

The Rhythm of Mikhail V. Lomonosov's Odes of 1743¹

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Introduction

Mikhail V. Lomonosov was an outstanding Russian scientist and poet of the 18th century, who at the end of the 1730s and the beginning of the 1740s implemented a reform of versification, introducing iambic verse into Russian poetry. In 1739, while in Germany, he composed his first iambic ode, "...On the Taking of Khotin." Its sample was, to some extent, a 1718 ode by the German poet Johann-Christian Günther, which was devoted to the victory of Prince Eugene of Savoy over the Turks: one can see a connection between these works in their theme and partially in their stanzaic structure. However, the German verse has not been found to influence the rhythm of the first Russian ode (Kazartsev, 2001a).

Nevertheless, the question of foreign influence on early Russian iambs—in particular, the influence of Günther's verse on the rhythm of Lomonosov's odes—has become one of the most debated issues in Russian prosody. Such outstanding scholars as Viktor M. Zhirmunskii, Kirill F. Taranovskii, Mikhail L. Gasparov, and others have discussed it at various times (Zhirmunskii 1968, Taranovski 1953, Taranivkii 1975, Gasparov 1997). The attempts to resolve this issue have given rise to the notion that despite the use of an adopted meter (it is recognized that the iambic meter was introduced into Russian poetry under the influence of German verse), the rhythmic shape of early Russian iambs was formed on the basis of the rhythm inherent to the Russian language (Zhirmunskii 1968).

Studies undertaken by Marina A. Krasnoperova using probability-statistical language models of meter and based on her theory of the reconstructive modeling of versification have resulted in a deeper understanding of the mechanism of Lomonosov's versification (Krasnoperova 2000). Using the apparatus of this theory, we have established some sources for the rhythm of his early works (Kazartsev 2001c, 2004; Kazartsev, Krasnoperova 2004).

Nevertheless, it is clear that in some cases the sources for the rhythmic shape of Lomonosov's early poems do not stem from the characteristics of the Russian language. Scholars have repeatedly noted that the qualities of certain works by the poet resemble examples of German verse that were well known to him. Thus, for instance, there is every basis to believe that the rhythm of two translations that Lomonosov made at the end of 1741 and in the spring of 1742

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resembles their German originals.² The present study shows that the rhythmic structure of Lomonosov's odes of 1743 is appreciably close to that of German verse.

About the Texts

In 1743 Lomonosov wrote only two odes: one solemn, "На день тезоименитства... Петра Федоровича" ("On the Saint's Day of Petr Fedorovich..."), and the other spiritual, "Вечернее размышление о Божьем величестве..." ("An Evening Reflection upon God's Grandeur...").³ The latter is the first Russian spiritual ode written in iambic verse. In our previous works we found a close connection between these compositions and German verse: the Russian solemn ode displays a connection to Günther's ode to Prince Eugene, while the first Russian spiritual ode appears to be linked to Günther's spiritual compositions, among which the "Ode to God" ("An Gott") is particularly close to the Russian verse. It should be noted that the connection between the Russian and German texts appears not only in their rhythm, but also in their stanzaic form as well as in their genre and theme, and partially in their artistic structure (Kazartsev 2001b, 2010).

Earlier, we studied each of the Russian odes from 1743 separately in spite of the fact that their rhythm has much in common. For example, both odes contain a small number of pyrrhics, so that their frequency of fully stressed lines is rather high (on the order of 79%) and, accordingly, the lines with pyrrhics come to about 21%.⁴ This relationship of fully stressed and non fully stressed lines distinguishes these works, for such a ratio of fully stressed to non fully stressed iambs does not occur either before 1743 or, all the more, afterward, when pyrrhics became widespread. Already at the end of 1741, after writing metrically "pure" iambs where the frequency of fully stressed lines had reached 95-96%, Lomonosov's verse shows a noticeable increase in the number of pyrrhics and a reduction in "pure" lines, which in 1742 decline to 58%. Why then

² At that time Lomonosov had translated two odes of J. Stählin and G. Juncker, German poets who served at the Russian court. K.F. Taranovskii has pointed to the similarity between the rhythmical structures of the translations and the originals (Taranovskii 1975). In our previous studies, written together with M.A. Krasnoperova, we have shown, through a comparative analysis of the distribution of non fully stressed lines, that Lomonosov's translation of J. Stählin's ode depends on the rhythm of the original (Kazartsev, Krasnoperova 2005).

³ The dating of one other ode supposedly written in 1743, "A Morning Reflection Upon God's Grandeur," was challenged by V. M. Zhirmunskii, who, through a rhythmical analysis of the text, provided proof for his hypothesis that this work was created during a more mature period of the poet's creative activity, between 1749 and 1757 (Zhirmunskii 1975).

⁴ This percentage of fully stressed lines occurs in the early redactions of both odes from 1743; see Table 1.

in 1743 do these pure lines increase again and why to this level of 79%? A detailed comparative analysis of Lomonosov's two odes and of German verse allows us to answer this question.

Rhythmic Analysis

In this study we used two rather different redactions of both Russian odes, "early" and "late." The solemn ode "On the Saint's Day ..." is found in a manuscript from the second half of the 1740s (the early redaction)⁵ and in the printed text of 1757 (the late redaction).⁶ The early redaction of the spiritual ode "An Evening Reflection ..." consists of a 1747 manuscript.⁷ The first printed text of 1748 is taken as the late redaction.⁸

As has already been noted, the early redactions of both odes by Lomonosov display practically equal frequencies (79.3% and 79.2%) of the 1st, fully stressed rhythmic form of the iambic tetrameter (*Лицѣ своѣ скрываетъ день*) (see Table 1). This statistic correlates with the high level of stressing in Günther's verse: the frequency of the 1st form (*Eugén ist fört. Ihr Músen, nácht!*) in the ode dedicated to Prince Eugene is 74.2%, and that in his spiritual odes is 78.3% and 83.3% (see Table 1). Note that the late redaction of the Russian spiritual ode also has 83.3% of its lines fully stressed. One can surmise that the "level of stressing" in the Russian iamb of 1743 and its corresponding percentage of pyrrhics could have been suggested by the German verse. We will test this hypothesis below.

Only a relatively few lines contain pyrrhics, both in the Russian and in the German texts. The 2nd rhythmic form of the iambic tetrameter, with a pyrrhic on the first foot (*Да превзойдетъ Егѡ летаму / Der unter Ádlern, Blíz und Nácht*), occurs quite rarely (see Table 1). The frequencies of the distribution of the 3rd form, with a pyrrhic on the second foot (*Являѣт естество утѣв / Was wilst du mit dem Schátten záncken?*), and of the 4th form, with a pyrrhic on the third foot (*Наслѣдникъ ѡмену и дѣл / Wer léhrt dich, túmme Tyranéy?*), are quite distinctive. In the Russian solemn ode, in comparison to the German, the frequency of the 3rd rhythmic form decreases and that of the 4th increases. This leads to a definite strengthening of the stressing on the 2nd ictus in comparison to the 3rd (see Table 1 and Figure 1).⁹

⁵ Archive RAN, fond 20, opis' 4, № 14, pp. 36-39 (ob.).

⁶ M.V. Lomonosov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8 (Moscow and Leningrad: Akade-miia nauk SSSR, 1959), pp. 103-110.

⁷ Archive RAN, fond 20, opis' 30, № 49, Pp. 104-105.

⁸ Archive RAN, fond 20, opis' 30, № 49, Pp. 104-105.

⁹ As Table 1 shows, in the late redaction of the Russian ode this tendency is expressed somewhat more weakly than in the early one.

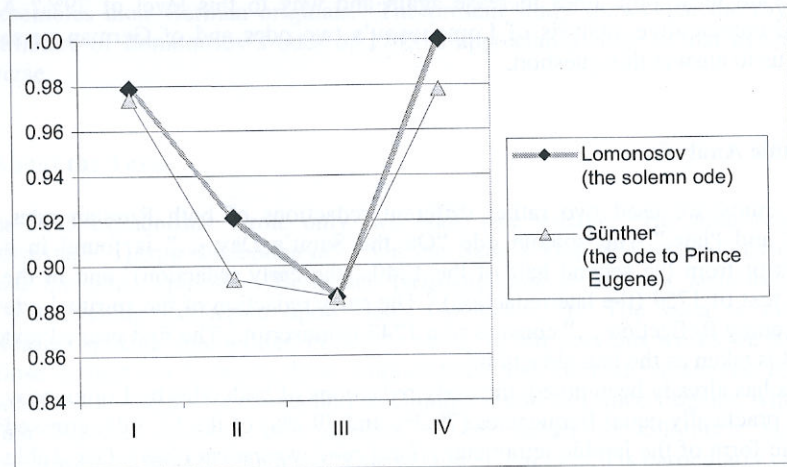


Figure 1. Profiles of metrical stresses in the Russian and German solemn odes

Such a stressing profile, which reflects equivalent tendencies in the distribution of stresses and, moreover, identical frequencies of stressing on the 3rd ictus, clearly shows that the Russian and German solemn odes are quite similar in their rhythmical characteristics.

The spiritual poems also reveal similarity between the rhythm of Russian and German verse. It appears that in Günther's spiritual odes the 3rd and 4th rhythmic forms quite often appear with equal frequency, which leads to an equal stressing of the internal ictuses. This phenomenon appears in the two spiritual compositions by the German poet that we are analyzing: "Herzlich lieb hab ich dich, Herr" and "An Gott." An analogous situation is also observed in the early redaction of Lomonosov's first spiritual ode (see Table 1 and Figure 2).

Table 1
Russian and German Iambic Verse and the Models of Meter

Compared sources		Rhythmic forms					# lines	Ictuses				
		1	2	3	4	All others		I	II	III	IV	
LOMONOSOV	Solemn ode	The early red.	0.793	0.021	0.071	0.107	0.007	140	0.979	0.921	0.886	1.000
		The late red.	0.757	0.021	0.093	0.121	0.007	140	0.979	0.900	0.871	1.000
	Spiritual ode	The early red.	0.792	0.000	0.104	0.104	0.000	48	1.000	0.896	0.896	1.000
		The late red.	0.833	0.000	0.104	0.063	0.000	48	1.000	0.896	0.938	1.000
GÜNTHER	Solemn ode (An Prinz Eugen)		0.742	0.018	0.100	0.112	0.028	500	0.974	0.894	0.886	0.978
	Spiritual ode 1 ("Herzlich lieb...")		0.783	0.033	0.083	0.083	0.017	60	0.967	0.917	0.917	0.983
	Spiritual ode 2 (An Gott)		0.833	0.000	0.074	0.074	0.019	54	1.000	0.926	0.926	1.000
MODELS	Russian 1		0.460	0.074	0.188	0.231	0.047	—	0.894	0.797	0.721	1.000
	Russian 2		0.333	0.066	0.229	0.272	0.100	—	0.863	0.742	0.628	1.000
	German 1		0.689	0.047	0.151	0.090	0.028	—	0.934	0.844	0.887	1.000
	German 2		0.706	0.049	0.155	0.069	0.021	—	0.933	0.841	0.910	1.000

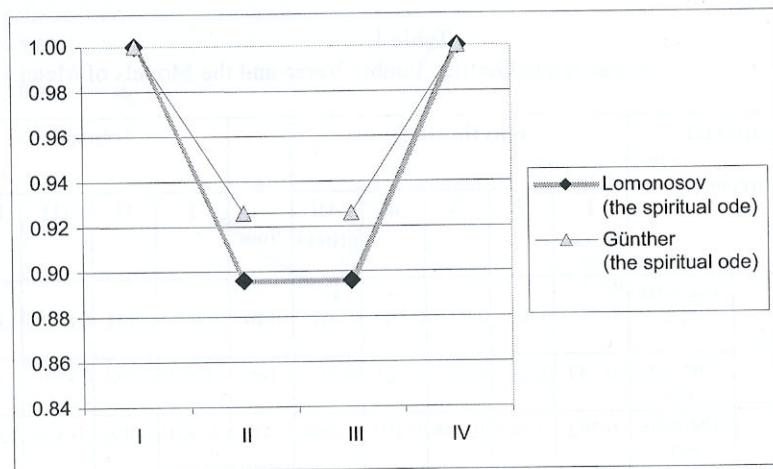


Figure 2. Profiles of Metrical Stresses for Russian and German spiritual odes

Figure 2 shows that although the stressing on the internal ictuses (positions II and III) in the German verse is higher than in the Russian, the Russian and German profiles of stressing are nearly identical. Like the German profile, it is symmetrical, thus reflecting a balance in the distribution of stresses over the entire line. This stressing profile is unique in Russian poetry. Evidently, for his first spiritual poem Lomonosov borrowed this original structure from Günther's spiritual works.

However, the statistical data allow for another hypothesis: that the rhythm not only of Lomonosov's solemn ode but also that of his spiritual ode could have been formed under the influence of the same foreign source—namely, Günther's ode to Prince Eugene. In fact, the data for the 1st, 3rd, and 4th rhythmic forms as well as the distribution of stresses on the ictuses in Russian and German odes are quite close (see Table 2 and Figure 3).

Table 2
Rhythm of Lomonosov's Spiritual Ode and Günther's Solemn Ode

	Rhythmic forms					Ictuses			
	1	2	3	4	The rest	I	II	III	IV
Lomonosov's spiritual ode (early redaction)	0.792	0.000	0.104	0.104	0.000	1.000	0.896	0.896	1.000
Günther's ode An Prinz Eugen	0.742	0.018	0.100	0.112	0.028	0.974	0.894	0.886	0.978

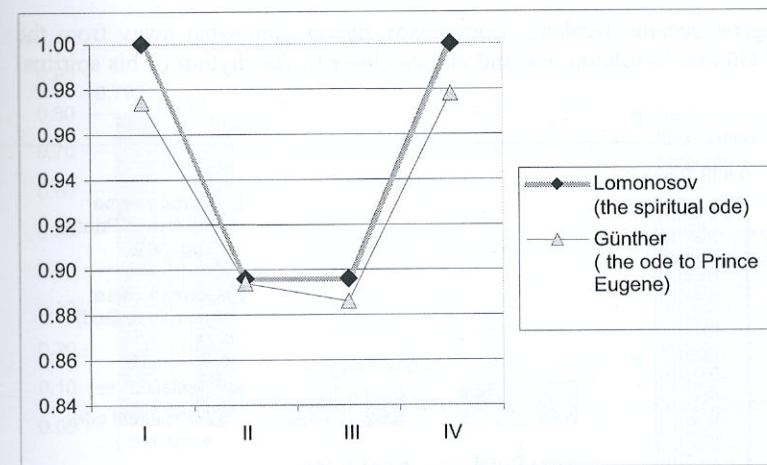


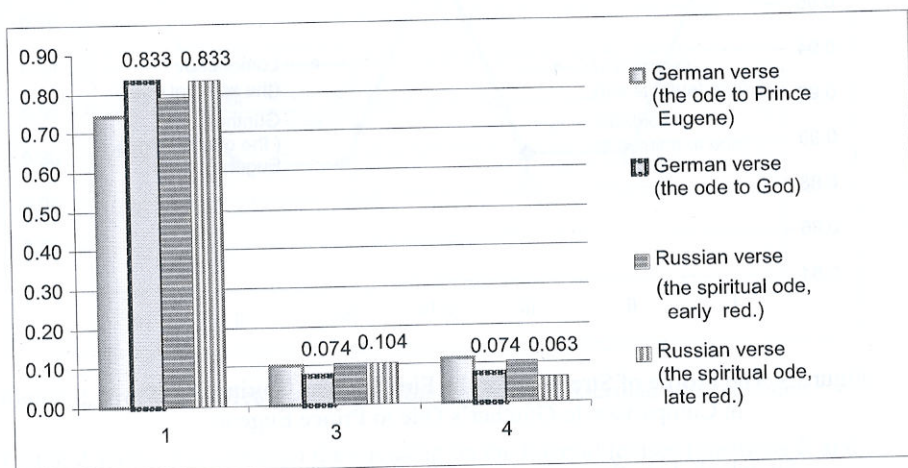
Figure 3. The Profile of Stressing for the First Russian Spiritual Ode in Comparison to Günther's Ode to Prince Eugene

So which hypothesis is more plausible in this case: the influence of Günther's spiritual odes with their distinctive rhythm (a symmetrical profile of stressing) or that of the ode to Prince Eugene? To answer this question, we have tested the homogeneity of the distribution of the basic rhythmic forms (1-4) in Russian and German texts using a χ^2 test. Such an analysis – in the first instance of the Russian and German spiritual odes and, in the second, of the Russian spiritual ode and the ode to Prince Eugene – shows that the probability of error in rejecting the hypothesis of homogeneity is very high in both cases (75.3% and 97.4%, respectively). Therefore, we are inclined to assume that the Russian poet was simultaneously under the influence of both sources. However, the degree of their influence evidently changed.

It turns out that the rhythm in the early redaction of the Russian spiritual ode is closer to the pattern found in the ode to Prince Eugene, while the rhythm of its late redaction moves away from this source and closer to the rhythm of the ode to God. This is especially true for the fully stressed rhythmic form: in the late redaction, its frequency changes considerably, completely coinciding with that of the German spiritual ode (83,3 %). Also, the frequency of the 4th form becomes closer to that for the German ode (see Table 1 and Histogram 1).

The analysis made using the χ^2 test reinforces this result. In fact, the probability of error in rejecting the hypothesis about uniformity between the early redaction of the Russian spiritual ode and the ode to Prince Eugene is greater than when comparing it with the ode to God, and on the contrary, the hypothesis about uniformity of the German and Russian spiritual odes appears to be more plausible if one takes the late redaction of the Russian text (see table 3). Apparently, in revising the Russian spiritual ode, the influence of the ode to

Prince Eugene became weaker: Lomonosov moves somewhat away from the rhythm of Günther's solemn ode and comes closer to the rhythm of his spiritual verse.

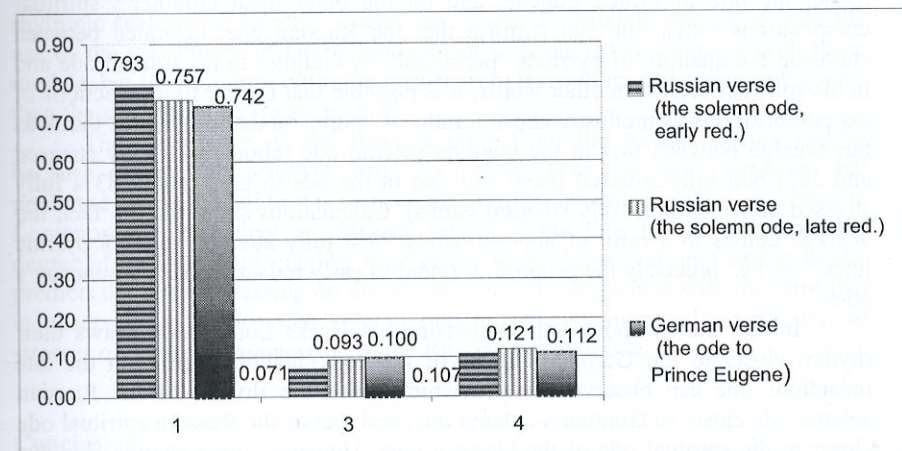


Histogram 1. Distribution of Basic Rhythmic Forms of Iambic Tetrameter in the Russian Spiritual Ode and in German Verse

Table 3
Comparison of the Russian Spiritual Ode and the German Verse

Series of comparison		χ^2
Russian verse	German verse	
The spiritual ode, early redaction	The ode to Prince Eugene	0.974
	The ode to God	0.753
The spiritual ode, late redaction	The ode to Prince Eugene	0.536
	The ode to God	0.860

It is interesting that in comparing the early and late redactions of the Russian solemn ode with the ode to Prince Eugene it becomes evident that the late redaction is even closer to the German source. The frequency of fully stressed lines in it (75.7%) is practically the same as in Günther (74.2%). It is also noticeable that the frequency of the 3rd form also approximates that in German verse (see Table 1 and Histogram 2). This result is supported by checking the texts for homogeneity with the χ^2 test (see Table 4).



Histogram 2. Distribution of basic J4 forms in the Russian Solemn Ode and in the German Verse

Table 4
Comparison of the Russian Solemn Ode and German Verse

Series of comparison		χ^2
Russian verse	German verse	
The solemn ode, early redaction	The ode to Prince Eugene	0.716
The solemn ode, late redaction	The ode to Prince Eugene	0.979

About the Results

It appears that in 1743, when he was composing both the solemn and the spiritual ode, Lomonosov was oriented to the rhythm of Günther's ode to Prince Eugene. Nevertheless, we conjecture that in both cases the spiritual odes of the German poet also exerted a certain influence. In our opinion, this influence affected the establishment of the acceptable ratio between fully stressed and non fully stressed lines in the early redactions of both Russian odes. As we recall, this ratio is 79% of pure iambs to almost 21% of lines with pyrrhics.

If our hypothesis is correct—that Lomonosov on the one hand had as a

model the ode to Prince Eugene, and on the other hand Günther's spiritual compositions—then one can surmise that the Russian poet hesitated between choosing the quantity of pyrrhics “permitted” by Günther in his solemn ode and in his spiritual verses. In other words, it is possible that for the first redactions of his compositions Lomonosov chose a ratio of “pure” iambs to pyrrhics that was the average between that in the German solemn ode (about 74% fully stressed and 26% non fully stressed lines) and that in the ode to God (about 83% fully stressed and 17% non fully stressed iambs). Calculations show that, in fact, the average comes to a ratio of approximately 79% fully stressed to 21% pyrrhic lines¹⁰ — i.e., precisely the proportion found in early redactions of Lomonosov's odes.

It was shown above that in revising his works Lomonosov draws their rhythm closer to the German sources of the corresponding genre: in the late redactions one can observe changes which make the rhythm of the Russian solemn ode closer to Günther's solemn ode, and that of the Russian spiritual ode closer to the spiritual ode of the German poet. However, these changes involve mainly the relationship of fully stressed and non fully stressed lines. In his revisions the Russian poet lowered the frequency of fully stressed verses in the solemn ode and raised it in the spiritual ode. Possibly, in doing so he was guided by considerations of genre and “style”:¹¹ pure iambs should be more numerous in spiritual, elevated verses than in secular texts. Evidently, the corresponding models of German poetry served as a criterion as to how much he could reduce stressing in the solemn ode and raise it in the spiritual ode. Thus, the standard that was intuitively perceived at the start by the Russian poet as to what should be the permissible average quantity of pyrrhics was later replaced by more concrete models corresponding to the genre and style: in the solemn ode, Lomonosov allowed a greater number of pyrrhics, being guided by the example of the ode to Prince Eugene, and in the spiritual ode he uses a smaller number of pyrrhics, having taken as a model the ode to God.

Our analysis would be incomplete if we disregarded the question of language sources for the verse rhythm. We have calculated several language probabilistic models for the iambic tetrameter that are capable of predicting the distribution of rhythmic structures in verse.¹² However, in practically all cases

¹⁰ The average ratio of fully stressed to pyrrhic lines in German odes approximately equals the ratio of these lines in the early redactions of Russian odes $(0.74/0.26)/2 + (0.83/0.17)/2 \approx 0.79/0.21 \approx 3.8$. Moreover, the average number of fully stressed lines in the German odes practically coincides with that in Russian odes: $(0.83 - 0.74)/2 + 0.74 = 0.79$.

¹¹ The notion of “style” should be understood in the context of Lomonosov's theory of three styles.

¹² We mean here so-called symmetrical models of meter, which adequately describe the rhythm of Lomonosov's early works. The probabilistic-statistical models of language show the distribution of rhythmic structures in verse, given particular rules of prosody and a particular language resource—a rhythmic dictionary calculated from prose examples. Table 1, under the headings “Russian 1” and “Russian 2,” shows the data for

the model data appeared to be farther from the Russian verse than from the rhythmic features of Günther's odes (see Table 1). Models calculated with the use of the vocabulary of German prose can to some extent compete with those models, but they too turn out to be further from the rhythm of Lomonosov's odes than the samples of German verse.¹³

The divergence of the Russian texts from the models occurs mainly because of the fully stressed form: its frequency in the verse surpasses that predicted by the model. In this respect, the German language models are closer to Lomonosov's verse than are Russian models,¹⁴ but they too do not attain the degree of conformity reached by the German verse. Moreover, no German model predicts the rise in stressing on the second ictus in comparison with the third that is observed in the Russian solemn ode nor the symmetrical distribution of stresses on ictuses characteristic of the Russian spiritual ode.

Conclusion

The analysis of Lomonosov's odes of 1743 in comparison with Günther's verse and language models of meter gives us grounds to assume that the features of their rhythmic shape have appeared not as a result of some qualities within the Russian language, but directly under the influence of the rhythm of German verse. There are reasons to consider that both Russian odes of 1743 were to some extent influenced by Günther's solemn and spiritual odes. This influence evidently affected the choice of the initial, 1743 level of fully stressed lines – that is the ratio of pure to pyrrhic iambic lines.

It has turned out that the rhythmic shape of the ode to Prince Eugene is close not only to Lomonosov's solemn ode, but also to his spiritual ode. One should note that the influence of Günther's work was called into question earlier only with respect to Lomonosov's first ode (1739), but it was not studied in detail in regard to other works by the poet.

On the whole, the early stage in Lomonosov's forming of his iambic verse was like a creative laboratory, where the Russian poet was working out the

symmetrical language models of dependence, calculated using a dictionary of V.K. Trediakovskii's prose, for two cases: that of the Russian solemn ode with a ratio of 60 % feminine and 40% masculine endings, and that of the Russian spiritual ode, which has only masculine endings. According to our data, the dictionary of Trediakovskii's prose appears to be the closest to the rhythm of Lomonosov's verse from the period under study (Kazartsev 2004).

¹³ We have also calculated two analogous models (see the previous footnote), using the vocabulary of German prose (that of J.-Ch. Gottsched) for the Russian solemn ode (“German 1”) and for the Russian spiritual ode (“German 2”), see the Table 1.

¹⁴ The influence of German on the rhythm of Lomonosov's early odes was shown previously in a study we did together with M. A. Krasnoperova, which was based on the rhythm of Lomonosov's first iambic ode, “... On the Taking of Khotin” of 1739 (Kazartsev, Krasnoperova, 2004).

criteria of poetic mastery. One such criterion, apparently a very important one, was that of metrical purity. Probably, in 1743, after increasing the number of pyrrhics in 1742, Lomonosov made an attempt to “restore” the pure iamb, but, realizing that entirely fully stressed verse is impossible, he attempted to establish a suitable relationship between pyrrhics and fully stressed lines. The German verse evidently helped him in this regard: at the beginning Lomonosov introduces into his texts a ratio of “pure” to not fully stressed lines which is close to the average ratio that occurs in the solemn and spiritual German ode, but later, when making final redactions of his poems, the Russian poet adopts those criteria of metrical “purity” that are found in Günther’s poems of the corresponding genre and style.

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