

The Prosody of a Poet's Prose and the Rhythm of Verse⁵

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Among Russian scholars, it has been traditional to consider the rhythm of prose as a neutral language background for the study of verse prosody. However, studies made at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21th century show that among prosaic texts one can individuate a special text corpus of the so-called “poet’s prose” that rhythmically essentially differs from common prose. Thus, a hypothesis arises that the experience of verse-writing could influence the poet’s prosaic texts. Earlier studies by Evgeny Kazartsev show that there are strong grounds for this hypothesis. Further observations give a more complete idea of this influence.

Traditionally, in this theme, special attention is paid to Pushkin’s prose. Vladislav Kholshevnikov initiated the study of so-called occasional iambs, verse-like fragments in prose, based on Pushkin’s *The Tales of Belkin*. This study was continued in the works of Kazartsev. They showed that the rhythm of such fragments reveals certain connections with verse. Practically opposite results were obtained by Aleksandr Prokhorov in his analysis of Pushkin’s *The Queen of Spades*. It should be noted that Prokhorov did not take into account the syntagmatic integrity of – “iambic” fragments chosen for the analysis (Kholshevnikov and Kazartsev considered this integrity). Obviously, that is why his data differ from those obtained by Kholshevnikov and Kazartsev on *The Tales of Belkin*.

The study of accidental iambs in *The Queen of Spades*, on the basis of the syntagmatic approach used in the present work, reveals, on the one hand, the similarity of their prosodic characteristics to the results obtained on *The Tales of Belkin*, and, on the other hand, a similarity to the rhythmic characteristics of early works by Pushkin.

It is interesting that the rhythm of occasional iambs in Pushkin’s novel *Dubrovsky* differs from his verse and from characteristics of his other prosaic works. It approaches the language model that is typical of “pure” prose (by non-poets).

Thus, it turns out that when writing his first prosaic work, *Dubrovsky*, which remained unfinished, Pushkin particularly tried to “reform” himself, to become a true prose writer by excluding all verse influence. However, in later works he, as it were, “relaxed” somewhat, and so this influence revealed itself.

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