

History of Quantitative Linguistics

Since a historiography of quantitative linguistics does not exist as yet, we shall present in this column short statements on researchers, ideas and findings of the past – usually forgotten – in order to establish a tradition and to complete our knowledge of history. Contributions are welcome and should be sent to Peter Grzybek, peter.grzybek@uni-graz.at.

Michail Lopatto: *Attempt at an Introduction into the Theory of Prose* (1918)

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ПУШКИНИСТЪ.

ИСТОРИКО-ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫЙ
СБОРНИКЪ

подъ редакціей профессора С. А. Венгерова.

III.

This article presents an early scientific paper, published by Michail Osipovič Lopatto (1892-1982) in 1918. It goes back to a presentation he gave in a 1915 seminar on Puškin, held at Sankt Petersburg University. This seminar, led by the renowned Puškin expert S.A. Vengerov, has been referred to as one of the off-shots of the Russian Formalist School. Lopatto's article has been largely neglected in works on the history of Russian Formalism as well as on the history of Quantitative Linguistics. In it, the author attempts to lay the foundations for a general theory of prose, distinguishing between material, form and content, on the one hand, and postulating quantitative methods, on the other. The analyses

offered, and the ideas presented as to the need of quantification, are far from being what might be called 'ripe', from a modern point of view. Yet, they are not only far ahead of their time, but largely wait for an answer still today.

Introduction: Historical Context

Lopatto's paper emerged in the context of Russian Formalism or, to be more correct, on the late pre-formalist threshold to a radically new understanding of literature and its analysis. Generally speaking, Russian Formalism is an umbrella term for a group of scholars who, in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, set out to lay the foundations for modern structuralism and semiotics. Specifically they attempted to develop radically new concepts for a theory of literature, art and, in fact, culture. Literature, specifically realistic prose, had lost its dominant ideological function at the turn of the century; the first Russian revolution in 1905, the beginning of World War II in 1914, and the October Revolution in 1917 meant significant changes not for the Russian society as a whole, but for academia, where younger scholars and students increasingly started to question traditional concepts. Two groups of young scholars are known to have formed the theoretical breeding ground and organizational centers of this movement: In 1915, the Moscow Linguistic Circle (MLK¹) was founded, followed by the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOJAZ²) in 1916, in Sankt Peterburg. The MLK, whose founders were Pëtr G. Bogatyřev, Roman O. Jakobson, and Grigorij O. Vinokur, existed from 1915-1924; its main interest were language and linguistic approaches to literature and folklore, particularly analytical and methodological approaches to the distinction between what they termed practical vs. poetic language. OPOJAZ, too, was founded by linguists, such as Lev P. Jakubinskij and Evgenij D. Polivanov (both disciples of Baudouin de Courtenay), but from the very beginning, they joined by trained literary scholars such as Viktor B. Šklovskij, Sergej I. Bernštejn, Boris M. Ėjchenbaum, Jurij N. Tynjanov, and Boris V. Tomaševskij. As Victor Erlich in his detailed survey on *Russian Formalism* (1955) reconstructed, many of them had been students of Semën A. Vengerov (1855-1920), an outstanding expert on Puškin, who had gathered young students around him and involved them in theoretical and methodological discussions; among these students was Michail Lopatto, whose name is not mentioned by Erlich, however.

The Russian Formalists shaped the academic atmosphere of the late 1910s and the 1920s in the field of the humanities although. And despite all differences in their personal interests and profiles, all these scholars may be said to have concentrated on literature as verbal art, trying to work out the devices [приемы] (i.e., processes, or structures) by which a verbal message is rendered into a form which is likely to be received as a work of art. In their concentration on form, they did not understand the latter to be in opposition, or juxtaposition, to content. In fact, it was some kind of a priori assumption from the very beginning that form and content can only be conceived of in a dialectical interrelation: any change of form would result in a change of content. Therefore, it was rather the 'formation' of some material (e.g., language, or linguistic material) by way of specific techniques, which was in the center of their interest, and their whole orientation was to determine these specifics and regularities – an approach, which has correctly been related to nomothetic concepts in their orientation (cf. Striedter 1969: XIII). But 'formalist' soon became some kind of derogatory term, since the dominant (political and ideological) tendencies were rather interested in "theories" focusing aspects of content. The formalists would counter these tendencies with an elaboration of their concepts, which was fruitful, in the beginning: after concentrating on the determination of

¹ Московский лингвистический кружок

² Общество по изучению поэтического языка

specific devices, seeing an individual work of art first seeing as the sum, then as a complex system of such devices, they extended their view on the whole ‘row’ of literature (as well as other rows, such as music, religion, painting, etc.), finally integrating them into a whole system and thus anticipating what systems-oriented (semiotic) theory of culture, half a century later. At that time, however, starting with the mid-1920s, it became increasingly clear that there could be no peaceful and harmonious co-existence with Soviet ideology and politics.

Nevertheless, despite all differences in the individual scholars’ personal fates (ranging from being exiled as political victims to Roman Jakobson’s international success story), Russian Formalism as a whole became one of the most important and influential theoretical movements of the 20th century, at least in the long run. Starting with Viktor Erlich’s above-mentioned book on *Russian Formalism* (1955), and Jurij M. Lotman’s *Lectures on Structural Poetics* (1962), accounts and (re-)interpretations of the history of Russian formalism started, which will hardly ever be finished. Yet, over the last half century, an almost complete picture has been reconstructed of the discussions which took place almost 100 years ago. Only accidentally, individual stones can be added to the overall mosaïque patchwork arising, and one such stone seems to be an almost forgotten early work by Michail Lopatto.



Michail Osipovič Lopatto was born in Vilnius, in 1892, as the son of a Livonian squire. One of Lopatto’s student mates and life-long friends was Nikolaj M. Bachtin (1894-1950; cf. Christian 1992), a brother of Michail M. Bachtin (1895-1975), who was later to become an outstanding philosopher, whose works are very much appreciated still today. Lopatto was able to finish the Historical-Philological Faculty of Petersburg University in 1917.

During his time in Sankt Petersburg and Odessa, Lopatto was not only interested in literary theory, rather he turned out to be an active (and obviously talented) poet himself. In fact, before he left Russia in 1920, to become a successful merchant, he edited two volumes of his poetry: *Избыток* [The Loss] in Petrograd (1916), and *Круглый стол* [Round Table] in Petrograd/Odessa (1919); the second volume was published in his own publishing house, Omphalos (1916-19). After his emigration, Lopatto first moved to Berlin, later settled in Italy (and received Italian citizenship after World War II), where he had no (or only very reduced) contact with the Russian literature scene any more. Lopatto mainly worked as a fur trader of. Only at a later period of his life, he would return to poetry: in 1959, he edited a volume of *Стихи* [Verses] in Paris, which included both earlier and later works of his; from his memorial novel, written later, only the first part remained in Italian translation. In Italy, Lopatto’s archive is kept by slavist Stefano Garzonio.



Lopatto’s article *Повести Пушкина* [The Tales of Puškin] was published in 1918, in the third volume of the historical-literary series *Пушкинист* [Puškinist]. This series was edited by renowned professor S.A. Vengerov, a literary scholar and a famous expert in Puškin. The title of Lopatto’s article is an allusion, of course, to Puškin’s *Повести Белкина* [The Tales of Belkin], which, in 1834, represented a milestone in the development of Russian prose literature. But detailed analyses of *The Tales of Belkin* represent only part of Lopatto’s interest: more important is the sub-title of Lopatto’s text, *Attempt at an Introduction into the Theory of Prose* [Опыт введения в теорию прозы]. In fact, Lopatto repeatedly points out that it is just a *theory* of prose, he wants to lay the foundations for, and that for this purpose, the establishment of *laws* is indispensable – a point of view which is very familiar with everyone

who has ever read Mario Bunge's (1967) *Scientific Research*³, and which clearly contradicts Viktor Šklovskij's usage of this term in his important and highly influential article "Art as Device" [Искусство как прием] from 1917, which was later repeatedly reprinted⁴, and in which the author, too, attempts to present objective criteria for the description of prose texts, part of these criteria even calling 'laws', but using the term 'law' in a rather everyday understanding of this word. For Lopatto, as opposed to this, a law cannot be established without quantificational methods, and although his own methods in achieving this goal are rather poor, it is just the claim and postulation, brought forth by a 22-year old student in 1915, which makes this text quite attractive for the history of quantitative linguistics and text analysis.

Although the text was published only in 1918, it goes back to a presentation Lopatto made in Vengerov's famous Puškin seminar, at the meeting held on February 12, 1915. We know this date from the protocols of the meeting. Half a year later, in fall 1915, after Vengerov's seminar had ended, a number of students approached Vengerov and suggested to him to continue their work, devoted to the study of 19th century in generally, and to Puškin specifically, by founding a historical-literary circle – one of these students was Michail Lopatto. In accordance with the university rules about student organizations, this society indeed started its work in on December 5, 1915. In the first one and a half year of its existence, that is until summer 1917, this Puškin Circle organized 22 meetings, which took place on Saturday evenings in the Museum of Ancient Times [Музей древности / Muzej drevnosti], until in fall 1917, due to restrictions of tramway traffic in the evenings, the activities came to an ending. Among the participants and speakers of this circle were some of the most outstanding literary scholars of the time, people like poet and literary theorist Andrej Belyj, or literary scholars like Viktor M. Žirmunskij (later an important person in literature and folklore research) and Boris M. Ėjchenbaum, and others. In 1918, the work was continued, but now not any longer in form of a specific student organization; instead, the organizational form had turned into an academic society by the name of Historical-literary Puškin Society at Petrograd University [Историко-литературное общество имени Пушкина при Петроградском университете / Istoriko-literaturnoe obščestvo imeni Puškina pri Petrogradskom Universitete]. The difference was that now, not only students, but any researcher in the field of history and theory of literature, could become a member of this society.

Lopatto had been one of the members of Vengerov's famous 1915 seminar on Puškin. This seminar was one of the decisive off-shots of the Russian Formalist School, as has been shown by Erlich (1955) in his survey on *Russian Formalism*. On February 12, 1915, Lopatto, delivered a presentation on Puškin's prose. Although this presentation and its publication three years later became almost forgotten in later times, Lopatto's contribution to Vengerov's seminar must be qualified as one of the earliest formalist presentations at large. In fact, Lopatto's work was well known and highly appreciated (though not uncontradicted) at that time.

As we know from the meeting's protocol, Vengerov himself is reported to have reacted to Lopatto's presentation by objecting that one should not talk about sugar and forget to say that it is sweet, thus obviously criticizing Lopatto's rigorous removal of literary theory from the field of esthetics. A second spontaneous reaction goes back to Jurij N. Tynjanov, himself still a student at that time, who was a participant of the seminar, too, and who was present at Lopatto's presentation. In his contribution, Tynjanov shifted the attention of what Lopatto had observed and presented into a slightly different direction: whereas Lopatto had mainly focused on issues of frequency, Tynjanov suggested to interpret and elaborate his

³ Cf. vol. I, p. 318: "No laws, no science."

⁴ This article was later repeatedly reprinted, among others, in his book *О теории прозы* [Theory of Prose], where further relevant contributions can be found.

results in terms of sequences, thus raising the question of specific rhythms of prose – a topic which he would later pick up in the early 1920s, elaborating it in context of the then dominating discussion on verse and prose, and on possibilities to theoretically distinguish between these two species of literature. According to Tynjanov's later opinion, the qualification of a text as being written in verse or prose cannot be made on the basis of inherent features; rather, reference must be made to a given literary system regulating the relationship between these two types of artistic speech (as well as various violations of the borderlines between them). At the end of the 1920s, this view would result in the principal distinction of form vs. function.

Lopatto's interest was not, however, to find a basis for a theoretical distinction between verse and prose; rather, his focus was on the description of specific traits of Puškin's prose, by way of this trying to provide a basis from which one would then be able to elaborate and extend. Lopatto sets out with a general critique of the current state the theory of literature.⁵

Our classical theory of verbal art is in the poorest state, not even containing a remark on scholarly method. Some shreds by ancient rhetorics, historical and philological particulars about the terminology of forms, somehow put together, are declared to be a 'theory'. It goes without saying that such a theory does not explain anything and cannot detect any laws. Its terms are indefinite and random, and the form of works is explained by their content (e.g., ballad, poem). (4f.)

Thus, right from the beginning, Lopatto sees it as a necessary condition that there can be no theory without laws. In this context, he excludes scholars like Potebnja and Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij from the general reproach of literary 'theory' of his time being avoid of scientific character; considering the works of these two scholars to be of high scientific value, he classifies their interest, however, primarily in the fields of what we would call today cognitive psychology ("psychology of thinking"), and reception of art, as a consequence attributing them to psychology of language (or psycholinguistics). According to Lopatto, these authors do not concentrate on the specifics of art itself. This, in fact, is Lopatto's major concern: a theory of literature which, according to him (p. 5), "must be autonomous" ["Теория же литературы должна быть автономна"], i.e. independent from other branches of science. With this claim, Lopatto fully sides with his contemporaries, as can be seen, for example, from the famous passage of Roman Jakobson's⁶ 1919/21 comparison between literary scholars and police who, interested in a particular person, would arrest everybody around.

Generally speaking, the Russian formalists, who understood themselves to be 'specificators' [спецификаторы], detecting and describing the specifics of art, would strive for an autonomy of a theory of art. But they would dismiss linguistics as a relevant discipline for literary theory to a lesser degree as Lopatto does, and not in such a categorical way – rather, they were literary scholars who would understand (and study) literature as a branch of verbal art and therefore need linguistics as a helpful discipline, or who would conceive of themselves as being linguists understanding the field of linguistics in a broad sense, covering all aspect of verbal products, among them literary works.

In this sense, Lopatto is even more radical, clearly setting apart his interest in founding a theory of literature from the field of linguistics and grammar; for him, the sphere of

⁵ In detail, Lopatto terminologically distinguishes between the traditional 'Theory of Verbal Art' [Теория словесности] and what he terms a 'Theory of Literature' [Теория литературы] which, according to him, still remains to be established.

⁶ Jakobson's contribution, published in 1921, goes back to a presentation in 1919: „Между тем, до сих пор историки литературы преимущественно уподоблялись полиции, которая, имея целью арестовать определенное лицо, захватила бы на всякий случай всех и всё, что находилось в квартире, а также случайно проходивших по улице мимо.“

grammar “includes language and the laws of language”, and is not in charge of a theory of prose: “The laws of language are not important for us [...]. We need art only” (p. 39). In fact, he restricts the responsibility of linguistics to the sphere of stylistics, only:

“The gravitation center of my work is in its methods. The conclusions of a theory of prose belong to future, when the methods will be sufficiently elaborated, and when special studies will appear on separate fields of artistic prose.” (p. 50)

As to the method of analysis, Lopatto discusses and distinguishes the concepts of material, content, and form, as well as the relevance of these categories for art and a theory thereof. In this, he is in full accordance with the discussions of his time, albeit he is, in fact, slightly ahead of his time. As to literature, its material is language, of course. However, just like no sound in music has any artistic value in isolation, but appears to harmonious or disharmonious only in combination with others, no word has artistic value in itself: again, only in combination with other words, a given word adopts take some value. This usage of the term ‘value’, however, should not be confounded with the discipline of esthetics, which, according to Lopatto, is concerned with the objectives of art and the laws of its emergence (p. 6): a form, according to Lopatto, cannot be nice in itself, although the analysis of art products may eventually establish specific laws of taste (p. 7): “A theoretician’s task is not the evaluation of a work [...], but the study of its form” (p. 27).

So, what exactly is such a form, what does it consist of? Given that it is ultimately the combination, i.e. the internal interrelations and successive order of elements, which represent what may be called the *form* of a work, the crucial tasks of analysis can be considered to be (p. 8):

1. to find the formal elements of artistic prose, and
2. to study their interrelation and succession.

Whereas, at first sight, the definition of what a ‘form’ is seems to be clear, in some preliminary or elementary sense, the situation becomes more complex and difficult with regard to the analysis of a piece of art as a whole: first, it must be decided which elements are to be analyzed and how they can usefully be defined; and second, due to the fact that the relation between these elements is not only qualitative, but also quantitative, a quantitative analysis is necessary along with qualitative approaches, in order to specify the relation between form and content. Taken together, both aspects represent an extraordinary complexity, and both exact and systematic approaches have to be pursued. Again, Lopatto’s view turns out to be very modern: as we assume to know since Saussurian times, linguistic elements and entities are given as positive in some a priori sense, but a matter of definition, and as we also know, the study of linguistics structures without paying due attention to the frequency of their occurrence is but the description of one side of the complex linguistic Rubik dice.

With regard to prose texts, which are in the center of Lopatto’s approach, there are three basic categories to be studied: these are:

1. the chapter,
2. the paragraph,
3. the phrase.

With regard to all of them, Lopatto offers a number of calculations which he presents in various tables; unfortunately, not only are most data in these tables incomplete, but also are the descriptions of these tables (i.e., their captions or their description in the running text) partly incomprehensible and cannot, as a consequence, be reproduced. Therefore, there is no

sense in presenting them here, the more since no reliable re-analyses are possible. Yet, Lopatto's way of stating the problem seems to be clear, in each single case, and it seems reasonable to focus here on his basic ideas.

With regard to the chapter, Lopatto concentrates on chapter length as one basic characteristic. According to him, a chapter represents something like a 'main caesura' in a writer's structuring of a text: by distinguishing chapters, pauses are introduced (not so much for the production, than for the reception process), which result in a specific distribution of information and thus alleviate the reader's reception. Analyzing Puškin's *Повести Белкина*, *Дубровский*, *Капитанская дочка*, and *Пиковая дама*, Lopatto calculates the length of each chapter for each of the stories. From a modern point of view, the results obtained and reported) may be considered to be disappointing – there are no further calculations as, e.g. averages, no questions as to some theoretical distribution model, no question as to specifics of the sequence of longer or shorter chapters (what might be called 'rhythm', in a broad understanding of this term). But one should not forget that these are the very first ideas developed in the direction outlined, some kind of a sketch for a whole research paradigm, completely new at the time of its publication.

For Lopatto, the unit of the paragraph is even more important than the chapter, at least with regard to Puškin's prose. According to Lopatto, the separation of paragraphs is an attempt to convey some kind of discontinuity to continuous thinking. For him, a paragraph in a prose text corresponds to what a stanza [строфа] is in poetry (p. 18). Again concentrating on length, Lopatto raises the question how to measure the length of a paragraph, i.e. in which measure units: whereas it is common to calculate the length of a stanza in the number of verse lines – what might an adequate entity for measuring paragraph length? To measure paragraph length in the quantity of pages, as does Lopatto in case of the chapter, does not seem reasonable to him, not only because most paragraphs are much shorter than one page, but also because the format of the edition and the font chosen will influence the results, particularly when comparing different authors. Likewise refusing to calculate paragraph length in the number of words, and looking for an adequate cognitive unit as the basic measuring unit, Lopatto suggests choosing the phrase as an adequate entity.

A phrase [фраза], according to Lopatto, can further be subcategorized into simple and complex, into direct and indirect ones, etc. In any case, a phrase must not be equated with sentence, and it should not be confused with it: whereas a sentence is a grammatical term, or concept, and as such determines laws of language, a phrase has semasiological meaning – it is a cognitive unit which cannot further be subdivided; a phrase can eventually be expressed by a sentence, but is not the same as a sentence (p. 21).

Thus, calculating the number of phrases per paragraph, Lopatto is well aware of the shortcomings of his study: "True, my figures do not cover the huge material of phrases, but yet, they are large, and the 'law of large numbers' may well be applied to them" (p. 23).

Given this restriction, it is not so important, in our context, that Lopatto must admit that he is not able to establish some law about the pauses between paragraphs – it is much more important that he raises this question. Analyzing the four above-mentioned texts written by Puškin, Lopatto finds the result to show that the average length of a paragraph is always one and the same across the four texts (p. 20). Table 1 reproduces the data as given by Lopatto; in addition to his original data, mean value (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (s) are presented in the last two columns.

Text	I	II	III	IV	V	\bar{x}	s
<i>Povesti Belkina</i>	17	22	118	31	53	48,20	37,02
<i>Dubrovskij</i>	46	34	72	30	8	38,00	20,98
<i>Kapitanskaja dočka</i>	29	47	38	12	80	41,20	22,59
<i>Pikovaja dama</i>	47	4	20	16	80	33,40	27,21

Given the fact that no more data are offered by Lopatto, and re-analyzing these spare data, it can clearly be seen, that paragraph length does not seem to constant; rather, length ranges from 33.40 to 48.20, with an overall mean of $\bar{x} = 40.20$ ($s = 28.18$).⁷

Furthermore comparing these results to those from other authors (Gogol', Tolstoj, and Kuz'min), Lopatto (p. 20) arrives at the conclusion "that for each author there are specific constant extents of paragraph" [свои постоянные размеры абзаца], with a specific variation from minimum to maximum: whereas, according to Lopatto, Puškin's paragraphs are characterized by a mean length of ca. 30 phrases, for Tolstoj, paragraphs concentrate on a length of ca. 15-20 phrases, that is it is two times less as compared to Puškin.

With regard to phrases, Lopatto offers tables with frequencies of phrases, separately for simple phrases and phrases with different degrees of complexity, for direct and indirect ones, for Puškin's texts and those of the other authors mentioned. Again, Lopatto interprets his results in terms of author-specific characteristics.

We will not go into further details here, fading out questions as far as, for example, the possible generalization of Lopatto's observations is concerned, or the assumed author-specific characteristics. These differences might as well be genre-dependent, or vary according to the differing proportions of descriptive, narrative or dialogical passages in the individual texts. In fact, Lopatto himself discusses such factors in detail towards the end of Lopatto's treatise (p. 33ff.), as well as differences with regard to perspicuity vs. abstractness (p. 28ff.); in his ruminations on style, he additionally discusses frequencies of sensitive [чувственные] vs. cognitive [мыслимые] words (the first directly relating to sensations, the second to abstract ideas), and of different parts of speech, concentrating on nouns, verbs, and epithets.

What seems worthwhile mentioning, however, is a remark by Lopatto (p. 21), which he himself does not pursue at any length, but which anticipates ideas which we today use to treat in terms of Menzerathian concepts. Pointing out the fact that Tolstoj's paragraphs consist of significantly less phrases, Lopatto mentions the fact that these phrases in turn are more complex and consist of multi-word fusions – thus, in a way, compensating, or counterbalancing, the lesser extent of paragraphs (p. 21).



Lopatto's work has been largely neglected in the history of science. But we know that the rare reactions to it have always been extremely controversial, as could already be seen from the two immediate contributions to the discussion by Vengerov and Tynjanov, which were mentioned above.

⁷ As has been mentioned above, one should be very cautious with re-analyzing the data given by Lopatto, not only because they tend to be incomplete, but also because their overall amount is rather scarce, resulting in very few data points. Anyway, a Kruskal-Wallis test over these data shows the differences between the four texts not to be significant ($X^2 = 0.66$, $d.f. = 3$; $p = 0.88$), thus corroborating Lopatto's finding in this case.

In the following years, too, there were contradictory statements on Lopatto's work which, however, had not been forgotten at that time. In 1925, for example, Tomaševskij presented a synopsis of Puškin studies of his time; in it, he explicitly mentioned Lopatto's study as an exception to the overall beginning status [зачатное состояние⁸] (ibid., 90). Interestingly enough, Tomaševskij also made reference to Lopatto in his 1929 article⁹ on the question of prose rhythm, illustrated on Puškin's *Пиковая дама* [*Pique Dame*]. In this article, basically concentrating on regularities of rhythmic structures in cola and sentences, Tomaševskij also mentioned A.M. Peškovskij's (1928) suggestion as to the extended structural analysis of paragraphs; in this context, he mentioned Lopatto's relevant study, and he regretted that Lopatto did not relate his findings to the question of rhythm (Tomaševskij 1929: 301).

As compared to these rather positive reactions, a clearly negative view of Lopatto's work was later taken by D.P. Jakubovič who, in his 1936 synopsis on the study of Puškin's prose, wrote:

Far-reaching conclusions were claimed in M.O. Lopatto's work about Puškin's short stories. The prematurity and subjectivity of his generalizing constructions about Puškin's style can be seen from the fact alone that Lopatto arrives at his conclusions – which postulate to be exact, on the basis of counting pages, phrases, paragraphs – not according to Puškin's original writings, but on the basis of printed editions [...]. Thus, in addition to works, which were published by Puškin, also unpublished drafts are among the works analyzed. In all of them, "the number of pages containing dialogues and descriptions" are equally calculated. According to the very same method, Puškin's prose is compared to the prose of other writers. Except for some disseminated clever remarks [...], nothing from that work entered the academic world and will not enter it.¹⁰

Subsequently, Lopatto's work became largely forgotten; only in 1975, in his retrospective view on the study of poetics in the 1920s, Vinogradov (1975) would mention Lopatto's contribution, qualifying them as a precursor of Tomaševskij's subsequent studies on prose rhythm.¹¹

Notwithstanding the overall neglect of Lopatto's paper as such, it seems to be much more important that many, if not most, questions raised in his text, wait for an answer still

⁸ Quoted from Garzonio (2006b: 138; fn. 11)

⁹ This article goes back to a presentation which Tomaševskij gave in the Moscow Linguistic Circle in 1920 and, in some elaborated form, on June 26, 1921, in the Russian Institute for the History of Arts. (RIII). Parts of that enlarged version were published separately in 1920/21 and eliminated from the 1929 version, mainly critical remarks on theoretical positions held by Andrej Belyj and Valerij Brjusov.

¹⁰ „На широкие выводы претендовала работа М.О. Лопатто о повестях Пушкина. Преждевременность и субъективность обобщающих построений о стиле Пушкина видны хотя бы из одного того, что Лопатто делает свои претендующие на точность выводы на основании подсчета страниц, фраз, абзацев не по рукописям Пушкина, а по изданиям (между прочим, неизвестно каким). В число анализируемых вещей, рядом с напечатанными Пушкиным, попадают и черновые, неоконченные. Во всех одинаково подсчитывается „число страниц диалога и описания“. Таким же методом проза Пушкина сравнивается и с прозой других писателей. Кроме разве отдельно брошенных умных замечаний [...] ничего из работы не вошло и не сможет войти в научный оборот.“

¹¹ Most recently, Italian Slavicist Stefano Garzonio, the keeper of Lopatto's archive, made references to him in two publications (Garzonio 2006a,b).

today. In this respect, it seems worthwhile pointing out, that insights most recently obtained on both chapter length and paragraph length point into the direction outlined by Lopatto. Neumann (2009), in her extensive work on paragraph length, analyzing 57 German texts of different kinds, is able to show that obviously there are indeed regularities in the organization of paragraph length which, however, seem to be text-type specific; she also proves there to be regular relations between paragraph and sentence length, which can be interpreted in Menzerathian terms. Likewise, Grzybek (2012a,b), analyzing chapter length of Tolstoj's *Война и мир* [War and Peace] for all 336 chapters separately, shows that not only follows the frequency distribution of chapter length follows a well-known distribution model (in detail, the hyper-Pascal distribution), but also corresponds the dependence of sentence length on chapter length the well-known Menzerath-Altmann law. It seems that with quite some temporal distance, we slowly arrive at answers to questions, which were asked almost a century ago. One of those, who raised these questions, was Michail Lopatto.

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