

Diaeresis in the Homeric Hymns

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Keywords: Homeric Hymns, Homer, diaeresis, meter, epic

A diaeresis is meant the coincidence of the division between words with the division into the feet. In the first line of the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite (h.Ven.)*, for example, there are diaereses after the first and second feet:

h.Ven.1 Μοῦσά μοι || ἔννεπε || ἔργα πο | λυχρὸ | σου Ἄφρο | δίτης

In *Iliad* and *Odyssey (Il. and Od.)* the rarest diaeresis is after the third foot. [1]

However, no studies have ever tried to prove the assumption that the principle, “the rarest diaeresis is after the third foot”, is also applied to the *Homeric Hymns (h.Hom.)*. The assumption must be widely accepted, because in matters of diction and style the influences of *Il.* and *Od.* are well-marked. [2] However, theoretically, it is not certain whether the principle is applied to the hymns. If this principle can be applied with certainty then it will be very useful in editing texts of these hymns. On the other hand, if it cannot be applied with certainty then we must not edit texts on this principle. [3]

Therefore I try to count the number of diaereses after each foot in the *h.Hom.* [4] We count all word-boundaries without qualification in Table I. [5] It shows the number of lines which have diaereses after each foot. [6]

Table I

	<i>h.Cer.</i>	<i>h.Ap.</i>	<i>h.Merc.</i>	<i>h.Ven</i>
after 1 st foot	255 (51.52%)	297 (54.3%)	265 (45.69%)	167 (57%)
after 2 nd foot	86 (17.37%)	104 (19.01%)	131 (22.59%)	65 (22.18%)
after 3 rd foot	116 (23.43%)	125 (22.85%)	139 (23.97%)	75 (25.6%)

after 4 th foot	301 (60.81%)	325 (59.41%)	354 (61.03%)	170 (58.02%)
after 5 th foot	159 (32.12%)	174 (31.81%)	195 (33.62%)	76 (25.94%)

We can see from Table I that in these hymns the rarest diaeresis is not after the third foot but after the second foot.

If we count all word-boundaries with qualification, the result will be changed. In Table II, the enclitics *δέ, μέν, γάρ, κεν, ἄν*, the proclitics *καί, ἀλλά* and the monosyllabic prepositions cohere so closely with the preceding or following word that divisions after or before these words are not regarded as word-boundaries: [7]

Table II

	<i>h.Cer.</i>	<i>h.Ap.</i>	<i>h.Merc.</i>	<i>h.Ven.</i>
after 1 st foot	235 (47.47%)	260 (47.53%)	240 (41.38%)	150 (51.19%)
after 2 nd foot	70 (14.14%) [8]	91 (16.64%)	116 (20%)	60 (20.48%)
after 3 rd foot	68 (13.74%)	56 (10.24%)	65 (11.21%)	41 (13.99%)
after 4 th foot	280 (56.57%)	301 (55.03%)	337 (58.1%)	164 (55.97%)
after 5 th foot	151 (30.51%)	172 (31.44%)	186 (32.07%)	73 (24.91%)

We can see from Table II that in these hymns the rarest diaeresis is after the third foot. However, there is little difference between the number of diaereses after the second foot and that of the diaereses after the third foot, especially in *h.Cer.*

Whether we count with or without qualification, it is certain that diaereses after third foot as well as diaereses after second foot are comparatively rare in *h.Hom.* However the percentages of diaereses after the second and third feet in each hymn exceed 10%. The poets of the hymns do not necessarily avoid the diaeresis after the second and third feet.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the number of diaereses after the second and third feet in each hymn is not small enough to be a decisive criterion for editing. The diaereses after the second and third feet are not as rare as lines without caesura in the third foot [9] or exceptions to *Hermann's Bridge*. [10] However it is no exaggeration to say that we can use the rarity of diaereses after second and third feet as a supplementary or secondary criterion when we edit the texts of *h.Hom.*

Notes:

[1] See D. B. Monro, *Homeric Grammar*, Second Edition, Oxford, 1891, p. 339; J.A. Scott, "The

Forbidden Dieresis in Homer”, CPh 39 (1944), p. 113; W. B. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer I*, Second Edition, London, 1959, p. lxxxiv.

[2] For example, N. van der Ben, “Hymn to Aphrodite 36-291: Notes on the Pars Epica of the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite”, *Mnemosyne* 39 (1986), p. 40. On this principle, at h.Ven. 290, Van der Ben refuses Van Eck’s (J. van Eck, *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite. Introduction, Commentary and Appendices*, Diss. Utrecht, 1978, pp. 98-99) conjecture ὀνομήναι which makes diaeresis after the third foot in this line:

h.Ven.290 ἴσχεο ἢ ἢ μῆδ’ ὄνο ἢ μῆναι ἢ ἢ θεῶν δ’ ἔπο ἢ τίξεο ἢ ἢ μῆνιν

Van der Ben’s refusal is on the condition that the principle is applied to this hymn and he does not count the number of diaereses after the third foot in the hymn (He also says that Van Eck’s form would make the line the only one without caesura in the third foot).

[3] For example, if the principle can be applied with certainty, it is useful in the following cases:

h.Cer. 393 Τέκνον μή ῥά τί μοι σ[ύ γε πάσσοα νέρθεν ἐούσα] (or γ’ ἐπάσσοα).

h.Merc. 35 οὐδ’ ἀποτιμήσω• σὺ δέ με πρῶτιστον ὀνήσεις (or δ’ ἐμέ).

If we do not have any other criterion, it is not too far from the truth to say that γ’ ἐπάσσοα and δ’ ἐμέ are probably right because γε πάσσοα and δέ με would make the diaeresis after third foot (Accents and word-divisions in manuscripts are often untrustworthy. [cf. M. L. West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique: applicable to Greek and Latin texts*, Stuttgart, 1973, p. 54-55]).

[4] The text used: T. W. Allen, W. R. Halliday and E. E. Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns*, Second Edition, Oxford, 1936. In this paper I deal with only four longer hymns, that is to say, the Hymn to Demeter (h.Cer.), to Apollo (h.Ap.), to Hermes (h.Merc.) and h.Ven. The reason is that other hymns are very short and statistics based on a short poem have little validity.

[5] The earlier scholars must count diaereses in the same way. The following data showing the percentages of the lines which include the bucolic diaeresis is cited from M. Van Raalte, *Rhythm and Metre: Towards a Systematic Description of Greek Stichic Verse*, Leiden, 1986, p. 86: h.Cer. 60.4%, h.Ap. 61.2%, h.Merc. 60.4%, h.Ven. 58%. The percentages must result from counting all word-boundaries without qualification. There is little difference between the percentages of Van Raalte’s data and those of Table I. See the row of “after 4th foot” in Table I.

[6] The percentages in Table I and II show the proportion of these lines in the whole lines of each hymn.

[7] For an explanation of the coherence, see M. L. West, “Homer’s Meter”, in I. Morris and B. Powell (eds.), *A New Companion to Homer*, Leiden, 1997, p. 223. For a survey of word-boundaries, see Van Raalte, *op. cit.*, 162-165.

[8] Only the number (70 [14.14%]) has already been presented in my former article: Ichiro Taida, “Elision and Augment in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter”, *Exemplaria Classica*, 11 (2007), p. 9.

[9] See Van Raalte, *op. cit.*, 79. In Homer 1.2 percent of lines do not have caesura in the third foot.

[10] See M. L. West, *Greek Metre*, Oxford, 1982, p. 38. The exceptions are about once in 550 lines in Homer.