The Concepts of "Verse", "Meter" and "Rhythm" in Russian Verse Theory*

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1.

My approach to the problem of meter and rhythm is not only theoretical, but also practical: together with my colleagues I research the problems of automated rhythmic and morpho-syntactic analysis of poetic texts and, in particular, the problems of automated recognition of verse meters and rhythmic forms[1]. This is why we are interested in the issue of the interrelation between meter and rhythm. In fact, this is a core problem in the study of Russian prosody. Arguably the discovery of the dichotomy of meter and rhythm marked the beginning of verse studies in Russia.

In his *Introduction to Metrics: A Theory of Verse* (1925) Viktor Zhirmunsky wrote: "The basic problem of the theory of verse out of which the entire book grew, is the opposition between rhythm and meter — an opposition which A. Belyi was the first to formulate clearly for classical Russian poetry in his famous works on the iambic tetrameter (*Symvolizm*, 1910)"[2]. Zhirmunsky was

[1] I.A. Pilszczikow and A.S. Starostin, 'Problemy awtomatizaciji bazowych procedur ritmiko-sintaksiczeskogo analiza siłłabo-toniczeskich tiekstow', in *Nacjonalnyj korpus russkogo jazyka 2006–2008. Nowyje riezultaty i pierspiektiwy*, ed. W.A. Płungian (Sankt-Pietierburg: Niestor-Istorija, 2009), 298–315; I.A. Pilszczikow and A.S. Starostin, 'Problema awtomaticzeskogo raspoznawanija mietra: siłłabotonika, dolnik, taktowik', in *Otieczestwiennoje stichowiedenije. 100-lietnije itogi i pierspiektiwy razwitija. Matierialy Mieżdunarodnoj naucznoj konfierienciji 25–27 nojabria 2010 g. Sankt-Pietierburg*, ed. S.I. Bogdanow and E.W. Chworost'janowa (Sankt-Pietierburg: Fiłołogiczeskij fakultiet SPbGU, 2010), 397–406; I.A. Pilszczikow and A.S. Starostin, 'Automated Analysis of Poetic Texts and the Problem of Verse Meter". W: Current Trends in Metrical Analysis', in *Current Trends in Metrical Analysis*, ed. C. Küper, vol. 2 (Bern; Berlin [etc.]: Peter Lang, 2011), 133–40; I.A. Pilszczikow and A.S. Starostin, 'Reconnaissance automatique des mètres des vers russes. Une approche statistique sur corpus', trans. É. Delente, *Langages*, no. 199 (2015): 89–105.

[2] W.M. Żirmunskij, *Wwiedienije w mietriku. Tieorija sticha* (Leningrad: Academia, 1925).

convinced that meter draws a borderline between what should be regarded as verse and what as prose; however, this is not true because there also exist such phenomena as metrical prose as well as *vers libre*, i.e., free, ametrical verse. If indeed it was the presence of meter which enabled us to decide between what is verse and what is prose, then this would solve the problem of a constructive definition of verse, since every text containing meter would automatically be regarded as verse and any ametrical text would be regarded as prose (which we know is not the case). It should be noted at this point that the descriptive definition of verse is a theoretical description of the difference between verse and prose.[3] Therefore, the dichotomy of "verse *vs.* prose" is more fundamental than the dichotomy of "meter *vs.* rhythm" and methodologically precedes it.

Russian verse theory at its late formalist stage came up with a theoretical definition of verse most clearly expressed in the ex-"junior formalist"[4] Boris Bukhshtab's formula of a "dual segmentation": "Any text breaks up into subordinate syntactic segments; in the poetic text, however, this […] is combined with the segmentation into lines of verse as well as verse entities which are larger or smaller than the line […] the latter segmentation can either coincide with, or diverge from the former, thus creating innumerable possibilities of rhythmic-syntactic correlations"[5].

If we follow Bukhshtab's line of thought, Maksim Shapir argued in his article "*Versus* vs. *prosa*", then it inevitably turns out that "the difference between verse and prose is the division into verses itself. […]" This definition of poetic discourse was formulated independently by Maksim Kenigsberg (1923), Boris Tomashevsky (1923; 1928) and Yuri Tynianov (1924). The shortcoming of their definition is not its seemingly tautological character, but its insufficiency: we do not know what is the peculiarity of the poetic line as compared with any other [kind of line]. Tomashevsky believed the *specificum* of verse was its state of being divided into comparable and commensurable segments"[6].

Mikhail Gasparov, who recalibrated many formalist concepts and gave them a classical form, endorsed Tomashevsky's idea. In his entry on "Stikh" ("Verse") in the *Concise Literary Encyclopedia*, Gasparov formulated the two main characteristics of the verse lines: their "comparability" (*sopostavimost'*) and their "commensurability" (*soizmerimost'*):

> STIKH [VERSE] (from the Greek στίχος — row, line) is an artistic speech, [which is] phon[et]ically divided into relatively short segments (each of which is also called " S[tikh]" [a verse-line]), [and] which are perceived as comparable and commensurable. The opposite notion is that of *prose* (see *Poetry and prose*). The prosaic speech is also divided into segments — *cola* [Sing. *colon*]; but, as compared to prose, the verse segmentation has two peculiarities: 1) in prose, text segmentation is determined only by syntactic pauses, [while] in verse, the dividing pauses may be not coincident

[3] We call a definition descriptive (or theoretical) when it identifies the object by enumeration of its properties or functions. A constructive (or practical) definition is an explicit description of its arrangement. Applied sciences transform descriptive definitions into constructive definitions, while theoretical sciences transform constructive definitions into descriptive definitions: I.M. Jagłom, *Matiematiczeskije struktury i matiematiczeskoje modielirowanije* (Moskwa: Sowietskoje radio, 1980)..

[4] A member of the group of Yuri Tynianov's and Boris Eikhenbaum's disciples known as *mladoformalisty*, i.e. "junior formalists".

[5] B.Ja Buchsztab, 'Ob Osnowach i Tipach Russkogo Sticha', *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics* t. XVI (1973): 110–11.

[6] M.I. Szapir, '«Versus» vs «prosa»: prostranstwo-wriemia poeticzeskogo tieksta', *Philologica, t* 2, no. 3/4 (1995): 49.

> with syntactic pauses (enjambment); 2) in prose, segmentation by the dividing pauses is to a large extent arbitrary, [while] in verse, it is predeterminedly fixed[7].

In the 1990s, Shapir challenged this definition arguing the following: if we take, say, a free iambus and *vers libre* as examples, we shall see that the verse lines [i] are **not comparable** in quantitative terms (they may have from 1 to 12 and more syllables), and [ii] they are **not commensurable** in qualitative terms, that is they do not always use one and the same *measure* (in a free iambus, a mono**syllabic** line may be rhymed with a mono**podic** line and a poly**podic** line: it is hard to consider a *one*-syllable line as an iambic *foot* which should contain *two* syllables).[8] Thus, according to Shapir, verse cannot be described in terms of **comparability of the commensurable**, but rather as the **equation of the incommensurable**.[9] Hence his own theoretical definition of verse:

> Verse is the system of pervasive compulsory paradigmatic segmentations [...]. Verse segmentations are pervasive because they run through the entire work or fragment. Verse segmentations are compulsory because they are pre-ordained by the author's will which is objectively expressed and cannot be ignored by a recipient. Verse segmentations are paradigmatic: they form the rhythmic units belonging to the same level which are correlated with one another as variants of a single invariable[10].

The last part of this definition was widely discussed, but this discussion is irrelevant for the context of the present paper. What matters for our purposes is that Shapir's **theoretical** definition of verse, as well as that of Gasparov, is hard to convert into a **constructive** definition, as Shapir himself once pointed out[11]. To build computer programs we use constructive definitions. This means that today we are still not capable of developing an algorithm which would enable us to distinguish between prose and verse in general.

Boris Tomashevsky, who was educated as an engineer and represented the "empiricist" wing of Opoiaz (a Petersburg association of formalists) and the Moscow Linguistic Circle (a Moscow association of formalists), always used constructive categories in his thinking. In his *Russian Versification: Metrics* (1923) Tomashevsky wrote: "It is impossible to give an exact objective definition of verse, it is impossible to list the main properties which distinguish between verse and prose"[12].

[7] M. L. Gasparow, 'Stich', in *Kratkaja litieraturnaja enciklopiedija*, vol. 7 (Moskwa: Sowietskaja enciklopiedija, 1972), 197 author's italics; cf. M. L. Gasparow, *Russkij stich naczala XX wieka w kommientarijach, Izdanije wtoroje (dop.)* (Moskwa: Fortuna Limited, 2001), 6; E. Klenin, 'M. L. Gasparov and the Definition of Verse', *The Slavic and East European Journal* 52, no. 2 (2008): 208–22; T.W. Skułaczewa, 'Mietody opriedielenija mietra w nieklassiczeskom stichie', *Izwiestija Rossijskoj Akadiemiji nauk. Sierija litieratury i jazyka* 71, no. 2 (2012): 45–46. Here and henceforth, translations from Russian are mine unless otherwise stated.

[8] In Gasparov's definition, "COMMENSURABILITY, in verse studies, is a property of all poetic lines of the [poetical] work to be measured (in the reader's consciousness) by one and the same conventional measure": Gasparow, 'Stich', 43.

[9] The same point was earlier made by Yuri Lotman: "The rhythmicity of poetry is the cyclical repetition of different elements in identical positions with the aim of equating the unequal or revealing similarity in difference, or the repetition of the identical with the aim of revealing the false character of this identity, of establishing differences in similarity": Ju. M. Łotman, *Lekcyi po strukturalnoj poetikie, wyp. 1 (Wwiedienije, tieorija sticha)*, vol. 1 (Tartu: Tartuskij gos. uniwiersitiet, 1964), 67.

[10] M.I. Szapir, 'O Priedielach Dliny Sticha w Wierlibrie (D. A. Prigow i Drugije)', *Philologica* 6, no. 14/16 (2000 1999): 138; M.I. Szapir, *Universum versus: jazyk — stich — smysł w russkoj poezii XVIII–XX wiekow*, vol. 2 (Moskwa: Jazyki russkoj kultury, 2015), 237.

[11] quoted in Pilszczikow and Starostin, 'Problemy awtomatizaciji bazowych procedur ritmiko-sintaksiczeskogo analiza siłłabo-toniczeskich tiekstow', 300.

[12] B.W. Tomaszewskij, *Russkoje stichosłożenije. Mietrika* (Leningrad: Academia, 1923), 7.

A constructive definition of verse is unavailable, but we can constructively define versification systems and meters within each versification system. Therefore, the concept of "commensurability" introduced by Tomashevsky and Gasparov, enables us to define **meter**, rather than **verse**.

2.

Let us now consider the opposition of meter and rhythm. Verse rhythm is distinct from the rhythm of real speech: we are aware of different "expiratory power" of vowels in ictic and non-ictic positions (noted by Roman Jakobson in "Briusov's stichology"[13], we know that so called "semi-stressed" words may be pronounced differently in ictic and non-ictic positions (as was discussed by Jakobson, Tomashevsky, Zhirmunsky and Gasparov, among others).[14] In other words, meter only emerges against the background of rhythm, and rhythm emerges against the background of meter.

In 1921 Žirmunskij maintained: "Rhythm is the *actual alternation* of stresses in verse, resulting from the interaction between the inherent properties of the linguistic material and the ideal norm [Russian: *zadanie*, 'design, intention'] imposed by the meter"[15]. In 1925 he explained that "the actual phonetic shape of verse is determined by its metrical structure only in part and its poetic rhythm is always a compromise resulting from the resistance shown by the linguistic material to the rules of artistic composition"[16]. Tomashevsky objected that we should not speak of the resistance, but of the "arrangement of the linguistic capabilities"[17]. As Morris Halle pointed out, the main shortcoming of this conception is the "(mis)conception that there must be a one : one relationship between entities in the meter and phonetic entities in the line"[18].

The dilemma of meter and rhythm can be solved in a different way. As Maksim Kenigsberg wrote in 1923, "Verse in its essence is not a physical, but a semiotic phenomenon"[19]. Verse is a sign, and, in the same way, meter and rhythm are signs (this was the position of the "phenomenological" wing of the Moscow Linguistic Circle: in particular, Kenigsberg, Nikolai Zhinkin and Grigorii Vinokur). Tynianov also gave eloquent examples of meter as a sign such as, for instance, incomplete or omitted lines[20].

[13]R.O. Jakobson, 'Briusowskaja stichologija i nauka o stichie". W Akadiemiczeskij centr Narkomprosa. Naucznyje izwiestija, t. 2: Fiłosofija', in *Akadiemiczeskij centr Narkomprosa. Naucznyje izwiestija*, vol. 2: Fiłosofija. Litieratura. Iskusstwo (Moskwa: GIZ, 1922), 229; S. Rudy, 'Jakobson's Inquiry into Verse and the Emergence of Structural Poetics". W Sound, Sign and Meaning: Quinquagenary of the Prague Linguistic Circle, Red', in *Sound, Sign and Meaning: Quinquagenary of the Prague Linguistic Circle*, ed. L. Matejka, vol. 477–520 (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1976), 481.

[14]Poets have other ways of further disassociating verse rhythm and natural language rhythm ("prose" rhythm): column and "staircase" (Mayakovsky), font and punctuation (Tsvetaeva), special diacritics (Selvinsky).

[15]W.M. Żirmunskij, *Kompozicija liriczeskich stichotworienij* (Pieterburg: Opojaz, 1921), 98; Żirmunskij, *Wwiedienije w mietriku. Tieorija sticha*, 7.

[16]Żirmunskij, *Wwiedienije w mietriku. Tieorija sticha*, 18.

[17]B.W. Tomaszewskij, *O stichie. Stat'ji* (Leningrad: Priboj, 1929), 49.

[18]M. Halle, 'Žirmunskij's Theory of Verse', *A Review Article". The Slavic and East European Journal, t* 12, no. 2 (1968): 214.

[19]M.M. Kienigsbierg, 'Iz stichołogiczeskich etjudow. 1. Analiz poniatija «stich»", wstup. stat'ja i primiecz', *M. I. Szapir, Philologica, t* 1, no. 1/2 (1994): 163.

[20]Ju N. Tynianow, *Problema stichotwornogo jazyka* (Leningrad: Academia, 1924), 22; Ju N. Tynianow, 'O kompoziciji Jewgienija Oniegina [1921–1922]', in *Poetika. Istorija litieratury. Kino*, ed. Je.A. Toddes, A.P. Czudakow, and M.O. Czudakowa (Moskwa: Nauka, 1977), 60; cf. Ju. M. Łotman, *Struktura chudożestwiennogo tieksta* (Moskwa: Iskusstwo, 1970), 66.

Semiotically speaking, any sign is "a material formation which is discernible against its background"[21]: meter is a sign against the background of rhythm; rhythm is a sign against the background of meter; they are both interrelated signs against the background of natural speech. This is the reason why the initial object of analysis for both a computer and a human analyst is the rhythm of natural speech. A rhythmic and metric model of verse can be thus based on automated accent-oriented morphological text analysis. This enables us to analyze poetic texts written in languages with variable stress, such as Russian[22].

How is all this related to the processes of generation and reception of poetic speech? Let us look at how Tomashevsky envisaged this problem. His main idea was that the synthesis of verse proceeds from meter to rhythm, while the analysis proceeds from rhythm to meter:

> When initially conceiving a poem, the poet adopts a metrical scheme which he feels to be a kind of rhythmical-melodical contour, a framework, into which words are "inserted".
>
> As it is realized in words, the rhythmical impulse finds expression in the actual rhythm of individual lines. [...]
>
> The listener perceives the rhythm in inverse order. First he is confronted with the actual verse-line rhythm. Then, under the impression of the reiteration of rhythmical configurations, due to his perception of a sequence of verse-lines, the listener grasps the rhythmical impulse [...]. At a still higher degree of abstraction from the rhythmical pattern he grasps the metrical scheme which may be uncovered by scanning[23].

The concept of *rhythmical impulse* describes a stochastic, not deterministic, norm, as Miroslav Červenka pointed out in his discussion of this concept[24]. From the poet's point of view, the **rhythmical impulse** or "rhythmical design" (*zadanie*) is the same as the **rhythmic inertia** from the recipient's point of view (Viktor Zhirmunsky). From the researcher's point of view, the same phenomenon is defined as a **rhythmic tendency** or, in a particular aspect, the **stress profile** of a poem or a group of poems (Kiril Taranovsky) or, in yet another particular aspect, the **rhythmic profile of the meter** (Mikhail Gasparov) or else as an **"image of the meter"** (Andrei Kolmogorov).[25]

[21]N.I. Żinkin, 'Znaki i sistiema jazyka', in *Zeichen und System der Sprache. Veröffentlichung des 1. Internationalen Symposions "Zeichen und System der Sprache" vom 28.9. bis 2.10.1959 in Erfurt*, vol. I (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 159.

[22]Pilszczikow and Starostin, 'Automated Analysis of Poetic Texts and the Problem of Verse Meter". W: Current Trends in Metrical Analysis', 133; Pilszczikow and Starostin, 'Reconnaissance automatique des mètres des vers russes. Une approche statistique sur corpus', 93–94.

[23]Tomaszewskij, *Russkoje stichosłożenije. Mietrika*, 83.

[24]M. Červenka, 'Rhythmical Impulse. Notes and Commentaries', *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach* 14 (1984): 30.

[25] For further discussion see O.M. Brik, 'Ritm i sintaksis (matieriały k izuczeniju stichotwornoj rieczi)". Wstupitielnaja zamietka, podgotowka tieksta i primieczanija M. W. Akimowa', in *Sławianskij stich IX*, ed. A.W. Prochorow and T.W. Skułaczewa (Moskwa: Rukopisnyje pamiatniki driewniej Rusi, 2012), 535–36 Marina Akimova's note; M. L. Gasparow, 'A. N. Kołmogorow w russkom stichowiedeniji', in *Izbrannyje trudy*, vol. IV (Moskwa: Jazyki sławianskoj kultury, 2012), 505; S.E. Lapin and I.A. Pilszczikow, 'O trudach Mirosława Czerwenki po tieoriji i istoriji sticha (K wychodu pierwogo russkogo izdanija jego rabot)', *Izwiestija Rossijskoj Akadiemiji nauk. Sierija litieratury i jazyka* 72, no. 3 (2012): 433–35. Taranovsky's and Gasparov's "stressing (or rhythmic) profile" is also a statistical characteristic, but it is a generalization of the statistics of rhythmical forms and does not always reflect the differences between individual types or patterns of the meter A. Dobritsyn, 'Rhythmic Entropy as a Measure of Rhythmic Diversity (The Example of the Russian Iambic Tetrameter)"', *Studia Metrica et Poetica, t* 3, no. 1 (2016): 35–38.

From a theoretical point of view, however, the question is not that simple. What is objectively given, and what is subjectively constructed? Is rhythm given initially? Then meter is a post-factum construction. Or, vice-versa, is meter a given entity and rhythm a mere construction?

Consider the definitions of meter and rhythm proposed by Russian scholars, starting from the prominent symbolist poet and verse theorist Andrei Belyi: "Under the rhythm of the poem we understand the symmetry of deviations from the meter […]"[26]. Later researchers pointed out the interrelation between meter and rhythm. This interrelation may be conceived as a "descent" from meter to rhythm (Tomahevsky, Zhirmunsky). In his 1923 treatise Tomahevsky wrote: "[…] meter is the principle of compatibility of verse lines". "Rhythm is a real sound form, the actual arrangement of qualitative relations of pronunciation for each separate verse-line". Meter is an "abstract scheme", while rhythm is a concrete individual form, a "real form" [Tomaševskij 1923: 44, 66]. Zhirmunsky added: "[…] meter is a general law of alternation of strong and week sounds, [while] rhythm embraces concrete particular cases of application of this law, the variations of the main metric scheme"[27]. In Yuri Lotman's structural poetics this thesis was later re-formulated in terms of linguistic and information theory dichotomies ("language *vs.* speech", "system/grammar *vs.* text", "code *vs.* message")[28].

The same interrelation may be conceived as an "ascent" from rhythm to meter, as in the above quoted passage from Tomahevsky or in the verse studies of the great Russian mathematician Andrei Kolmogorov, who wrote: "Under *meter* I understand a regularity of rhythm which is distinct enough to arouse: a) the expectancy of its confirmation in further lines, b) a specific experience of 'irregularity' when it is interrupted"[29].

Mihhail Lotman has introduced a useful distinction:

> All approaches to meter can be divided into two main groups: I will call these respectively a priori and a posteriori. In accordance with the a priori approach meter precedes […] poetical text. Meter is realized in a poem, the competent reader recognizes it, and the researcher describes it. […] According to the a posteriori approach, meter does not precede text but is its immanent quality, the competent reader perceives it […], the researcher makes it explicit[30].

In the last analysis, the difference between a-priori metrics and a-posteriori metrics may be reduced to the problem of interrelation between meter and rhythm, Mihhail Lotman argues. From the point of view of the a-priori approach, meter has a primary function, while rhythm is its realization; whereas for the a-posteriori approach, rhythm is the primary reality, while

[26]A. Biełyj, *Kniga statiej* (Moskwa: Musaget, 1910), 396.

[27]Żirmunskij, *Wwiedienije w mietriku. Tieorija sticha*, 11.

[28]Ju. M. Łotman, *Analiz poeticzeskogo tieksta. Struktura sticha* (Leningrad: Proswieszczenije, 1972), 46–59.

[29]A.N. Kołmogorow, 'K izuczeniju ritmiki Majakowskogo', *Woprosy jazykoznanija*, no. 4 (1963): 64 original emphasis.

[30]M. Lotman, 'Stanowlenije anticznych razmierow w russkom stichie. Aspiekty kognitiwnoj mietriki". W: Russian Text (19th Century) and Antiquity / Russkij tiekst (19 wiek) i anticznost'', in *Russian Text (19th Century) and Antiquity / Russkij tiekst (19 wiek) i anticznost*, ed. K. Kroó and P. Torop, vol. 24–53 (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2008), 32–33; M. Lotman, 'Metre. The Unknown', in *Frontiers in Comparative Metrics. In Memoriam Michail Gasparov. Conference Abstracts, November 21–23, 2008, Tallinn and Tartu, Estonia*, ed. M. Lotman and M.-K. Lotman (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2008), 25.

meter is a secondary formation. This researcher suggests transferring this problem from the methodological sphere to the ontological sphere and to interpret the difference described above not as two different **approaches** to meter, but as two drastically different *types* of versification meters. If we deal with a well-known structures which are unequivocally interpreted by both the author and the readers, Lotman calls such meters **explicit**. If the structure is new, and is not unequivocally recognized, such meters are **implicit**:

> Usually the difference between explicit and implicit meter is reflected already in their names. In the first case we are dealing with nomination (iambus, hexameter), in the second case with description; for instance, the "meter of Russian fairy tales", the "bylina verse", even such a splendid name like the "verse meter of Songs of the Westerns Slavs", that is, the meter Pushkin used in his cycle Songs of the Westerns Slavs[31].

3.

Maksim Shapir combined the a-priori and a-posteriori approaches. His conception of meter was developed in his article "Metrum et rhythmus sub specie semioticae", where he proposed a revision of the linear hierarchy of meter and rhythm, that is the views of rhythm as a system of deviations from meter, or rhythm as a particular realization of the metric scheme. Shapir conceived of two processes which are opposite in direction to each other: "metrization" of rhythm and "rhythmization" of meter[32].

For Andrej Belyi, Tomahevsky and Zhirmunsky meter was the law, while rhythm was a tendency; for Shapir, both rhythm and meter are tendencies, and they are not straightforwardly deductive from each other. Rhythm is not a particular case of meter because rhythm, being able to violate meter, can be autonomous from it.

Meter, in its turn, is not deductive from rhythm because rhythmically identical lines can be differently interpreted in different metrical contexts or, to put it another way, the rhythmic forms of different meters can be isomorphic. In this case, we are dealing with metrical ambiguity[33].

If the entire poem consists of such metrically ambiguous lines, it would be a heterometric text, as in Aleksandr Polezhaev's poem "Song of the Dying Swimmer". Aleksandr Iliushin cites it is a "genuinely bimetrical" poem (Iljušin 1988: 67) because its meter may be perceived as 2-foot trochee (trochaic dimeter) —´◡ —´(◡) or as 1-foot anapest (anapestic monometer) ◡´ ◡ —´(◡):

[31] Lotman, 'Stanowlenije anticznych razmierow w russkom stichie. Aspiekty kognitiwnoj mietriki". W: Russian Text (19th Century) and Antiquity / Russkij tiekst (19 wiek) i anticznost'', 33; Lotman, 'Metre. The Unknown', 28.

[32] M.I. Szapir, 'Metrum et rhythmus sub specie semioticae"', *Daugawa*, no. 10 (1990): 91–128.

[33] Jakobson, 'Briusowskaja stichologija i nauka o stichie". W Akadiemiczeskij centr Narkomprosa. Naucznyje izwiestija, t. 2: Fiłosofija', 229; Tomaszewskij, *O stichie. Stat'ji*, 15 sq; G.A. Szengieli, *Tiechnika sticha. Prakticzeskoje stichowiedienije* (Moskwa: Sowietskij pisatiel, 1940), 79–80; S.P. Bobrow, 'K woprosu o podlinnom stichotwornom razmiere puszkinskich «Piesien zapadnych sławian"', *„Russkaja litieratura"*, no. 3 (1964): 123.

Во́т мрачи́тся
Сво́д лазу́рный!
Во́т крути́тся
Ве́тер бу́рный!
[…]
На равни́нах
Во́д зерка́льных,
На пучи́нах
Погреба́льных
Я́ скользи́л […][34]

These are two ways of "metricizing" the same rhythm. Other examples of "metrization" are logaoedic verses, especially non-classical logaoedic meters, such as Osip Mandelshtam's "Today is a bad day…" (*Сего́дня дурно́й де́нь*), where a particular rhythmic pattern ◡ ´ ◡ ◡ ´ ´ is reiterated throughout the poem and thus becomes its metrical scheme ◡ — ´ ◡ ◡ — ´ — ´.

The opposite transformation may be called the "rhythmization" of meter. For instance, in Joseph Brodsky's "Strophes" of 1968, the meter of the initial line (*На проща́нье – ни зву́ка*) is 2-foot anapest ◡ ◡ — ´ ◡ ◡ — ´ (◡), as is the meter of the entire poem: ◡ ◡ — ◡ ◡ — (◡). However, the meter of a rhytmically identical and phonetically similar initial line of his "Strophes" of 1978 (*Наподо́бье стака́на*) is not 2-foot anapest but the 3-ictus *dolnik* — ◡ — ´ ◡ ◡ — ´ ◡ because the entire poem is written using this meter: (◡) — ◡ (◡) — ◡ (◡) — (◡).[35] However, not only this line, but many other lines of 3-ictus *dolnik* in this poem are isomorphic to 2-ictus *dolnik* and in particular to its rhythmical form which is isomorphic to 2-foot anapest. It is interesting to note that the 1978 "Strophes" contain a whole stanza, **all** the lines of which are isomorphic to the 2-foot anapest:

Неуме́стней, чем я́щер
в филармо́нии, ви́д
на̀с вдвое́м в настоя́щем.
Тѐм верне́й удиви́т
обита́телей за́втра
разведе́нная зде́сь
сѝльных чу́вств диноза́вра
и кири́ллицы сме́сь.

[34] Vladislav Kholshevnikov did not consider this bimetrical and defined its meter as 2-foot trochee: W.Je Kholshevnikov, *Mysl, wooruženna ja rifmami. Poeticzeskaja antołogija po istoriji russkogo sticha* (Leningrad: Izdatielstwo Leningradskogo Uniwiersitieta, 1987), 180. As a genuinely bimetrical poem he cited Ivan Miatlev's "Fantastic Tale" (Тарака́н / Ка̀к в стака́н…): Kholshevnikov, 202.

[35] The only line that violates the meter is *кото́ро̆го нӗ пӗрӗкрича́ть*: it features an interval of six unstressed syllables, whereas a maximum of only five is allowed by the metrical scheme.

This is a **rhythmic quotation** which, however, refers to a **metrical** precedent (Brodsky's own poem which was written ten years earlier and which is referred to in the title and the initial line of the later poem: ***Нă прŏщáньĕ*** *– ний звýкă* → ***Нăпŏдóбьĕ*** *стăкáнă*)[36].

Shapir's "metrization of rhythm" and "rhythmization of meter" partly correspond to the less known concepts of *logaedizacija* ("logaoedization") and *verlibrizacija* ("vers-libre-ization") introduced by Vadim Rudnev[37]. Indeed, the transformation of rhythm into meter is a transformation in the direction of the logaoed, while the transformation of meter into rhythm is a transformation in the direction of the *vers libre*. In the Brodsky example, *dolnik* is a more *libre* meter than anapest because it tolerates a wider variation of inter-ictic intervals[38]. On the contrary, 100% of one and the same rhythmic form in an "iambic" poem will turn this iambus into logaoedic or paeanic verse.

Therefore, contemporary Russian verse theory proposes the theoretical representation of meter as "tendency" or "potentiality". Since meter is usually not preconceived (at least from the reader's point of view) and we are not dealing with a given meter but with the metrization of rhythm, it follows from this that every poetic line is, *in potentia*, heterometric. In the context of the entire poem such metrical ambiguity may be either disambiguated (remaining, however, a factor of rhythm), or realized as a metric tendency (as in the so called "transitional metrical forms" or TMF[39]) or even the metrical law (in genuine heterometric texts).

4.

Considering all of the above, we can offer the following constructive definition of the meter of the Russian verse line:

(1) Meter is a design of strong and weak positions (*temps forts* and *temps faibles*) in a line of verse.

[36]Roman Jakobson called the poet's use of a meter, which closely associated with a particular text or group of texts, "a kind of metrical quotation": R.O. Jakobson, 'K Popisu Máchova Verše', in *Torso a Tajemství Máchova Díla: Sborník Pojednání Pražského Lingvistického Kroužku*, ed. J. Mukařovský (Praga: Fr. Borový, 1938), 246; R.O. Jakobson, 'Toward a Description of Mácha's Verse', in *Selected Writings, t. V: On Verse, Its Masters and Explorers*, trans. P. Steiner and W. Steiner (Paris – New York: The Hague, 1979), 465; Rudy, 'Jakobson's Inquiry into Verse and the Emergence of Structural Poetics". W Sound, Sign and Meaning: Quinquagenary of the Prague Linguistic Circle, Red', 506.

[37]Vadim Rudnev understands these terms in a wider culturological sense; I prefer to remain in the realm of metrics: W.P. Rudniew, 'Istorija russkoj mietriki XIX — naczała XX ww. w swietie problemy "litieratura i kulturołogija"', in *Uczebnyj matieriał po tieoriji litieratury. Litieraturnyj process i razwitije russkoj kultury XVIII–XX ww.*, ed. T.M. Kotniuch (Tallinn: Tallinskij gos. piedagogiczeskij institut im. Eduarda Vilde, 1982), 91–93; W.P. Rudniew, 'Stich i kultura', in *Tynianowskij sbornik. Wtoryje Tynianowskije cztienija*, ed. M.O. Czudakowa (Riga: Zinātne, 1986), 227–39; W.P. Rudniew, *Słowar' kultury XX wieka* (Moskwa: Agraf, 1997).

[38]Compare Pilszczikow and Starostin, 'Problema awtomaticzeskogo raspoznawanija mietra: siłłabotonika, dolnik, taktowik', 404–5; Skułaczewa, 'Mietody opriedielenija mietra w nieklassiczeskom stichie', 48.

[39]"TMF is such a construction of a verse meter, in which a certain amount of violations of one of the principal features of a particular poetic form is present. Moreover, these sporadic irregularities [...] do not yet change the *quality* of verse of a given kind. The main task in describing a TMF is to define the 'threshold', after which quantity is transformed into quality": P. A. Rudniew, 'Mietriczeskij Riepiertuar A. Błoka', in *Błokowskij Sbornik, II. Trudy Wtoroj Naucznoj Konfierienciji, Poswiaszczennoj Izuczeniju Żizni i Tworczestwa A. A. Błoka*, ed. Z. G. Minc (Tartu: Tartuskij gos. uniwiersitiet, 1972), 227 emphasis in original.

(2) Strong positions, or ictuses, are such positions in the design of any meter, on which the word stresses **can** fall if these words have a length of *i+1* or more syllables where *i* Î **N**0 (*i* being the number of syllables in a constant or maximum inter-ictic interval, on which see below).

(3) Weak positions, or inter-ictic intervals, are such positions in the design of any meter on which the word stresses **cannot** fall if these words have a length of *i+1* or more syllables.

(4) If the line fits more than one meter, preference is given to the one with less variation (*v*) in the volume of inter-ictic intervals (*i*).

(5) Rule 4 can be applied to a particular line only if it also applies to all other lines of the poem at the same time.

It is a constructive definition, and therefore describes meter in its relationship to rhythm. Rule 1 defines the conditions for generating the rhythm of schematic word stresses; Rule 2 defines the conditions for generating the rhythm of word boundaries; Rule 3 defines the conditions for generating the rhythm of extra-schematic word stresses; Rule 4 epitomizes the idea of metrical hierarchy;[40] and Rule 5 asserts the insufficiency of a "horizontal" analysis of verse structure, which must always be corrected by a "vertical" analysis of the metrical context.

The latter rule also applies to the issue of metrically ambivalent lines, **both** metrical interpretations of which imply the **same** variation (*v*) of the volume of inter-ictic intervals (*i*). Thus, some rhythmic forms of binary meters are isomorphic to the rhythmic forms of ternary meters. Both binary and ternary meters have zero variation in the volume of inter-ictal intervals ($v = 0$). The metrical ambivalence of this type of verse in a homometric context is considered a rhythmic characteristic of verse rather than its metrical characteristic.

If the metrical repertory includes iambic, trochaic, dactylic, amphibrachic, anapestic, paeanic, *dolnik* and *taktovik* meters, then $1 \leq i \leq 3$. If we replenish the repertory with the meters based on a pentasyllabic foot (hyper-paean) and a hexasyllabic foot (hexon), then $1 \leq i \leq 5$. If we then add non-classical logaoedic meters of the "Todáy is a bád dáy" type, then $0 \leq i \leq 5$. As regards "pure" tonic verse (also referred to as "accentual verse"), the question remains of a maximum volume of its inter-ictic interval. For the sake of simplicity, we will consider this interval theoretically unrestricted (*i* Î **N**0), although it has an empirical limit[41] (in the examples examined by Kolmogorov, Zhirmunsky and Gasparov, the unstressed interval varies from 0 to 8 syllables[42].

[40]Gasparov wrote that "each stricter meter on the steps of this staircase is inevitably an individual rhythm of a freer meter": M. L. Gasparow, *Sovremennyj russkij stich : metrika i ritmika* (Moskwa: Nauka, 1974), 308. An hierarchized multilevel list of metrical patterns is found in: Pilszczikow and Starostin, 'Problema awtomaticzeskogo raspoznawanija mietra: siłłabotonika, dolnik, taktowik'.

[41]M. Lotman, 'Russkij stich. Osnownyje razmiery, wchodiaszczije w jewropiejskij mietriczeskij fond', in *Słowiańska metryka porównawcza. VI. Europejskie wzorce metryczne w literaturach słowiańskich*, ed. L. Pszczołowska and D. Urbańska, vol. VI: Europejskie wzorce metryczne w literaturach słowiańskich (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich, 1995), 330, 324, fn. 75.

[42]cf. W.M. Żirmunskij, 'Stichosłożenije Majakowskogo', *Russkaja litieratura*, no. 4 (1964): 12.

The proposed constructive definition applies to various systems of versification used in Russian poetic tradition. They differ from each other in the type of *metrical period* (the syllabic distance from one ictus to another, that is the series of syllables consisting of the ictus and the inter-ictic interval).[43] In syllabic-accentual (syllabotonic) verse, the **metrical period** (traditionally referred to as "foot") has a fixed and constant volume of inter-ictic intervals (it is the same in different feet). In logaoedic verse, the metrical period has a fixed but not constant volume of inter-ictic intervals (it is different in different feet). In *dolniks* and *taktoviks*, the metrical period has a variable, but a limitedly varying volume of inter-ictic intervals (each particular meter has a minimum and maximum volume, within which the inter-ictic interval varies). In accentual verse, the metrical period has a variable and unlimitedly varying volume of inter-ictic intervals.

It follows from rules 2 and 3 that extra-schematic stresses (i.e., stresses on weak positions in words whose syllabic length ≤ *i*)[44] and skipped schematic stresses on the ictuses[45] are possible in all of these meters.

Gasparov considered *dolniks* and *taktoviks* "transitional" meters on the way from syllabic-accentual verse to "pure" accentual verse[46]. I would suggest that they are a separate type of verse (Mihhail Lotman calls it accentual-syllabic, as opposed to syllabic-accentual or syllabotonic[47]) and abandon the idea of "transitional" systems altogether. But whether or not to separate *dolniks* and *taktoviks* into a special system of versification depends on the definition of what a "versification system" is an issue beyond the scope of this article.

[43]I introduce this term by analogy with Tomashevsky's term "*accentual period*, i.e. the syllabic distance from one stress to another"Tomaszewskij, *Russkoje stichosłożenije. Mietrika*, 14 original emphasis. A caveat, with which the author of the original term would agree: what we should take into consideration is a syllabic distance from one *metrical (schematic)* stress to another, i.e. form one ictus to another.

[44]This rule is known as "the Jakobson-Tomashevsky thesis about the impossibility of shifting the accent in Russian [poetry] within a word": V. Erlich, *Russian Formalism. History — Doctrine*, 2., popr (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), 220. Compare Jakobson: "[...] a stressed syllable can realize a *temps faible* [...] and, vice versa, a stressed syllable [can realize] a *temps fort* [...] provided that these syllables do not belong to the same word [...]. To put it another way, the word cannot be rhythmically trans-accentuated": R.O. Jakobson, *O czeszskom stichie prieimuszczestwienno w sopostawleniji s russkim* (Berlin: Opojaz — MLK, 1923), 29. According to Tomashevsky, "a word with an additional [i.e. extra-schematic. — *IP*] stress should be shorter than a foot period" (M.L.K. 1919, 'Archiw Instituta russkogo jazyka imieni W. W. Winogradowa RAN (Moskwa). F. 20. Jed. chr. 2.II: Protokoły zasiedanij Moskowskogo lingwisticzeskogo krużka za 1919 god.', 1919.): in Russian syllabic-accentual (syllabotonic) verse, "non-metrical stress can fall on words that fit within a merically unstressed interval and do not extend to the metrically stressed syllables. To put it another way, in classical [Russian] verse non-metrical stresses are only allowed on monosyllabic words in iamb and trochee, whereas in dactyl, anapaest and amphibrach, they are allowed on both monosyllabic and disyllabic words": Tomaszewskij, *Russkoje stichosłożenije. Mietrika*, 62; Gasparow, *Sovremennyj russkij stich : metrika i ritmika*, 4. For more details see I. A. Pilshchikov, 'Zasiedanije Moskowskogo lingwisticzeskogo krużka 1 ijunia 1919 goda i zarożdienije stichowiedczeskich koncepcij O. Brika, B. Tomaszewskogo i R. Jakobsona', *Revue des études slaves, t* LXXXVIII, no. 1/2 (2017): 51–56; I.A. Pilszczikow and A.B. Ustinow, 'Moskowskij Lingwisticzeskij Krużok i stanowlenije russkogo stichowiedienija (1919–1920)', in *Unacknowledged Legislators. Studies in Russian Literary History and Poetics in Honor of Michael Wachtel*, ed. L. Fleishman, D.M. Bethea, and I. Vinitsky, vol. 50 (Berlin [etc.]: Peter Lang, 2020), 393–94.

[45]We can often hear that it is impossible to skip schematic stresses in pure tonic verse. This is prejudice or oversimplification: Lotman, 'Russkij stich. Osnownyje razmiery, wchodiaszczije w jewropiejskij mietriczeskij fond', 332; M. Lotman, 'O sistiemach stichosłożenija (prieimuszczestwienno na matieriale estonskogo i russkogo sticha)', *Trudy po znakowym sistiemam* 26 (1998): 224; compare Gasparow, *Sovremennyj russkij stich : metrika i ritmika*, 428; J. Bailey, 'The Accentual Verse of Majakovskij's «Razgovor s fininspiektorom o poèzii"', in *Slavic Poetics: Essays in Honor of Kiril Taranovsky, red*, ed. R. Jakobson, C.H.Van Schooneveld, and D.S. Worth (Paris: Mouton, 1973), 29–31; Dż Bejli, *Izbrannyje stat'ji po russkomu litieraturnomu stichu* (Moskwa: Jazyki sławianskoj kultury, 2004), 285–88.

[46]Gasparow, *Sovremennyj russkij stich : metrika i ritmika*, 16, 220–21, 306, 308; Gasparow, *Russkij stich naczala XX wieka w kommientarijach, Izdanije wtoroje (dop.)*, 130, 133, 135.

[47]Lotman, 'O sistiemach stichosłożenija (prieimuszczestwienno na matieriale estonskogo i russkogo sticha)', 237.

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KEYWORDS

verse

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METER

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Abstract:
A definition is called descriptive (or theoretical) when it identifies the object by enumeration of its properties or functions. A constructive (or practical) definition is an explicit description of its arrangement. Russian verse theorists proposed several *theoretical* definitions of verse (as opposed to prose), which are not, however, convertible into a *constructive* definition (a list of formal differences between verse and prose). To date, we are still not capable of developing an algorithm which would enable us to distinguish between prose and verse in general, but leading prosodists have produced both theoretical and constructive definitions of versification systems, verse meters, verse rhythm, and particular rhythmic types of individual meters.

This article examines definitions of verse and description**s** of the relationships between meter and rhythm proposed by scholars of Russian poetry. Building on their observations, the author devises a constructive definition of the concept of "meter" as a system of permissions and prohibitions that govern the distribution of word stresses and word boundaries in a verse line. The article also formulates constructive definitions for the versification systems used in Russian poetry (such as syllabotonic verse, logaoedic verse, *dolnik* and *taktovik*, and pure accentual verse).

rhythmical impulse

VERSIFICATION SYSTEM

RHYTHM

rhythmization

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