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A CENTENNIAL TRIBUTE TO
KIRIL TARANOVSKY

Edited by

BARRY P. SCHERR, JAMES BAILEY, AND



Kiril Fedorovich Taranovsky, 1967

POETRY AND POETICS

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BARRY P. SCHERR

JAMES BAILEY

VIDA T. JOHNSON

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A Comparative Study of the Early Dutch, German, and Russian Iambic Tetrameter

Evgeny Kazartsev

The 16th century played an important role in the development of modern Western European verse. Iambic verse becomes more and more common in English poetry of the time, and practically simultaneously, although with some delay, syllabo-tonic verse becomes established on the continent. Iambs first appear there in the second half of the 16th century among poets of the Southern Netherlands (Brabant and Flemish).

In spite of the fact that the development of the iamb in English poetry evidently aided its formation in other European literatures, it was not English but specifically Dutch poetry—which enjoyed a high prestige during this epoch—that gave the impulse to the dissemination of syllabo-tonic verse.

Dutch poetry of the Golden Age (which began in the 70s of the 16th century and continued until the 70s of the 17th)¹ developed rather independently and exerted a noticeable influence on several other European literatures. The power of its authority is evident, for example, in the fact that the writings of the English poet John Donne became recognized and even world famous only after the outstanding Dutch poet Constantine Huygens translated them into that language.

Two basic syllabo-tonic meters developed in Dutch poetry during the second half of the 16th century, the iambic tetrameter and hexameter, which were later adopted by German poetry and, through it, by Russian verse. The iambic pentameter, which is characteristic of English poetry, became widespread in Europe only much later.

The iambic hexameter of Dutch origin became the basic syllabo-tonic meter in European verse of the 16th–18th centuries. This meter can be seen as an entirely Dutch innovation, which evolved from the French 12-syllable Alexandrine. The Dutch tetrameter line—which to some extent can be traced back to instances of medieval Dutch syllabo-tonic verse—also developed independently.

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¹ The beginning of the Dutch Golden Age is traditionally considered to be 1574, the year of an important victory in the war against Spain, when the city of Leiden was liberated from its Spanish besiegers. In 1581, the Netherlands' northern provinces declared their independence from Spain. The period of the so-called "Dutch War" (1672–78) should apparently be considered as the end of the Golden Age for the Netherlands. The first year of this war became a year of national disaster (*rampjaar*), when the allied armies of France and England, as well as the army of the bishop of Cologne and Münster, occupied a large part of the country. This war greatly weakened the Netherlands.

At the beginning of the 17th century syllabo-tonic verse came to dominate the poetry of the Northern Netherlands (Holland), which was influenced by the iambic prosody that had become perfected in the work of the Brabant poets Filip Marnix van Sint-Aldegonde and Jan van der Noot in the Southern Netherlands in the 16th century. Then, due directly to the influence of Dutch poetry, during the second quarter of the 17th century this verse spread throughout Germany, first and foremost in the writings of Silesian Protestant poets, such as Martin Opitz, Andreas Gryphius, and Angelus Silesius. During the 17th and 18th centuries, mainly through the influence of German sources, syllabo-tonic verse was imported into northern and eastern Europe, including Russia.

Russian and German Verse

In 1953 Kiril Taranovsky carried out the first detailed study of the relationship between early Russian iambs and German verse. As a result of this investigation he put forth the hypothesis that German verse had an influence on early Russian iambs. Furthermore, he saw an influence not only on the meter, but also on the rhythm of Russian verse. It should be noted that Taranovsky's attitude toward his hypothesis changed over the years. In his monograph of 1953, he clearly indicates that the rhythm of the first Russian iambic ode, "... On the Taking of Khotin," depends on that of Johann Christian Günther's ode to Prince Eugene (Taranovsky 1953, 71). But in a later work from 1975 he modified his views. Quite possibly, he was swayed by Viktor Zhirmunskii's 1968 article, where he asserted that the rhythm of Russian iambs was inherent to the Russian language (Zhirmunskii 1968). In 1975, Taranovsky, despite noting the similarity of certain rhythmic features in Russian and German verse, denies the influence of German sources on early Russian iambic poetry, and, following Zhirmunskii, maintains that its rhythm has been formed on the basis of the rhythm found in Russian. As proof, he cites the data for the theoretical iamb, a simple linguistic metrical model, calculated using independent (random) combinations of rhythmic words taken from Russian prose. According to Taranovsky, this data shows an analogy to the rhythmic characteristics of Lomonosov's and Sumarokov's verse (Taranovsky 1975, 36).

It should, however, be noted that in 1975 Taranovsky somewhat changed his earlier statistics for the text of the Khotin ode. This new data differs from Günther's verse to a greater degree (Taranovsky 1975, 33). However, even in this case Taranovsky emphasizes that the rhythmic structure of Lomonosov's Khotin ode is similar to Günther's verse.

On the basis of this new, evidently recalculated data, Taranovsky notices an important feature of the Khotin ode's rhythm: an increase in the frequency of the third rhythmic form, where stress is omitted on the second ictus (*В долине тишина глубокой*) as compared to the fourth rhythmic form, with omitted stress on the penultimate ictus (*То рód отверженной рабы*).

Taranovsky suggests that this feature, which distinguishes the rhythm of the Khotin ode from Lomonosov's subsequent writings, results from a later reworking of

the text. This hypothesis stems from the fact that the original text of the Khotin ode has not survived, and the small excerpts from it that Lomonosov placed in his *Rhetoric* of 1744 and 1748 contain more fully stressed lines than the earliest surviving redaction of the ode, which dates from 1751. However, these facts, in our opinion, do not prove that the original form of the Khotin ode was fully stressed nor that the distribution of rhythmic forms in the initial edition had a different character. One could conjecture that, on the contrary, Lomonosov changed the examples he took for his *Rhetoric* and not the text of the Khotin ode. Lomonosov may have been particularly attentive to the frequency of regular iambic feet in the examples given in his *Rhetoric* and therefore tried to avoid unstressed ictuses. Possibly, in the examples of verse selected for his *Rhetoric*, Lomonosov replaced the third rhythmic form with the first. Thus unstressed ictuses could have appeared in the original version of Lomonosov's ode, and their distribution could have had the same character that is found in its first edition. Marina Krasnoperova examined in detail the supposition that unstressed ictuses were already present in the first version of the Khotin ode; she came to believe that Lomonosov had allowed them through an oversight.²

In any case, a feature of the first Russian iambic ode is the increase in the frequency of the third rhythmic form in comparison with the fourth and a corresponding rise in stressing on the third ictus as compared to the second. Our calculations for the Khotin ode support the results obtained by Taranovsky (see the appendix, table 1).³

The question arises as to how this feature could have come about. Our detailed analysis of verse by Günther and some other German poets such as Johann Christoph Gottsched and Jacob Stählin, whose works were well known to Lomonosov, does not support, in this case, Taranovsky's hypothesis of an influence by German verse (Kazartsev 2001a, 67). Evidently, the rise in stressing on the third ictus as compared to the second was not a constant feature of German verse during this period.

German and Dutch Verse: Analogies

Our research shows that a noticeable rise in stressing on the third ictus, in comparison with the second, consistently occurs mainly in early German iambic verse, especially in that of Martin Opitz (see appendix, table 3). And it is curious that an analogous phenomenon also appears regularly in early iambic verse of the Netherlands. Indeed, during the first decades of its development, tetrameter verse from both the Southern and the Northern Netherlands has as a constant feature an increase in the frequency of

² The idea that the first unstressed ictuses in Russian iambs appeared due to an oversight was expressed for the first time by Boris Tomashevskii, while Marina Krasnoperova carried out an analysis that supported this hypothesis (Krasnoperova 1980, 88).

³ On the whole, our results differ only insignificantly from those reported by Taranovsky. The main difference concerns the presence or absence of the sixth rhythmic form. Taranovsky considered the line «И что на турках тягота» as having two stresses: «И что на турках тяготá», while in our calculations this line was accounted as having three stresses: «И что́ на турках тяготá».

the third rhythmic form as compared to the fourth and a corresponding rise in stressing on the third ictus in comparison with the second (see table 2). This distribution of rhythmic structures apparently does not depend on the authorship or the genre of texts, and it appears up to the end of the 1630s in practically all the Dutch tetrameter poetry we have analyzed.

Thus it turns out that this distribution of the main rhythmic variations with unstressed ictuses and of the stressing on internal ictuses is characteristic of early Dutch, German, and Russian iambs. It can be surmised, therefore, that this feature is universal: possibly, this tendency in the distribution of rhythmic structures occurs at early stages in the development of syllabo-tonic verse irrespective of authorship, genre, and language—and is perhaps associated with the greater attention that poets pay to the penultimate strong position, resulting in a stronger emphasis on it.

If the above hypothesis is correct, the attention Opitz pays to the stressing of the penultimate ictus in his early German iambs is especially great. The German poet clearly singles out this strong position, evidently trying to emphasize the metrical structure of the entire second half of the verse line. As a result, in some texts the stressing on the penultimate ictus is close to that of the last, which is the most frequently stressed (table 3). Opitz's special attention to meter probably provides an explanation for this feature. The punctiliousness of the German poet in maintaining metrical purity is very significant, for he not only introduced the syllabo-tonic system into the practice of writing German poetry, but also created the most integral and consistent theory of his day for such verse.

The Rhythm of Verse and the Rhythm of Language

The fundamental similarity observed in the rhythm of early Dutch, German, and Russian iambic verse could have come about not only as a result of the particular attention poets paid to metrical purity in the second half of the line and not only through the influence, for instance, of Dutch poets on German (in this case an influence of German verse on Lomonosov is unlikely). There is also reason to suggest that this rhythmic structure of verse arose on the basis of language rhythm.

It turns out that the linguistic metrical model (the theoretical iamb) based on the distribution of rhythmic words in Dutch prose (prose dictionary) predicts the distribution of rhythmic structures in Dutch poetry. The principle used for calculating this model—that the rhythmic words in a line of iambic tetrameter are combined dependently—assumes that the choice of each rhythmic word in a line depends on its metrical position and the preceding rhythmic context. The model, which was calculated using text of a highly developed literary language (P.-C. Hooft's prose), predicts an increase in the frequency of the third rhythmic variation in comparison with the fourth and a corresponding rise of stressing on the third ictus as compared to the second (Kazartsev 2006, 2010a). The data in the model are clearly close to those for verse (see table 2 and chart 1). Thus the model that predicts the rhythm of early Dutch iambic verse has been found.

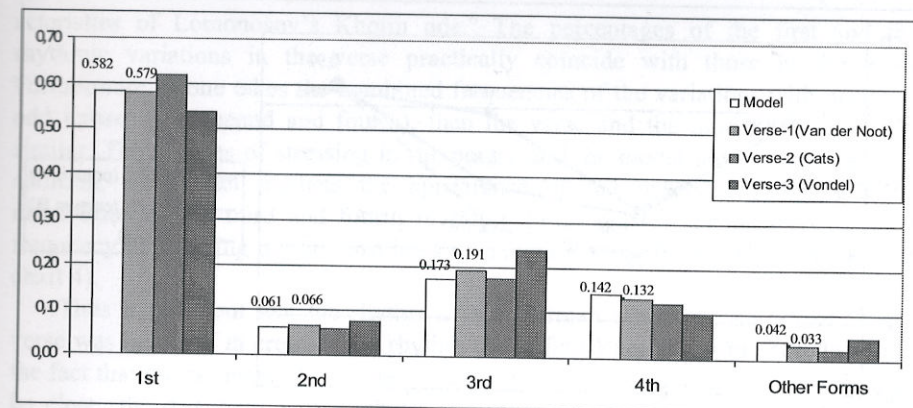


Chart 1. Distribution of Rhythmic Variations in Early Dutch Iambic Verse and in the Model

We have also found a model describing the distribution of rhythmic structures in Opitz's verse. It resulted from calculating the theoretical iamb, again using the principle of dependence, based on the vocabulary of Opitz's own prose (see table 3 and chart 2).⁴ One can surmise that Opitz's individual style in his prose served as the rhythmic source for his verse. However, this German model differs from the Dutch in the manner of constructing the line. It assumes that the author at first forms the beginning or the end of a line and then fills in the middle. Thus, this type of model, which can be called "symmetrical," reflects the author's dependence on framing a

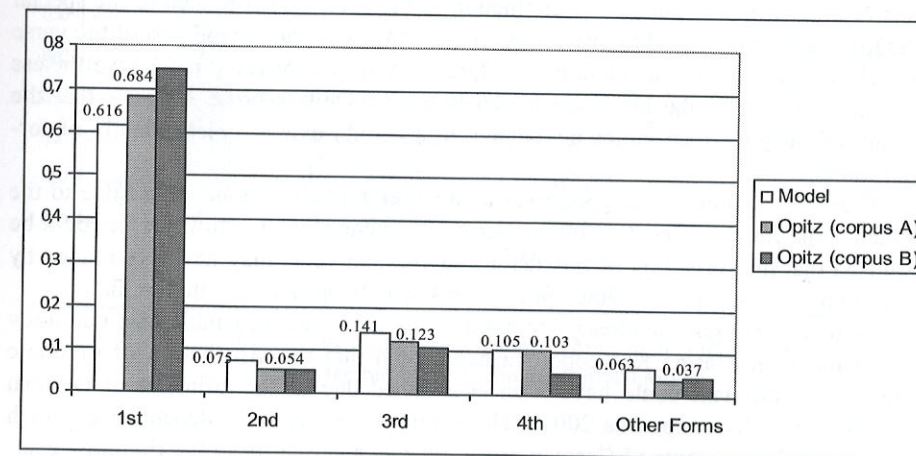


Chart 2. Distribution of Rhythmic Variations in Early German Iambic Verse and in the Model

⁴ See also Kazartsev 2006b and 2008.

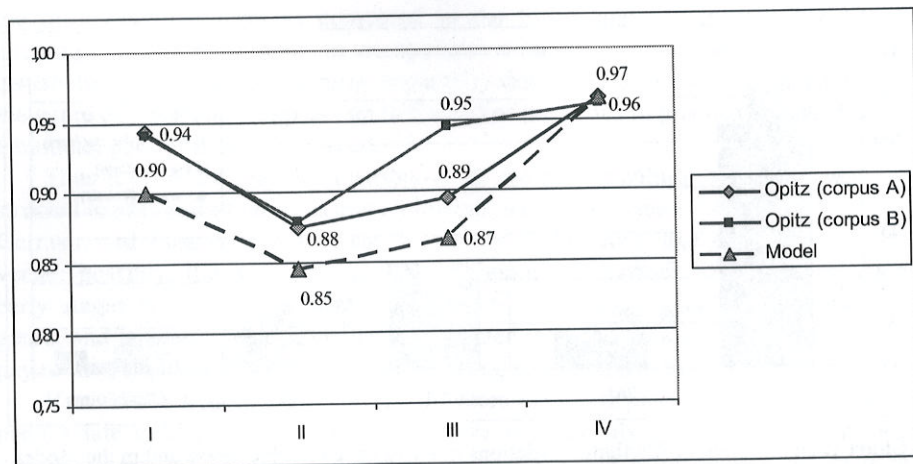


Chart 3. Accent Profiles of M. Opitz's Verse and of the Model

verse line that is formed by the initial and final strong positions.⁵ Conversely, the corresponding model for Dutch verse suggests that authors do not depend on such a framing.

It should be noted that the model corresponding to Opitz's prosody effectively describes only a limited corpus of the poet's works, in which the observed rhythmic tendency is poorly expressed (corpus A). So far, an adequate model has not been found for that verse by Opitz where this tendency clearly appears (corpus B). See chart 3. Therefore, one may conjecture that the extreme rise in stressing on the third ictus in these works is purely a phenomenon of the verse and is related to the special attention that the poet paid to observing metrical purity in the second part of the verse line. However, the fact that a number of Opitz's compositions (corpus A) nevertheless show a similarity to the linguistic model based on Opitz's prose suggests that the rhythm of early German iambs developed, to a certain extent, independently of foreign sources.

Thus, this feature of early German iambic verse likely originated not due to the influence of Dutch poetry, but due to German's innate rhythm. However, it could be surmised that the formation of this feature in German verse may have been aided by the presence of examples in Dutch poetry, with which Opitz was quite familiar.

As to an analogous tendency observed in the first Russian iambic ode, our study carried out with Marina Krasnoperova has shown that the distribution of rhythmic structures in this text could have been established due to the influence of German (Kazartsev and Krasnoperova 2004). The symmetrical model of dependence, which we calculated using texts of German prose, reveals a similarity to the rhythmic char-

⁵ Language models of dependence and independence are a part of the device of reconstructive

acteristics of Lomonosov's Khotin ode.⁶ The percentages of the first and third rhythmic variations in the verse practically coincide with those in the model. Furthermore, if one takes the combined frequencies of the variations with unstressed odd ictuses (the second and fourth), then the verse and the model are again quite similar. The profiles of stressing in the poetry and the model are also analogous. In addition, the model predicts the appearance of the observed tendency in the distribution of the third and fourth rhythmic forms as well as the increase in the frequency of stressing on the third ictus in comparison to the second (see table 4 and chart 4).

Thus it turns out that the rhythm of the German language and not of German verse was involved in creating the rhythm of the first Russian iambic ode. In spite of the fact that the numbers of unstressed ictuses in Russian and German verse appear to be close, the distribution of rhythmic variations in Lomonosov's ode differs from Günther's verse, which does not display the same proportion of the third and fourth variations as the Russian ode. The data cited above show that the characteristic quality of Lomonosov's verse, noted by Taranovsky, apparently developed on the basis of the German language.

This result is somewhat unexpected, since it is difficult to imagine that the formation of a Russian text could depend on a foreign language (as opposed to verse)

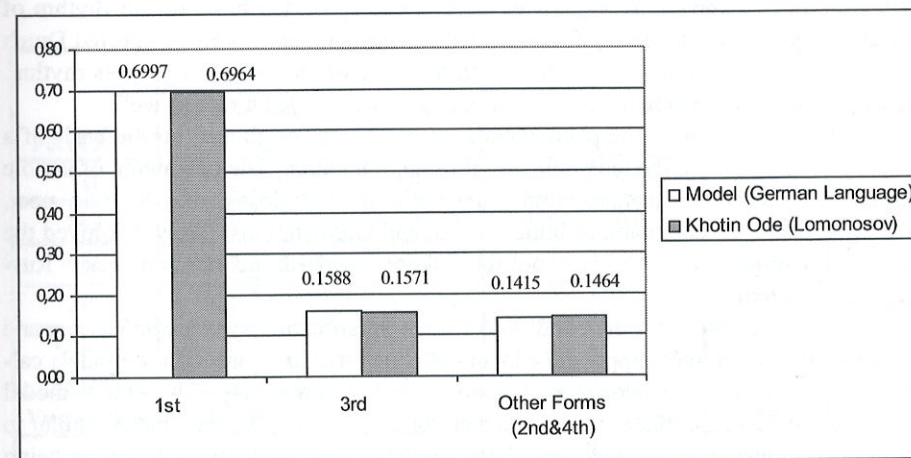


Chart 4. Distribution of Rhythmic Forms in the First Russian Iambic Verse and in the German Model

⁶ This model was calculated by the author of this article using a rhythmic dictionary based on J.-Ch. Gottsched's prose. The resulting model is more accurate than that in Kazartsev and Krasnoperova 2004. This new calculation was done only for those rhythmic variations that are found in Lomonosov (that is, the re-done model, unlike the previous one, does not generate

source. Since this was the first experience with this system of versification, we conjecture that the process of creating verse could have been as follows: at the pre-writing stage, the rhythmic structure of Lomonosov's verse was formed on the basis of the rhythm of the German language, and at the stage of writing the resulting rhythmic patterns were filled in with Russian words.

Thus, by studying Taranovsky's hypothesis regarding the influence of foreign sources on early Russian iambic verse, we have revealed a new source for such an influence: not from foreign poetry, but from a foreign language. As for the hypothesis regarding an influence of German verse on Russian poetry, it is supported, according to our data, by the material of Lomonosov's later odes of 1743 (Kazartsev 2001b, 2010b, 2011).

Conclusion

Let us offer a brief summary. From our study it may be concluded that the similarity in the distributions of basic rhythmic structures in early Dutch, German, and Russian iambic verse is not the result of borrowing or of an influence by one prosodic system on another. Nevertheless, this similarity can be called typological, since it appears to be general in nature, combining features of the language (its supply of rhythms) with features of the versification.

In Dutch verse, which developed independently, the observed rhythmic structure of iambic poetry apparently originated spontaneously on the basis of the rhythm of the Dutch language. Our analysis shows that in German verse, which imported Dutch meters, this phenomenon similarly arose on the basis of the native language's rhythm. However, in this case Dutch poetic sources could have played a role as well.

In the Russian iamb, the phenomenon probably also originated on the basis of a language's rhythm, but the language was foreign, not native. The borrowing of iambic verse occurred in this instance under a condition of diglossia: the Russian poet, having an excellent command of both Russian and German, most likely employed the rhythm of German as an auxiliary tool for creating the rhythmic inertia of a new Russian verse system.

It should be noted that the conditions for the versification systems in Russian and early German verse were apparently identical, since the structures of the models calculated for the German and Russian iamb coincide completely. The Dutch model somewhat differs from them in the sequence for constructing the line, but is similar to them in the sense that it is also calculated on the principle of rhythmic words being combined dependently.

Hence it follows that the observed tendency in the distribution of those rhythmic forms that contain unstressed ictuses and of the stressing on internal ictuses in early Dutch, German, and Russian iambs has come about to a large measure independently, on the basis of language rhythm and of a similar technique of versification, which corresponds to the metrical models that have been discovered.

Appendix

Table 1. Distribution of Rhythmic Variations in Lomonosov's Khotin Ode

Form №	Examples	Taranovsky's statistics	Our statistics*
1st	Востóрг внезапный ум пленял	0.693	0.696
2nd	Что протекáла между нými	0.010	0.007
3rd	В долине тишина́ глубокой	0.154	0.157
4th	То рóд отвёрженной рабы́	0.139	0.139
6th	И что на гúрках тяготá	0.040	0.000

* Our calculation conforms to the level of precision accepted by Taranovsky—three decimal places.

Table 2. The Rhythmic Structure of the Early Dutch Iambic Tetrameter and the Theoretical Iamb (Model)

Form №	Verse (1580–1638)						Model*
	Marnix	Van der Noot	Bredero	Hoof	Cats	Vondel	
1st	0.7500	0.5790	0.5513	0.5484	0.6197	0.5375	0.5823
2nd	0.0441	0.0658	0.0769	0.0860	0.0598	0.0750	0.0610
3rd	0.1177	0.1908	0.1795	0.1936	0.1752	0.2375	0.1728
4th	0.0882	0.1316	0.1539	0.1075	0.1239	0.1000	0.1420
Other Forms	0.0000	0.0330	0.0384	0.0646	0.0214	0.0500	0.0418
Verse Lines	68	152	78	93	234	80	—
Syllable Position №							
I	0.9559	0.9276	0.9103	0.9032	0.9231	0.9125	0.9222
II	0.8824	0.7961	0.8077	0.8065	0.8248	0.7375	0.8148
III	0.9118	0.8553	0.8205	0.8817	0.8590	0.8750	0.8368
IV	1.0000	0.9801	0.9872	0.9462	0.9957	0.9750	0.9838

*This is an asymmetrical model, calculated from a rhythmic dictionary based on P. C. Hoof's prose (see in Kazartsev 2001b).

Table 3. The Rhythmic Structure of the Early German Iambic Tetrameter and the Theoretical Iamb (Model)

Form №	Verse (1619–37)		Model**
	Opitz (corpus A)	Opitz (corpus B)	
1st	0.6838	0.7448	0.6161
2nd	0.0539	0.0541	0.0753
3rd	0.1225	0.1082	0.1410
4th	0.1029	0.0490	0.1049
Other Forms	0.0368	0.0438	0.0627
Verse Lines	408	388	—
S-Position №			
I	0.9436	0.9407	0.8999
II	0.8750	0.8789	0.8461
III	0.8946	0.9459	0.8667
IV	0.9657	0.9613	0.9657

** This is a symmetrical model, which was calculated from a rhythmic dictionary based on M. Opitz's prose (see in Sources, Prose)

Table 4. The Rhythmic Structure of Lomonosov's Khotin Ode and the Theoretical Iamb "German Model"

Form №	Khotin Ode (1739)	Model***
1st	0.6964	0.6997
2nd	0.0071	0.0575
3rd	0.1571	0.1588
4th	0.1393	0.0840
Verse Lines	280	—
S-Position №		
I	0.9929	0.9425
II	0.8429	0.8412
III	0.8607	0.9160
IV	1.0000	1.0000

*** This is a symmetrical model, which was calculated from a German rhythmic dictionary based on J.-Ch. Gottsched's prose (see in Sources, Prose).

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