Frontiers in Comparative Metrics IV
16–17 September 2022, Tallinn, Estonia

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On 16–17 September 2022, the conference *Frontiers in Comparative Metrics* took place for the fourth time at Tallinn University. Funding for the conference was provided by the University of Tartu (grant PHVLC21924) and Estonian Research Council (grant PRG319); while preparation and support was of Organizing Committee members: Mihhail Lotman, professor emeritus of Tallinn University and, currently, visiting professor at the University of Tartu; Maria-Kristiina Lotman, associate professor of the University of Tartu; Igor Pilshchikov, research professor at Tallinn University and professor at the University of California, Los Angeles; and Mikhail Trunin, researcher in Tallinn University and the author of this report. Originally, the conference was to take place in December 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it had to be postponed twice: first, to December 2021; and then, due to a second viral surge, to September 2022.

The first conference in this series occurred in 2008, and was dedicated to memory of Mikhail Gasparov (1935–2005), a key figure in Russian verse studies; the second, in 2014, was in memory of prominent Polish scholar of verse Lucylla Pszczołowska (1924–2010); while the third conference was held in 2017 to commemorate the 75th birthday of eminent Estonian scholar Jaak Põldmäe (1942–1979), the founder of scientific Estonian verse theory (see Pilshchikov 2014; Novikov, Arukask 2017). The original plan for the fourth conference was to be dedicated to the legacy of Marina Krasnoperova (1941–2010), a distinguished Russian verse scholar. A mathematician and linguist by education, Krasnoperova devised a novel approach to the problems of verse analysis and created a theory of reconstructive simulation of versification, which allows to describe the typology of mechanisms of versification in different languages. That conference series, however, was negatively affected, not only by the pandemic, but also by the criminal war unleashed by Russia in Ukraine in February 2022. By decision of the Academic Senates of the Universities of Tartu and Tallinn, all cultural and scientific contacts with the

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Russian Federation were suspended. And as a result, the conference had no named dedication, and was held without participants from Russia.

Mihhail Lotman spoke about the past and present contexts of the *Frontiers* in his opening address. He acknowledged the criminal actions of the Russian government and army, and explained that due to their behaviour, collegial relationships with residents of Russia and employees of Russian academic institutions have, unfortunately, become toxic. At the same time, we are aware that there are many top-class scholars in Russia who do not support Russian aggression in Ukraine. All the conference participants agreed, and expressed their hope that the situation would soon change, and Russian scholars would again become accepted internationally.

Both conference days started, and closed, with keynote plenary lectures. The first was delivered by *Frog*, from the University of Helsinki, and was entitled "Problems in the Aurality of Medieval Written Oral Poetry: Toward a Theory of Manuscript Performance". The speaker remarked that contemporary research on the metrics and poetics of oral poetry customarily begins by considering it as performed and heard rather than viewing it exclusively as abstracted linguistic text. Research on medieval texts has tended to focus on: 1) oral performance traditions in the background of the written documents; 2) the sound, situations or manner of articulation in which the written text or their oral counterparts would have been performed; and 3) how copyists' knowledge of an oral tradition could impact on written transmission. The fact that medieval written texts were often intended for public rather than private reading is widely recognized, yet there has been almost no consideration of how this relates to the written texts themselves. Subsequently, Frog focused on the pragmatics of public reading and the dynamics of oral-literary interaction. In the paper presented, examples from Old Norse poetry and so-called Eddic poetry were considered. Then the discussion was extended to other forms of oral-derived poetry and poetry that operated at the intersection of orality and literacy.

The manuscripts of medieval Iceland were first viewed in terms of their general challenges posed to a reader, and considered in relation to scribal errors in copying texts that illustrate such challenges. Then consideration was given to the abbreviation practices specific to this poetry that make demands on its readers to learn and remember, at very least, the recurring poetic passages. Finally, passages that include metrically problematic lines and passages were considered, not from the perspective of the poem as a written text, but in terms of the oral performance of the poem and its reception, and of the assessment of that performance by an audience. Taken together, these factors predict variation between the written text and what is performed, which provides a

foundation for theorizing manuscript performance as social practice. That problematic passages were preserved in copying the poems and are for the most part also uncorrected by owners of the manuscripts, leads us again to consider how these relate to manuscript use. To outline a complementary theory of how these written texts were conceived by the people who used them, Frog introduced the term "text ideology", which describes the concept of what texts "are" as things in the world. Here, the text ideology of poems combines with the principles for a predictive model of variation in manuscript performance. The result is a preliminary theory of manuscript performance, based on tradition-specific factors of written texts and their usage, combined with the knowledge and contemporary text ideology of the person or a group engaging with those texts. This theory predicts that lines and groups of lines that were not metrically well-formed in medieval manuscripts would, contingent on the knowledge (competence) of the reader and that reader's text ideology, most likely be revised into well-formed lines in the course of manuscript performance.

Mihhail Lotman discussed the problem of secondary meter. He considered verse forms where not one metrical scheme but two are realized in a text. The focus of the paper was on the interference of the two meters and the emergence of new hybrid forms. In Russian versification, these are, first and foremost, Russian analogues of classical (Greco-Roman) meters. On one hand, they attempt to implement the schemes of the classical meters, but on the other, they are permeated by a simpler verse meter that is more easily recognisable to a Russian reader (listener). Another example are Russian paeons; being quaternary meters, they clearly betray the substrate of a binary meter. There also exist other verse forms whose structure is governed by two metrical schemes, for example, Mayakovsky's free iambs and trochees in the metrical context of his accentual verse.

The first conference session was concluded with the presentation by *Jean-Louis Aroui* (Paris 8 University), "Musical Beats and Intonational Phrases in French and English Traditional Songs". Traditional French songs are characterized by a special dialect, whose words or phrases are described as "feminine" or "masculine". A feminine expression ends phonetically with a post-tonic syllable. In that case, the last syllable's nucleus is always a schwa. A masculine expression ends phonetically with a tonic syllable. The nucleus of this syllable cannot be a schwa. It has been argued that, in traditional French songs, the stress-to-beat matching is strictly constrained for a "line ending", i.e. an intonational phrase ending: if the phrase is masculine, its last syllable cannot match a weaker beat that the penultimate syllable; however, if the phrase is feminine, its last syllable must match a weaker beat that the penultimate syllable. The

only exception would be in case of a *melisma*: then the last two syllables are on strong beats. However, the speaker showed that an intonational phrase with a feminine ending may have its last two syllables on strong beats, even without a *melisma*. In English, a feminine ending is post-tonic as well, and a masculine ending is tonic. The only difference with French is that a specific word or phrase cannot be freely feminine or masculine (in French, a word like *vie* may be pronounced as [ˈvi.ə] or [ˈvi]). In the last part of the presentation, Aroui offered the generalization explaining the stress-to-beat matching concerning the end of an intonational phrase in both French and English.

The second session, which was mostly devoted to the automated analysis of big data sets, was opened with a paper by *Mirella de Sisto* (Tilburg University), "The Development of a Poetic Tradition. Automatic Annotation of a Dutch Renaissance Poetry Corpus". This paper introduced a scansion machine which was used to annotate a Dutch Renaissance poetry corpus and described the analysis of its resulting data. The automatically generated annotations allowed to delineate a detailed picture of the development of early-stage Dutch iambic pentameter and Alexandrine, and to investigate a number of theoretical questions related to them. The annotations derived from automatic scansion were also used to compare the Dutch corpus with the *Archivio Metrico Italiano*, an annotated corpus of Italian Renaissance poetry. The purpose of the study was to investigate the development of the same poetic form in two different traditions. The metrical analysis was elaborated by calculating the deviation percentage from a perfect line in each work of the two corpora. By comparing the Italian and the Dutch corpus, it is possible to observe the divergences in the evolution of the two poetic forms and to define their phases. On the one hand, the Dutch corpus shows how Dutch meter went from being an unstable form to a fixed and strongly regular one. On the other hand, the Italian corpus only underwent minor changes and preserved its original form. A similar tool can potentially be adapted to other poetic traditions, both written in other languages and/or from different historical periods.

Éliane Delente and *Stéphane Ferrari* (both from Normandy University) made a Zoom presentation of "Automated Processing of Relationships Between Meaning and Rhythm in French Metrical Poetry". The presenters stated that the most common approach to studying the relationships between rhythm and meaning in French poetry – both in theoretical works and in automated processing – consists in aligning the syntactical and metrical structures to identify what is usually called *enjambment*. The speakers attempted to show that considering the sole syntactic boundary at the end of the line brings limited, sometime even disputable results. They used a large TEI corpus *Malherbə* (Crisco) to build an exploratory corpus by automatically extracting

groups of two Alexandrines using Xquery on Boileau and Chénier's works. In a second step, a case-by-case examination made it possible to obtain a more restricted corpus with lines in which rhythm and meaning could possibly be mismatched. The observation focused on the metrical expressions: their beginning, their end, and their internal consistency. This method of processing – metrical expression after metrical expression – was an attempt to integrate the mental processing time, which is the specific reader's expectation, in the analysis itself.

The last presentation of the session, "Freedom Bound" by *Johnny Edström* (Stockholm University), was devoted to a detailed cognitive analysis of four poems written by Edith Södergran in metrical verse. Södergran is generally regarded as one of the most important adopters of modernist free verse in Swedish. However, her metrical verse has garnered less attention. The speaker aimed to fill this lacuna and to provide a close reading of Södergran's four poems: "Nocturne", "Du som aldrig gått ur ditt trädgårdsland" (You who never left your garden country), "O himmelska klarhet" (O heavenly clarity), and "Ankomst till Hades" (Arrival in Hades). Analysing the structure of the poems the researcher used the metrical theories of Reuven Tsur and Richard Cureton, together with the cognitive theories of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Edström introduced two main schemas: balance and power. The balance of the body is metaphorically mapped to the balance of the metrical structure, where distribution of stresses represents a body in controlled balance, while the speed of the rhythm is mapped to the force of the body in movement. All the poems show more or less obvious play between balanced and unbalanced rhythms, and the later ones reflect the dramatic depictions of religious imagery and life after death. The study ultimately shows that Södergran used traditional metrical verse in order to produce interesting experiences of uncertainty and unbalance.

Robert Kolár (Institute of Czech Literature of the Czech Academy of Sciences), in co-operation with *Ksenia Tveryanovich*, discussed the problems of translation and meaning of verse forms. They undertook a metrical analysis of more than 130 Russian translations of four Czech poets who worked at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (Karel Toman, Fráňa Šrámek, Viktor Dyk, and František Gellner), looking for the motivations for structural or functional equivalents. They also compared the general profiles of mentioned poets in Russia based on the metrics of translations with their profiles in their homeland. In the comparison, differences between the Russian and Czech metrical system were taken into account, as well as differences between the Russian and Czech verse theories, first and foremost their different concepts of free verse and different labelling – for example *dolnik*, a specific Russian version of German strict stress-meter.

Jesús M. Saavedra Carballido, from the University of Santiago de Compostela, devoted his paper, "Across the Whale Road", to the problems of verse translations of the Old English verse epic *Beowulf* into several Iberian Romance languages: Spanish, Galician-Portuguese and Catalan. Translators have sometimes offered prose versions, thus renouncing the verse of the original, with its four-ictus lines divided into two halves of varying syllabic lengths. Among those who have attempted verse translations, a few have resorted to a kind of free verse that can be difficult to distinguish from chopped-up prose. Most, however, have chosen kinds of metrical verse that, apart from the usual licence of varying clausulae, regulate the number of syllables in ways that are quite alien to the original: some translations are based on unified ten-position lines in which stresses are irregularly distributed; others, on lines divided by internal extrametricality, with each half featuring two ictuses, a noticeable ternary rhythm and optional headlessness, or on divided lines in which each half has exactly five positions. Despite the allowed variations, all of these metrical versions impose a degree of formal rigidity that is absent from the Old English epic meter. The speaker expressed bewilderment about the fact that no translator, at least as far as Galician-Portuguese and Spanish are concerned, has ever exploited the possibilities afforded by the loose, *dolnik*-type meter known in both languages since the Middle Ages. The advantages of this meter seem obvious: to begin with, it can present itself as, among other things, a divided line whose internal extrametricality increases the translator's freedom; moreover, the possibility of combining a precise number of ictuses with internal syllabic fluctuation brings it closer to the original. Lastly, it is flexible enough to permit more literal translation than strict meters.

Grigori Utgof's (Tallinn University) presentation was announced as a combination of a formal description of several poems by one of the most important contemporary Russian authors, Maria Stepanova, with an overview of the poet's strategies towards quoting her predecessors. However, the speaker only had enough time to introduce Stepanova to the public and read aloud a few poems and their translations made by Sasha Dugdale. The audience was free to draw their own conclusions about the meaning of the form in the works of Stepanova. Her poems are excellent, both in the original and in translation.

The first day of the conference ended with a keynote lecture delivered via Zoom by *Barry Scherr*, a professor of Dartmouth College (Hanover, NH), and named "Metrical Ambiguity". In most instances the meter of a Russian poem becomes clear virtually from the start, after a single line or just a few lines. In others, such as works employing logaoedic meters or compound meters, it may be necessary to look at a couple of stanzas or even the entire poem before a firm determination of the meter can be made. However, there are also poems

for which the author is clearly providing a metrical structure to the verse lines, but the work nonetheless resists easy classification. Most often this phenomenon results from situations in which the poem bears some resemblance to more than one metrical type but does not precisely match the norms for either one. More rarely, a poem seems to fit under a specific metrical category but breaks one or two key rules for that meter, leading to the sense that it might be equally possible to classify the work differently. In his paper the speaker examined several instances of metrical ambiguity in Russian verse and concluded that such poems should be treated as a distinct category when establishing the metrical repertoire of a given poet.

The second day of the conference was opened with a plenary keynote lecture delivered by *Igor Pilshchikov*: "Russian Quantitative Formalism of the 1910–1930s as a Forerunner of Digital Humanities". The speaker approached Russian Formalist theory from the perspective of the digital humanities and corpus-based computational study of verse. In 2011, Franco Moretti and his co-authors from the Stanford Literary Lab called their research method "quantitative formalism" in contrast to old, Russian Formalism, which, in their opinion, was "qualitative". However, the thesis of quantitative formalism's novelty is only partially true. To demonstrate this, the author focused on the approaches to quantitative poetics developed by Boris Tomashevsky (1890–1957) and Boris Yarkho (1889–1942), and showed how their methodologies can be applied in the present-day digital corpora. Both Tomashevsky and Yarkho were members of the Moscow Linguistic Circle, cofounded by Roman Jakobson in 1915.

Tomashevsky pioneered a statistical method of his own invention that compares empirical indicators of verse rhythm with a theoretical model. Later the mathematician Andrei Kolmogorov introduced important corrections to Tomashevsky's methodology. Meanwhile, in the contemporary computational corpus-based research of verse, the study of rhythm is the weakest link. While the automated recognition of most meters is now available and used in poetic corpora, the study of rhythm requires a lot of manual markup that takes a lot of time and effort, particularly for the languages with a free stress, such as Russian. The diachronic changes create additional complications, such as, for example, the shifts in the position of stress in Russian polysyllables compared to their stress in the language of the 18th and 19th centuries. There are no large rhythmically disambiguated corpora, and the comparative rhythmics of the meters of poems written in different languages has never been extensively studied with computer support. Tomashevsky undertook the first study of this kind in 1919 (published in 1923), and in the pre- and early computer era his approach was substantially developed in the studies of Marina Tarlinskaja and Mikhail Gasparov.

Yarkho used statistics for researching almost all aspects of the language of poetry and belles-lettres, motivated by a total quantification of poetics. The presenter drew special attention to Yarkho's then-novel approach of comparing many texts using a limited number of features. This is nothing else but an early example of "distant reading", a term coined by Moretti many decades later. Only a few features suggested in Yarkho's works are used in contemporary digital corpora of Russian and European drama, such as the DraCor project (https://dracor.org/). Of particular interest today is Yarkho's late book, *Methodology of Exact Literary Studies*, in which he shows how the study of literature can benefit from applications of basic statistical methods and how these data can explain certain features of literary structures or their evolution.

The next presentation, entitled "Simulating History of Poetic Forms in a Jar: Role of Imitation, Chance and Inequality in the Emergence of Association between Poetic Meter and Meaning", was made by *Artjoms Šeļa* (Institute of Polish Language of the Polish Academy of Sciences and University of Tartu), one of the most prolific among contemporary digital humanists. The association between a poetic form and semantics – also known as "the semantic halo of meter" – remains one of the fundamental problems in verse studies. There is a growing body of recent work that shows that persistent relationship between meter and meaning in different poetic traditions is formally detectable across large and cross-cultural corpora of accentual-syllabic verse. However, we are yet to have a satisfactory answer to the main question: why must this relationship form and how does it persist in time? There are many possible explanations: from mnemonic capacities of metrical forms, or specific literary conventions, to educational practices and literary canon that selects lucky few texts which are then imitated by a disproportionate amount of aspiring poets. Unfortunately, a historical corpus of poetic texts does not hold these answers in itself; also impossible are experiments: we cannot simply "switch off" one variable – e.g. memory or canonicity – and look at how poets will produce poetry in a controlled setting for generations. The last remaining path is simulations and formal modelling: to understand an observable effect of a complex system (the "halo") we must first understand simple interactions that might lead to it. The speaker presented a series of simple agent-based models that explicate and test basic assumptions about the relationship between time, form and meaning on the level of generations of individual poems. While the effect of different moving parts of these models can drastically differ, they show at least two important premises for the persistent form and meaning relationship: 1) small preference of a new poem to copy meaning within the observable past of the same meter; and 2) unequal popularity of metrical forms which create formally different poem pools of variable sizes. In other words,

the halo effect activates when memory works together with chance. This kind of simulations, while not providing any definitive answers, can hopefully push us to refine theories about complex historical processes.

The last paper of the morning session, "European Eclogue: Genre and Meter (from Theocritus to Brodsky)", was given via Zoom by *Anastasia Belousova*, *Juan Sebastián Páramo*, and *Paula Ruiz* (all the co-authors represent the National University of Colombia / Universidad Nacional de Colombia). Eclogue, or idyll, is one of the most important genres of European poetry. It was created by Theocritus, transferred to Latin soil by Virgil, flourished in the poetry of the Renaissance and has survived to the present. However, to give an exact definition of this kind of poetry is not so simple. Problems arise in part due to the fact that this form in the history of European poetry allows for variability of metric parameters while maintaining a number of semantic constants. Though in classical poetry eclogue was written in hexameters, new European poetry did not find a single equivalent to this form, which has caused a certain genre uncertainty. The paper discussed European variants of the transfer of the genre and form of eclogue in translations and original poems. Particular attention was paid to *terza rima* as a meter of pastoral poetry (examples are Boccaccio's poems and Sannazaro's "Arcadia") and the reasons for the appearance of such a metric equivalent. Another European equivalent was the Alexandrine verse used by French poets (Fontenelle) and their Russian followers (Sumarokov, Muravyov). Finally, the paper focused on Joseph Brodsky's experiments in search of the tonic equivalent. An analysis of the history of eclogue from the point of view of meter and genre allowed the presenters to turn to the fundamental aspects of comparative metrics, the specificity of poetic forms in translation and semantics of meter and rhythm.

The next session discussed Germanic and Finno-Ugric folklore verse and some reincarnations of the latter in contemporary Estonian popular poetry. The first presentation, "A Rough Analysis of Geographical Variation of Finnic Runosong Meter on the Basis of Large Data", was prepared by a group of scholars: *Mari Sarv* from Estonian Literary Museum and her colleagues from the University of Helsinki, *Maciej Janicki*, *Kati Kallio*, and *Eetu Mäkelä*. Finnic common runosong tradition characterized by trochaic tetrametric verse lines, alliteration and parallelism were documented extensively in previous centuries. Majority of runosong texts stored in Estonian and Finnish archives have been reworked into databases during last decades, and recently brought together into a joint database in the framework of the FILTER project sponsored by the Finnish Academy. The digital accessibility of this vast material allowed the researchers to delve into various aspects of variation within this tradition with the help of computing. At the same time, extreme linguistic

variation, archaic language mode, and biases in the material complicate the analysis. Despite of the scholarly interest in the runosong meter (so-called *Kalevala*-meter) in general, its variation in the Northern Finnic songs had remained unstudied. The research questions, and methods for solving them derive from Mari Sarv's research on metrical variation of Estonian runosongs based on limited text samples from each Estonian parish. The quantitative *vs.* accentual nature of the verse lines in each region was estimated based on rough syllabification of the whole body of material, the average length of the syllables, and the percentage of verse structures typical of so-called broken lines (where placement of stressed syllables violates the trochaic rhythm). Sarv's previous study had shown how in Estonia, through the innovation in prosodic structure of the language, the quantitative basis of meter became gradually replaced by the accentual one. The results of the new research showed similar tendencies in the whole Finnic area in the direction from North-East towards South-West.

The paper by *Janika Oras* (Estonian Literary Museum) "On a Metric Dialect of the Southern Border of the Finnic Runosong Area: Versification in Seto Singing Tradition" introduced one example of the metric variability in oral poetic tradition – Seto runosong meter as a peculiar regional version of the common Finnic verse meter. The Seto region is located on the southern border of the Finnic runosong tradition area. The presenter, with a group of co-operators, which includes Mari Sarv, Žanna Pärtlas, Sulev Iva, and Andreas Kalkun, has statistically analysed the structure of Seto verses based on sound recordings of performances, in an attempt to understand the principles of versification characteristic of the local tradition. The analysis has comprised three different structural levels: the musical rhythm structure of the performance that is tightly connected to the song text; the structure of the octosyllabic main line in the performance (without repetitions, additional syllables and addressing formulas/refrains); and the generalized or deeper level of the verse structure (without taking into account the most variable part of the performance). The Seto song meter shares similarities with but also has considerable differences from other metric dialects of Finnic runosong, including the tradition of the neighbouring and linguistically very similar Southeast-Estonia. There are also differences within Seto region which can be understood as three versions of the local meter of the older runosong style. These different versions of the meter are connected to three categories of songs: 1) the main corpus of runosongs with a stable line length; 2) the group of refrain songs with a varying line length; and 3) the choral laments with a varying line length.

With the paper "A Living Oral Tradition with Viking Roots: Norwegian *Nystev* Features Found in Old Norse Skaldic Poem *Málsháttakvæði*" presented by *Jacqueline Ekgren*, founder and head of Ekgren Institute of Music in Oslo,

the discussion moved from Finno-Ugric topics to Old Germanic. The paper introduced the Norwegian *nystev*, "new stev", one-stanza four-line folk poetry performed solo in a living oral tradition called *kveding*, "between singing and saying". In 1914, researcher Ivar Mortensson-Egnund published a short essay proposing a strong connection between the living oral tradition of Norwegian *nystev*, and *Málsháttakvæði*, an Old Norse thirteenth century "proverb poem", found in *Codex Regius* which also contains Snorri's *Edda*. Among the 30 eight-line stanzas in *Málsháttakvæði*, one finds 14 instances of four-lines sharing the distinctive features of *nystev*. Mortensson-Egnund's essay lacks sources, but deserves closer scrutiny. The speaker reviewed relevant research, and presented additional common features. *Málsháttakvæði* and *nystev* are both accentual poetry, with four stresses per line. *Málsháttakvæði* has situational verse, a major feature of *nystev*. Moreover, despite the differences in language, the 14 instances of *nystev* pattern in *Málsháttakvæði* can be performed in *nystev* kveding style with any *nystev* melody (as it was demonstrated by the presenter). One may wonder if the *nystev* pattern in *Málsháttakvæði* was the poet's innovation, or an example of older folk poetry. A common assumption of *nystev* originating in the 1600s may be revised: the findings of the presenter support that the *nystev* pattern could be at least as old as thirteenth century *Málsháttakvæði*.

The session ended with a paper on contemporary Estonian pop culture. In her paper "Sound Devices in Estonian Instagram Poetry", *Rebekka Lotman* (University of Tartu and Tallinn University) stated that during the second half of the 20th century end rhymes started to disappear from Estonian poetry. In elitist poetry these effects were used mainly (with some exceptions) with a comic function (for example, in parodies), as they were perceived as an outdated artistic device. However, in the last decade, rhyming has started to emerge again in two popular types of poetry, which both have brought it back to a wider audience: firstly, in oral rap poetry, and secondly, in Instagram poetry, mostly in the works by popular author Lauri Räpp. The speaker analyzed the sound patterns in Estonian Instagram poetry: what kind of word and sound repetitions are used, and what is the occurrence of different kinds of end rhymes (full rhyme, and various types of deviations from it) as well as alliteration and assonance. The outcome was compared with the results of studies on sound devices in the previous periods of Estonian poetry.

The next session was devoted to the incarnations of Greco-Roman culture in later historical periods. *Kristi Viiding* (Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Science) and *Maria-Kristiina Lotman* discussed the dactylic hexameter in Livonian humanist poetry: their paper presented the comparative analysis of the versification of the poetry by Daniel

Hermann (1539–1601) and David Hilchen (1561–1610), both humanistically educated authors and influential political figures of their times. During the period of 1585–1600 in Riga these two authors were closely acquainted and Hermann's dedicatory poem to Hilchen reveals their friendly relationship. While Hermann was an active poet during his entire life and the image of a poet was an important part of his persona, Hilchen was first and foremost a politician and a lawyer for whom writing poetry was a diversion from his other obligations. In his lifetime, Hermann prepared three volumes of his collected works (published posthumously in Riga in 1614–1615), while Hilchen's extant poems were collected and edited only this year. In the paper the rhythmical and prosodical structure of the dactylic hexameter of both authors were studied and the results was compared to the data of ancient Latin poetry. The analysis demonstrated the prosodic and rhythmic variety of the hexameter of both authors and revealed the main rhythmic tendencies and basic rhythmic patterns of their verse, as well as the commonalities and peculiarities in comparison with classical Latin hexameter.

Quasi-hexameter in the work of contemporary Russophone Estonian poet P. I. Filimonov (a nom de plume) was the topic of *Mikhail Trunin*'s paper. He analysed a poem entitled "Hellenic Elegy, Ordinal Number Unknown" («Какая-то по счету эллинская элегия»). It consists of 14 metrical lines and two concluding lines written in free verse. This poem attracts attention with its classical antique colouring. The paper examined what its verse meter is, and how it is related to the previous tradition at the level of form and semantics. The first part of the paper considered the rhythmic structure of the poem. Out of the 14 metrical lines, only two are written in classical hexameter; all the others are various derivatives of this meter. The main field of experiments for P. I. Filimonov is the anacrusis: its length varies from zero to two syllables. At the same time, clausulae are a stronghold of tradition. The second part of the paper presented P. I. Filimonov's interest in classical antiquity as a sign of the poetic style that has developed in the Russian poetic language since the early 19th century. It has been continually reinterpreted since then, but has not lost its significance until now. To test the viability of (quasi)hexameter, P. I. Filimonov collides it with vers libre at the end of his poem. In conclusion, the question was posed: can semantics be the anchor that makes a poetic text quasi-hexametric? The example of P. I. Filimonov's poem shows that even a minimal shade of the antique colouring forces us to read the poem against the background of both the revisited classical antiquity and modern experiments with classical hexameter. But if a quasi-hexametrical rhythm enhances this shade, the impression intensifies. Therein lies a significant difference between classical hexameter and other poetic forms.

"*Cursus* in Dante's and Boccaccio's Latin Prose" by *Annika Mikkel* (University of Tartu) was the last paper of the session. The term "prose rhythm" is used in ancient rhetoric to indicate rhythmical units at the end of sentences and clauses which in classic prose were called *clausulae*. The rhythm of classic prose was based on the quantity of syllables. Over centuries, the system of clausulae was simplified and, in addition to quantity, word stress became relevant. Medieval Latin prose rhythm was based on word stress and it was called *cursus*. There were four rhythmic patterns in the late Middle Ages: *cursus planus*, *cursus velox*, *cursus tardus* and *cursus trispondaicus*. The aim of the presentation was to study the occurrence of *cursus* in Dante's and Boccaccio's Latin prose using the method of comparative-statistical analysis. To achieve this goal, the presenter analysed the following texts: *De Monarchia*, *De vulgari eloquentia*, *Questio de aqua et terra* and *Epistole* by Dante; and *De mulieribus claris* and *De casibus virorum illustrium* by Boccaccio.

The conference ended with a lecture delivered via Zoom by honorary speaker *Marina Tarlinskaja*, professor emerita in the University of Washington, entitled "*A Lover's Complaint*: not Shakespeare". Outlining Shakespeare's canon is one of the most important problems of literary studies. The poem "A Lover's Complaint" is still a mystery: was it written by Shakespeare or somebody else? And what is its date? Until the 1960s its attribution to Shakespeare was doubtful, but in the 1960s two scholars independent of each other, Kenneth Muir and MacDonald P. Jackson, analysing the poem's vocabulary, firmly attributed it to Shakespeare; nowadays this poem is included into all complete editions of Shakespeare. However, nobody had studied its rhythmic and metrical particulars. The speaker has been studying this poem since 2004, and according to her rhythmical analysis, the poem was not written in the 1600s as Jackson believes to this day, but in the early 1590s, and not by Shakespeare. If the poem is dated to, say, 1592–1593, Shakespeare wrote his own "complaint" at this time – it is named "The Rape of Lucrece". The rhythmical style of "A Lover's Complaint" makes the presenter think that it was composed by an older poet who used an old-fashioned way of stressing, word boundaries distribution and other rhythmical features of a poetic text.

The programme and abstracts are available on the webpage of the conference[1]. Science does not stop even in cramped circumstances, when the universe is unstable and often turns to people with its disgusting side. Verse studies reconcile a little with reality and sometimes give us a hope.[2]

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[1]   https://www.tlu.ee/en/frontiersincomparativemetricsIV

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