

A study on Shakespeare's verse in its historical context (Marina Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama, 1561–1642*, Ashgate, 2014)

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Marina Tarlinskaja's new book about English verse culture is a remarkable study. As typical of Tarlinskaja's monographs, it is substantial 411 + XI pages with a very densely typeset text. The book includes a considerable amount of statistical data which are valuable not only for this book, but also to future researchers.

The book consists of six chapters. The first, "Why Study Versification? Versification Analysis; Tests" is an introduction to the theme and includes the description of methodological basis (pp. 1–32). The second chapter, "How It All Began: From Surrey's *Aeneid* to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*" (pp. 33–68), gives an overview of the historical prosody of English verse in the 16th and 17th centuries. The particular focus of this chapter is on the stressing of disyllabic words in New Modern English. The third chapter, "Early Elizabethan Playwrights: Kyd, Marlowe, Green, Peele, Early Shakespeare. 2, 3 *Henry VI* and *Arden of Faversham*" (pp. 69–122), analyses the rhythm of Shakespeare's older contemporaries in comparison with young Shakespeare, with special attention to Marlowe. The fourth chapter is titled "Shakespeare's Versification: Evolution, Co-authored Plays. The Poem *A Lover's Complaint*" (pp. 123–199). In this chapter the prosody and evolution of Shakespeare's verse is studied, as well as his collaboration with other authors. Shakespeare's authorship of the poem *A Love's Complaint* is contested. The fifth chapter, "Jacobean and Caroline Playwrights: From Shakespeare to Shirley" (pp. 193–256), focuses on the later years of Shakespeare in comparison with his younger contemporaries. The sixth chapter summarises the book and carries the title "Conclusions: Shakespeare and Versification, 1540s–1640s" (pp. 257–286).

## Studies on rhythm

Marina Tarlinskaja has investigated English verse for over half a century, focusing on different problems of verse rhythm. Living in two cultural worlds, Tarlinskaja has applied the methods of statistical verse analysis called “the Russian method” (Bailey 1975, 1979) to the English material. This review will mainly focus on Tarlinskaja’s latest book (2014), but some issues from her earlier works, especially her monographs (Tarlinskaja 1976, 1987 and 1993), will be dealt with as well.

The Russian tradition of versification studies is characterised by three main directions. These are, first, the statistical analysis of verse; the second direction, based on the acquired data, is a typological and historical study of verse including the dating and attribution of literary works; and the third direction is the study on semantic mechanisms of verse form.

As regards the analysis of rhythm, the basis of the Russian method is the distinction between metre and rhythm. Metre is an abstract scheme, while rhythm is a stochastic process that takes place in concrete lines against the background of metre. Russian scholars have discussed whether metre is a precondition of rhythm (Zhirmunsky 1925) or its generalisation (Tomashevsky 1929, 1959), but the distinction between metre and rhythm has never been questioned. For Marina Tarlinskaja as well, this is the main methodological principle: the first cornerstone of versification research is the differentiation between the abstract metrical scheme and actual stresses in actual texts (Tarlinskaja 2014: 4, 258). But Tarlinskaja goes even further: she shows that although sometimes verse metre precedes rhythm, occasionally metre is crystallised from rhythm in the course of verse evolution (Tarlinskaja 2014: 3–11).

Although Andrej Belyj (1910) was the first to use statistics in his studies of Russian rhythms, Boris Tomashevsky’s works (1929, 1959, 1977) laid a scientific ground for verse analysis. Tomashevsky did not confine himself to fixing the statistics of stresses in verse, but compared it to the so-called theoretical rhythm that he calculated on the basis of the rhythmical lexicon of the Russian language. This allowed him to distinguish between the rhythmical impulse of the language and the aesthetic choice of a poet. An outstanding mathematician Andrej Kolmogorov improved and specified Tomashevsky’s method (Kolmogorov 1963; Kolmogorov, Kondratov 1962; Kolmogorov, Prokhorov 1963). But it was Mikhail Gasparov who performed the most comprehensive study of Russian verse (Gasparov 1974, 1977 and others). Gasparov was Marina Tarlinskaja’s mentor, colleague, collaborator and friend.

In Tarlinskaja’s works, the rhythmicity of English verse has been described on the basis of large quantities of material; she took into account not just the stress

profiles, but also word boundaries and syntactic relations between adjacent words. Tarlinskaja has analysed a big bulk of the most important verse metres in English poetry: iambic pentameter, iambic and trochaic tetrameter, ternary metres and the strict stress-metre (the 'dolnik') (Tarlinskaja 1976, 1993).

Marina Tarlinskaja not only uses the "Russian method" to analyse English verse but has made considerable improvements and modifications to it. First, she has not just counted the stressed and unstressed syllables, but analysed which parts of speech occur in which position in verse (Tarlinskaja 1967, 1972a, 1984). While before only strong and weak positions were distinguished in verse, now these positions have obtained certain morphological characteristics. Since the achieved results were extremely fruitful, she applied the modified method in its turn to analyse Russian poetry (Tarlinskaja 1972b).

The next feature that characterises Marina Tarlinskaja's works is directly connected with the previous trait. Tarlinskaja sets apart not just stressed and unstressed syllables, but takes into account also the gradation of stresses, for instance, distinguishing between phrasal stresses and lexical stresses, and phrasal stresses may appear in verse as proclitics and enclitics. Even more detailed is her differentiation of word boundaries.

Marina Tarlinskaja has studied the major body of English verse text starting from pre-Chaucerian poetry and ending with Frost, but in the centre of her attention has always been Shakespeare and his period. The reviewed work is the second monograph by Marina Tarlinskaja, which deals with Shakespeare. The first (Tarlinskaja 1987) was devoted to the detailed analysis of the rhythm of Shakespeare's iambic pentameter. Tarlinskaja had not just described its rhythmic profile, but had studied the so-called "rhythmic figures" (that is, deviations from the metre) and their rhythmic-grammatical patterns.

The statistical analysis of verse elucidated not only the individual stylistic features of certain works or even authors, but also the directions of the evolution of verse rhythm. Already Andrej Belyj (1910) showed that there are significant differences in the rhythm of iambic tetrameter of the 18th and 19th century Russian authors. Kiril Taranovsky's fundamental study (1953) made it possible to describe Russian verse in significantly more detail, to add a transitional period between the 18th and the 19th centuries, and to further specify different rhythmical types in the 18th and the 19th centuries. It turned out that the whole evolution of Russian binary metres beginning with the 18th century has been subjected to the same regularities, and in his later works (1982) Taranovsky ventured to date the yet undated works on the basis of their rhythmic particulars with the precision of ten years.

In 1973 Miroslav Červenka claimed that evolution characterises only Russian verse, and that there has been no consistent evolution, for instance,

in Czech verse, where one can merely characterise the rhythmic structure of every particular author's oeuvre, but that there was no general regularity. James Bailey (1975) came to a similar conclusion regarding the English iambic tetrameter analysed with the help of the Russian method. Tarlinskaja, who has studied a considerably larger bulk of material and has not confined herself to just one parameter or one metre, showed that Bailey's conclusion was questionable.

One has to keep in mind that although Červenka too proceeds from the methods of Russian formalism and Prague structuralism (following Tomashevsky and Mukařovský), his paper, similarly to some of his other works, is polemical and directed against the standpoints of Kiril Taranovsky and Roman Jakobson. His criticism is not restricted to the Czech material: he makes similar generalisations about Russian verse. Yet Červenka's own data reveal that, first, there are rhythmic regularities in Czech verse too, and Červenka even calls the observed regularity 'progressive accentual dissimilation', by analogy with Taranovsky's term 'regressive accentual dissimilation'. And secondly, he observed certain evolutionary features. The prosody of the Estonian language is similar to Czech: both languages have phonologically relevant stress fixed on the first syllable of a polysyllabic word, and both have contrast of quantity. In Estonian verse, similarly to Russian, we observe both the progressive accentual dissimilation of feet and the rhythmic distinctions between different periods, and this is true of both trochee and iamb (see, for instance, Lotman, Lotman 2011, 2013, 2014).

Tarlinskaja's studies of verse rhythm are important not only in the context of English versification, but also the general verse theory. The history of English verse covers a much longer chronological period compared even to Czech verse, not to speak of Russian and particularly Estonian verse. In latter cases, we are dealing with just a two or three hundred years of existence, while the English verse history has been much longer and uninterrupted. Tarlinskaja's studies have revealed that in English verse we also see an evolution of rhythm. Several features do not develop lineally (like, for instance, the evolutionary direction in Russian verse discovered by Taranovsky), but in a wave-like pattern, from stricter – to looser – to stricter – to looser canon. Yet there is an important parameter whose change shows a relatively consistent change in the same direction. This is the frequency of stressing of strong metrical positions. In this area we see the same general tendency in English verse that we had previously observed in Russian verse: the average stressing of strong metrical positions on the whole decreased, although in English, this tendency is not linear. In Chaucer's iambic pentameter, this index is 84.8%, in Shakespeare 79.6%, in Donne 76.4%, in Swinburne 75.3%). At the same time, this regularity is not

characteristic of weak syllabic positions. On the contrary, in Chaucer's verse it is rather low (8.1%), then it starts to increase and reaches 19.1% in Donne and achieves a maximum level in Swinburne: 20.8%. However, this evolution was not linear and in Classicist and Romanticist a symmetrical, but opposite tendency can be observed: the average stressing of strong positions increases, reaching 86% in Dryden and Pope, and that of weak positions decreases up to 5% in Pope, Wordsworth and Byron (Tarlinskaja 1976: 279–280).

Similar tendencies are also observed in the evolution of iambic tetrameter (Tarlinskaja 1976: 260). Thus, the verse rhythm does not become lighter (in Mikhail Gasparov's sense; Gasparov 1977), but the contrast between strong and weak syllabic positions falls and the degree of freedom in poetry increases. All this means that the verse metre as an abstract scheme needs decreasingly less physical expression in rhythm, and it therefore allows more liberties in realising both strong and weak positions. These are the most general processes, which reveal themselves in different eras in different ways. More particulars of rhythmic-syntactic and lexical patterns allow us to make the concept of metre more concrete.

In the rhythmic structure of iambic pentameter Tarlinskaja demonstrates periods of alternation of more strict and less strict periods. The first period, Chaucer's iamb, is more rigorous, then in the 15th century the metrical constraints become looser, next, after that period of looseness, the early Elizabethan verse becomes more constrained again. In the Jacobean drama the constraints become less rigorous again, and then in Carolinian versification there is a return to a Shakespeare-like mode. The Classicist poets become even more constrained, while in the Romantic poetry the less constrained verse re-emerges anew.

The evolution of English versification is not only global, but concerns also the development of individual authors, just like in Russian verse the rhythmic structure of Pushkin's works, for example, enables us to date his poems quite precisely. Marina Tarlinskaja pays particular attention to the rhythmical evolution of Shakespeare. She has described several different periods in his verse. Evolution occurred, for example, in the stressing, in the location of strong syntactic breaks within his lines, and in the line endings (syllabic, accentual and syntactic: run-on lines). There was a period of relatively numerous feminine endings in early Shakespeare, then a 5-year period of few feminine endings, and then a remarkable growth of their number in later Shakespeare.

The studies of the evolution of rhythmical structure allow Tarlinskaja to determine or to question the traditional dating of certain works. Thus, she has shown that Ford's "Tis Pity She's a Whore" was probably written much earlier than commonly believed. Also, having analysed Ford's works, Tarlinskaja offers

a hypothesis that the rhythmical peculiarities of “The Laws of Candy” make us look for a collaborator in composing this play. But this will bring us to the next set of questions.

## Attribution

Marina Tarlinskaja started her research with the analysis of the rhythmical structure, but already one of her first publications deals with attribution (1973). Verse rhythm is an important tool in attribution of poetic texts, because it is not usually connected with a conscious intention of the author but is formed mostly subconsciously as a synthesis of the language material, the mode of the epoch and the individual preferences of the poet. Tarlinskaja (1973: 419) cites Boris Tomashevsky’s claim that “... rhythm is inertia created by the chain of verses. And this inertia is individual for every poet. It is easy to forge a word. But in order to forge a verse rhythm the forger has to study the imitated rhythm very hard, and few forgers have done the preliminary work thoroughly enough to be ready for a flawless imitation, it takes a careful study of minute details, hard work and a good ear to become a tolerable imitator of verse rhythm...” (Tomashevsky 1929: 249).

In the area of attribution we need to distinguish between two types of research. The aim of the first type is to uncover forgeries and mistaken authorships, so-to-say, exclusive attribution. Here we have to determine whether a text or fragment in question is at all possible in a given author or a given work. Thus, for instance, according to Tomashevsky’s analysis of the rhythmical structure of the alleged final part of Pushkin’s unfinished dramatic poem “Mermaid”, the author of the forgery was Pushkin’s epigone who composed his text more than half a century after Pushkin’s death. Tomashevsky showed that the structure of its word boundaries made the end of “The Mermaid” impossible for Pushkin’s versification style of that period. The author of this paper, together with Yuri Lotman, revealed that the alleged fragments attributed to Chapter 10 of Pushkin’s “Eugene Onegin” were also nothing but a later forgery. The statistical analysis along other parameters used in addition to the analysis of rhythm, such as the length of words (Lotman, Lotman 1986) confirmed the results obtained by the analysis of verse rhythm.

In her earlier work Marina Tarlinskaja had used the exclusive attribution, for example, in the analysis of the third part of the English translation of “Roman de la Rose” (1973). The original text had two authors, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. In the English translation, three parts are

distinguished, marked with letters A, B and C. The authorship of the first part is usually not doubted, it is believed to be by Chaucer. The second part (B) could not belong to Chaucer: its author is from Lincolnshire and uses dialect forms typical of this region. The authorship of part C, the style of which is close to the first, was questionable. Tarlinskaja's approach to this issue is complex. She analyses several parameters, using a large bulk of text as a comparison. She uses statistical data in order to perform three tests: first, the syllabic structure of the verse, second, the distribution of certain monosyllabic words to different positions in verse and third, the rhythmic inversion, that is, the placement of stresses of polysyllabic words on weak syllabic positions (Tarlinskaja includes only original Anglo-Saxon words in her analysis, since this way there are no different interpretations in the position of word accent). In addition to that, she uses a whole number of qualitative factors. She concludes that part C could not have been written by Chaucer, but rather by his epigone, who tried to follow his style, yet managed to do so only to a small extent.

Similar tests were reported in Tarlinskaja's later works too. In the 2014 book the final section of Chapter 4 is dedicated to a poem "A Lover's Complaint". The poem has been traditionally ascribed to Shakespeare and included into his Complete Works, but his authorship of the poem has been from time to time questioned. An ardent proponent of the Shakespearean authorship of the poem has always been MacDonald P. Jackson (Jackson 1965, 2008), while Brian Vickers has recently claimed that the author was a minor poet of the early 1600s John Davies of Hereford (Vickers 2007). Tarlinskaja, using versification tests, has convincingly shown in the reviewed book that neither mature Shakespeare nor Davies were possible authors of "A Lover's Complaint", and that it had been written at the end of the 16th century by a still unknown minor poet, a follower of Spenser.

This shows how negative attribution excluding the text from the author's oeuvre is closely related to positive attribution. A good example of positive attribution is the case of the Jacobean comedy "The Spanish Gypsy", in which Tarlinskaja confirmed its authorship by John Ford, Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker (Tarlinskaja 2014: 244–247). At the same time Tarlinskaja excludes William Rowley's co-authorship in the iambic pentameter parts of the play, but admits that he might have contributed prose exchanges and songs (Tarlinskaja 2014: 243–246).

Even more complicated is the analysis of the authorship of "Henry VI". There have been lots of discussions, whether Shakespeare wrote the three parts alone or were there co-authors. The suggested co-authors in Part 1 have been Nashe, Kyd, Marlowe, but also unidentified authors. It has to be reminded here that at that time the authorship, especially in the case of theatre texts, was

significantly different from our present day understandings, although even today a stage director or a literary consultant may change the text for the purposes of the staging. During Shakespeare's times the author had no copyright of his own work: the text belonged to the theatre company. In "Henry VI" the three parts are different in the sense that they seem to have been written by different authors. In her negative attribution, Tarlinskaja excludes Marlowe, who was at one time suggested the author of Part 2 (Craig 2009: 40–77; compare Tarlinskaja 2014: 112–114). As to the positive attribution, first, Tarlinskaja identifies the scenes that are indisputably Shakespearean. Act 1 in 1 "Henry VI" seems to be Nashe's, and in the other parts a possible collaborator might have been Kyd. A careful comparison with statistical data of different texts allows Tarlinskaja to make an assumption that the unidentified collaborator of different scenes in Parts 2 and 3 of "Henry VI" may well have been the same person (2014: 116). Here we approach the field which could be called forensic study of verse.

Thus, statistical analysis enables not only to determine the authorship of anonymous work but to solve even more complicated problems related to attribution. A very exciting story concerns a play published in the 18th century, "Double Falsehood". A minor poet Lewis Theobald published the play in 1727, claiming that it is based on "Mister Shakespeare's manuscript" which Theobald had revised. Not all the critics believed Theobald – it was the age when the interest in Shakespeare was renewed, and thus the knowledgeable public suspected that the play might have been a money-making stunt. An influential poet and literary critic Alexander Pope considered "Double Falsehood" a forgery and did not include it in Shakespeare's corpus (see, for instance, Hammond 2012: 87–89). A meticulous statistical analysis allowed Tarlinskaja first to detect an earlier adaptation in Lewis Theobald's play and later to identify the author of the earlier adaptation: it was William Davenant. The early adaptation was dated 1670–1680. As for the text itself, it is an adaptation of Shakespeare-Fletcher's drama "Cardenio", written probably in 1613 and after the closure of the theatres in 1642 considered lost. Tarlinskaja shows, using statistical methods, that Shakespeare and Fletcher were the collaborators of "Cardenio" that was to become "Double Falsehood", and she identified the parts tentatively by Shakespeare that had been reworked by later adapters, and the parts clearly written by Fletcher. Lewis Theobald (and probably Davenant before him) made significant revisions especially in the portion written by Shakespeare.

## Semantics of verse

In the study of Russian verse semantics, Kiril Taranovsky was the first to formulate the problem in contemporary terms. He analysed the whole bulk of Russian binary metres from the 18th century to the first half of the 20th century and discovered that all texts written in trochaic pentameter are semantically interrelated (Taranovsky 1953: 274; 1963). In all these texts we find the theme of journey, be it an actual travel or, metaphorically, the course of life. What could be the reason behind it?

One of the causes is obvious and has not been disputed much. The founder of this tradition is Mikhail Lermontov with his famous elegy written in 1841 (see Shapir 1991). All the consequent authors took this into account in one way or another. Taranovsky showed that this link of a metre with the theme was not as much an abstract scheme but a concrete rhythmic-syntactic structure, a formula in its own way. However this was only part of his explanation. The problem is that there were also texts written before the Lermontov elegy was published where the same theme of the road could be detected. Furthermore, supporting Roman Jakobson reconstruction of general Slavonic epic verse (a decasyllable with trochaic tendency, see Jakobson 1966), Taranovsky claimed that this structure was best preserved in the bylinas, where the theme of the journey prevails (“Vavila’s journey with the skomorokhs”). Moreover, Taranovsky hypothesised (or even claimed) that this particular rhythmic type of trochaic pentameter has a psychological, motor and synesthetic connection with the idea of movement. All that means that the relationship between metre and meaning encompasses different semantic mechanisms: conventional connection, which is based on a tradition (in Charles Sanders Peirce’s terms we could speak of symbolic meaning here), as well as on a direct (iconic) link. The latter idea has been contested, and Mikhail Gasparov, the most meticulous and prolific researcher of Russian verse semantics acknowledged only the conventional association.

The latter approach is also characteristic to Tarlinskaja; compare especially her analysis of thematic associations in Tarlinskaja 1993: 121–188. Tarlinskaja studies not only the thematic associations of verse metres, but also formulae which make it possible to create a link between rhythm, syntax, morphology and lexicon. Here her studies are analogous to the research of Russian verse by Mikhail Gasparov (1999). However, what is new in Tarlinskaja’s studies of verse semantics, are rhythmical italics. This is, in a way, the most traditional research subject. For a long time, critics have pointed out lines or whole passages where changes in rhythm accompany the theme of swift movement or other strong actions. Such observations may or may not have been true; they

were usually unsystematic and subjective. Tarlinskaja has a different approach here: she treats the link between verse form and meaning as rhythmical italics. The semantic role of “deviations” emerges from rhythmical deviations (two to four syllables long) regularly accompanying micro-situations of motion. The deviations of recurring rhythmical structures often contain similar or identical morphological and syntactic patterns and recurring key lexicon dealing with motion (the verbs “shake, tremble, pierce, run” and the nouns “wings, hand, arm, head, neck; wind, wave”). Thus, the concept of “rhythm and meaning” had acquired a linguistic basis; it became a rhythmical, grammatical and lexical phenomenon. It turned out that rhythmical italics were a learned skill: their number doubled from the early to late Shakespeare.

Studies on the semantics of rhythm are not only important for the theory of verse, but also for the general semiotics (Lotman 1988, 1989, 2012). John Hollander (1975, 1989, compare also Tarlinskaja 2012) has brought to notice that verse metre and verse rhythm have different semantic mechanisms. Verse metre is like an emblem, that is, the link between metre and meaning is conventional, based on tradition, and in Peirce’s terms a symbolic mechanism of the sign. The meaning of rhythm is more *ad hoc*, at first glance it does not seem to be based on any kind of tradition or convention, but is connected with the immediate influence of rhythm (sometimes we could even speak of synesthetic influence in Taranovsky’s sense; see especially 1966), that is, this is an iconic mechanism of sign. However, although the semantic mechanism of verse rhythm is more difficult to formalise and involves a danger of subjectivism, such mechanisms do exist, and they are important both from the aesthetic and general semiotic perspective. Tarlinskaja’s verse analyses have shown that the formulae had become, in their own way, emblematic. The recurring link between similar rhythmic deviations from iamb with grammar and semantics was clearly felt already by the Renaissance authors and made fun of the 18th-century poet Alexander Pope.

Among the few shortcomings of the book some misprints and errors should be mentioned (for example, in “The White Devil” by Webster the sum of simple, compound and compound heavy endings does not equal their separate percent). The book would have benefited from the increased clarity of charts: the charts where multiple authors are compared (for example, p. 144) are rather difficult to interpret. The table of content is unsatisfactory, which is especially odd, since the book itself is well structured and the steps from one subject to another are numbered and have subheadings; if these subtitles had been included into the table of contents, the usefulness of the book would have greatly increased.

What can annoy some readers (in addition to the fact that some literary scholars still reject any studies based on quantitative methods) is that it may seem old-fashioned to linguists. For half a century Tarlinskaja has been working practically in the same theoretical paradigm, widening and deepening her research, yet without changing her methodological basis. Generative metric, optimality theory, different directions of cognitive versification have remained outside Tarlinskaja's sphere of interests. One cannot say that she does not know these notions: she translated, for example, a paper by Morris Halle and Samuel Jay Keyser (1979) already before emigrating from the Soviet Union. From Halle-Keyser's approach she has borrowed the markings S and W to signify what the structuralists called 'ictus' (strong metrical positions) and 'non-ictus' (weak positions). But here we are rather dealing with the loan of abbreviations; the analysis and the presentation of results are purely structuralist and just like in Mikhail Gasparov's works, with a certain touch of positivism. There are indeed readers who might consider such old-fashioned approach a weakness of this study, but I would rather call it "faithfulness to the school". After all, in empirical studies theory plays an auxiliary part, without theoretical bases an empirical study falls apart, yet theory is only scaffolding of a kind, the purpose of which is to build a house, but not to be a thing in itself. Furthermore, we have recently come across studies that eclectically join different modern theories and terms; the result of such thinking can be read at best as an interesting essay. However, such theoretical framework does not allow the authors to arrive at new findings in the studied material. In this context, Tarlinskaja's rigorous approach to theory and methodology together with the richness of her results particularly stand out. All in all, what matters, is the results, and the copiousness of the latter. In this aspect, all Marina Tarlinskaja's monographs, as well as the reviewed book are especially exemplary.

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