on dynamic grammars, this section has established that syntactic projections are distributed in time, implying a distinction between provisional and complete units. The pause signals the sequence that precedes it as a strategic stage in discourse planning, the moment to adjust projections and their realizations. The following section will answer the question: are some poetic and metrical studies aware of these issues?

## 2.2. The temporality of versified poetry

A temporal and dynamic approach is defended in metrics (Attridge 1982, 1995; Cornulier 1995, 2000, 2003, 2012, in particular;<sup>31</sup> Golomb 1979; Jakobson 1960;<sup>32</sup> McCully et al. 1996; Paterson 2018; Tsur, 2012), in poetics (Bakker 1997; Tynianov 1977 [1924]), and in certain French versification treatises (Du Gardin 1620; Richelet 1972 [1672]; Mourgues 1724; Batteux 1810; La Grasserie 1900).

<sup>31</sup> More broadly, all Cornulier's works are based on this approach, though not developed and not always demonstrated. There is no doubt that they have deeply nourished the present study.

<sup>32</sup> A dynamic process had yet been seen in Jakobson (1960: 362–363), at least as far as metrics is concerned: "Since the overwhelming majority of downbeats concur with word stresses, the listener or reader of Russian verses *is prepared with a high degree of probability* to meet a word stress in any even syllable of iambic lines, but at the very beginning of Pasternak's quatrain the fourth and, one foot further, the sixth syllable, both in the first and in the following line, present him with *a frustrated expectation*. The degree of such a "frustration" is higher when the stress is lacking in a strong downbeat and becomes particularly outstanding when two successive downbeats carry unstressed syllables." (The first italics are mine)

Du Gardin (1620: 77) was clearly aware that rhythmical discourse unfolds over time. He calls for the groups of words making up single lines or hemistiches to have “un petit sens et construction à part soy” (my translation: a little meaning and construction of their own), implying that the metrical unit is also a unit of interpretation, as what is to follow is not yet known.

Richelet (1972 [1672]: 95) developed the same idea: “On doit autant qu’on le peut détacher les Vers les uns des autres, & les tourner de telle façon, qu’ils aient chacun leur sens parfait”,<sup>33</sup> i.e. each with its own complete meaning, which does not rule out possible later extensions. In the line sequence

- (2) 5 **Bienheureux, j’ allongeai      les jambes sous la table**  
       Happy        I stretched out   my legs        under the table  
       ‘Happy, I stretched out my legs under the table’  
   6 **Vert: je contemplai les sujets    très naïfs**  
       Green: I    studied        the patterns very naïve  
       ‘Green: I studied the artless patterns’  
       (Rimbaud, *Au Cabaret-Vert, Cinq heures du soir*, 1870)

line 5 complies with these recommendations, since it is a construction in its own right, with a complete meaning, whereas the beginning of line 6 is strongly divergent. As a result, the syntactic relationship at the line break cannot alone account for the different types of rhythm/meaning relationships. Let’s compare (2) with (26):

- (26) 5 **Bienheureux, j’ allongeai      les jambes sous la table**  
       Happy,        I stretched out   my legs        under the table  
       ‘Happy, I stretched out my legs under the table’  
   6 **Vert   amande avec pois   cerclés d’    un trait foncé.**  
       Green   almond with dots   circled with a   line dark  
       ‘Almond green with dots circled with a dark line.’

(26) keeps the same syntactic relationship at the line break but line 6, constructed, develops the adjectival phrase until the end of the line. Despite the fact that after “Vert amande” (almond green) the reader has reached a point of potential completion, nothing indicates that the adjective phrase is achieved, which the colon does in (2). Under these conditions, line 6 has a little meaning

<sup>33</sup> My translation: As much as possible, lines of verse should be detached from one another, and turned in such a way that each has its own perfect meaning. “perfect” at that time should be understood as meaning “complete”.

and a construction of its own in Du Gardin's sense, and a perfect meaning in Richelet's sense. What these authors recommend, then, is a requirement for the line to show unity or integrity. While there is arguably a banal enjambment in (26), there is very little to say about it because the unity of the line has been preserved. The same idea can be found in Mourgues (1724: 171): "C'est un enjambement vicieux dans la poésie française que de pousser le sens qu'on aura commencé dans un vers jusque dans le vers suivant et de reprendre là quelque sens nouveau avant la fin du vers."<sup>34</sup>

Defective enjambment is characterized by two successive processes over time (*italics are my own*), as argued here:

1. *Expending the meaning begun in one line through into the next*

In itself, this is a fairly frequent and therefore commonplace process. Example (26) proves the point. And, statistically, few lines coincide with a sentence.<sup>35</sup> In other words, an already computed meaning can always, in a second stage, be extended.

2. *Starting some new meaning before the end of the line*

This second condition calls for several comments:

1. The line must be consistent not with syntax but with meaning.

2. The sequence of words in the line may thus correspond to a complete or incomplete grammatical constituent. If incomplete, its end must coincide with a point of potential completion of the syntactic gestalt. If not, it produces a case of defective enjambment.

3. What determines the defective character of enjambment is therefore the lack of integrity or unity of the line.

4. The unity of the line is ensured by the regular rhythm and its end by the pause at the line break, which retroactively constitutes it as a unit of interpretation.

5. Therefore, concordance is more about the possible ways to associate rhythmical units with meaning(s). If so, concordance can no longer be seen as a kind of more or less arbitrary convention that poets are thought to have set for themselves. Nor can it be seen as the avoidance of some syntactic relationships at the line break. The matching we are scrutinizing is common to every discourse genre, with rhythmical particularities in versified poetry.

<sup>34</sup> "It is a defective enjambment in French poetry to continue a meaning starting in one line into the next and then to start some new meaning before the end of the line."

<sup>35</sup> For information, see D. Godfroy's Master's dissertation 2013. In a corpus of 6773 alexandrines 6-6 by Verlaine, 248 lines are also sentences, i.e. 3.66%.

Golomb's seminal thesis on enjambment (1979) focuses above all on "the temporal perception of syntax" (132), which elicits in the reader the anticipation of a continuation or pause, which may or may not be confirmed later. He describes this dynamic by also distinguishing:

1) enjambments predictable at the end of line 1 ("*prospective*");  
 2) unexpected enjambments, discovered only at the beginning of line 2 ("*retrospective*"). Golomb's distinction between prospective and retrospective enjambment implies a pause in the process between two lines, i.e. a two-stage process:

- if an enjambment is predictable at the end of line 1, this implies that the reader has perceived the incompleteness of the morpho-syntactic sequence of line 1, while still not knowing what follows. The very perception of this incompleteness implies that line 1 has been processed. Subsequently, line 2 will confirm or refute this prediction;
- if an enjambment is not predictable at the end of line 1, this also implies that line 1 has been processed without knowing what follows. Conceiving line 1 as a complete morpho-syntactic structure, at least provisionally, is to have processed line 1, before processing line 2. Then, line 2 will confirm or refute this prediction of completeness.<sup>36</sup>

The step-by-step building of discourse means more than an unfolding through time. It implies that, in versified poetry, at each end of a metrical unit (line, stanza module, stanza, poem), the reader's activity consists in establishing an assessment between projections and realization of projections.

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<sup>36</sup> Golomb (1979: 126) builds on Tynianov's method of analysis. It consists in assessing, at each point between two words, predictions that can be made in any discourse. Applied to versified poetry, the assessment at the end of the line of course becomes crucial: "It follows that in describing or delimiting any type of syntactic anticipation one has to adhere to the strictest prospective procedures, and not be deluded by the temptations of hindsight. At any given point of assessment in a verbal utterance one has to ask such questions as: What do I know so far, syntactically? Can I, on the basis of this knowledge, predict one syntactic category and rule out another as the next word (or one of the next words)? Can I, on the basis of that knowledge, predict not only what syntactic category should appear at some near point (paradigmatic predictability), but also when it should appear (syntagmatic predictability)?"

Thus, the "dynamic" or "linear" grammars developed from Brazil's work in the UK had, at least, one antecedent in Tynianov's work. Though probably unknown to them, the similarity of the step-by-step analyses is absolutely striking.

### 2.3. Temporality in psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics

Recent psycholinguistic studies shed new light on the reading process, implying predictions. Järvillehto et al. (2009) challenge the view of reading as a linear process dominated by information processing theories. These theories assume that word recognition occurs only after the presentation of a stimulus or the fixation of a textual element. Using the Fixation-Speech Interval (FSI) measure, they demonstrate that the reading process is anticipatory in nature, depending on the integration of sensory and motor processes in a process of anticipation and meaning generation. Similarly, McDonald, Shillock (2003: 651) assert that “the remarkable efficiency of reading is due, at least in part, to the on-line formation of predictions about words to come. The statistical properties of the linguistic environment provide a viable source for these predictions”.

Koops van't Jagt et al. (2011) compared eye movements while reading passages of prose vs poetry, then prose vs two lines with and without enjambment, and finally prose vs two lines with prospective enjambments, i.e. predictable at the end of line 1 and with retrospective enjambment, i.e. unpredictable at the end of line 1, following Golomb's distinction. Their examination focused on the duration of fixations on the last two words of line 1 and the first two words of line 2, as well as on the number of regressions on what precedes. The approach developed here leads to predicting, as did the authors, that with retrospective enjambment, the last two words of line 1 should be treated as those of a line without enjambment, since enjambment is not predictable at the end of line 1. And this is exactly what happened. In lines without enjambment, as well as in lines with unpredictable enjambment at the end of line 1, the last two words of line 1 were subject to longer fixations and the number of regressions on what preceded was high, two phenomena absent in reading the same text with a prose layout.

On the other hand, the authors made a second prediction which, interestingly enough, did not turn out to be correct: they should have observed a greater number of regressions from the first two words of line 2. The fact that this was not the case shows that retrospective enjambment does not necessarily imply a look back, i.e., the interpretation made at the end of line 1 is not necessarily always revised.<sup>37</sup> These results suggest that the reader, as the discourse unfolds, may also give up some hypotheses and will try to find a solution in what follows in line 2 (for an example, see section 3 below).

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<sup>37</sup> It goes without saying that this experiment only concerns how enjambment is processed when reading written lines, as well as some aspects of the issues that are discussed here, which leaves aside, for example, how enjambments are processed when heard on stage. Cognitive operations may differ depending on the type of reception.

In neurosciences, the work on movement by Berthoz,<sup>38</sup> and Pozzo,<sup>39</sup> make the same assumptions. They do not support the idea that stimulation coming from the outside world affects the body which, in its turn, transmits signals to the brain, which then begins its computation. Conversely, they show that perception is closely linked to action, and that most of our perceptions are expected or predicted.

Neurolinguistic studies on temporality have been conducted first in music. For a decade, they have been exploring rhythmical speech. One cannot help but be struck by the fundamental role given to the step-by-step processing, predictions, and the effects of anticipations (What comes next? When?) on the cognitive benefits of rhythm.

Kotz, Schwartze (2016) consider the temporal and essentially rhythmical nature of speech as more or less trivial, if only understood as “processing in time”. More specifically, the temporal structure of speech represents a valuable source of information in its own right and it is primarily used to optimize predictive timing of behavior. Temporal processing of speech is built on mechanisms that are essentially not speech-specific, a universal mechanism most likely serving the goal of “optimizing predictive behavior.” (722).

Falk et al. (2016, 2017a and 2017b) recalls that 1. metrical periodicity produces the emergence of hierarchical predictable temporal structures in the reader; 2. neuronal oscillatory activity phase-locks to this rhythmical periodicity at hierarchically nested frequencies. Tested assumptions show that in metrical speech, information is better processed and remembered, particularly when it occurs on stressed syllables. These results support the conclusion that auditory-driven temporal expectations in speech may contribute to enhancing the perceptual salience of prominent syllables and, thus, facilitate verbal processing at these times. They also suggest that advantages from the synchronization between motor and verbal activities might be driven by overlapping temporal expectancies.

At last, Ravignani et al. (2019) also established that the temporal dynamics of metrical speech induce expectations about upcoming events. The explanation they propose is now widely shared: the substrate of this mechanism lies in the quasi-rhythmical properties of the speech signal that engage oscillatory behavior in the brain. They explain: “Speech patterns are thus capable of driving dynamic attending, underpinned by neurocognitive self-sustained oscillations, which phase-lock to the temporal dynamics of syllabic nuclei in speech.”

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<sup>38</sup> See Berthoz 1997 in particular.

<sup>39</sup> See Papaxanthis et al. 2002.



Applied to French metrics, this work argues that the last metrical vowel of the line, as the anchor vowel of the metrical process, is a temporal event anticipated by the reader, and that this predictive dynamic is reset at the beginning of each line. The question remains why the discourse that unfolds through time could not be deeply shaped by such metrical regularities? One possible explanation is that the line is a phase in the process.

In this regard, enjambment, rejet and contre-rejet, as phenomena that create tensions between different dynamics, can shed light not only on versified poetry, but also on more general discursive mechanisms.

### 3. Illustrating the dynamics at work

This section is designed to briefly illustrate these dynamics on lines 5 and 6 of *Au Cabaret-Vert* by Rimbaud:<sup>40</sup>

(27) **Au Cabaret-Vert**

*Cinq heures du soir*

- 1 Depuis huit jours, j'avais déchiré mes bottines
- 2 Aux cailloux des chemins. J'entrais à Charleroi.
- 3 – *Au Cabaret-Vert*: je demandai des tartines
- 4 De beurre et du jambon qui fût à moitié froid.
  
- 5 **Bienheureux, j'allongeai les jambes sous la table**
- 6 *Verte*: je contemplai les sujets très naïfs
- 7 De la tapisserie. – Et ce fut adorable,
- 8 Quand la fille aux tétons énormes, aux yeux vifs, (...)

(Rimbaud)

<sup>40</sup> Although it is not part of my corpus, this sonnet was chosen for three reasons. First of all, it offers a relatively simple understanding, at least on first reading, which avoids entering into long poetic, historical and intertextual considerations that the framework of this paper does not allow. Secondly, the rejet I chose to study could not go unnoticed. Although contemporary readers of Rimbaud may be familiar with Chénier's rather spectacular rejets, Hugo's multiplication and combination of rejets, contre-rejets and enjambments, the fact is that the metrical awareness of the equality of the 6-6 lines triggers an immediate perception of this rejet. Finally, an unexpected rejet at the end of line 1 better meets the objective of illustrating a temporal and dynamic approach.

### At the Green-Inn

#### *Five in the Evening*

For a whole week I had ripped up my boots  
 On the stones of the roads. I was entering Charleroi;  
 – *At the Green-Inn*: I asked for some slices  
 Of bread and butter, and some half-cooled ham.

Happy, I stretched out my legs under the table  
 Green: I studied the artless patterns  
 Of the wallpaper – and it was charming when the girl  
 With the huge breasts and lively eyes,

Adaptation from Oliver Bernard's translation: Arthur Rimbaud,  
*Collected Poems* (1962)

Some arguments can be made for the hypothesis that the sequence of words “Bienheureux, j'allongeai les jambes sous la table verte” (Happy, I stretched out my legs under the green table) was not conceived in one go or in a single stage. Line 5 constitutes the first unit of interpretation. Its rhythmical forms (meter, rhyme and ending) do not include the adjective “Verte”. The beginning of line 6 brings up an unpredictable scenario. The adjective, though syntactically linked to what precedes, lies outside the domain that enabled the phonological, metrical and semantic-pragmatic operations that took place at the end of line 5.

Drawing on the very interesting analysis of line 3 in Cornulier (2009: 405–406),<sup>41</sup> and noticing the line-initial position of both “Au Cabaret-Vert” (At the Green-Inn) and “Verte” (Green), it might be the case that the metrical detachment of “Verte” invite the reader to interpret the adjective as an exclamatory statement in its own right. The tired walker first orders food and drink, then relaxes, and suddenly notices the color of the table: Verte! Visual perception

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<sup>41</sup> Despite the fact that this kind of interpretation is fragile by nature, it becomes more solid when based on structural features. B. de Cornulier noticed a syntactic singularity: the verb aspect of “j'avais déchiré” (line 1, ‘I had ripped up my boots’) and “j'entrais” (line 2, ‘I was entering’) show the walk in its unfolding, not yet finished. Then, the simple past tense “demandai” (line 3, ‘I asked for’) describes an action that implies that the walk must have stopped. Between the walk and the order, what happened is suggested by the mention of the name of the Inn, “Au Cabaret-Vert” (‘At the Green-Inn’). Syntactically detached from what precedes by an em dash and from what follows by a colon, the phrase cannot be a locative complement. What is suggested is that the walker, while walking, saw the sign “Au Cabaret-Vert”. Seeing it meant instantly stopping the walk, dashing inside the Inn, sitting and ordering food and drinks.

leads to a mental operation: something like “Verte! Comme dans *Au Cabaret-Vert!*” (Green! Just like in “At the Green-Inn”). This process, un verbalized but built through rhythm, gives the reader access to the walker’s perceptions and consciousness. It goes without saying that this process does not invalidate the morpho-syntactic link between ‘la table’ (the table) and ‘Verte’ (Green), as the feminine form of the adjective shows it. The idea to be developed further is that the reader has to deal with a morpho-syntactic development totally determined by metrical regularities and that a metrical pause can indicate two autonomous communicative actions, two different “enunciative strokes”, before and after the pause.

Despite the difficulty of demonstrating the two-step hypothesis, it is at least possible to show that the one-step hypothesis, based on the statement “Bienheureux, j’allongeai les jambes sous la table verte” (Blessed, I stretched out my legs under the green table), is weaker. Firstly, it does not take into account the line as a metrical unit. Secondly, it does not take into account the pause as a strategy in planning. Thirdly, it does not take into account the line-initial position of both “Au Cabaret-Vert” (At the Green-Inn) and “Verte” (Green). Finally, it makes it possible to ask: “Would your happiness have been different if you had stretched out your legs under a table of a different color?”, which calls into question the pragmatic relevance of the color adjective in this statement. The very fact that this question is possible underlines the fact that the reader cannot understand the communicative intention attached to such a statement. Conversely, the two-step hypothesis suggests two different enunciations.

As suggested at the end of section 2.2., instead of revising the interpretation already made at the end of the previous line, it may happen that the interpretation of the *rejet* is somehow compatible with what follows in its line, providing a certain semantic coherence. Here, the walker takes a more careful look at the room, which appears as a natural development after the unexpected perception of the color of the table. His attention is first abruptly drawn, before being turned into a closer examination. To my knowledge, these questions have not yet been studied: does unexpected *rejet* always require a revision of what has already been interpreted? Is the *rejet* integrated into the line to which it belongs by means of semantic, thematic, discursive relationships?

## 4. Conclusion

Enjambment, rejet and contre-rejet appear as crucial phenomena, highlighting the way discourse is dynamically processed over time.

Metrical units, and in particular the line, are signaled by the end break pause as provisional process units. As part of a planning strategy, it signals to the reader the point at which he or she should proceed with processing. This step-by-step process makes it possible to distinguish rejet and contre-rejet, as well as predictable and unpredictable rejet at the end of lines.

The temporal distribution of morpho-syntactic and metrical structures, the expectations they induce and their subsequent realization or not, are therefore part of the interpretative process, which cannot be reduced to objective properties of the text.

Observations of the corpus must be carried on. So far, they show that some rejets follow from the need for an additional afterthought, others from the need to delay a notion, then to bring it under focus. Some contre-rejets follow from a need to anticipate an event.

Clearly, within this framework, the constraints on the interface between metrics, phonology and morpho-syntax remain to be defined. How do a metrically relevant vowel sequence, sandhi phenomena within a line but not from line to line, the pause at the line break and morpho-syntactic development work together in the reader's mind?<sup>42</sup>

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