Rhythmical-Syntactic Formulas among Enjambements in Russian Narrative Poems

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Abstract

The term “rhythmical-syntactic formulas”, introduced by M.L. Gasparov, refers to different lines by one or more authors where rhythmical structure, syntactic structure and one or more words fully coincide. We believe that this term is useful for describing certain types of enjambement. This article deals with enjambement formulas that contain identical final words of a line (in some cases with the addition of a preceding link word or a preceding notional word not connected with it syntactically). The enjambement formula in this case contains an important feature: its very quality of enjambement, when a syntactic complex runs on from one line into another, crossing the end of a line.

The repertoire of formulas, their frequency and their structure are described against the background of data on all enjambements of a particular period, author or poem.

The material studied is iambic tetrameter narrative verse of the 19th–20th centuries—from V. Zhukovsky to A. Tvardovsky. The texts are divided into six groups (a total of 48 long poems, containing 43,584 lines).

The frequency of enjambement formulas has been calculated as a percentage of all enjambements. Their structure was analyzed using our methods for examining enjambement: 1) by the type of enjambement (contre-rejet, double-rejet); 2) by the type of ending in the initial line; 3) by the type of word boundary after the formula in the subsequent line; 4) by how many words there are between the syntactically connected words of the initial and subsequent lines; 5) by the type of syntactic tie crossing the end of a line (and the frequency of such syntactic ties for a poem, author or period); 6) by whether and how the initial line participates in a rhyme.

The analysis of syntactic ties is based on the hierarchy of syntactic ties developed by M.L. Gasparov and T.V. Skulacheva.
1 Introduction

The term “rhythmic-syntactic formulas” in the title of the paper has been suggested by M.L. Gasparov (Gasparov 2012). He worked out a classification of constructions with similar rhythm and syntax (rhythmical-syntactic clichés) repeated in texts by the same or different authors. Among such constructions Gasparov singled out a special group of “rhythmical-syntactic formulas”—that is, constructions where similar rhythm and syntax is accompanied by one or more completely identical words (Gasparov 2012: 274, 294). We found that this notion can also be useful when describing some types of enjambement (enjambement with similar rhythm, syntax and lexical coincidences), and we have used it for analyzing a relatively large number of enjambments.

Vsem zheniham otkaz – i vot
Za ney sam Getman svatov shlet
Tak mntit uzh devitsa, i vot
S odra tihhon’ko vstaet

Letim, Moskva letit – i vot
K znakonym devkam priskakali
Ya vyshel iz lesu. I vot
Prosinulsya den’, i horovod
Svetil napuststvennyh ischez…

<...> i vot –
(Son ili yav’): chudesnyy flot <...

Dver’ otvorilas’; pered nim
Yavllya voin neizvestnyy,

Ochnulsya russkiy. Pered nim,
S privetom nezhnym i nemym
Stoit cherkeshenka mladaya.

<...> i pered nim
Uchastiem ispolnennyy zhivym,
Stoyal cherkes, soratnika lishennyy;

On vhodit, smotrit – pered nim
Poslannik raya, heruvim,
Hranitel’ greshnitsy prekrasnoy,
Stoit s blistayuschim chelom <...>

Polyubite vy snova: no...
Uchites’ vlastgovat’ soboyu

Sidit i sam ispravnik – no
Ob nem uzh ya skazal davno...

Ee, sebya terzal ya... no –
Mne bylo stydno i smeshno

Pushkin “Poltava”
Baratynsky “Eda”
Polezhaev “Sashka”
Lermontov “Mtsyri”
Blok “Vozmezdie”
Pushkin “Ruslan i Lyudmila”
Pushkin “Kavkazskiy plennik”
Lermontov “Ismail-Bey”
Lermontov “Demon”
Pushkin “Evgeniy Onegin”
Lermontov “Tambovskaya kaznacheysha”
Turgenev “Razgovor”
Kurilsya rosnny ladan... No –
On klal drugoy rukoy kostlyavoy
Zhivye dushi pod sukno.
Blok “Vozmezdie”

As one can observe in the above examples, we consider the precise repetition of the final word of a line (sometimes with the addition of a preceding link word or notion word not connected with the final word syntactically) as the most important parameter. Rhythmical-syntactic similarity is provided by the very fact of enjambement in a similar meter and the fact that there is a syntactic tie reaching from the initial line into the subsequent one. The enjambements of the type shown above can be called “enjambement formulas”. Further we will label such enjambements by one or two characteristic words (“i vot”, “pered nim”, “no” and so on). A word immediately before enjambement is underlined; a word in the next line, with which it is syntactically connected, is printed in italics.

2 Enjambement formulas

In this article data on enjambement formulas are compared with the data on all enjambements (of a particular poem, author or period). The main issues in the use of enjambement formulas are as follows:

1. What is the repertoire of enjambement formulas and does it change chronologically?
2. How does the frequency of enjambement in general influence the frequency of enjambement formulas?
3. Does the structure of enjambement formulas change, and if so, do the tendencies of this change coincide with the changes in enjambement in general?
4. Does the number of formulas correlate with the general aesthetic quality of a poem as it has been generally regarded in the history of literature?
5. By which structural devices can enjambement formulas be modified?
6. What are the reasons for the use of enjambement formulas?

To answer these questions we found it most sensible to analyze enjambement formulas using the same corpus that we previously employed to study enjambement in general (Matyash 2017: 35–65, 95–119), with the addition of four other poems. These works are narrative (longer) poems from the 19th–20th centuries written in iambic tetrameter. Six groups of texts were studied: 1) Shil’onskiy uznik” (1821–1822) by V. Zhukovsky; 2) the novel in verse “Evgenyi Onegin” and 11 longer poems by Pushkin: “Ruslan i Lyudmila” (1817–1820); “Kavkazskiy plennik” (1820–1821), “Brat’ya-razboyniki” (1821–1822), “Vadim” (1821–1822); “Bakhchisarayskiy fontan” (1821–1823), “Tsygany” (1824), “Graf Nulin” (1825), “Poltava” (1828–1829), “Tazit” (1829–1830); “Ezerskiy” (1832), and “Mednyi vsadnik” (1833); 3) 9 narrative poems from Pushkin’s era: “Voynarovskiy” (1824–1825) by K. Ryleev; “Chernets” (1824–1825) by I. Kozlov; “Eda” (1824–1825), “Bal” (1825–1828) and “Tsyganka” (1829–1831, 1842) by

Thus, 48 narrative (longer) poems (containing 43,584 lines) have been analyzed.

To clarify certain points in our study (the genesis of formulas, the role of rhyme in the occurrence of enjambement formulas, etc.) older texts belonging to well-developed genres of Russian poetry were also investigated: fables from the 18th—first half of the 19th century, Zhukovsky’s ballads from the first two periods (1808–1822), as well as the narrative poem “Domik v Kolomne” and the play “Boris Godunov” by Pushkin.

Calculations take into account an author’s self-repetitions in the same poem (when repeated two or more times) and in other poems (by the same author or another) if they are written at the same time or earlier than the poem being studied. Repetitions of names in enjambement (Evgeniy in Pushkin, Zoraim in Lermontov’s “Angel smerti”) were not included in the calculations.

Let’s start by concisely describing the repertoire and frequency of enjambement formulas in the six groups of texts. We will: 1) calculate the number of formulas; 2) show those that occur not less than thrice from the most frequent to the less frequent ones; 3) show the percentage of enjambement formulas among all enjambements in a particular group.

In the first group—“Shil’onsky uznik” by Zhukovsky—there are no enjambement formulas. There is only one enjambement, i one..., which will be later intensively used by other poets. Enjambement formulas in Russian longer narrative poems start with the second group (Pushkin’s), beginning with “Ruslan i Lyudmila” and then appearing frequently in all 11 poems and “Evgeniy Onegin”. In Pushkin’s iambic tetrameter longer poems there are 22 formulas. Those occurring frequently are ona, on, vot, nakonets, vdrug, poroy, ty, tam. It is possible that some of the formulas were suggested to Pushkin by the texts of fables (ona, potom, nakonets) and by Zhukovsky’s ballads (potom, nakonets, vdrug). Among Zhukovsky’s enjambements there is a very noticeable enjambement from “Zamok Smal’gol’m” (“I syuda s vysoty ne soshel by... no ty / Zaklinala Ivanovym dnem...”), which was repeated by Pushkin in “Evgeniy Onegin”: “Zabudet mir menya; no ty / Pridesh’ li, deva krasoty...”). The enjambement formula with no is not found in Russian poetry before Pushkin.
The frequency of enjambement formulas in Pushkin’s poems is 10.1% in narrative poems and 9.2% in “Onegin”. Comparative data for “Domik v Kolomne” and “Boris Godunov” show that in the rhymed iambic pentameter of “Domik v Kolomne” results are close to those mentioned above, while in the blank iambic pentameter verse of “Boris Godunov” the percentage is half as high. This shows the role of rhyme in generating enjambement formulas, though the presence of the same formulas in blank verse (i vot, ona, nakonets, takov, etc.) shows that formulas may occur even without being produced by rhyme.

Other poets of Pushkin’s era (group 3), probably striving to attain their individual style, employ enjambement more sparingly than Pushkin. They use neither Pushkin’s exotic no, nor the common “nakonets”. The number of formulas is 18; the most frequent are: ona, ya, vot, poroy, potom, gotov, on. The most intensive user of formulas is Podolinsky. His “Nishchiy” brings the frequency of enjambement formulas in this group close to Pushkin’s: 10.4%.

Lermontov (group 4) shows demonstrative use of Pushkin’s formulas. In “Tambovskaya kaznacheysha”, written in the Onegin measure (“Onegina razmerom”) there appears Pushkin’s unconventional no, never repeated even by Pushkin himself or his followers, as well as others of Pushkin’s enjambements. Lermontov also uses ya, nazad, konechno, which do not occur in Pushkin. There are 28 formulas; the most frequent are on, potom, poroy, tam, ona, vdrug, peredo mnoy. The frequency of enjambement formulas in Lermontov poems is 13.2%. Noticeably, formulas are equally frequent in both his early (12.9%) and in his mature period (13.8%). For example, in the poetic masterpiece, “Mtsyri”, they rise to 14.7%.

Poets from the middle of the 19th century (group 5) use enjambement formulas even more intensively. There are 29 formulas, the most frequent are: ya, ona, potom, togda, on, vot, nakonets, gotov, ne raz, byla, vdrug, mozhet byt’. Many formulas occurred in poems of earlier authors, while some (byla, opyat’, mozhet byt’) are introduced in Ap. Grigoryev’s poems. The growth of ya is due to Turgenev’s “Razgovor”. The frequency is 12.4%—somewhat lower than in Lermontov, mainly because of Nekrasov’s poems, where enjambement formulas are only 4–5%.

Two poems from the 20th century (group 6) show that there is no tendency toward permanent growth in the frequency of enjambement formulas. Blok’s “Vozmezdie” has only eight formulas, Tvardovsky’s “Za dal’yu – dal’”—four. The frequency of enjambement formulas in “Vozmezdie” is 8.7%, in “Za dal’yu – dal’” it is 2.3%. In addition to the noticeable drop in the number of enjambement formulas another two points should be mentioned. First, in Blok’s verse, ona, vot, no (!) signify a conscious attachment to the tradition of Pushkin. Second, Tvardovsky shows the possibility of making an old device unrecognizable by means of modern verse (graphics):

I vozrazit’, kazalos’, nechem,
Kogda vzdochnul on tiho:
- No...
V tylu, mol, delo obespechit’
Uzhe ne vsyakomu dano.
We take into account six parameters when analyzing enjambement structure: 1) the type of enjambement: rejet (not in this type of study), contre-rejet, double-rejet; 2) the clausula of the upper line (for all types of enjambement); 3) the word boundary type in the subsequent line (for rejet and double-rejet); 4) the number of words between syntactically connected words of the previous and the subsequent lines; 5) the types of ties and their frequency; 6) rhyming of the upper line (for all types of enjambement).

The first parameter (the type of enjambement) is traditional for verse-study; all the other parameters have been proposed by us. Let's illustrate our method of analysis by examples and describe the most important results.

Types of enjambement. All verse experts (including the author of this paper) traditionally divide enjambement into three types: rejet, contre-rejet, double-rejet. We believe that formulas in enjambement occur in the initial line; formulas in the subsequent line are very rare. Therefore in this type of analysis we have two types of enjambement instead of three: contre-rejet (“Hotel ya vstat’ – peredo mnoy / vse zakruzhilos’ s bystrotoy) and double-rejet (nepronitsaemoy stenoy / Okruzhena, peredo mnoy / Byla polyana. <...>). Both examples are from “Mtsyri”. In enjambement formulas contre-rejets prevail. This prevalence differs considerably from their frequency among all enjambements in general, where it is about 50% (with some fluctuations during the century). In the enjambement formulas of Pushkin and his contemporaries contre-rejets comprise about 85%. In the verse of Lermontov and poets from the middle of the 19th century the frequency decreased by 10%, but in poems of the 20th century the rate of occurrence returned to Pushkin’s 85%.

The clausula of the upper line can be masculine (M): “I chto-to shepchet, i poroy / Goryuchi slezy l’et rekoi” (“Bakhchisarayskiy fontan”) or feminine (F): “Nikto ne proydet – lis’ poroyu / Chut’ kolokol’chik prozvenit” (I. Kozlov “Chernets”). According to our data, at the earlier stage of Russian narrative verse enjambement in general is marked by a masculine ending in 60–70% of cases. In the process of its development the prevalence of masculine endings became less consistent. In enjambement formulas the situation is different: there is a consistent prevalence of masculine endings throughout the evolution of enjambement (in the majority of poems 100% of the endings in formulas are masculine).

Word boundary in a subsequent line (at the end of a syntactic group which runs on from one line into another). Obviously this parameter refers only to the double-rejets in our material. A word boundary can be masculine (m): “I krasota – i vse, chto ya / Tak obozhal, – ischezlo vse”), feminine (f): “<...> ya / Vse pomnyu <...>” (both examples from “Razgovor” by Turgenev), or dactylic (d): “Gotov byl cheln – i nakonets / Dostig on berega <...>” (“Mednyi vsadnik” by Pushkin). In our material only 7% of the word boundaries are dactylic (a single enjambement formula in “Kavkazskiy plennik” with the dactylic word boundary padaet, which repeats a well known non-formulaic enjambement in Pushkin; one case in Podolinsky and two in Apollon Grigoryev). In contrast to clausalas in the initial line, words boundaries are more often feminine: they are one and a half times more frequent than masculine. Thus a masculine ending characterizes the part of the phrase left in the initial line, but not the part transferred to the next line.
The interval between words of the initial and the subsequent line, where the syntactic tie runs over the border of a line, providing a vertical connection between lines. We determine the number of metrical words between these two words. By a metrical word M.L. Gasparov meant a word bearing metrical stress along with any preceding or following unstressed words that are attached to it when reading. This interval may be zero (the words are in contact): “Ego zovut Aleko; on / Gotov idti za mnoyu vsyudu”, or it can contain one or two words (“Uzh ya… no tishe! Slyshish’? On / Drugoe imya proiznosit’”). Both examples are from Pushkin’s “Tsygany”. In the first example the syntactic tie is a contact (c, between adjacent words), in the second—distant (d). The ratio of contact and distant syntactic ties differs considerably in different periods of the development of Russian narrative poetry.

In Pushkin’s enjambement formulas distant syntactic ties prevail (60.5%), especially because of earlier poems (before “Graf Nulin), where distant ties occur 75% of the time (in later poems and “Evgeniy Onegin” they are at 57.8%). Pushkin’s contemporaries have an almost equal proportion of contact and distant ties. The same is true for Lermontov. Poets from the middle of the 19th century have more contact ties (57.3%). A slight prevalence of contact ties can also be observed among 20th-century poets (53.8%). The general tendency in the development of enjambement formulas from the point of view of this parameter coincides with the evolution of enjambement in general (from a prevalence of distant ties to a prevalence of contact ties).

The analysis of this parameter helped us to discover for the first time in verse study the existence of what we call “prolonged” enjambments, where the interval between syntactically connected words in the enjambement increases to three or more words and the whole enjambement construction covers not two but three or more lines.

The mechanism of prolonged enjambement normally presupposes that the syntactic tie which actually forms enjambement is interrupted by an inserted construction or some other syntactic structure (described in detail in Matyash 2017) which makes us wait for the enjambement construction to terminate a line or two later than in regular enjambement (in cases of contre-rejet), or we have to look for the beginning of enjambement a line or two earlier than normally (in cases of rejet or double-rejet).

Prolonged enjambements in iambic tetrameter narrative poems of the 19th–20th centuries comprise 5–10% of all enjambements: “Akh, russkiy, russkiy, dlya chego / Ne znaya serdtsa tvoego, / Tebe navek ya predalasya! (“Kavkazskiy plennik” by Pushkin); “Akh, Eda, Eda! Dlya chego / Takoe dolgoe mgnoven’e / Vo vlazhnom plameni ego / Pila ty strastnoe zabven’e” (Baratynsky “Eda”); “Pevets Gyul’pary! Dlya chego / V izbytke serdtsa moego, / v poryve sil’nyh vpechatleniy / Nazlo prirode i sud’be, zachem ne raven ya tebe <…>” (Polezhaev “Chir-yurt”). In our examples the prolonged structures contain 3-4-5 lines, with 5-6-10 metrical words between the words forming the syntactic tie in the enjambement. The large proportion (10–25%) of prolonged enjambements within enjambement formulas was unexpected.

Types and frequency of syntactic ties in enjambement are analyzed using the hierarchy of closer and looser syntactic ties (stronger and weaker syntactic and prosodic breaks between words), suggested by Gasparov and Skulacheva, using the abbreviations
of these scholars (see Gasparov–Skulacheva 2004: 182–183). The set of ties used in formulas is predictably more limited than in enjambments of iambic tetrameter narrative poems in general. There are no ties with a direct object, no borders between paratactic clauses, no ties between similar parts of the sentence. There are extremely close ties between parts of a compound predicate (“... Ya gotov / Za eto otevchat” — “Olimpiy Radin” by Apollon Grigoryev); enjambement with no we also considered to be extremely strong. There are also easily noticeable enjambements with a direct object (see examples with pered nim at the beginning of this article) and—unexpectedly—with unattached phrases (“... gde ona, / Bog znaet kem okruzhena, / rvalas' i plakala snachala” (“Evgeniy Onegin”); “No budet vremya – mozhet byt', / V ney mozhno chuvstvo probudit'...” (“Nishchiy” by Podolinsky). Even borders between hypotactic clauses were found: “On takzhe dumal, mozhet byt', / Chto, s zhiz'yu konchivshi raschet, / Spokoyney, krepche on usnet.” (“Predsmertnaya ispoved’” by Grigoryev). The broadest repertoire of syntactic ties is used by Lermontov in “Tambovskaya kaznacheysha”. Even enjambement with an attributive tie occurs (“Kakuyu / nazvat' prichinu poverney?”) and is later repeated by Tvardovsky (“Kakuyu / Naznachat pensiyu emu...”). The most intensively used ties are ties of an adverbial modifier (“... i vmig / Poverzhen Lenskiy <...>” (“Evgeniy Onegin”) and predicative ties (see earlier in this article examples with on and numerous cases with ona). The evolution of their frequency toward lowering the number of adverbial modifier enjambements (from 55.8% in Pushkin to 38.4% in poets of 20th century) corresponds to the same tendency in enjambements in general. Still, the number of adverbial modifier enjambements (especially in Pushkin) is significantly higher in formulas, because for enjambment in general it was no more than 30%.

Rhyming in the initial line of enjambement. This parameter presupposes the answer to two questions: 1) in what kind of stanza does the formula word occur (couplet? quatrain with enclosing or alternating rhyme?); second—whether the formula word is the initial or the subsequent word in a rhyming pair. The analysis of formulas has shown that the formula words in initial lines of enjambement may be:

1) the first member of the rhyming pair in a couplet: “Upryamo smotrit on: ona / Sidit spokoyna i vol'na” (“Evgeniy Onegin”);

2) the second member of a rhyming pair in a couplet: “V tishi na lozhe sna / Kak nekiy duh, emu ona / O mshchen'e shepchet <...>” (“Poltava”);

3) the first member of a rhyming pair in a couplet within an enclosing rhyme: “Pleski, kliki / Ego privetstvuyut. Ona / Pevtsu prisest' prinuzhdena; / Poet zhe skromnyy, khot' velikiy <...>” (“Evgeniy Onegin”);

4) the second member of a rhyming pair in a couplet within an enclosing rhyme: “Tak neozhidanno surova / i vechnyh peremen polna; / Kak veshnyaya reka, ona / Vnezapno tronut'sya gotova” (Blok “Vozmezdie”).

5) the first member of a rhyming pair in a quatrain with alternating rhyme: “Stareyut zheny. Mezhdu nimi / Davno gruzinki net; ona / Garema strazhami nemymi / V puchinu vod opuschena” (“Bakhchisarayskiy fontan”).
(6) the second member of a rhyming pair in a quatrain with alternating rhyme: “Lunoyu chut’ ozarenа, / S ulybkoy zhalosti otradnoy / Kolena prekloniv, ona / K ego ustam kumys prohladnyi / Podnosit tihoyu rukoy” (“Kavkazskiy plennik” by Pushkin);

(7) the first member of a rhyming pair in quatrains with enclosing rhyme: “Chto budet s ney, kogda ona / Uslyshit slovo rokovoe? / Dosel’ ona eshche v pokoe – / No tayna byt’ sohranena / Ne mozhet dolee. <...>” (“Poltava”);

(8) the second member of a rhyming pair in quatrains with enclosing rhyme: “Do utra yunaya knyazhna / Lezhala, tyagostnym zabven’em, kak budto strashnym snoviden’em, / Ob’yata – nakonets ona / Ochnulas’ <...>” (“Ruslan i Lyudmila”)

Formulas in longer stanzas were not taken into account because of their very small number.

Enjambement formulas stand out most prominently in adjacent rhymes (both in a separate couplet and within an enclosing rhyme), they are the least prominent in an enclosing rhyme.

When a formula is the first member of a rhyme pair, the rhyme and syntax unfold in the same direction, creating a cumulative effect. In the opposite case the syntactic and rhyme movements contradict each other. The majority of formula words are the first members of a rhyme pair (44.9%), and only a small percentage (2.5%) are the second. The general tendency for this parameter is an increase in the number of types used by a particular poet. The maximum (7 out of 8 types) appears in the poems of Ap. Grigoryev.

3 Conclusion

Thus we can make the following conclusions.

(1) The repertoire of enjambement formulas is rather stable and has a tendency to broaden.

(2) Enjambement formulas of Russian narrative poems occur as a result of borrowing, imitation, and indicating adherence to a certain tradition.

(3) The occurrence of enjambement formulas is often stimulated by the search for a rhyme, but the fact of the very presence of formulas in blank verse shows that the role of rhyme should not be overemphasized.

(4) The number of formulas does not depend on the number of enjambements in general in a particular poem and does not correlate with the prominence of a poet in the history of literature.

(5) The rather complex structure of enjambement formulas makes it possible to bring new features into common formulas by changes in rhyme, word boundaries in subsequent lines, graphic representation, or the use of prolonged enjambements.
The structure of enjambment formulas evolves largely in correspondence with the evolution of enjambment in general, but this process also has some features of its own: an increased number of contre-rejets, masculine clausulas, adverbial modifier ties and so on. This demonstrates the existence of complex mechanisms for the memory of forms in the history of verse and also—as Gasparov mentioned once on a different occasion—the complex interaction of rational and intuitive factors in the creative process.

References
