Palacký University, Olomouc

Roman O. Jakobson:
A Work in Progress

edited and with an introduction by
Tomáš Kubíček and Andrew Lass

Olomouc 2014

Neprodejná publikace

Content

Introduction

A few years ago, in an animated conversation with our dear friend and colleague, Professor Lubomír Doležel, the topic of structuralism and cognitive linguistics inevitably led us where it had taken us many times before, to Roman Osipovič Jakobson (1896–1982). It occurred to us that this pattern revealed a discrepancy that, in turn, spoke clearly to a need. Namely, the frequency with which Jakobson's name comes up in conversation seemed not to be matched by an engaged discussion of his ideas in current research and it was therefore high time to revisit the place this pioneer and grandmaster of the science of language and signification held in contemporary Czech scholarship. Thereof was born the idea for the international conference that took place December 10–11, 2012 in Olomouc (Czech Republic) at Palacký University's School of Humanities under the auspices of the Department of Czech Studies.

As we noted in our call for papers, the aim of the conference was to shed new light on the importance of an extraordinary scientific personality whose work and ideas influenced not only modern Czech literary science and linguistics, but also contributed considerably to laying the foundations of several new fields of science, such as phonology, communication theory or cognitive linguistics, and strengthened the foundations of a newly formed science of semiotics. Jakobson participated in the creation of the institutional base of Czech structuralism; he helped establish contacts and relations between Czech and foreign scientific environments as he also developed mutually productive relations among the representatives of the scientific, cultural and artistic life in Czechoslovakia. Finally, he made the intellectual potential and intellectual heritage of the Prague School of Structuralism available to linguistics and literary science worldwide. The two days of eighteen inspiring lectures and lively discussions brought together scholars from several countries, including Germany, France, the United States and Canada as well as the Czech Republic. The broad range of topics and interdisciplinary approaches that not only referenced and further explored his initiatives but also challenged them would have no doubt cheered Jakobson.

Reading encyclopedic entries devoted to Roman Jakobson offers an odd feeling of safety. Everything is well organized, lucid and complete. However, to take an example from our own research, a careful reading of his classic study *What is poetry?* reveals an argument full of contradictions. These contradictions provide an energetic impulse and influence one's own thinking even more so because the author never explained or resolved them as his attention turned in other

directions. One of the sources of inspiring ideas as well as permanent tensions that draw many back to Jakobson's studies and that informs the study on poetry mentioned above, lies at the core of his scientific method as it continued to develop since the beginning of 1930s. It is his emphasis on the character of the linguistic sign as a means of communication. As early as 1933, the publication date of *What is Poetry?*, Jakobson came to a realization that the Saussurean concept of the sign, defined as the unity of signifier and signified was, in its take on semiosis as process, vulnerable to very strong criticisms that demanded that he look elsewhere for the source of the identity of meaning. It is our opinion that *What is poetry?* marks the decisive moment in Jakobson's radical parting with the essentialist poetics of the Formalist school and signals his inclination towards a conditional poetics. For Jakobson the answer to the question of "what makes a literary work literary" could not lie with a simple reference to formalist *literariness* (*poeticalnes*) or estrangement (*priyom ostranenie*) which cease to play a pivotal role. It is the status of fiction itself that is now incorporated into the question as Jakobson's attention moves away from the immanent structure of the text to regions that make for the larger structures of which a literary work is part. Still, this is a tricky move and that is why Jakobson, in the final part of his study, does not hesitate to strengthen the central place of a text in the process of meaning formation, in the process of communication. That is why his concluding assertion, given what he stated in the earlier part of the study, that "poeticalnes is a *sui generis* phenomenon" strikes one as rather confusing. An alarming crack appears.

Solving this riddle belongs among the many ongoing adventures of semiotics. The point is that in the 1933 study many of the problematic categories of communication, such as code, subject or context, had in effect escaped from Pandora's box. After all, if you read *What is poetry?* carefully, you will find out that as early as in 1933 Jakobson formulated the first outlines of what would later appear in the study *Linguistics and Poetics* (1958) as the famous model of communication. In other words, to engage with Jakobson's oeuvre should be understood as an invitation to a dialog. To come back to Jakobson does not and should not mean a return to the safe territory of complete answers. That surely would contradict the spirit of Jakobson's studies. After all, Jakobson was himself interested in the discrepancies that marked theoretical developments. In one such case that appeared in his study *Quest for the Essence of Language*, he suggested that there is no temporal gap dividing theories; that questions, once introduced in a debate, remain as its permanent components, a point he illustrated using Plato to make an argument against Peirce. Theory, as Jakobson understood it, is not subject to evolution; the engine of progress does not drive it and it will never reach perfection as its final state since cognition cannot be perfect and stay human at the same time. Nevertheless, any theory must be based in a broadly

conceived self-reflection and self-criticism and its language should not lose its ability to reveal.

At a time when scholarship in the Czech Republic as elsewhere, is increasingly prone to a systematic forgetting, to an arrogant illiteracy and ignorance that claims a post-modern loss of values as an excuse, the minimal presence of Jakobson is startling. It is our opinion that the social sciences and the humanities have embraced ideologically inspired movements, such ideological concepts as gender studies, post-colonial studies or Marxism at a cost: instead of further refining the language of analytical abstraction, they have embraced the language of metaphorical interpretations. Undoubtedly, Jakobson would shake his head in disbelief if he had the chance to witness this shift.

Is Jakobson *de modé*? Cognitivists, who shape one stream of contemporary theory, would find Jakobson's study *Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances*, published in 1956, inspiring. The frequently voiced demand that theories turn to anthropological constants of understanding and utterance construction had been addressed by Jakobson long before it was reformulated for the present era. Jakobson's works—among others the study titled *Subliminal Verbal Patterning in Poetry* published in 1970—further support this claim. The tendencies in current literary history to redefine the contents of terms that are used as names of literary movements were already fulfilled in Jakobson's article *On Realism in Art* (1921), a pioneering example of deconstruction. There is perhaps no end to the relevance of Jakobson's scholarship to current trends in research.

This is not to say that Jakobson's work has not had a lasting impact on modern scholarship. The semiotics of Umberto Eco and the structural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss provide the best-known examples. Overall, the tendency is to use Jakobson as a time-proven authority. Such is the case of works in Czech literary theory published in the last decade with a few exceptions that try to truly understand him and respond to his invitation to a dialogue. If we exclude Zdeněk Mathauser, for whom such critical restlessness, the need to analyze contradictions, was part of his "in der welt sein", and several other scholars who are or were nearly Jakobson's contemporaries; in treatises on Jakobson the sound of a sculptor's hammer that shapes the bust of a scientist, respectable but rarely talked to, prevails. We firmly believe that it was dialogue, which Jakobson favored above all as an instrument of refinement. Dialogue, that did not recoil from contradictions but, instead, turned them into topics of further research. Such was the Jakobson we wished for our conference, to offer a platform for a critical evaluation of the historical as well as continuing relevance of his work.

All of the conference presentations included in the present volume have been edited and many expanded by the authors for the purpose of publication. **Wolf**

Schmid addresses the concept of equivalence or parallelism as a key constitutive tool in the verbal arts. Where Jakobson's seminal analysis focused exclusively on poetry, Schmid expands our understanding of parallelism by demonstrating its functionality in prose (he takes a closer look at Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Pushkin's *The Undertaker*) and proposes five distinct functions in the employment of this device. **Peter Nesselroth** takes a refreshing look at Jakobson's often quoted classic *Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics*, first presented in 1958. The six factors / six functions model has certainly proven its heuristic strengths but time has also highlighted its prejudices: it works best for a predominantly face-to-face, written and print culture characteristic of 20th century. Derrida's "deconstruction" and McLuhan's "probes" offer useful conceptual frameworks for addressing the fundamental shifts in communication types in our present, cyberspace environment. **Andrew Lass** takes a critical look at the abuse of mathematically derived models to explain Levi-Strauss's structural analyses. In this case, an attempt to understand the underlying meaning of Paussin's painting *Elezier and Rebecca at the Well* is found wanting for it misapplies the topological notion of non-genericity at the cost of highlighting the play of ambiguity and chance, both fundamental features of all poetic language. **Tomas Kubíček**'s paper revisits Jakobson's 1933 study *What is Poetry?* for the implications that the notion of aesthetic function and aesthetic value, as developed by the Prague Linguistic Circle, have for contemporary narratology and, specifically, in relation to the analysis of axiological systems for which narrative texts provide the medium. The resurgence of rhetoric in the 20th century guides **Jiří Kraus**'s reading of Roman Jakobson's place in the context of a historical process that established rhetoric as a systematic analysis of rules. He also offers a rebuttal to the historian of rhetoric, Brian Vickers, who rejected Jakobson's reduction of tropes and figures of speech to metaphor and metonymy, finding it an untrustworthy and extreme application of phonological binarism.

The place Czechoslovak Slavonic studies in the development of Milman Perry's and A. B. Lord's formulaic theory of epic songs is the topic of **Sylva Fischerová**'s contribution. She offers a fresh and in depth history as she follows the two protagonists through the many encounters with the likes of Roman Jakobson, Matija Murko, Antoine Meillet, and others, their research methods and many travails throughout their work in the Balkans during the 1930. In a similar vein of historical research, **Eva Krásová** investigates the possibility of actual contact between Roman Jakobson and the French linguist Emile Benveniste. Since both published pivotal papers on deictic expressions ("shifters") at about the same time (1956 and 1957 respectively,) the question of primacy or direct influence inevitably comes up. Careful content analysis reveals that their models work with very different understandings of the *langue / parole* distinction. Jakobson's approach also enables a clearer understanding of shifters as signs comprising both

symbolic and indexical components. **Božena Bednaříková** takes a refreshing look at Jakobson's inaugural essays to *Janua linguarum* (1956), in particular at his studies on aphasia because of the emphasis placed on the dual axis of language and the relation between the two poles of selection/substitution vs. combination/ contextuality. The author outlines an interesting comparison with a different set of distinctions, suggested by Jakobson's colleague and contemporary Vilém Mathesius, namely, between onomaziological and syntactic needs and with his bipolar approach to the word.

Petr Plecháč and **Robert Ibrahim** add to Jakobson's commentaries on Czech poetry with an interesting frequency analysis of lexical types in the writings of the 19th century poet Adolf Heyduk. By looking at verse length, literary form and meter in a corpus of over 100 thousand verses, they have been able to identify a significant dependency of the frequency of lexical types on verse length and literary form in contrast to other poetic markers (such as trochaic / iambic or rhymed / unrhymed verse) that turn out not to be defining. **Robert Dittman** revisits Jakobson's interest in Judaic-Czech medieval literature. This historical review introduces works that Jakobson had published on this subject as well as those that remained as works-in-progress and offers an interesting comparison between some aspects of his research with the current state of knowledge in the study of medieval Canaan glosses. The notion of artifice, one of the less frequently cited terms of Jakobsonian semiotics, is the paper topic of **Richard Müller** and **Pavel Šidák**. While reviewing it in the context of functional aesthetics and sign theory, they also draw attention to some weak points in this concept, namely the problematic assumption of the imminent character of parallelism as an artistic procedure. By looking at the historical context, comparing the Saussurean and Peircean paradigms also allows them to place the notion of artifice within the inherent symmetricism of 20th century literary theory. **David Skalický** returns to Jakobson's understanding of poetry famously outlined in *What is Poetry?* and, later, *Linguistics and Poetics*, as he takes a closer look at the ensuing debates, often polemical, regarding the functionalist perspective and the consequential criteria for the artistic status of a work, be it the author's intention, the characteristics of the work itself or, finally, the recipients point of view. Perhaps it is not, as the author suggests, a question of what is the essence of a work of art but, more fundamentally, "what does art do?"

Finally, **Veronika Ambros**, inspired by a comment made by the leading surrealist and theoretician of the Czech Avant-guard, Vratislav Effenberger, calling Jakobson "an inventor and fighter, friend of modern artists," takes a refreshing look at the latter's encounter, in 1937, with E. F. Burian's experimental theater and the staging of Pushkin's novel *Eugene Onegin*. As she points out, Jakobson used the occasion to reflect on his own position toward biography and history. In a similar

vein, **Eva Šlaisová** reminds us of the importance played by the "Letter of Roman Jakobson to Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich regarding the noetics and semantics of fun" for the theory of dramatic dialog and verbal, "objectless" comedy. By placing his thoughts in the context of his contemporaries (Bühler, Honzl, Mukařovský, Šklovský and others,) she is able to highlight Jakobson's pioneering work in the semiotics of drama.

Needless to say, the two day conference was as lively a meeting of kindred minds as it was a fruitful platform for the exchange of stimulating and, at times, passionately held opinions. We hope that we have succeeded in passing some of this productive atmosphere on to you, the reader, by preparing a volume that commemorates the work of Roman Jakobson and with which we wish to honor our friend and colleague Lubomír Doležel.

Tomáš Kubíček
Andrew Lass

Parallelism in prose

Wolf Schmid

Universität Hamburg, Institut für Slavistik und Interdisciplinary
Center for Narratology, Slavistische Literaturwissenschaft, Narratologie
Von-Melle-Park 6, 20146 Hamburg, Germany.
Email: wschmid@uni-hamburg.de

Abstract: The paper deals with five functions of equivalence or parallelism in prose: a) the rhetorical function, b) archisituations shaping function (examples from Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*), c) categorical frames shaping function, and functions that d) mark changes of state (example from Pushkin's *The Undertaker*), and e) shape gestalten.

Conclusion: Jakobson's sharp and rigid distinction between poetry, based on the principle of similarity, and prose, based on the principle of contiguity, must be modified. Parallelism plays a seminal role in both hemispheres. However, the substances, the material in which the patterns are realized and embodied, are different. In prose, they are more thematic, more abstract and occur in larger units.

Keywords: thematic equivalence; formal equivalence; prose; verse; narratology; temporality; Tolstoy; Pushkin.

Apparently, there has been no other subject during my entire scholarly life that has captured me as persistently as have the questions of parallelism. (Jakobson in Jakobson and Pomorska 1983, 100)

1. Jakobson on Equivalence and Parallelism

One of Roman Jakobson's favorite categories was equivalence. Equivalence means equality of two elements with regard to a particular value. In verbal texts, equality in this sense refers to a specific feature either of the text itself or of what is depicted in it. Such a feature, the *tertium comparationis*, is a characteristic that connects two or more elements or passages of a given text in a non-temporal way.

Equivalence, as it has been made prominent by Jakobson (1960), comprises both similarity and dissimilarity of text or content units. The dual nature of equivalence is expressed by Yurii Lotman's (1977) synonymous term *so-protivopostavlenie* ("co-opposition").

As is well known, equivalence has been promoted by Jakobson (1960) to a constitutive feature of verbal art, that is to say, of texts dominated by the poetic function. Although Jakobson does not restrict the sphere of poetic function to poetry, in his examples he concentrates on genres with a high degree of sound repetitions such as lyric verse, political slogans or common sayings.

Twenty years later, in his *Dialogues* with Krystyna Pomorska, Jakobson (1980) expands the range of equivalence or, as he now says, of parallelism. Pomorska asks about the role of parallelism in literary prose beyond the obvious cases of rhythmic prose or Biblical prose. According to her, for some scholars, among them the earliest Russian formalists, the existence of parallelism in prose is indubitable and Pomorska herself points to paired structures such as characters and more abstract thematic units as examples of parallelism. However, her question is more systematic: "can one consider that with regard to parallelism there is a certain sharp boundary between *versus* and *provorsa*, particularly in light of your theory of prose as a structure based on the principle of contiguity and poetry as a structure founded on the principle of similarity?" (Jakobson and Pomorska 1983, 106).

Jakobson admits that parallelism occurs also in a number of types of literary prose but that there is, nonetheless, a notable hierarchical difference between the parallelism of verse and that of prose. While in verse "the sound organizes the meaning" (ibid., 107), "inversely, in prose semantic units differing in extent play the primary role in organizing parallel structures. In this case, the parallelism

of units connected by similarity, contrast, or contiguity actively influences the composition of the plot, the characterization of the subjects and objects of the action, and the sequence of themes in the narrative" (ibid.).

2. Thematic and Formal Equivalence and their Reception

One can distinguish two basic types of equivalence in narrative prose with regard to the underlying features (cf. Schmid 1984a; 1992; 1998; 2010, 18–21). The first type is based on the identity of the segments in a *thematic* feature, a property or a diegetic function, which links elements of the story (situations, characters, and actions). This thematic bracketing is the primary form of equivalence in prose. It represents the basic relation in the construction of meaning, the axis of crystallization upon which all further, non-thematic equivalences semantically condense.

The second type, secondary in prose, is *formal* equivalence. It is not based on a thematic feature, but is dependent on the identity of two segments in terms of one of the devices that constitute the narrative. Those devices include the point of view, techniques of speech and mind representation; further, the transformation of the happenings into a story via selection of elements and properties, the transformation from the story into the narrative by compositional means and finally the transformation of the narrative into a text by verbalization.

Whether a thematic equivalence of two elements appears as similarity or contrast is not decided by the number of identities and non-identities in the features of those elements, but solely by the position that the corresponding features take in the story's hierarchy. The hierarchization, which the features undergo in the story, can be very dynamic. When the story emphasizes a feature x in which two elements A and B are identical, the equivalence of A and B appears as a similarity. In another phase of the story, a feature y can be highlighted. If the elements A and B are non-identical in y, the equivalence appears as a contrast, regardless of the number of other, non-actualized features A and B coincide in.

An example taken from Alexander Pushkin's tale "The Shot": In his military life, the narrated self encounters Silvio, an enigmatic romantic hero, as it seems to the young narrator. Whenever the feature of *romanticism* is actualized, the heroes' relationship is *similarity*. Silvio is perceived by the narrated self as a demonic-mysterious hero à la Byron. At the same time, the narrator yields to his "romantic imagination" and views Silvio as the "hero of some mysterious story" (Pushkin 1983, 67). Later in the story, the features of *age* and *experience* are highlighted: the

young narrator and the much older Silvio form a *contrast*. More complex is the heroes' relationship in the *military life* feature that combines them. Whereas, at first glance, their relationship seems to be *similarity,* it becomes clear that actually it is *contrast*: the young narrated self experiences the life of an infantry officer in the small village of N. where "there was not one house open to us, not one marriageable girl" (ibid., 65) as boring, the monotonousness being interrupted only by Silvio's enigmatic behavior. Silvio himself must have enjoyed that life in N. Not being in military service any more, hence living in N. by choice, he apparently was living off the admiration by the young men about half as old as he himself to whose circle he belonged and who formed an appreciative audience for his romantic performance (for details Schmid 1984b; 1987). It should be made clear that the decision on similarity or contrast depends on the features focused in each case.

Equivalence, in particular a thematic equivalence, must be *actualized* in order for it to be noticed. This can happen in many ways. The safest way to actualize equivalence and to ensure its noticeability is its intersection with other equivalences, either on the same structural level or on another level. Naturally, the highlighting of specific features and the assignment of equivalences is a matter of interpretation. Although the equivalences do characterize and reciprocally determine one another, their identification and integration into a semantic thread remains an action to be performed by the reader.

The actualization of potential equivalences contained in the work will always be only partial. This partialness is not only based on the number of equivalences, but also on their multiple relatability, which produces new results from each different analytical perspective. Of all the equivalences and equivalence relations available, the reader will always select the one that corresponds to the meaning he or she expects or—in some cases—wishes. Reception reduces the complexity of the work in that it selects those relations that become identifiable as meaningful within its particular horizon. In reading and interpreting, we therefore draw a thread through the thematic and formal equivalences and the thematic features that can be actualized in them, and we necessarily disregard an abundance of other features and equivalences (cf. Schmid 1984a).

Equivalence produces, against the sequentiality of the story, simultaneity of elements, which are often distant from one another not only on the syntagmatic axis of the text, but also on the time axis of the story. As equivalences form non-temporal links between elements scattered across the text the result could be called the work's "spatial form," to use Joseph Frank's (1945) not quite clear and often misunderstood term. In any case, equivalence competes with temporal links such as sequentiality and causality. These cannot be transformed into equivalences. Being before or after, being cause or effect are ontological designations of

a completely different nature to being equivalent. Hence, the categorical difference between temporal and non-temporal linking cannot be dissolved.

As soon as euphonic and rhythmical repetitions are involved in the formal equivalence, the narrative text approaches a prose type widespread in literatures of post-realist modernism that is called "poetic" or—in Russian—"ornamental" prose (cf. Schmid 2013). Ornamentalism, however, is not merely a stylistic, but also a structural phenomenon, which manifests itself as extensively in the narrated story as in its texture. The equivalences overlay both the linguistic syntagma of the narrative text, where they lead to rhythmic patterns and sound repetition, and the thematic sequence of the story, where they cut across the temporal sequence by placing a network of non-temporal concatenations. In extreme ornamental prose, narrativity can be weakened to such a degree that no story whatsoever is told any more. The temporal links are then merely embryonic and no longer align the happenings into the continuity of a story. The unity of the work is provided instead by the, as it were, simultaneously given equivalences. An extreme example is the *Symphonies* by the Russian symbolist Andrey Bely, which strive to implement musical composition in verbal art.

Our interest, however, is not ornamental, but 'normal', plot-oriented prose without a peculiar sound elaboration of the texture, as in the novels of Tolstoy or Dostoevsky. These novels are by no means ornamental, yet they do contain a more or less overt design of formal and thematic equivalences. It may suffice to mention the pivotal role of oppositions in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The situations denoted in the work's title form an opposition that organizes the whole work, as do the juxtapositions of town and country, Petersburg and Moscow, French and Russian, Napoleon and Kutuzov. In a letter, Tolstoy (1936–64, LXII, 269) mentions the *labrint sceplenii* ("labyrinth of linkages") that determines the message of his novels. In Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* there is a superficial similarity between Ivan Karamazov and his followers such as Smerdyakov, Rakitin and Kolya Krasotkin. However, on closer examination it becomes apparent that all of Ivan's adepts realize only one of his different positions, whereas Ivan himself keeps changing his positions with each of the many treatises he writes. So, instead of a similarity of views we get a contrast of the adherents' highly selective and fixed, if not petrified, worldviews on the one hand and an ever-changing one of their idol on the other. In both cases equivalence—whether in the form of dominating similarity or of contrast—plays a seminal role in the works' signifying structures.

3. The functions of Equivalence

What are the functions of equivalence in traditional prose such as Tolstoy's or Dostoevsky's? This question will be answered in five steps.

a. Rhetorical Function

Narrative shares the first function with persuasive texts, comprising advertising and rhetoric. Such texts tend to use equivalence abundantly, either in the shape of leitmotifs, where similarity clearly dominates, or in the shape of equivalences proper, where the relationship between similarity and contrast is balanced. In both cases, parallelism serves the purpose of persuasion. One means to this aim is the increase of memorability, the heightening of the power of suggestion. Marc Antony's "But Brutus is an honorable man" may serve as an example of the persuasive power of a rhetoric leitmotif. The repeated, mock praise of Caesar's murderer functions as a means to instigate the masses against him.

Increased memorability and the heightening of the power of suggestion are effective in narrative prose as well. It is not uncommon for leitmotifs to contribute to these effects. Besides, leitmotifs function as carriers of connotations. Tolstoy's novels provide numerous cases of connotative leitmotifs: to mention just one example: the "shortened upper lip of the little princess Bolkonskaya" in *War and Peace*, Andrei Bolkonkij's wife, who is doomed to die during her first childbirth.

Another device that rhetoric and narrative have in common is the shaping of equivalence between the beginning and the end of the text. However irrelevant the similar and dissimilar passages may be for the core of the message, the listener will get the impression that the speech is well structured. The effect of a well-wrought construction gives not only a certain aesthetic satisfaction, but also will be interpreted by the listener in the sense that the speech is well-thought-out and that its arguments are well-founded. This, of course, enhances the persuasiveness of the orator's theses. Comparable effects can be observed in narrative where the ending for the sake of an effect of well-structuredness, density, and closeness is constructed in correspondence with the beginning, something that might lead authors to implement a *lozhnyi konets* ("false ending"; Shklovsky 1991, 56) consisting of a description of nature which compensates for a lack of a real conclusion.

b. The shaping of archisituations

Equivalence of situations in a narrative can be compared to rhyme in verse. This is known as "situation rhyme" (Meijer 1958). According to Jakobson (1960, 372), "in poetry, any conspicuous similarity in sound is evaluated in respect to similarity and/or dissimilarity in meaning." The linkage of two words by the similarity of their sounds produces hybrid semantic associations that Lotman (1970, 181) calls "archisemes." It would be more correct to say "archisememes."

An archisememe is an intersection or set union of sememes or meanings of words. An archisememe can unite contrasting yet compatible sememes such as "north" and "south", "birth" and "death", containing semantic features common to both sememes. However, in poetry an archisememe can unite sememes that may be completely incompatible. From a poem *I am Goya* by Andrei Voznesensky Lotman cites the sememes *Goya* (the name of the painter*), gore* ("grief"), *golos* ("voice"), and *golod* ("hunger"), all united into an archisememe. This archisememe exists solely based on the sound similarity of the signifiers; it exists only in this poem, is completely bound to its structure, and is hard to explain in words.

A comparable semantic process can be observed in situation rhymes of narrative prose. We can thus speak of *archisituations* based on the equivalence of two or more situations.

Two examples from Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*

In *Anna Karenina*, we have a striking resemblance of dream motifs shared by both Anna and Vronsky. It is the vision of a little and dreadful-looking peasant with a disheveled beard murmuring some incomprehensible words in French.

At first, the vision is part of Vronsky's nightmare (Tolstoy 1965, part IV, chapter 2). Having received Anna's invitation for this evening in a note from her, he has lunch and lies down on the sofa. Before falling asleep he recalls "hideous scenes he ha[s] witnessed during the last few days". They are "confused together and join on to a mental image of Anna and of the peasant who had played an important part in the bear-hunt." Having woken up, Vronsky recalls the dream: "a little dirty man with a disheveled beard was stooping down doing something, and all of a sudden he began saying some strange words in French." Recalling the peasant and his incomprehensible French words, Vronsky feels that a chill of horror runs down his spine. What is so "awful" in this dream? Obviously, it is the equivalence of Anna and the peasant acting as a beater at the bear-hunt. In his dream, Vronsky sees himself as a victim, as the bear that is driven into the trap. When he is awake Vronsky thinks "What nonsense!" and has a glance at his watch.

In the next chapter, when Vronsky because of his sleep arrives late, irritated Anna recalls a dream she had a long time ago. Before knowing what Anna's dream was about, Vronsky instantly recalls the peasant of his own dream. In Anna's dream, actually the peasant reappears: "… it was a peasant with a disheveled beard, little, and dreadful-looking. … he bent down over a sack, and was fumbling there with his hands…" Vronsky, remembering his dream, feels his soul filling with terror. "He was fumbling and kept talking quickly, quickly in French, you know: 'Il faut le battre, le fer, le brayer, le pétrir…'" Besides the strong similarity of the dreams, there is a telling difference. Vronsky's dream is a reflex of his fear of being deprived of his liberty by Anna dressed up in images of the bear-hunt. Anna's dream expresses the expectation of her imminent death. The motif of iron presented not by chance in French translation hints at the Russian *zheleznaya doroga* ("railway", literally "iron way"). It was at the railway that Anna had met Vronsky for the first time, and it is the railway that will bring her death.

Hundreds of pages later Anna wakes up due to the same "horrible nightmare, which had recurred several times in her dreams, even before her connection with Vronsky", as the narrator underlines. Significantly, the dream is told by the narrator in free indirect discourse:

A little old man with unkempt beard was doing something bent down over some iron, muttering meaningless French words, and she, as she always did in this nightmare (it was what made the horror of it), felt that this peasant was taking no notice of her, but was doing something horrible with the iron—over her. (Tolstoy 1965, VII, 26)

To be sure, this is a foreshadowing of Anna's death under the wheels of the train. Not by chance the figure of her nightmares recurs in her suicide when "something huge and merciless struck her on the head and rolled her on her back … A peasant muttering something was working at the iron above her" (Tolstoy 1965, VII, 31).

When the narrator has Anna remember that the nightmare "had recurred … even before her connection with Vronsky," he is apparently unreliable. Given the sophisticated design of the nightmare equivalences, it is not very likely that the peasant, a messenger of death, really appears to Anna independently of Vronsky and her love for him. More likely, the narrator has taken over the character's point of view treating her wishful thinking as an objective fact. We have good grounds for this assumption because the passage is embedded in a context that contains much of free indirect discourse and figurally colored narration. In addition, Anna has good reasons to wish that her nightmare were not linked to Vronsky. Actually, the peasant's figure entered Anna's mind only after her first encounter with Vronsky. On her return from Moscow to Petersburg, in the raging snowstorm at a stopover on a small railway station, only a few seconds before she unexpectedly reencounters Vronsky, Anna perceives "The bent shadow of a man glided by at her feet, and she heard sounds of a hammer upon iron" (Tolstoy 1965,

I, 30). This perception, arisen in the beloved man's proximity and in the ominous sphere of the railway, is in all likelihood the origin of the peasant nightmare. This example demonstrates how skillfully Tolstoy combines devices of composition with techniques of mind representation.

Another example of Tolstoy's art of shaping significant and psychologically motivated chains of equivalences is the motif of cutting a body into pieces. This motif establishes a tripartite chain that stretches across the whole part of the novel devoted to Anna. Its central member deals with the situation after the fulfilment of what Vronsky had fervently wished for and of what had appeared to Anna as a dream never to be realized:

She felt so sinful, so guilty, that nothing was left her but to humiliate herself and beg forgiveness; and as now there was no one in her life but him, to him she addressed her prayer for forgiveness. Looking at him, she had a physical sense of her humiliation, and she could say nothing more. *He felt what a murderer must feel when he sees the body he has robbed of life. That body, robbed by him of life, was their love, the first stage of their love.* There was something awful and revolting in the memory of what had been bought at this fearful price of shame. Shame at their spiritual nakedness crushed her and infected him. But in spite of all the murderer's horror before the body of his victim, he must hack it to pieces, hide the body, must use what he has gained by his murder.

And with fury, as it were with passion, the murderer falls on the body and drags it and hacks at it; so he covered her face and shoulders with kisses. (Tolstoy 1965, II, 11; italics WSch)

Who compares the lover with a murderer? It might initially appear that Vronsky experiences it in this way. After all, it is stated explicitly: "He felt what a murderer must feel." But, would the cavalry captain really experience the fulfilment of that "which had been for almost a whole year the one absorbing desire of [his] life" (Tolstoy 1965, II, 11) in terms of a murder? Equally improbable is the narratorial rendering of Vronsky's feelings. Vronsky himself must feel different. The obvious alternative is that the narrator makes the comparison. Naturally, what comes into consideration is a comparison in his own name, behind the backs of the characters, as it were, a purely narratorial commentary or even an authorial one, one that refers back to the author. These kinds of narratorial—and ultimately authorial—comments are encountered relatively often in Tolstoy's work. Nonetheless, the formation of this passage suggests yet a different way of reading it. If one considers that Anna's sentiments and interior monologue are presented around the segments in question, one can certainly reach the conclusion that none other than Anna herself draws the comparison of the furious lover with a murderer. Such an association would be strongly motivated within her consciousness, psychologically as well as compositionally. This is because the image of the sliced up body can be interpreted as Anna's reflection on the "horrible death" suffered by the railwayman at her first encounter with Vronsky. The words that she overheard from two passers-by at the time must have engraved themselves deeply in her

consciousness: "'What a horrible death! … They say he was cut in two pieces.'" (Tolstoy 1965, I, 18). Anna is severely shaken and interprets the accident as an "omen of evil" (ibid.). From this moment on, the heroine becomes the bearer of the fatal image of the sliced up body, which she associates with Vronsky's love. She superimposes this image onto her encounter with Vronsky and carries it within herself until her destiny has been fulfilled under the slicing wheels of the train. Shortly before her suicide, "she thought of the man crushed by the train the day she had first met Vronsky, and she knew what she had to do" (Tolstoy 1965, VII, 31). With this concatenation of motifs, her death under the wheels of the train appears as the fulfilment of a schema of her fatal expectations, which had formed as early as during the first encounter with Vronsky. Insofar as the key scene after the act of love is presented from Anna's point of view and embodies her fatal construction of her future life and death, the author indicates to us that the heroine is the draftsman and engineer of her fate.

c. The Shaping of Categorical Frames

Thematic equivalences contribute to the semantic framework of a story in that they do not only shape a bridge between more or less remote passages of the text, but can convey certain connotations. Features foregrounded in them determine the categorical frames of the story-world functioning as carriers of symbolic or symptomatic meanings.

In *Anna Karenina,* there is a set of physical details characterizing the heroine: "the little willful tendrils of her curly hair that would always break free about her neck and temples", her "small, skillful, magic hands", her "easy, resolute steps". Everything metonymically representing her liveliness and life force, and above all her often mentioned "narrowed eyes", symbolizing her narrow perception of reality, as Dolly interprets correctly: "Just as though she half-shut her eyes to her own life, so as not to see everything" (Tolstoy 1965, VI, 21). During Anna's lifetime, Vronsky's even, strong teeth are mentioned several times, but after her death, he goes to the Serbian war with toothache. Anna's hair and Vronsky's teeth become indicators of their inner states.

d. Marking Changes of State

To be a narrative means to represent changes of state. A change of state implies two things: 1) a temporal structure with two states, the initial and the final state and 2) an equivalence of the initial and final states, that is, the presence of a similarity and a contrast between the states.

With every story, the reader will concentrate primarily on the temporal links and their logic. In the interpretation of a narrative text, the first question to be asked is

in what way do the initial and final states of the story-world differ (cf. Stierle 1977, 217). In ascribing meaning, while we read a narrative text, we aim to identify changes to the initial situation as well as the logic that underpins these changes. Not only the determining causes, but also the changes themselves are only rarely described explicitly and reliably and must therefore be usually reconstructed. In their reconstruction, the reader is called upon to draw on equivalences. In many cases, only non-temporal linking brings temporal changes and their logic to the surface.

It is often the case that a change of state underlying a whole novel can be tracked only in many small and inconspicuous steps. One example is Thomas Mann's novel *Buddenbrooks*, depicting the "decline of a family," as stated in the subtitle of the German original. The changes between the many steps, however inconsiderable they may seem, manifest themselves in symptoms appearing not only in the characters and their behavior but also in small details of the setting. In Mann's *Buddenbrooks* such symptomatic details form pairs of similarity and contrast that make the changes observable.

Another example of equivalence as a tool for reconstructing the changes of state is Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. In the center of the novel are Elizabeth Bennet, the second of the five unmarried Bennet daughters, 20 years old, intelligent, lively, attractive, and Fitzwilliam Darcy, the wealthy owner of a famous family estate. The course of Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship is ultimately decided when Darcy, who belongs to a higher social class than the Bennets, overcomes his pride and Elizabeth overcomes her prejudice, leading to them both surrendering to the love they have for each other. Therefore, the novel's central event is the twofold mental change of state, the overcoming of an initial weakness of the heroes, namely pride and prejudice. This long-lasting process can be conceived of on both sides of the couple only by retracing the slightest changes in the heroes' conversations and reactions. However, there is still another field where the changes become manifest. This field is Elizabeth's perceptions and reflections. Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is the beginning of the European novel of consciousness. Mental actions are the focus of the plot and their central reflector is Elizabeth. That is, the reader sees the unfolding plot and the other characters mostly from her point of view. Elizabeth's perceptions are tinged with her evaluative and linguistic position. Consequently, the mental events forming the plot become accessible via the reconstruction of Elizabeth's changing inner states. In reconstructing those changes, we need to compare the forms and contents of Elizabeth's external and inner speech acts and detect the more or less apparent similarities and contrasts between them. Hence, for analyzing event structures and forms of eventfulness it is helpful to draw on thematic equivalences.

In an example from Alexander Pushkin's tale "The Undertaker," at the beginning, the hero moves houses. Strangely enough,

As he approached the little yellow house that had enthralled his imagination for so long, and that he had at last bought for a considerable sum, the old undertaker noticed with surprise that his heart was not rejoicing. (Pushkin 1983, 87)

However, when the undertaker, waking up from his nightmare, eventually learns that the merchant's widow whose death he could hardly wait for did not die yesterday, that is on the extra day of his nightmare, he—again unexpectedly—is "much gladdened" (Pushkin 1983, 89). Any interpretation of the tale has to take into account the contrast of the paradoxical lack of joy at the beginning and the no less paradoxical joy at the end of the tale. The contrast of beginning and end renders those interpreters (like e.g., Eikhenbaum 1919) who maintain that in this tale actually nothing has happened, nothing has moved, as simply wrong.

e. Shaping Gestalten

One more effect of equivalence in prose, that has hardly been dealt with, should be mentioned. As in poetry so in prose parallelisms generate structures, which can be described in terms of Gestalt psychology (Schmid 1977). However, whereas in poetry the gestalt emerges from sound and rhythm, in prose mainly thematic units form the material of the gestalten. Equivalences, together with their configurations and concatenations, project their patterns onto the story-worlds, giving them a specific character of structuredness. The effect is that Tolstoy's worlds, for example, evoke an impression very different from Dostoevsky's or Pushkin's, quite apart from their differing thematic substances.

4. Conclusion

Besides the *temporal* linking of elements, which is constitutive of narrativity, there is also a *non-temporal* linking. It is an important device in constructing narratives accounting for their semantic density. The foremost manifestation of non-temporal linking, which is based on the *paradigmatic* structure of the text, is *equivalence* or *parallelism*, comprising both similarity and contrast.

So we can conclude: Jakobson's equivalence declared by him as constitutive for poetry is no less relevant for narrative prose. Jakobson's sharp and rigid distinction between poetry based on the principle of similarity and prose based on the principle of contiguity must be modified. Equivalence or parallelism plays a seminal role in both hemispheres. However, the substances, the material in

which the patterns are realized and embodied, are different. In prose, they are more thematic, more abstract and occur in larger units.

Words Cited

Eikhenbaum, Boris. 1987. "Boldinskie pobasenki Pushkina." In *O literature. Raboty raznykh let*, 343–47. Moskva: Sovetskii Pisatel'.

Frank, Joseph. 1963. "Spatial Form in Modern Literature." In *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature*, 3–62. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Jakobson, Roman. 1960. "Linguistics and Poetics." In *Style in Language*, edited by T. Sebeok, 350–77. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jakobson, Roman and Krystyna Pomorska. 1983. *Dialogues*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lotman, Yurii. 1977. *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, translated by G. Lenhoff and R. Vroon. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Meijer, Jan. 1958. "Situation Rhyme in a Novel of Dostoevsky." In *Dutch Contributions to the IVth International Congress of Slavistics*, 1–15. s'Gravenhage: Mouton.

Pushkin, Alexander. 1983. *Complete Prose Fiction*. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes by P. Debreczeny. Stanford, CA: Standford University Press.

Schmid, Wolf. 1977. *Der ästhetische Inhalt. Zur semantischen Funktion poetischer Verfahren*. Lisse: The Peter de Ridder Press.

Schmid, Wolf. 1984a. "Thematische und narrative Äquivalenz. Dargelegt an Erzählungen Puškins und Čechovs." In *Russische Erzählung. Russian Short Story. Russkij rasskaz*, edited by R. Grübel, 79–118. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Schmid, Wolf. 1984b. "Three Diegetic Devices in Puškin's 'Tales of Belkin'." In *Language and Literary Theory. In Honor of Ladislav Matejka* (= *Papers in Slavic Philology*. 5), edited by B. A. Stolz, I. R. Titunik and L. Doležel, 505–525. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

Schmid, Wolf. 1987. "Prose and Poetry in 'Povesti Belkina'." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 29 (2–3): 210–227.

Schmid, Wolf. 1992. "Äquivalenzen in erzählender Prosa. Mit Beispielen aus Novellen Anton Čechovs." In *Ornamentales Erzählen in der russischen Moderne. Čechov – Babel' – Zamjatin*, 29–71. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang.

Schmid, Wolf. 1998. "Ėkvivalentnost' v povestvovatel'noi proze. Po primeram iz rasskazov A. P. Chekhova." In *Proza kak poėziia. Pushkin—Dostoevskii—Chekhov—avangard*, 213–242. Sankt-Peterburg: Inapress.

Schmid, Wolf. 2010. *Narratology. An Introduction*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Schmid, Wolf. 2013. "Poetic or Ornamental Prose." In *The living handbook of narratology*, edited by Peter Hühn et al. Hamburg: Hamburg University Press. Accessed May 25 2013. http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/poetic-or-ornamental-prose.

Shklovsky, Viktor. 1991. "The Structure of Fiction." In *Theory of Prose*, translated by B. Sher, 52–71. Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press.

Stierle, Karlheinz. 1977. "Die Struktur narrativer Texte: Am Beispiel von J. P. Hebels Ka-lendergeschichte 'Unverhofftes Wiedersehen.'" In *Funk-Kolleg Literatur 1*, edited by H. Brackert and E. Lämmert, 210–33. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer.

Tolstoy, Lev. 1936–64. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 91 t.* Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia li-teratura.

Tolstoy, Lev. 1965. *Anna Karenina*, translated by C. Garnett, revised by L. J. Kent and N. Berberova. New York: Modern Library. Accessed May 27 2013. http://www.litera-ture.org/authors/tolstoy-leo/anna-karenina/.

Reopening the "Closing statement": Jakobson's factors and functions in our Google Galaxy

Peter W. Nesselroth

University of Toronto, Centre for Comparative Literature,
93 Charles St. W., Toronto, Canada M5S 3H1.
Email: pwnesselroth@gmail.com

Abstract: At the University of Indiana 1958 conference on style in language, Jakobson introduced his well-known diagrammatic model of communication with its six "factors" and, more or less, corresponding "functions". The title of his paper was "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" and it was first published with the entire conference proceedings by MIT Press in 1960. The general validity of Jakobson's description of the components involved in the act of communication has rarely been put into question.

While the diagram itself may have been satisfactory for the dominant, mostly written and print cultures of the early 20th Century, it is no longer adequate in our digital and post-structuralist times. New questions have arisen: who and where, for example, are the addressers and addressees of the message in today's cyberspace environment and how do the six functions function within our present-day laws and means of communication? Some answers can be found in Derrida's "deconstructions" and in McLuhan's "probes". My paper takes these later concepts and analyses as the basis for a more pertinent and up-to-date view of some of the types of communication that are going on right now.

Keywords: Derek Attridge; Jacques Derrida; différánce; Lubomír Doležel; Grammatology; Rita Leistner; Marshall McLuhan; poststructuralism; Michael Riffaterre

---

It has been said that it was a good thing that Roman Jakobson's paper on linguistics and poetics, delivered at the 1958 University of Indiana conference on "*Style in Language*", was labeled as the "*closing statement*" because, had it been the opening statement of the conference, there would have been no point in listening to all the other papers. This may seem a bit harsh, mainly because some of the other participants are names to be reckoned with in both linguistics and literary criticism: I. A. Richards, W.K. Wimsatt, Edward Stankiewicz, René Wellek, and others (Sebeok 1960). But, as far as I know, none of their contributions have entered the cannon of seminal papers the way Jakobson's did, in particular his well-known diagrammatic model of communication with its six "factors" (*addresser, message, addressee, context, contact and code*) and, more or less, corresponding "functions" (*emotive, poetic, phatic, conative, referential and metalingual*) (Sebeok 1960, 353–358). As Lubomír Doležel (1990, 149–175) has pointed out in his book on *Occidental Poetics*, this model is an extension and elaboration of Karl Bühler's and Jan Mukařovský's earlier versions. Bühler's 1934 triadic model linked a sender, a referent and a receiver with an expressive, a *referential* and a *conative* function. Mukařovský added a fourth factor, *language*, and a fourth function, the *aesthetic* one (1977, 65–80). Jakobson does acknowledge his debt to Bühler and to Bronislaw Malinowski (for the "*phatic function*"), but not to Mukařovský. Michael Riffaterre, the first to seriously criticize parts of the Jakobsonian model, had indicated this erasure, in a 1960 paper (1964, 316–322). He argued, mainly, that when it comes to literary texts, only two functions really matter, the referential and what he preferred to call the "*stylistic*" rather than the "*poetic*" because it is style and its devices that make readers perceive a text as being literary art rather than merely referential. It is the old formalist argument and in a later French version of this paper, he does indeed suggest that calling it the "*formal*" function would be a more appropriate name for the specificity of verbal art where it is the dominant function because it subsumes all the others (1971). For example, to illustrate the "*phatic function*" which serves to establish and maintain "*contact*", Jakobson quotes Dorothy Parker's representation of an awkward first date conversation: " 'Well!' the young man said. 'Well,' she said. 'Well, here we are,' he said. 'Well, here we are,' she said. 'Aren't we? I should say we were,' he said. 'Eeyop! Here we are. Well!' she said. 'Well' he said, 'well.' " (Sebeok: 355–356). This may be a good representation of the use and need of the phatic function but the humor of the description comes from the effect of the repetitions, echoes and alternations of "*Well*" and of "*he said/she said*", i.e., of its written style and thus of the formal function's dominance. I shall get back to the phatic function itself in the second part of my paper but first I want to discuss another critique of the model, Jonathan Cullers' in his collection of essays entitled *Structuralist Poetics* (1975, 55–74). Culler takes as an example Jakobson's application of his method (1973, 420–435) to Baudelaire's fourth Spleen (*Quand le ciel est bas et lourd*) from

Les Fleurs du Mal (1857), and he shows that the poem can also be analyzed in ways, which reveal many other patterns that would follow *the principle of the projection of equivalences*, in prose as well as in poetry. In fact, this principle could be applied to any other type of text as well, and Culler goes on to show how it pertains to the first paragraph of Jakobson's "*Postscriptum*" to his 1973 collection *Questions de poétique* (485–504). The demonstration worked, but apparently Jakobson was not amused. He reports that in a conversation he had with Culler, when they met at Oxford, he told him that the result of the experiment was really "extremely negative" and "that if it were a work of poetry, it would be an awfully bad poem" (Jakobson 1985, 70). It was surprising that Jakobson would fall back on a value judgment when his whole "*projection principle*" was supposedly based on objective analysis. It also confirms the post-structuralist notion that the generic labeling of a text will make us seek and find whatever markers we associate with a given genre (the graphic layout of a poem, for example, or the real world context of a political or advertising poster, etc). It is a point that Stanley Fish made in a 1970 article, called "*Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics*" (ibid., 60). Having quoted Riffaterre to the effect that in verbal art, the focus is on the message itself rather than on the situation or the physical or mental reality to which it might refer in everyday language, he comments that "this is distressingly familiar deviationist talk, with obvious roots in Jan Mukařovský's distinction between standard language and poetic language…" (ibid.). Fish's argument is that deviation is not caused by any objective features of the verbal structure of the text. It is imposed by the reader, or rather by the "*authority of interpretive communities*", i.e., professors of literature or literary theory. Any analysis that is based on binary oppositions inevitably favors the marked pole over the unmarked one, and will therefore make certain features count at the expense of others, while in reality, says Fish, everything counts. Distinguishing features can certainly be found in any work, if you try hard enough, but they are imposed by the reading method itself, not inherently present in the text. A situation not unlike Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy in quantum mechanics, where events are altered in the process of observing them, an analogy that has itself become a post-structuralist cliché.

This brings us to Derrida and his theory and practice of "écriture", understood as a kind of productive writing, reading and even speaking, that puts into question the ontological status of literary communication itself, in particular an author's authority over the meaning and effects of his production. An author cannot know or control what the words of his/her text may mean to others, now and/or in the future. This lack of control was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's reason for distrusting writing and the written because it introduces a dangerous *supplément* (in the French undecidable and contrary senses of both *supplement* and *replacement*). But this *supplement* is precisely what a close reading should bring out. In his essay

on Rousseau's *Confessions* entitled "*Ce dangereux supplément…*" (1967, 203–234), Derrida wrote:

Et la lecture doit toujours viser un certain rapport, inaperçu de l'écrivain, entre ce qu'il commande et ce qu'il ne commande pas des schémas de la langue dont il fait usage. Ce rapport n'est pas une certaine répartition quantitative d'ombre et de lumière, de faiblesse ou de force, mais une structure signifiante que la lecture doit *produire*. (Derrida 1967, 227) [1]

In the absence of its sender, a written communication always defers its meaning(s) which is bound to differ from its intended meaning at the moment of utterance. Hence Derrida's critique of the presuppositions of Saussurean linguistics which devalorize writing as an autonomous meaning producing system and view it only as a representation of the spoken, as a sign of a sign. This notion was picked up by Derek Attridge, the keynote speaker at a conference called *The Linguistics of Writing* that took place in Glasgow at the University of Strathclyde, in 1986 (Fabb et al.). The gathering was intended to be, after almost 30 years, a sort of follow-up to the Indiana *Style in Language* conference and the list of participants was equally impressive: Raymond Williams, Mary Louise Pratt, David Lodge, Stanley Fish, Ann Banfield, and others. Derrida himself attended a session called "*Some questions and responses*" (252–285). Attridge's opening statement was entitled "*Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics in Retrospect*." (Fabb 1987, 15–32). The last speaker at that conference was Colin MacCabe whose title turned out to be, as you might guess, "*Opening Statement: theory and practice*" (286–306). But this revolving door effect between closing and opening statements, including the title of my essay in these proceedings, is not merely a postmodernist conceit. It did revolve around what was to come (Derrida) and to what is currently all around us right now (McLuhan). As Attridge, who later collected and published many of Derrida's major essays on literature in English translations (Derrida 1992), said in his conclusion, that

Jakobson's confident incorporation of literary studies into linguistics might be reversible, and that the particular problems which arise when we try to define, to categorize, to fix literary or philosophical writing might be characteristic of all uses of language. To close the chapter which Jakobson opened thirty years ago is by no means to reach the end of the story. (Derrida 1992, 27)

Let me, then, reset that never-ending story with a quote from Samuel Beckett's 1938 novel, *Murphy*: "In the beginning, was the pun. And so on." (65) In a 1967 lecture, Derrida famously punned on the French word "*différence*", a concept

---

[1] "And reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses. The relationship is not a certain quantitative distribution of shadow and light, of weakness or of force, but a signifying structure that the critical reading should *produce*." [Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from French are my own.]

that is at the very foundation of the structuralist paradigm of the fifties and early sixties, by coining the homophonic word *la différance*, as the title of one of his most seminal lectures (1972, 1–29). And that very word put theory into practice since, in French, the difference between *différence* and *différance* exists only in the written. It cannot be heard: the *e/a* change represents a difference that both does and does not make any acoustic difference at all yet does make a semantic difference when the word is written. The letter "*a*" is what it is all about. That is why the opening sentence of the lecture/essay is a syllepsis, a rhetorical figure that binds two levels of meaning in separate clauses.

Je parlerai donc d'une lettre.
De la première, s'il faut en croire l'alphabet et la plupart de spéculations qui s'y sont aventurées. (Derrida 1972, 3)

So, I shall speak of a letter.
Of the first, if we are to believe the alphabet and most of the speculations that have ventured into it.

Once scripted, however, the word *différance* took on a meaning of its own, as a noun derived from the present participle *différant* of the infinitive *différer*, to 'differ', to 'diverge', to 'defer', etc. Difference produces meanings while meanings also produce *différance:* thanks to Derrida's practical application, the e/a difference is no longer insignificant. It is now another marked word, a selectable substitute within and without the lexicon of deconstruction. Concept formation is here the effect of a meaningless auditory perception but of a very significant visual one. Only in French, though, where it is a difference that must be seen to be perceived and meaningful. In English, for example, it loses its undecidability because it is no longer a homophonic word. For our Anglo-Saxon ears "*difference*" is noticeably different from "*différance*". Northrop Frye, in a discussion of "concrete poetry", a genre that exploits typographical disposition for visual effect, uses the two words to contrast the difference between the meaning of an epitaph in the here and now, as opposed to its meaning for future non-beings:

The most primitive form of visual poetry is the epitaph, which manifests Derrida's principle of *différance* very clearly. The epitaph typically says: stop and look at me; I'm dead and you're alive (*difference*), but you'll soon be dead too (*deferral*). (Frye 1992, 69)

The grapheme *a* may be the same as in French, but in English it is also phonemically audible. Unlike Derrida, Frye did not have to constantly explain to his audience whether he was using the *e* word or the *a* word. The difference was there for everyone to hear and not just to see on the printed page. This gap between speaking and writing or between visual and acoustic space is precisely

the very fertile ground where "modernist" writers, from Mallarmé to Apollinaire, Joyce and beyond, play. Joyce, for one, explored and exploited it in both *Ulysses* and in *Finnegans Wake*. That is why he became the *figure incontournable*, the exemplary programmer (in the computer sense of the term) for McLuhan's explorations and Derrida's grammatological applications. And, inexorably, his writing practice guided both men through the Joycean labyrinth. McLuhan, from early on in his academic career to his last works, and Derrida, despite some serious misgivings (mostly because he learned English relatively late in life) did ultimately, at the urging of some of his Anglicist friends, give two lectures "on" Joyce (Derrida 1987). I have put the word *on* in quotations marks to underline the fact that Derrida's readings of literary texts are anything but traditional critical remarks. His lectures and essays are not commentaries made from above to give a clear overall understanding of the work's unity or functioning. Neither are they analytical or descriptive explications in the structuralist mode, i.e., based on static binary oppositions like Jakobson's and Riffaterre's. Unlike academic essays or professorial presentations, they are actually replays and re-enactments of the initial authorial gesture, miming and doubling up on them, or writing over them in a palimpsestuous manner. His readings play on dynamic indeterminacies (undecidables) where categorical dualities such as 'either/or', 'proper/improper', 'inside/outside', etc. overflow into each other, and overcome their own textual limits and semiotic demarcation lines. This type of signifying practice is not restricted by the linearity of the text, by its progression from the first capital letter to the final period or, rather to the end of the discourse, to a *point final* that is never really "final" (Derrida and Farasse 2005), just *to be continued* and *deferred*.

Two of Derrida's lectures on Joyce are collected in *Ulysse gramophone: deux mots pour Joyce* [*Ulysses gramophone: two words for Joyce*] (1987). The subtitle of the second essay in *Ulysse gramophone* is "*ouï-dire de Joyce*" which, when translated into English means "*Joyce's hearsay*", simply because there are the two dots of a dieresis over the letter *i* instead of the one dot, as in "*oui*" meaning "*yes*" or "*Joyce's yes saying*", which echoes, of course, Molly Bloom's saying "*yes, I will, yes*" at the end of *Ulysses*. To the French ear *ouï* [*hearing*] *i*s a homonym of *oui,* yes: '*Joyce's yes saying*' and '*hear say in Joyce*" can only be understood and 'received' (*oui, oui, vous m'entendez bien, ce sont des mots français,* [*yes, yes, you are hearing/ understanding me*], is the opening sentence of the lecture, an opening normally used to test a sound system before a performance). It is this double meaning of the verb *entendre* [*to understand* and *to hear*] which accounts for the title of the essay, a title that depends on a reading of the silent grapheme, the dieresis over the letter *i* rather than the hearing of it as a phoneme,

a reading of the grapheme yes rather than the hearing of it. *Yes* in *Ulysses* can only be a mark at once written and spoken, vocalized as a grapheme and written as a phoneme, yes, in a word, gramophoned. (Derrida 1987, 75–76)

Derrida's punning here remains within the French language's spoken and written representations and, in the case of the last word in this quotation, it is impossible to translate**:** "*gramophoned*" is English for the French past participle "*gramophoné*". The insertion of a silent hyphen in the middle of this nonce word would give us "gramo-phoné" and would foreground "phoné", a key word in the lexicon of grammatology. However, Derrida's writings *on* and *over* literary texts are not comments or interpretations but mimeses of those texts. They retrace the steps of the writings themselves and counter-sign their *creative* "acts of literature" (Derrida 1992). Given the babble and the Tower of Babel that is *Finnegans Wake* (supposedly written in 40 languages at once), this becomes an insurmountable task, even for Derrida. But he does deal with one exemplary multi-lingual pun, the title sequence *he war* which includes the third person pronoun *he* and the English noun *war* or a misspelling of *was* which is exactly what the words "Er war" [he was] mean in German, where it also sounds like *waer*, "true". With some anagrammatic permutations we get *Yawé*, the name of the Lord who countersigns the last sentence, including Joyce's laughter:

Dieu contresigné, Dieu qui se signe en nous, laisse-nous rire, *amen, sic, si, oc, oïl*. (Derrida 1987, 53)

Countersigned by God, God who signs Himself in us, let us laugh, *amen, sic, si, oc, oïl*.

That is "yes" in five languages: Hebrew, Latin, Italian, Provençal and the last, in Old French, the *langue d'**oïl**,* the dialect that was spoken in the Northern France, the region of the surviving and dominant present-day "oui", as opposed to "oc", "yes" in the language of the Provençal South, the "oc" that has left its trace in the name of the Languedoc region of France. But the word "oïl" is also a homonym of "oeil", the "eye", and of the Yiddish expression of pain and weariness, the "oy" we experience after trying to read Finnegans *Wake*… etc. Nonetheless, you will have noticed that the Jakobsonian poetic projection principle still applies: the axis of selection is here the multilingual "yes" combined in the communal affirmation of the post- Babel, prayer-like ending. That is not really surprising since as far as "media studies" go, Derrida always stays, plays and speculates on speech vs. writing. And writing is, of course, where McLuhan and Derrida's ideas converge, overlap and differ, at least according to Derrida. In the lecture entitled *"Sign Event Context"*, "*sec*" or dry for short, he maintains that:

We are witnessing, not an end of writing that would restore, in accord with McLuhan's ideological representation, a transparency or an immediacy to social relations, but rather the increasingly powerful historical expansion of original writing, of which the system of speech, consciousness, meaning, presence, truth, etc., would be only an effect, and should be analyzed as such. It is the exposure of this affect that I have called elsewhere logocentrism. (Derrida 1988, 20)

However, as Richard Cavell notes in his 2003 book *McLuhan in space,* McLuhan was concerned with acoustic vs. visual space, while Derrida focused on speech vs. writing, so that his comment is not really a "refutation" but an alternative approach (272). It turned out that McLuhan's approach is more suitable for our current media environment because it involves, potentially, our whole sensorium and the entire spectrum of new media.

McLuhan's prophesies

The Gutenberg Galaxy, subtitled "*the making of typographical man*", was published in 1962 and *Understanding Media* in 1964, three years before Derrida's lecture on *différance*. His last book is called *Laws of Media*: *the new science*, written in collaboration with his son Eric, and published posthumously (McLuhan 1988). The "new science" subtitle puts the work intentionally in the line of Vico and of Bacon. In fact, McLuhan had already explained his own well-known penchant for aphorisms ("verbal hand grenades", as he sometimes called them) by retrieving Bacon's distinction between "Methods" and "Aphorism" because "*writing in aphorisms, rather than in 'methods' was the difference between keen analysis and mere public persuasion*." (McLuhan 1962, 102). An aphorism is the outcome of a long line of reasoning, the tip of the iceberg or the cream that has risen to the top. As Derrida put it: "*Despite appearances, an aphorism never arrives by itself, it doesn't come all alone. It is part of a serial logic*." (1992, 416) The aphoristic form is thus a "cool" medium because the listener or the reader has to provide the unspoken "serial logic", which grounds the figure but, in fact, it applies to any medium (or "contact" in Jakobson's model), "hot" or "cool".

All three books predicted the coming of the global electronic village and here we are now, living in that era and space, i.e., in our Google Galaxy and, I would suggest that the Jakobsonian statement needs to be re-examined in the light of our current digital culture. New questions have arisen: who and where, for example, are the *addressers* and *addressees* of the message in today's cyberspace environment and how do the six functions function within our present-day laws and means of communication?

While e-mail programs, for example, still use (albeit catachrestically) the Jakobsonian categories in their headings ("*sender*" or "*from*" for "*addressor*", "*subject*" or, in French, "*objet*" for "*context*", and "*to:*" or "*recipient*" for "*addressee*"), the email messages themselves, enhance the speed and convenience of communication and obsolesce the postal services, "*snail mail*", an internet neologism, while telephone conversations are replaced by "chats", tweets, etc. The

"phatic function" has become dominant in our contacts along with "small talk" as our social glue in the form of "posts" (Radovanovic and Raggneda 2012). The messages these "phatic posts" carry may be light or low on information, e.g. "I am drinking a glass of wine", "I am listening to Miles Davis", or they simply enable us to signal our presence by clicking on "like" or "poke" or an "emoticon", usually because we are too lazy to write detailed "comments". These so-called micro-blogs have turned "small talk", the traditional application of the phatic function, into a universal time-wasting or time-saving practice.

When we sit in front of our computer, tablet or smartphone screens, we are, narcissistically, our own addressors and addressees. Consequently, the "context factor" and the "referential function" are quite different from direct oral and written communication. We gather information through sites and hyperlinks; we paraphrase or plagiarize it, and then disseminate it. The plagiarism aspect is the most frowned upon and yet, without it, we would have no encyclopedias (Wikipedia being an obvious example) and no advance in the accumulation of knowledge. I have occasionally recognized my own sentences and paragraphs in articles on subjects that I had also treated. That is acceptable because there is no addressor, no one "author." It is tribalism at its best, like an epic poem, the encyclopedic form that brings together a multitude of individual voices into one or many "Cantos". The new tribalism, according to McLuhan (1967), is a direct consequence of the return of oral culture through electronic media like cell phones, networks, etc. However, the return of oral culture has also brought back the old fragmenting tribalism. As we are witnessing, this is not exactly a utopian outcome, e.g., the ethnic wars in the Balkans of the nineties, the tribal genocide in Rwanda and in other parts of Africa, the current Middle East sectarian conflicts, etc.

The *Laws of Media* were "intended to provide a ready means of identifying the properties of and actions exerted upon ourselves by technologies and media and artefacts" (McLuhan 1988, 93). As a pedagogical tool, the McLuhans designed a "tetrad", a four part diagram designed to explain the social processes underlying the adoption of a technology/medium (ibid., 129). Although they do not say so, it is actually an attempt to zero in on the components and effects of Jakobson's "contact factor".
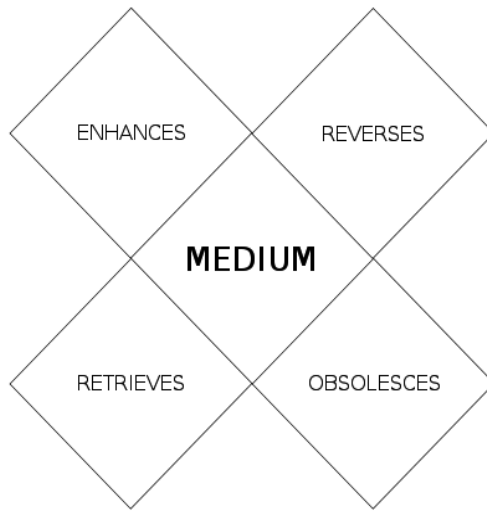
Figure 1: Tetrad as represented on Wikipedia.

Visually, a tetrad can be depicted as four diamonds forming an X, with the name of a medium in the center. The two diamonds on the left of a tetrad are the *Enhancement* and *Retrieval* qualities of the medium, both *Figure* qualities. The two diamonds on the right of a tetrad are the *Obsolescence* and *Reversal* qualities, both *Ground* qualities. In tetrad form, the artifact is seen to be not neutral or passive, but an active logos or utterance of the human mind or body that transforms the user and his or her ground. The laws of the tetrad exist simultaneously, not successively or chronologically, and allow the questioner to explore the "grammar and syntax" of the "language" of media. There are, with any medium, four questions to consider:

1 . What does the medium enhance? *For example, radio amplifies news and music via sound.*

2 . What does the medium make obsolete? *Radio reduces the importance of print and the visual.*

3. What does the medium retrieve that had been obsolesced earlier? *Radio returns the spoken word to the forefront.*

4. What does the medium flip into when pushed to extremes? *Acoustic radio flips into audio-visual TV.*

While this type of approach may seem unwieldy, I shall mention one exemplary application in this paper. There is no question that the current media environment

requires that we re-examine some of the features of Jakobson's mostly Guttenberg Galaxy based diagram, in the context of our present cultural context. For example, the Canadian photojournalist Rita Leistner has used McLuhan's tetrads to make sense of her reportage in Afghanistan by using iPhone photos with a "Hipstamatic" application "to examine the face of war through the extensions of man. (Leistner 2013, 107–114) Not surprisingly, this new medium does follow one of McLuhan's *Laws* because it "retrieves" what had been obsolesced earlier:

… the Hipstamatic app simulates analog photography by applying exaggerated effects to the image files, mimicking traditional photographic processes and reclaiming some of the artifactual qualities of material objects. It doesn't matter that we know the images are digital. Our eyes and our brains are easy purveyors of semiotics. (Leistner 2013, 54)

One of the remarkable features of this project is that it represents aspects of McLuhan's *laws*, Derrida's **écriture** (the deferral of time and space) and Jakobson's *poetic function* all at once. It is the formal encoding of its phatic function, rather than its reference, that dominates the message. Even in our Google Galaxy, formalism still rules. And that, it seems to me, is a good thing for any artistic practice in any medium.

Works Cited

Beckett, Samuel. 1957. *Murphy*. New York: Grove Press.

Cavell, Richard. 2003. *McLuhan in Space: A Cultural Geography*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Culler, Jonathan. 2002. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*. London: Routledge.

Derrida, Jacques. 1967. *De La Grammatologie*. Collection "Critique". Paris: Éditions de Minuit

Derrida, Jacques. 1972. *Marges de la philosophie.* Collection "Critique". Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

Derrida, Jacques. 1987. *Ulysse Gramophone: Deux mots pour Joyce*. Paris: Galilée.

Derrida, Jacques. 1988. *Limited Inc*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Derrida, Jacques. 1992. *Acts of Literature*. New York: Routledge.

Derrida, Jacques. 2005. *Déplier Ponge: Entretien de Jacques Derrida Avec Gérard Farasse*. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du septentrion.

Doležel, Lubomír. 1990. *Occidental Poetics: Tradition and Progress*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Fabb, Nigel. 1987. *The Linguistics of Writing: Arguments between Language and Literature.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Fish, Stanley. 1982. *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Frye, Northrop. 1992. *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of the Bible and Literature*. Toronto: Penguin Books.

Jakobson, Roman. 1973. *Questions de Poétique*. Poétique. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Jakobson, Roman. 1985. *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Leistner, Rita. 2013. *Looking for Marshal McLuhan in Afghanistan.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1962. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1968. *War and Peace in the Global Village*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1988. *Laws of Media: The New Science*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Mukařovský, Jan. 1977. *The Word and Verbal Art: Selected Essays*. Yale Russian and East European Studies 13. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Radovanovic, Danica and Massimo Ragnedda. 2012. "Small Talk in the Digital Age: Making Sense of Phatic Posts." http://ceur-ws.org/Vol-838/paper_18.pdf.

Riffaterre, Michael. 1964. "The Stylistic Function." In *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Linguists, Cambridge, Mass, August 27–31, 1962*, edited by Horace E. Lunt, 316–22. The Hague: Mouton & Co.

Riffaterre, Michael. 1971. *Essais de stylistique structurale*. Paris: Flammarion.

Sebeok, Thomas A. 1960. *Style in Language*. Cambridge: Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Elective Affinities: Roman Jakobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss and his *Antropologie Structurale*

Andrew Lass

Mount Holyoke College, Department of Anthropology,
Porter Hall, South Hadley, MA 01075, USA.
Email: alass@mtholyoke.edu

Abstract: My point, in the present paper, is twofold: to highlight the importance of the play of chance as a pivotal principal of structuration and therefore of the production of meaning, and to draw attention to the potential dangers of using theoretical modeling from other fields of inquiry (in this case topology) in structural analysis. My focus lies with the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss (and his interpreter Jean Petitot) and involves an engaged reassessment of their attempt to identify the underlying meanings of Nicolas Poussin's 1648 masterpiece *Eliezer and Rebecca at the Well*. I wish also to draw attention to an underlying irony: what seems to have gone missing was the very hallmark of the Prague Linguistic Circle, i.e., an emphasis on developing open-ended *aleatoric* models of verbal and visual or performing art forms.

Keywords: Claude Lévi-Strauss; Jean Petitot; Nicolas Poussin; topology; aleatoric; ambiguity; structural anthropology

---

"If you mean speculation, sir, said Stephen, I also am sure that there is no such thing as free thinking in as much as all thinking must be bound by its own laws."

Stephen Daedalus in *Portrait of an Artist As a Young Man*.[1]

"As beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table."

Comte de Lautréamont *The Songs of Maldoror*[2]

I. Overture

The legacy of Roman Osipovich Jakobson, a dedicated friend and advocate of Czech culture, the great linguist, literary theoretician and founding member of the Russian Formalists and of the Prague Linguistic Circle, is as rich as it is everlasting. It has also been a source of controversy, itself significant. From the point of view of an intellectual historian this legacy evinces an important trait, the instrumental role that coincidence plays in the development of ideas. Or, to put it more bluntly, a road to the discovery of rational order is infused with chaos. Typically, the question how Jakobson found himself in Czechoslovakia and ended up in the United States is deemed interesting as "simply biographical" and hence tangential (a fascinating litany of "who's who"). In fact, we all recognize that his life's trajectories were marked by the encounters with key players in the field of linguistics, the arts and sciences that influenced his thinking as much as he influenced theirs. Their unfolding was, by necessity, open ended and remains open to interpretation. It was one of those "accidents of history", in which two world wars and their aftermath played a key, overarching role. As almost anyone today can attest, a quest is punctuated by detours, but exile, physical or mental, internal or external is defined by limits, actual or imagined and it is in that tension between the planned and the unexpected that the possible is actualized. For example, it is within larger constraints that actual social networks play themselves out. And while these networks have their rules that many anthropologists refer to as 'cultural norms'—kinship, class, religion and ethnicity are typically mentioned in this context—regardless of how prescriptive these may be they inform and affect but do not literally cause a particular outcome. What holds for social worlds holds equally for the poetic and also for the noetic. In other words, the contingent quality of the actual is enabled as much as it is constrained by necessity. Modal

---

[1] Joyce (1963, 198).

[2] Quoted in Clifford (1981, 541).

semantics is not the topic of this presentation, I wish nevertheless to at least allude to it here by saying that for me the possible, whether discovered or constructed, suggests an a-posteriori, a 'looking at' if not always 'looking back', whereas the contingent, itself both possible and necessary, defies both, always ahead of us, inarticulate. This tension between *necessity* and *contingency* and its importance in the understanding of the *possible* as central to the study of meaning in cultural anthropology, is here explored in view of Lévi-Strauss's concept of structure and the claims, made by him and others, for its foundations in mathematics.

It is worth recalling in this context the strong affinity that Jakobson felt for the artistic avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s, for the Czech surrealist poets and artists among others. This close affiliation continued, joined by Lévi-Strauss, during the war years in New York (Lass 2006). As we know, surrealist games, played since the 1920s, have two rules: one stipulates the order in which members participate in the creative process while the other defines a constraint that must be observed, for example a word or line or medium. The point here is that one of the defining features of surrealism, the 'rule of chance' (*princip náhody*)—an oxymoron—is actually enabled by defining boundaries and delimiting thresholds. After all, the *aleatoric* is an essential ingredient of *poesis* as it is of life. I find it telling of *l'histoire d'antropologie structurele* that while its own genealogy was in no small part a network of coincidences and, more importantly, that so much of what it claimed to address—from kinship through systems of classification to myth—is riddled with the play of chance, its author would devote his career in pursuit of an underlying 'logic of concrete' that would account for their forms and transformations (in the words of the mathematician and semiotician Jean Petitot, for 'the morphogenesis of meaning') while committing himself, in the opinion of others (the present author included), to a questionable position that *de facto* conflates mathematical models with the intersubjectivity of sense and reference.

Within the North American and British anthropological communities during the high point of structuralism, the elegance and penetrating insights of Lévi-Strauss's work were blunted by the sharp criticism it was subjected to. For us, the aficionados, it seemed merely dismissive and unwarranted except for one point; decisive I thought and still think. Namely, that his model was dis/located. It lacked a semantic subject, it was not actor oriented. The actor-centered models of structural analysis developed by the anthropologists James Fernandez, Victor Turner and Nancy D. Munn, among others, would move the field of socio-cultural analysis symbolic systems in new and very productive directions and address the famed objection of the French philosopher Paul Ricouer (discussed below). In hindsight two additional criticisms call for renewed attention: a curious disregard for ethnographic evidence and a proneness to methodological formalism.

II. Harmonia mundi

It may be helpful to take a brief look at a few examples—from poetics and anthropology—that best exemplify the analytical pitfalls of the kind of analysis that characterized the work of Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss mentioned above. Theirs was a fascination with the concept of structure, as an underlying, a-temporal set of rules, that found inspiration in other fields, primarily mathematics (but later also genetics) that appear to exhibit and confirm the same metaphysics, at the cost of paying little attention to *in situ* contexts that sign systems function in and that resulted in a rather warped and lax treatment of evidence. As a consequence, the search for the invariant structure that could account for as well as exhibit its variant expressions tended to result in abstracted analyses of questionable heuristic value prone to (methodological or metaphysical) formalism.

The inverse relation between tightly woven models and fuzzy evidence is well illustrated by the infamous analysis, authored jointly by Roman Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss, of Charles Baudelaire's poem "Les Chats"[3] and the equally famous rejoinder by Michael Riffaterre (1966). The analysis, in fashion typical of both authors, focuses on disclosing a meaning lying at depth but emergent from a reinforcing mereology of the poem's construction, a layering built from the phonological level up to the mirroring inversion of the stanzas. The key to the analysis lies with the importance of the lexeme 'cat' and its association with 'woman,' a semantic co-incidence that is said to be encoded in the poem's structure and supported by biographical information about the author's love of cats. Accordingly, the poem's hidden message, echoing Lévi-Strauss's analysis of myth, is said to consist of a logical transformation where "All the characters in the sonnet are of masculine gender, but *les chats* and their alter ego *les grands sphinx*, share an androgynous nature. … the cats, by their mediation, permit the removal of woman from the initial assemblage formed by lovers and scholars" (Jakobson 1987, 197). While the authors' analysis itself is elaborate and the critique extensive, two of Riffaterre's points are relevant to the present discussion. First, the *factual fault*, regardless of the biographical moment, much of the concluding argument of their analysis works with a female grammatical gender of 'le chats' when, in fact, the grammatical gender is male (if it was female an altogether different sexual connotation would follow): "we find no correspondences enabling us to see 'Les Chats' as equivalent to a 'female' structure" (Riffaterre 1966, 236). Second, the structural analysis de-temporalizes the poem's flow and therefore build up; the model is faulty because it simply ignores the poem's overt message and

---

[3] See Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss (1962). Present quotation is from the reprinted excerpt in Jakobson (1987).

does nothing to show Baudelaire's poetic art of structuring the reader's possible response.

In a similar vein, on the anthropological side of the arguments about the merits of Lévi-Strauss's version of structuralism, he would also readily dismiss the ethnographic counterfactuals that would be held up against the formalism of his method. The eloquence of his expositions is arresting. "The book (*Du miel aux cendres,* part two of the four volume *Mythologiques*) is an aesthetic treat … it will give great pleasure to anyone who enjoys intellectual acrostics and delights in fearless scholarship" wrote the anthropologist David Maybury-Lewis in 1969. Yet, he continues, "reading it for review was the most exasperating, onerous task". The trouble, it turns out, is twofold. If one reads in order to better understand the object of analysis, in this case the South American Indian myth cycle, then where is "this reality that he [CLS] feels confidently will guide his inquiry? What sort of reality do they [the myths] represent?" (Hayes and Hayes 1970, 151) The answer, often quoted, was as dismissive of empirical reality as it was allusive:

For, if the final goal of anthropology is to contribute to a better knowledge of objective thought and its mechanisms, it comes to the same thing in the end if, in this book, the thought of South American Indians takes shape under the action of mine, or mine under the action of theirs. (Lévi-Strauss 1975, 13)

I am perfectly aware that it is this aspect of my work that Ricouer is referring to when he writes he describes it as 'Kantism without the transcendental subject' but far from considering this reservation as indicating some deficiency, I see it as the inevitable consequence, on the philosophical level, of the ethnographic approach I have chosen; since, my ambition being to discover the conditions in which systems of truth become mutually convertible and therefore simultaneously acceptable to several different subjects, the pattern of those conditions takes on the character of an autonomous object, independent of any subject. (ibid., 11)[4]

With this Neo-Kantian take on a shifting subject, ethnographic reality becomes only as useful as it allows for the confirmation of the concept that precedes the precept but for a de-centered yet universal subject. It does not seem to matter that a key motive in the myth cycle on the origin of fire, the jaguar's wife, is indeed also a jaguar rather than a woman (as Lévi-Strauss maintains). If the latter was the case, the jaguar would be a brother-in-law to the wife's human brother, a point key to Lévi-Strauss's argument (see Hayes and Hayes 1970, 156).

---

[4] In a footnote Lévi-Strauss extends the citation from Ricoeur (1963, 24): "… a Kantian rather than a Freudian unconscious, a combinative, categorizing, unconscious… A categorizing system unconnected with the thinking subject … homologous with nature; it may perhaps be nature…"

III. Poussin in perspective: a contemporary view

That the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss will invariably find its resting place as a continuing source of inspiration among the cognitivists for whom semantics are internal to language and naturalized or locatable in the human mind and nature generally speaking, is well illustrated by the work of the French mathematician and semiotician Jean Petitot.

In his contribution to a recent volume devoted to an appraisal of Lévi-Strauss's work "Morphology and structural aesthetics: from Goethe to Lévi-Strauss", Petitot (2009) focuses on Lévi-Strauss's analysis of the French classical painter Nicolas Poussin's masterpiece *Eliezer and Rebecca at the Well* (1648) that is included in his final work, a collection of essays *Look, Listen, Read* (Lévi-Straus 1997). Petitot's interest is twofold: a fuller appreciation of the method used by Lévi-Strauss with respect to the mathematical concept of non-genericity and of the "authentic morphological genealogy of structuralism in the history of ideas" (Petitot 2009, 275). I will focus here on the first point only. On the latter point, a long-term interest of Petitot, it is worth recalling Lévi-Strauss's own words from an interview with Didier Eriborn, first published in France in 1988 (see Lévi-Strauss and Eriborn 1991). In response to the question whether linguistics or logic was the source of inspiration of his concept of transformation, a key and consistent ingredient of his definition of structure and well-illustrated by the canonical algebraic formula best known from his classic paper on the Oedipus myth, he had this to say:

Neither in logic nor linguistics. I found it in the work that played a decisive role for me. … *On Growth and Form* … by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson… The author … interpreted the visible differences between species or between animal or vegetable organs within the same genera, as transformations. This was an illumination for me, particularly since I was soon to notice that this way of seeing was part of a long tradition: behind Thompson was Goethe's botany, and behind Goethe, Albrecht Dürer… (Lévi-Strauss and Eribon 1991, 113)

It does come as a bit of a surprise; the adamant conviction about the foundational importance of structural linguistics that seemed to define his early work is now qualified. Granted, D'Arcy W. Thompson, the Scottish mathematical biologist, is first mentioned in 1958 as a footnote to a sharp rebuttal to several of his French contemporaries in which Lévi-Strauss remarks on his early awareness of the connection between his notion of social structure and current research in Gestalt psychology (see "Postscript to Chapter XV" in Lévi-Strauss 1963, 324–345). One cannot, I suppose, reproach him for being entirely inconsistent about his own genealogy. Petitot's discussion of the historical links that expose the development of mereological morphology of science and aesthetics is, I think, both illuminating

and thorough in fleshing out Lévi-Strauss's retrospective claim. I imagine that it was the second, expanded edition of *On Growth and Form*, published in 1942, which Lévi-Strauss came across, quite *accidentally*, in The New York Public Library where it may have been on display and where he was spending much of his time reading up on North American myths (Thompson 1942).[5]

Figure 1: Nicolas Poussin: *Eliezer and Rebecca at the Well*. © Paris: Louvre Museum

Reminiscent of Roman Jakobson's 1970 paper on Blake and Henri Rousseau (see Jakobson 1970), in which verbal and visual art disclose mutually homologous iconic structures—a painting maps a verse as does the verse map a painting—Lévi-Strauss engages Poussin's allegorical representation of a biblical story in which Eliezer, Abraham's emissary sent to bring back for his son a wife ('a daughter of his blood'), is providing the virgin Rebecca with a golden ring. Lévi-Strauss maintains that this biblical episode stages a conflict, "the contradiction of what the jurists of the Old Regime called race and land" (quoted in Petitot 2009, 290). At the subliminal level, Poussin "illustrates above all the procedure of double articulation." Lévi-Strauss treats the painting as mereological, a nested set in which episodic points in the painting carry a significance that is part and equal to the whole. "Each is a masterpiece of the same stature which, considered on its own, is worthy of attention as the rest. The picture thus appears as a second order organization of forms of organization already present in the smallest

---

5   See Thompson (1942). The original edition first appeared in 1917. It was completed in 1914 (its publication delayed by the war) the same year that saw the publication of de Saussure's *Course*.

detail." Of particular interest is the group of women on the right side of the painting in which one figure is singled out by her positioning in front of a "pillar of masonry … surmounted by sphere, against which the woman is silhouetted and to which she almost seems attached. … it is true that this cultural figure is in sharp contrast with the others. I believe this calculated difference holds the key to the painting." Accordingly, since the women can be said to symbolize 'race' and the architectural features 'land,' this composition realizes what the other groups repeat "the synthesis of an effigy which is still human (and thus of a piece with 'race') and a pillar of masonry (already 'land')." For Lévi-Strauss "Poussin furnishes, formulated in plastic terms, the solution to the problem" (Petitot 2009, 290).
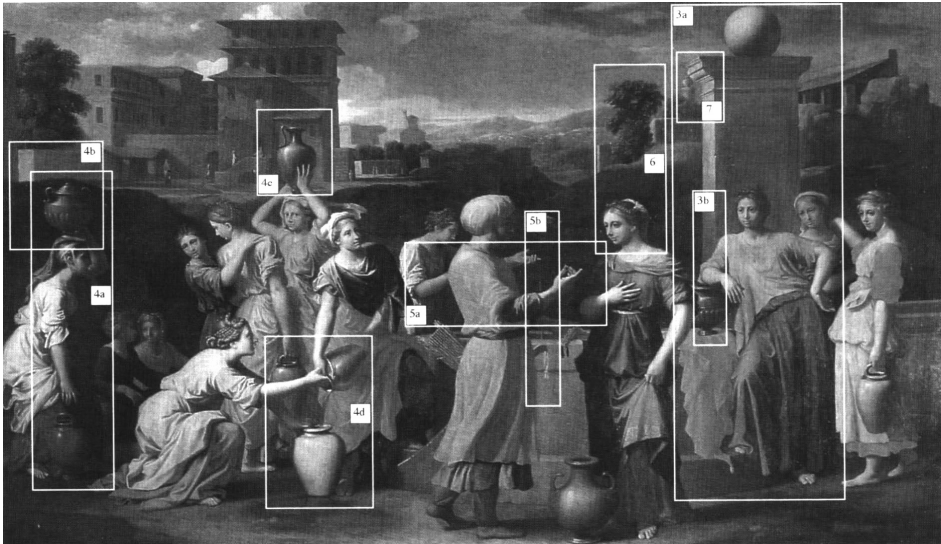
Figure 2: From Petitot (2009, 289).

According to Petitot, this structural analysis underscores the importance of the procedure of non-genericity, a mathematical concept and, presumably, a device utilized by Poussin as exemplified in the above composition. Furthermore, it is an essential feature of visual art that Lévi-Strauss is picking up on and that further reinforces the genealogical link of his structural aesthetics, beyond Jakobson, the Russian formalists and the PLC, to the aesthetic and scientific theories of Goethe and Lessing whose essays on the *Laocoön* "introduced the revolutionary thesis of an imminent meaning and a sui generis legitimacy of the sensible world" (ibid., 282). If difference, opposition, contrasts, symmetries, etc. are the defining moment of semiosis (and of structuralism), then it is the work of art

as "autonomous and closed upon itself" that makes for aesthetic quality and, according to Petitot, aesthetic meaning. And yet, if at the conceptual level it is categorization that introduces discontinuity, creating discrete phenomena that take "typical values central to a domain" then, in the plastic arts, we are faced with a problem of "extracting a form of discrete expression from a form of continuous intuition" (ibid., 284). The essential point is to isolate the mechanism that retains this intuitive quality and, "which makes it possible to establish a non-conceptual origin of aesthetic meaning on a purely imminent basis (i.e. with sole reference to the forms composed by the artist)" (ibid., 286). The geometric concepts of genericity and non-genericity provide Petitot with a way to address this problem. A situation is said to be generic when the properties of a visual field do not change under small shifts in perspective (or alignment). When they do, such as when two sticks of different heights, perceived as separate and at varying distances, are perceived as merged into one as seen from a singular position, we speak of non-genericity. It is the latter that is used in the plastic arts to draw attention: "plucked from the backdrop of an infinite (continuous) variability of possibilities, asymmetry, a contrast, a parallelism, etc., are non-generic. … in the plastic arts, non-genericity guarantees significance and provides a specifically morphological criterion of meaning" (ibid.).
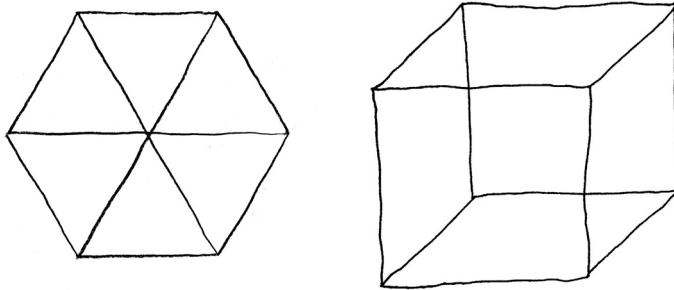
Figures 3a/3b: Planar hexagon and Necker cube.

In the Necker cube example (see above, Figure 3b), the 2D diagram is perceived as a 3D object which, in 3D reality, would be perceived as such from just about every position with slight modifications but no change in the identity of the object. These are generic vantage points. However, there is a point of view from

which the 3D experience is replaced by a 2D symmetrical hexagon (Figure 3a).[6] This non-generic vantage point on to the cube is both exceptional and unstable since the slightest variation will disturb the resulting perception.[7] As noted above, Petitot maintains that "non-genericity provides an imminent criterion for the difference between receptive structures and artistic composition" (ibid., 285) and finds this device fully and ingeniously employed in Renaissance composition. It allows the artist to position individuals and gestures at different planes of pictorial space in ways that express a specific meaning as when a person is pointing exactly towards an object that is positioned at another, distant plane or when they are placed in front or bellow it. Apparently, that is precisely what Lévi-Strauss has picked up on in singling out the pillar / woman association on the right side of the painting. This is Petitot's conclusion: "This non-generic construction selects a figure and imposes, in a structural an imminent manner independent of any external meaning, the identification 'leaning woman = pillar'" (ibid., 290).[8]

IV. Towards aesthetics of ambiguity

I find Petitot argument persuasive on one point; the distinction between genericity and non-genericity rightfully identifies an aesthetic device employed by artists in the creative process. But I find his argument deeply problematic on several counts, indicative of the immanentist approach to semantics and, more generally, of the risks involved in the overextension of analytical tools taken from another field, in this case topology. Arguments and facts established in the home field are then 'found' in the host field, a move that is paralleled by a troubling disrespect for facts.

---

[6] Imagine rotating the Necker cube so that the second from the left (inner three point) corner is aligned with the second from the right (inner three point) corner.

[7] Here is the more technical definition of the distinction as discussed by Petitot: "Let us take the form F that can be deformed through the action of parameters W. That state FW of S will be said to be generic if its qualitative type does not change when W varies a little, in other words, when it resists small deformations. Typical example is that where W varies in a space of vantage points (for example, the vantage point chosen by any painter for a painting) and where FW is the apparent contour of a 3D object seen from the perspective W" (2009, 285).

[8] The author generalizes his argument as follows: "To be significant and capable of mediately expressing more abstract meanings, spatial relations in the plastic arts must be non-generic and unstable. This is the fundamental principle of the emergence of non-conceptual semiotic meanings" (Petitot 2009, 287).
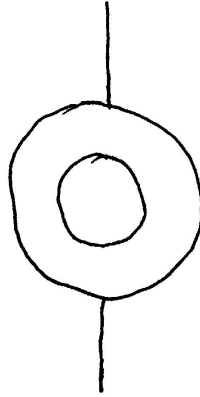
Figure 4: What is this line interrupted by a double concentric circle?

In order to consider the planar hexagon as the non-generic vantage point on a cube, it is necessary to already know that it is so vis-à-vis the generic ones, i.e., that it is a singular position of perspective in the cubes' rotation. Seen alone it is just that, a planar hexagon that *could* be employed in a mystery game as, for example, when as kids we quipped "what is this line interrupted by a double concentric circle?" The answer, of course, was "a woman on a bicycle wearing a large brim hat as seen directly from above" (Figure 4). Of course, the example goes only so far since it also assumes a visual identity between the aligned parts. This works well with model geometrical objects but not so readily—though better under additional conditions, such as lighting, perceived color and size—in everyday reality. For this reason, any linear identification of the component parts invites ambiguity. Identifying the woman with the pillar is only possible. It is just as likely that she is sitting / resting against the pillar completely oblivious to the fact that the sphere hovering on the edge of the pillar is about to crush her. If the definition of non-genericity depends on the effect of a "minor perturbation" than, given the close proximity of the woman, her resting arm and jug to the column, the alignment would continue to hold for several degrees of movement to the left by the viewer. Needless to say, the view of the woman against the pillar is generic, their separation, the non-generic position, would require taking a side way glance from the vantage point of the other women (other than Rebecca.) In other words identifying the woman with the pillar is *not* a convincing case of non-genericity. Interestingly, a stronger *ambiguity* is generated by non-genericity in the other two groups: the woman on the left, carrying two jugs, seems to be crushed by the weight of a slab of cement wall balancing on the jug resting on her head. On the other hand a woman in the middle group appears to be reaching overhead to take hold of a large amphora positioned on the ground in front of the palace. Our

mind switches back and forth, unable to settle down and live with both. Add to this the gradual left to right upward progression of the two amphorae leading to the sphere and one may be inclined to look for another underlying meaning to this clever composition as well as credit the artist with anticipating the work of Escher. In effect, the use of non-genericity to align otherwise unrelated objects in space—what I call its *flattening effect*—in order to signify a distinct iconology is matched by its other uses: to create an equally distinct semantic ambiguity or force a semantic uncertainty even a poetic vertigo. Hereby lays the irony in the limitation of Petitot's topological model. It is actually not the planar hexagon (Figure 3a) but the generic Necker cube (Figure 3b) that best represents the effect of ambiguity in visual representation.[9] This vintage example of gestalt in the psychology of perception, it's ceaseless back and forth flipping, would do just as well in illustrating the visual effects in the composition of Poussin's *Eliezer and Rebecca*. On the other hand, that depends on whether you train your mind to 'see' a cube rather than something entirely different, more stable yet equally indubitable such as a folded Origami of a doughnut (think of the central square as the hole.)

Following are three of my own photographs that all illustrate conscious employment of non-genericity, at different points in the creative process and for very different results.
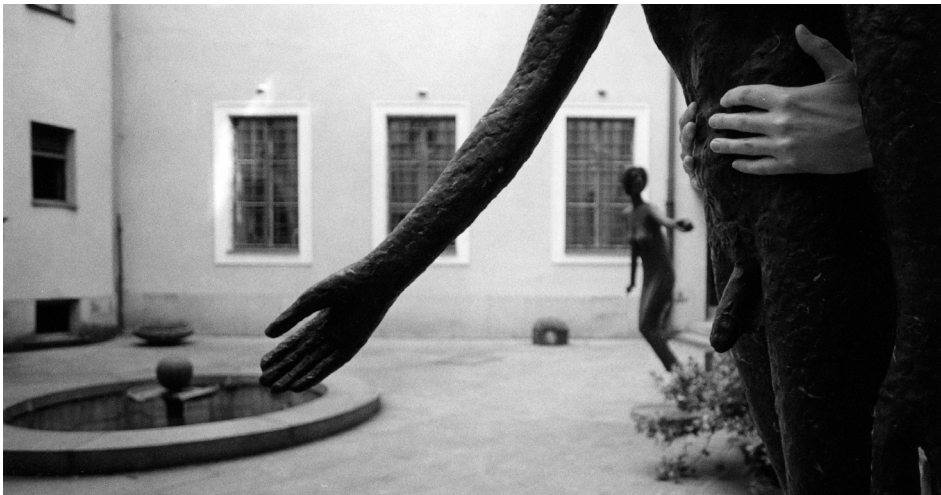
Figure 5: *Billiards*

---

9   Although, if you already know that it is supposed to be a cube and then rest your eyes on the hexagon long enough, you will find it. It will then exhibit a series of ambiguities.
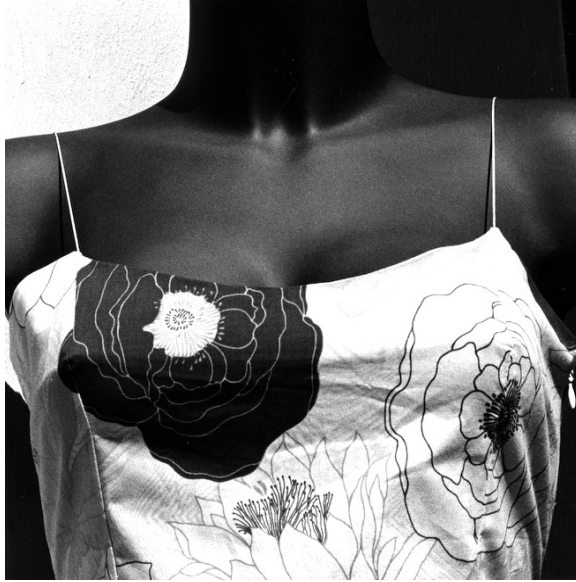
Figure 6: *On Sale*

At this point it is important to agree on a useful distinction that I will simply call the *strong* and *weak* versions of non-genericity. The example from geometry used by the author, the hexagon, or my bicycling woman example, could be considered strong. They pertain to situations where it is a singular view on an object that is *unique*, presenting it in a non-generic way and intolerant of the slightest perturbations. But all the other examples are weak; *Eliezer and Rebecca* as well as my photographs involve the juxtapositions of two or more objects in perspective. In Poussin's composition the alignments, impervious to minor degrees of perturbation, are *ambiguous*. In the photographs non-genericity is employed in different ways. The first photograph (Figure 5) was deliberately composed for an effect that is indeed the result of (weak) non-genericity seen from a singular positioning of the camera and intolerant of even the minutest movement. In photographs 6 and 7, I composed into the camera and again in the easel during development working with an alignment—both vis-à-vis the objects and the frame—that would elicit the desired flattening effect that I like because it creates a tension between a 2D and 3D effect in addition to any aesthetic quality of a balanced composition. In the second photograph (Figure 6), the composition also enhances the disturbing ambiguity of the woman / mannequin torso. Finally, (Figure 7) non-genericity was compositional only, first in camera's view finder and then in the easel during enlargement, and it is possible (but I will never know for certain) that this enhanced the emergence of what I did not see until

the final print was ready to dry mount, i.e., that the bouquet of flowers was also a silhouette of an Arcimboldo like figure, stepping into the frame from the right, wearing an eye mask and holding a few roses. This *emergent* quality, integral to the theory of gestalt, may be conceptualized via Jakobson's notion of subliminal verbal patterning or a Freudian unconscious, but I submit to the play of chance, the shifting constraints and enabled ambiguities that accompanied me from the very first moment of lifting the camera to the very last one of "seeing it." It is only then that I chose to secure this mystery by the title "Masked Ball." In effect, to revert back to the geometric example, weak non-genericity may bring about the incommensurable meanings of the Necker cube.

Figure 7: *Masked Ball*

Such ambiguity can be striking in deliberately composed paintings that create visual puzzles with a *zwishenfiguren* effect (the paintings of Arcimboldo or Magritte come to mind as the best known examples). The point I wish to emphasize is the openness of the plastic arts, an invitation to interpretation that is accomplished by the organic form and sense of closure, framing and internal reference. I think the history of art or literary criticism only illustrate that the insistence on one meaning, said to be intentional (by the author or theme) or unconscious, is inevitably matched by several others down the road. The concept of non-genericity is certainly useful in highlighting one way such semantic openness is constructed and controlled, introducing discontinuity in a continuous visual field, but it is not the only way or employed in the same

way or for the same effect and it certainly does not result in univocal claims—aesthetic meanings—through non cognitive means.

V. Coda

I had decided on the title for this paper because I liked the allusion, the poetic image it suggested. A relationship between two kindred souls with a synergy that was productive and life-long. The expression, I knew, comes from the title of a novel by Goethe[10] but it was not until a couple of months later, as my research broadened its scope and zeroed in on a minor aspect in the history of ideas, that I realized the fortuitous choice. I discovered additional meanings as I also actualized them. As a matter of speaking, it was Goethe who made use of an early 19th century theory of chemistry to model a fictional narrative of marriage as a mutual transfiguration between two couples. My use of his figure of speech remains figurative yet all the more rich because of the historical affinity, affirmed by Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss to Goethe.

As I have noted in the previous section, the very confluence of ideas and influences that our topic appears to encompass forms a kind of gestalt of its own. The epistemological background of the Prague Linguistic Circle as well as the inter-war tradition of American cultural anthropology harken back to this tradition in Western thought, with its roots in Aristotelianism, that is associated with the Romantic and Enlightenment philosophy of art and science. It is the point and power of poetic language, of this simile, that in gathering together a series of associations in what appears to be a logical series of connections, it does so because it is both closed ('patterning') and open, indeterminate, and always available to further creative interpretations and actualizations. And so it does not matter that the analogy has its limits, if anything contradicted by the observation that it was a long series of tragic coincidences that brought the two together, that while Jakobson's influence was decisive it was also limited, that the structuralism that we associate with Lévi-Strauss would, over his career, not only become distinctly his own, something he would be adamant about in many an interview as he distanced himself from the other Parisian structuralists Barthes and Lacan, but also far removed from the post-war work of his friend and mentor Roman Jakobson. It does not matter for it is the very power of figurative speech to accommodate contradictions, a power both scholars explored in their scholarship. I could have used the expression 'fateful meeting' (*osudové setkání*), or "on the use

---

[10] *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (Elective Affinities) was first published in 1809.

and abuse of mathematics" with equal success but a different outcome.[11] In effect, any fact that I could offer up to weaken the usefulness of the expression 'elective affinities' could find itself fitting in quite nicely into the fold. But does it make for good scholarship? My point is actually quite simple; it is not to question the many semantic and other functions of figurative language or of any attempt to get to the bottom of it. The problem arises when you insist that your analysis of expressive forms is rigorous as you engage the very same language in your analysis while also being dismissive of empirical counterfactuals, the very reality you claim to respect and help understand. The fuzzy respect for facts in science is legend, what made some brands of structuralism more prone to go down this slippery slope, was the doubly weakened tie between language and extra-linguistic reality; first, by its emphasis on system (langue) over usage (parole) and second, by extending the concepts of sign and language to recast all reality as semiosis.[12] Any reference is easily and always at best secondary when reality is a system of signs. It will take the post-structuralist and deconstructive critique to fully realize this potential, to speak of the 'prison house of language;' it would be a mistake, however, to argue that the stage was not set. With the benefit of historical hindsight, the alignment with the methodologies and explanatory potential of the mathematical and field sciences that was so much on the agenda of the social sciences, humanities and, in our case linguistics and anthropology, is therefore all the more worthy of our attention.

There are two things that I have attracted my attention for as long as I can remember being interested in the life of conceptual frameworks and theoretical arguments: the propensity to draw on models in radically different domains of knowledge for support and validation and the tendency to extend the use of a concept beyond its original point of discovery. If the first move sometimes appears to be an expression of self-doubt that seeks security outside, the second feels like a case of expansiveness that only results in diminishing returns. The analogy with both sides of colonial mentality may seem forced if it wasn't for some curious historical evidence as well as our better understanding of the relation between knowledge, fame and power we now have, thanks to the work of Michael Foucault and others. I think that we are all here able to tell the stories of concepts that lost their vigor from their use and abuse: dialectics, libido, unconscious, binary opposition, genetic code, as well as parallelism to name the obvious. Of course, this is not to take away from the importance of influence in the history of

---

[11] In the latter case, such a study would certainly highlight the very important, fruitful impact that the advances in mathematic had on the development of models in the social sciences, humanities as well as the arts. A similar intellectual inquiry could and, in fact, has been pursued for biology. See e.g., Sahlins (1976).

[12] In the astute words of Maybury-Lewis commenting on the unqualified extension of the linguistic structuralism to other domains: "Myth is not language, it is like language" (Hayes and Hayes 1970, 163).

ideas but to add to it. I think it is the point of good intellectual history to flesh it out, to complicate it. It is against the backdrop of this process that the reality of exile and of movement more generally has garnered considerable interest in the history of science in the past few decades. Locations and dis/locations—human, physical and conceptual—make for a complex, intertwined intellectual history to which I only wish to add: take note of the *aleatoric*, it is as much a part of the grammar of poetry as it is of life.

Works Cited

Clifford, James. 1981. "On Ethnographic Surrealism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 (4): 539–564.

Hayes, Nelson E. and Tanya Hayes. 1970. *Claude Lévi-Strauss: The Anthropologist as Hero*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jakobson, Roman and Claude Lévi-Strauss. 1962. "'Les Chats' de Charles Baudelaire," *L'Homme* 2 (1): 5–21.

Jakobson, Roman. 1970. "On the Verbal Art of William Blake and Other Poet-Painters." *Linguistic Inquiry* 1 (1): 3–23.

Jakobson, Roman. 1987. "Baudelaire's 'Les Chats.'" In *Language in Literature*, edited by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, 180–197. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press—Harvard University Press.

Joyce, James. 1963. *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. In *The Essential James Joyce*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Lass, Andrew. 2006. "Poetry and Reality: Roman O. Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss." In *Artists, Intellectuals and World War II: The Pontigny Encounters at Mount Holyoke College, 1942–1944*, edited by Christopher Benfey and Karen Remmler, 173–184. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude and Didier Eribon. 1991. *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss*, translated by Paula Wissing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1963. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1975. *The Raw and the Cooked*. New York: Harper.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1997. *Look, Listen, Read*, translated by Brian C. J. Singer. New York: Basic Books.

Maybury-Lewis, David. 1969. "*Mythologiques: du miel aux cendres* by Claude Lévi-Strauss." *American Anthropologist* 71 (1): 114–121.

Petitot, Jean. 2009. "Morphology and structural aesthetics: from Goethe to Lévi-Strauss." In *The Cambridge companion to Lévi-Strauss*, edited by Boris Wiseman, 275–295. Cambridge, UK—New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ricoeur, Paul. 1963. "Symbolité et temporalité." *Archivio di Filosofia* 20 (1–2): 24.

Riffaterre, Michael. 1966. "Two approaches to Baudelaire's les Chats." In *Yale French Studies* 36–37: 200–242.

Sahlins, Marshall. 1976. *The Use and Abuse of Biology*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.

Thompson, D'Arcy Wentworth. 1942. *On Growth and Form*. Cambridge, MA—New York: The University Press—The Macmillan Company.

Functional Semiotics of the Prague School: Functional Semiotics and New Narratology

Tomáš Kubíček

Moravian Library,
Kounicova 65a, 601 87 Brno, Czech Republic.
Email: tomas.kubicek@upol.cz

Abstract: The concept of the aesthetic object, as developed by Jan Mukařovský and Roman Jakobson, is the concern of this essay. It considers this concept in the context of current approaches in modern narratology that strive to bring renewed attention to research that has lost its focus with the onset of postclassical narratology. The author points to the consequences for structuralist research of shifting our emphasis from the text to the relationship between the literary text and the work as such. The concept of value, and the connection of this concept to social practice, thus becomes the center of attention. The work as a whole is a sign that turns towards a person as a member of a given society that uses language and narration not only as a tool for the distribution of meanings, but also as a means for the distribution and legitimization of values. Membership in a society implies simultaneously membership in a certain axiological system and the sharing in its production and conservation. Narrative worlds become a singular expression of this system. Value as a relational and intentional category thus presents itself as a totalizing object of research. It has the potential of defining the rules of the existence of a literary text (as sources of semantic movement), as a work that is part of a broader social and cultural structures while maintaining its specificity, its identity as a work of literature. Value has the potential of introducing the subject into analysis, as a component of an axial logical system, as a component of a singular style. The understanding of the literary text as a specific axiological system can then become the foundation for the analysis of its dynamic relationships, its ability to produce new interpretation as well as its ability to remain an open work.

I.

One of the most important issues that Prague structuralism introduced at the very time of its conception during the course of the 1930s was the question of value of a literary work. In his 1933 study "What Is Poetry?" Roman Jakobson gives thought to the fundamentals of poetic work. In connection with the functional semantics of the Prague school and the opinions of Jan Mukařovský, he maintains that the basic function of an artistic text is the poetic function, which he refers to as *literariness* (a concept first introduced in Russian formalism). He describes it as a *sui generis* component that cannot be mechanically reduced to other components. According to Jakobson, it is possible to disclose and isolate this component; it presents itself in a text such that it concentrates our attention to the word in and of itself. Not to the subject matter but, first of all, to its formal shape. Clearly, Jakobson is at this time moving away from the positions of the Russian formalist school to Prague's functional structuralism. The breakthrough in the concept of aesthetic function will have to wait for Mukařovský who will re-conceptualize the aesthetic function as a sign. Only then will he be able to address the relationship between the recipient and the work, a relationship, that is not accidental and yet is *a priori* undetermined. It is in this relationship, where the recipient becomes an active player in a specific type of communication, that rests the origin of a work as an aesthetic object.

Jan Mukařovský discovered quite soon that the complete reliance upon the concept of aesthetic value that would respect the immanent limits of *literariness* does not quite exhaust the problem issuing from the recognized nature of the artistic text as sign. By accepting the text as a sign, we are forced to think of it as part of an act of communication and thereby reinforce its significance as well as its identity in this act, since its basic property is repeatedly to re-constitute its significance and continuously renew its meaning. However, an immanent notion of the text would be rather limited in accounting for this dynamic potential. Mukařovský, who at this moment decides to treat aesthetic value as a value that originates in the dynamic process of communicating the significance of the literary work, in effect addressed the same feature that would later win recognition under the

concept of "an open work". In a certain sense he even surpassed it. I will return to this point later.

Wolf Schmid, the leading representative of German narratology, recently noted that instead of developing the post-classic narratology (which failed to define the object of its research and, instead, hid this fact by presenting ethical issues), it is necessary, to think about a return to the classical narratology—with its analytical foundation based on a description of events—and reshape it into a New narratology. This would expand its resource by emphasizing the questions that deepen our understanding of the anthropological nature of narration. According to Schmid, it is necessary to bring to the forefront such essential questions as: "Why does man narrate?", "How does the narration affect the narrator and the recipient of the narration?", "To what extent is it possible to narrate about human consciousness and its processes?", "What does the therapeutic effect of the narration consist in?" In other words, "Why do people write their autobiographies?" and "How can we explain why children, who were psychologically traumatized in wars, can miraculously heal thanks to a process of narration?" From there, in his opinion, the path leads to an interdisciplinary cooperation with anthropology or psychology.

However, against the background of the issues proposed by Schmid, the criticism of the postclassical narratologies, which the formally trained Schmid cannot stand, proves unjustified, if the fault is placed with the introduction of ethical questions into literary-scientific analysis. It does not seem to us that it would be possible to adequately investigate the questions that Schmid proposes without actually trying to take into account the ethical categories as part of the axiological setup of the narrative world through which the text communicates with the perceivers. Schmid is duly aware of the danger which issues from this "taking into account," and this concern of his is certainly justified. It is because it could lead our investigation to the toils of receptive aesthetics in its extreme form, represented by Stanley Fish's interpretation communities, and in the end we would even lose the object of our investigation, that is the text, to be replaced only too willingly be the reader. On the other hand, despite this concern, Schmid's dismissal of the questions of narration ethics as such is hard to defend.

Of course, if we concentrate primarily on the domain of ethics, we will introduce value judgments that can cause a destruction of the narrative worlds (i.e., a destruction, which does not form part of their strategy of construction), one that will ideologize them with their own value systems and this way predict their meaning. What else are the gender or post-colonial interpretations but exemplifications of "free attitudes"? However, is it really possible to join in the questions proposed by Schmid and not avoid the ethical nature of narration? To deal with the question why people narrate means to theoretically investigate

and analytically examine the values and principles that direct human behavior, model its possibilities of choice and represent their consequences as an analysis of narration, as well as a part of the decision-making process in relation to the concept of free will. How will I be able to ask the aforementioned questions if I cannot perceive both the narrator and the addressee, the author and the reader, as social beings that realize their act of constructing the narration and its understanding as consequential of certain, historically given sets of values, the integral part of which are also ethical values?

Besides, the decision itself, to write or narrate, is a decision that reflects a certain value structure. It is the narration as a textual organization of the world that has the capacity to designate and thematize these values. But the introduction of axiological questions that ask about the reasons and ways of constructing narration does not and must not imply ideologizing or, moralizing this activity through an a-priory negotiation of its meaning. Every act of narration (and especially a narrative act the result of which is the construction of a fictional world, i.e. one existing in its specific regime or mode) should retain exactly those values that form part of its semantic strategy. The narration is not only a description of a world; it is simultaneously an act of communication, and therefore a communication of that world. Consequently, the objects of these acts are the meanings as their intersubjective categories. Meaning, as Saussure pointed out already some time ago, is closely related to value, the essential part of which derives from the space of the social practice of the semiotic process. What determines the selection of meanings (the elements of construction) and their organization is not just the point of view that we could call pragmatic or aesthetic but also a point of view the consequence of which is the strategic distribution of values upon which a given statement is constituted as a complex narrative world. In my opinion, this informs a need to ask about the values for which the narration becomes a medium, which it organizes and designates with its expressions as well as its structure. But those must always be only those values that are designated by the text (the values for which the text is designating), and not the values that were superimposed upon the text.

II.

These were the key questions that formed the basis of the Prague structuralist project: "What makes the constant renewal of meaning possible? What is the mechanism that triggers and models the receptive activity of the perceiver? Where does the identity of a literary work lie considering that the literary

work is a changing aesthetic object originating in a dialogical relation between the recipient and the text?" and, finally, "What, in fact, is aesthetic value and what is its relation to extra-aesthetic values?" All these questions derive from a more general foundation, from Mukařovský's interest in the aesthetics of effect that subsequently (in the 1930s) became the very image of the aesthetics of the Prague school. It is that type of aesthetics that has its roots in Aristotle's *Poetics* and addresses its analytical questions at the functional meaning of elements out of which the literary text is constituted. The result of this type of an aesthetic foundation of analysis as functional semiotics is a shift in the main objects of interest towards an evaluation of the relation between the individual text elements primarily from the point of view of their functional organization. However, for the Prague structuralists "function" is not merely a logical term that would be exhausted by providing a certain "textual grammar", but one that speaks also to the relation between the perceiver and the text. In this form, it becomes the very object of evaluation and a tool of the structural analysis of texts. And this problem activates the interest in literary theories and in questions regarding the acts of valuation by means of which an aesthetic object is formed, i.e. our judgments of it. The validity or legitimacy of these judgments, the question of the identity of meaning and of its source becomes the one indivisible question.

Mukařovský work affirmed and helped to renew the importance of the widely embraced emphasis on values in the analysis of a literary text and for the analysis of the relation between the text and its recipient. A consideration of the relation between a literary text and value led him from the earlier, narrower space of poetics or semantics toward aesthetics and pragmatics. That is the moment that informs the radical difference between French and Czech structuralism and that supplies both schools with a different sum of problems and questions. According to Mukařovský:

A work of art, even if it does not contain directly or obscurely pronounced evaluating judgments, is replete with values. Everything in it, beginning with the most substantial material and ending with the most complex thematic figures, is their bearer. … The eternal relation of the work of art strikes with its multeity not only the individual things, but the reality as a whole, and so touches the perceiver's overall attitude towards it; and that is both the source and regulator of the evaluation. And as each of the components of the work of art, be it contextual or formal, gains that multiple factual relation in the context of the work, it becomes a bearer of the extra-aesthetic values. (2000, 140)

From this observation it follows that the extra-aesthetic values in art are not a matter of the work of art alone but of the perceiver who also participates in them. However, the perceiver disposes with a set of his own values and his specific attitudes toward reality. So the perceiver is at the same time both an individual

and a member of a society and therefore, to certain extent, a representative of the general value standards and systems. The consequence is that what we call a literary work is constantly being transformed through the acts of concretization.

Within the scope of an aesthetics defined this way, it is not the result of the concretization process itself that is the object of research, but rather the relation between the literary text and the aesthetic object. Therefore, and more precisely: between a material artefact on the one side and a temporally and individually actualized concretization on the other. While French structuralism got fully involved in the ways of textual organization and so enclosed itself within the safety of semantics, Prague structuralism from the very beginning of its theoretical development crossed this border and set out toward a pragmatics of communication that the literary text establishes. However, as we know, the sense of safety of French structuralism proved only temporary and illusory; later this very approach became the target for the attacks from the ranks of post-structuralism and deconstruction theory.

Mukařovský consequently tied both value and meaning with the artefact and therefore with the literary text. His intention was to prevent the disintegration of the identity of meaning. The latter could become extinct in endless concretizations and could result in the recipient or possibly even an interpretative community (that the recipient is a member) to become the object of analysis, instead of the text, which, from the point of view of Prague semiotics, must contain, by its very nature, an objective source of concretizations. This source of an aesthetic object's transformation is conceived as the bearer of an *independent aesthetic value* and in this form represents the highest form of value of a literary text. Mukařovský states that "the independent aesthetic value of an artistic artefact is higher and more enduring the less easily the work submits itself to the literal interpretation from the point of view of the generally accepted system of values of the specific era and the specific environment" (2000, 146). With these words he not only anticipates the principles of an open work, the way it is later treated by Eco's semiotics, but at the same time points to the sources of this openness. The decisive role here is played by the relation between the aesthetic value and the extra-aesthetic values that form part of the textual organization and dispose of similar value principles with which the literary text comes into contact at the time of a meaning's concretization during the point of reception. By means of the interaction of value systems, the text forms "complex mutual relations, both positive and negative (conformities and variances) such that a dynamic complex originates and is kept in unity by the conformities and at the same time set into motion by the variances. It is, therefore, possible to presume that the independent value of an artistic artefact will be the higher the more plentiful clusters of extra-aesthetic values can bind them together and the more heavily it can energize their

mutual relation" (ibid., 145). Between the values represented by the text and the values of the perceiver, there exists a mutual tension, and this tension contains the very meaning and actualization of the work of art.

III.

The development from narratology to narratologies, which Schmid criticizes to only a certain extent rightfully, shows the inclination of narratology toward becoming a sort of general theory. It had attempted—in this sense successfully— to overcome the crisis through which it passed at the beginning of the 90s. At that point, there was talk of its demise as it attempted to get inside the walls of individual scientific disciplines by means of a Trojan horse and offered itself to them as a methodological basis for their own observations. The effort to move, on the one hand, in the direction of disciplines that, with its help, may understand and analyze the formation of narrativity, i.e. the process by which a certain phenomenon becomes a narrative event, existent, catalyst, etc., and the way this process happens, leads, on the other hand, to the danger of imposing an ideology or teleology on semantic action with the result of establishing a discipline that, in turn, is then invited to an interdisciplinary colloquium. This was the reason for Umberto Eco to stop his *Theory of semiotics* at the border from where subjective understanding comes into play, individualizing interpretations, i.e., where we land outside semiotic systems. The subjects of semiosis, or narration if you please, must always be fully reliant on their existence as signs: "They can either be defined," says Eco, "from the point of view of semiotic structures or—from this point of view—they do not exist at all" (Eco 2004, 350). Eco's attempt at concentrating the semantic action fully within the limits of textual semiosis leads to the final statement of his book: "What is on the background, in the front and at the back, outside or too much inside of the methodological 'subject' outlined in this book could be no doubt important. Alas, these matters—at this stage— seem to me to be occurring beyond the semiotic threshold" (ibid., 351). Behind Eco's words lies the danger that results from the contextualization of the meaning of a sign beyond the area of the text. Nevertheless, it simultaneously resounds with the wooing voice of the Siren; the voice that lures the semiotic mariners to sail between the Scylla of the transcendental ego (as Eco calls this incorporeal, a-historical power existing without the singular consciousness) and Charybdis of the usurpation of meaning, its ideologizing, its individualizing personification or, more simply, the recognition of the intention that is both part of and the result of semantic construction, but which transcends the limit of the singular text.

Instead, it seems, narratology could set out down the path of semiotics, in the direction of both the context and the subject. That possibility could lie with the understanding and analysis of the narrative world as a specific axiological system. The study of the value layout of a narrative world has the potential of re-constructing the subject, which we unite with intention, and show this subject as a part of a certain context, a certain value system, while, at the same time, allowing for its individuation. With this in mind we can still continue to recognize a singular style. Observing the processes and function of a style means, among other things, speaking of the way the work is made and why it is offered to a certain type of reception. But it also means bringing into the discussion not only the general and the unique (i.e., recognize the distinctive symptoms in the manifestation of a style), but also the extra-aesthetic values that the text activates, uses them and by their means makes it recognizable as a part of a context by allowing us to re-construct this context. Only the tension that arises from the clash between this re-construction and the shape of the transformed aesthetic object, which has become part of the new value system, can place the tools in our hands to study the questions that Schmid identifies as the victims of the new narratology. We can now add to these questions also others that arise from the axiological arrangement of the narrative world:

How does the literary text constitute truth and truth claims? What narrative processes of verification serve the distribution of values? How does the narrative text constitute the subject, a subjective consciousness as the supreme ethical value? What set of ethical values makes it possible to constitute a narrative world as a specific type of space of noesis or identity? How does the narrative constitute its axiological singularity and, through it, the resources for the evaluation of itself, its narrative world? What structural relations does the narrative text enter by means of its axiological system?

The work as a whole is a sign that turns to man as a member of a certain society that uses language and narration not only as a tool for the distribution of meanings, but also as a means for the distribution and legitimization of values. Pertinence to a society also means pertinence to a certain axiological system and the sharing in its production and preservation. Unique expressions of this system are also narrative worlds. Confining this narratological view to the spheres of anthropology or psychology only would deprive us of the possibility of perceiving narrative texts as parts of social practice. We are not only anthropological constants but to an equal extent, we are also parts of a specific society. The questions relating to the value foundation of a text (narrative world), its axiological organization, therefore allow us to recognize the social nature of art.

It seems to me, that the concept of value or questions dealing with the form of axiological systems could become the subject matter of a literary theory that can

cope with the heritage of structuralism and also address the post-structuralist critique. Value appears as a consolidating object of investigation; it has the potential of appreciating a literary text, even in the form of a work as part of the wider social and cultural structures and, at the same time, upholds its specifics, its identity as a literary work. It has the potential to introduce the subject into an analysis, as a part of the axiological system, as a part of a singular style without leading us into the trap of psychology.

Schmid is correct in his criticism of post-classical narratological concepts; consequently, their approach to research only results in the ideologizing of narratology and, therefore, to an evaluation of narratives according to value criteria that were pre-negotiated. This justified worry, however, should not lead to a resignation over the most important elements of narration, over value that is not exhausted in its aesthetic manifestation. A mistrust of ideologies does not imply a resignation over the analysis of narrative texts as axiological systems. However, instead of pre-negotiated value systems, the text itself must become the source as well as the goal of analysis.

Perhaps it is those very axiological systems, values, and their textual realizations that allow for the restorative contact of the perceiver with the work of art. The understanding of a literary text as a specific axiological system is therefore a basic resource for an analysis of its dynamic relations, its capacity to produce new interpretations as well as its capability of being an open work. And in the end, it is those very extra-aesthetic values that, updated by means of the aesthetic function (that transparent function, as this power described by Jan Mukařovský), allow us to relate again and again to the meaning that we perceive as existing somewhere in the space between our individual experience and the semantic field that activates the literary text.

Works Cited

Eco, Umberto. 2004. *Teorie sémiotiky*. Brno: JAMU.

Doležel, Lubomír. 1989. *Occidental poetics—Tradition and Progress*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Kubíček, Tomáš. 2010. *Felix Vodička—Názor a metoda. K dějinám českého strukturalismu*. Prague: Academia.

Kubíček, Tomáš. 2007. *Vypravěč. Kategorie narativní analýzy*. Brno: Host.

Mukařovský, Jan. 2000. *Studie I*. Brno: Host.

Schmid, Wolf. 2005. *Elemente der Narratologie*. Berlin—New York: De Gruyter.

Schmid, Wolf. 2009. *Slavische Ezähltheorie—Russiche und tschechische Ansätze*. Berlin—New York: De Gruyter.

Schmid, Wolf. 2010. "O Praze, slovanském funkcionalismu a renesanci naratologie." Česká literatura 58 (3): 331–345.

Roman Jakobson's work on poetic language from the point of view of the revival of rhetoric in the 20th century

Jiří Kraus

Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism,
Smetanovo nábřeží 6, 110 01 Prague 1, Czech Republic.
Email: jiri.kraus@centrum.cz

Abstract: Throughout the 20th century, classical rhetoric (as a cultural heritage of the past) acquired renewed theoretical and practical importance in a variety of domains, particularly linguistics and literary criticism. In Russian scientific and cultural life before and after the Revolution of 1917, the activities of the Moscow linguistic circle and of the Petrograd's Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOJAZ) influenced the works of Roman Jakobson. Soon after his arrival to Prague, he made contact with the head of the Department of English Philology of Charles University Vilém Mathesius. Together with him and other collaborators (Mukařovský, Havránek, Trnka, and others), they laid the foundations of the Prague Linguistic Circle (1926). Jakobson's scholarly work concentrated on topics that drew from both linguistics and literature: phonology, the analysis of poetic language, the problem of linguistic functions, the analysis of the iconicity of language signs, etc. His article *Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances* (1956) marks the most influential site of the return of classical rhetoric. It includes the chapter *The Metaphoric and metonymic poles* in which the author projected the post-Saussurean pair paradigm / syntagm on to the rhetorical domain of the dominant figures metaphor and metonymy. These devices designate general processes that work across the entire field of discourse. Jakobson argues that these poles are not simply juxtaposed. Instead, their interrelation is based on the dominance of either pole. His theory is exemplified by a detailed analysis of the function of metaphor and other poetic devices in the narrative poem May (*MáJ*) written in 1836 by a leading representative of Czech romanticism Karel

Hynek Mácha. In the article *The Quest of the Essence of Language* 1956), Jakobson demonstrates another point of interest of classical rhetoric namely iconicity, i. e., the marked tendency of many language units (words, vowels, syntactic figures) to correspond to the objects signified.

In Russian philological thought—primarily due to the groundbreaking and authoritative 18th century work of M. V. Lomonosov—rhetoric never completely lost its position as a fully elaborated communication system. As an important cultural heritage of Greek and Roman antiquity, it provided a normative description of compositional models and essential concepts and categories in poetry, prose, drama, legal and political debate, religious discourse, history-writing, and even science (Bender and Wellbery 1990; Conley 1994; Plett 2010; Kraus 2011). In Russia, both in theory and in an oratorical practice, rhetoric has not, as a rule, been linked with such derogatory terms as "artful cobbling", "dubious mannerism", "meaningless jingle-jangle", which, during the period of Romanticism, evinced both a striking neglect of and a negative attitude towards this discipline of the humanities revered in the Western system of education.

The progressive decline of rhetoric was aggravated by attacks on the part of some philosophers who, like John Locke, dismissed rhetoric as "the powerful instrument of Power and Deceit" or Immanuel Kant who called rhetoric "an art of playing for one's own purpose upon the weakness of men" and claimed that "it merits no respect whatever."

On the other hand, the modern vogue of rhetorical scholarship is documented not only by many academic works, but also by the programs of new university departments of language, literary criticism, communication, media, and others. Because linguists, literary theoreticians and philosophers saw language as central to understanding meaning and interpretation, and as the medium through which social behavior and cultural habits were created, rhetoric came to be seen once again as an important area of study. At the end of the 19th century, the path-breaking works of Nietzsche, namely his Outline of classical rhetoric (*Darstellung der antiken Rhetorik*; cf. Gilman 1983; Nietzsche 2011), initiated

a philosophical re-conception of rhetoric as symbolic action instructing us how we, as humans, construct the world in which we live. Beginning with the 20th century—when Martin Heidegger at Marburg university, in a series of lectures on the fundamental principles of Aristotelian philosophy, placed great emphasis on a theoretical approach to rhetoric (Heidegger 1977)—the discipline has become a prominent topic in the works of Paul Ricoeur, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Richard Rorty, Richard McKeon, Jürgen Habermas, Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov and many others. The focus on rhetoric proved to be a considerable factor in the works of literary historians and literary critics, among them Ivor-Armstrong Richards and his students in the United States. Among his followers let me name William Empson, Cleanth Brooks and Paul de Man all of whom focused on the common problems of poetics and rhetoric, concentrating on the polysemy of words, on diction and on sentence structure. As a result, the concept of rhetoric was gradually drawn into the gravitational field of interest of theorists of language and communication.

In Germany, anti-rhetorical prejudices of long duration were done away with in Heinrich Lausberg's *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, Ernst-Robert Curtius's monumental work *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* and Klaus Dockhorn's collection of essays *Macht und Wirkung der Rhetorik* as well as his study *Wordsworth und die rhetorische Tradition in England.* A symbiosis between rhetoric and literary theory reached its apex in the numerous works of Heinrich F. Plett.

In France, rhetoric (called *la rhétorique restreinte*) had been typically restricted to *elocutio*, i.e., to literary stylistics and to an inventory of tropes and figures (cf. the classic work of Fontanier 1977). Well-known modern Francophone representatives of a serious interest in the renaissance of rhetoric include Gérard Genette, the author of the two volume *Les figures*, and the Liège group of neo-rhetoricians with their work *Rhétorique générale* (Dubois et al. 1970). This group tried to answer the questions of how a language as a system of signs is constructed, and how various modes of expression are produced by applying the key rhetorical operations of addition, deletion, substitution, and permutation, as conceived by Quintilian, to the key units of the different levels of language—graphemic, phonemic, morphological, syntactic and semantic.

The works of prominent representatives of Francophone linguo-stylistics, notably Charles Bally, Gustav Lanson, Maurice Grammont, Marcel Cressot and others, are marked by certain hostility towards rhetoric and rhetoricians. In particular, under the influence of the concept of *la rhétorique restreinte*, they criticized an abundant inventory of tropes and figures as well as pedantry of complicated and ponderous terminology combining Greek, Latin and modern expressions. Nevertheless, all these authors contributed to the elaboration of linguo-stylistics

as a field of study of expressive, i.e., evocative, persuasive, and affective devices of modern French and, therefore, to the upsurge of rhetoric, namely its subfield traditionally called *elocutio.*

Let us turn now to the situation in Russia. Alongside his Grammar, Lomonosov's *Ritorika* of 1748 reflected the author's view that the normative basis of Russian language and literature was a study and imitation of the Latin classical canon, unmediated by other cultures (cf. Kahn 1995). It was not only an attack on the growing influence of French neoclassicism, propagated mainly by Sumarokov, called "the Russian Boileau", but also a thorough elaboration of a Russian theory of literary genres with their particular laws and restrictions. Rhetoric also contributed to the functional differentiation of literary language where style and genre have been pivotal operative concepts. According to Renate Lachman, the influence of Lomonosov's works on grammar and rhetoric in Russian culture established a continuing interrelation between the rhetorical doctrine of style and the adoption of certain manners of textual practice. Not only in the field of oratory (Lachman 1994).

Both theoretical and practical interest in rhetoric had been strongly stimulated by the reinvigorating effect of revolutionary ideas in the first two decades of the 20th century. In 1918, students of the prominent linguist Baudouin de Courtenay founded, in Petrograd, an educational and scientific center called *Institut zhivogo slova* (The Living Word Institute), one of whose main topics was the language of the literary avant-garde (cf. Ivanova in Sériot and Friedrich 2008). In 1923 there appeared a special issue of the journal *Lef* (Left Front of the Arts) containing the analysis of newly grasped functions of tropes and figures in Lenin's oratorical style. The attention of Russian formalists had been attracted to the poetic language of Vladimir Mayakovskii, Valerii Bryusov, Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Kruchonykh among others (France 1988; Yamaguchi 1999; Glanc 2005). In the broader context of the appearance of a new rhetoric in connection with modern tendencies in poetry and drama, it might be useful to mention a short article of Bertolt Brecht *Űber das Rhetorische* (1963). He speaks there about a contemporary revival of rhetoric not documented by textbooks and critical studies but by revolutionary poetry and drama of the German Expressionists. Their plays are moving and full of powerful attacks and acute satire. The rhetorical function *movere,* to move, to overwhelm, plays a dominant role not only in the works of Expressionist playwrights (e.g., Walter Hasenclever, Georg Kaiser) but even in Bertolt Brecht's plays like *Trommeln in der Nacht* (Drums in the Night), *Im Dickicht der Städte* (In the Jungle of Cities), and others (Plett 2010). Roman Jakobson dedicated a lecture, given in Berlin in 1963, to this prominent German playwright and poet and, in 1965, published an article *Der grammatische Bau des Gedichts von Bertolt Brecht 'Wir sind Sie'* (Isačenko et al. 1965, 175–189). Original and intellectually

daring works of the epoch, together with the creative atmosphere of the Moscow linguistic circle and the activities of the Petrograd group OPOJAZ (Society for the Study of Poetic Language), characterized the atmosphere which influenced the early works of Roman Jakobson. Several years after his arrival in Prague, in July1920, he made contact with the head of the Department of English philology at Charles University, Professor Vilém Mathesius. Together with him and other collaborators, they laid the foundations of the Prague Linguistic Circle. His scholarly work includes topics that draw from both linguistics and literature: the analysis of poetic language, the elaboration of phonology as a model branch of structural linguistics, the problem of language functions, the iconicity of linguistics signs, and many other fields of study (cf. Toman 1994; Glanc 2005; Havránková 2008). In an article *Roman Jakobson as a student of communication*, dedicated to 100th anniversary of his birth, Lubomír Doležel characterized Jakobson's linguistic studies as an establishment of close interdisciplinary links with the entire domain of human and social sciences (Doležel 1996).

The growing interdisciplinary interest in rhetoric as well as the formation of neo-rhetoric as a new discipline (including the works of linguists, literary theorists, philosophers, specialists in language communication and media, and others), is characterized by frequent citations from the works of Roman Jakobson. For the authors of *Rhétorique générale* (1970), a collective work of neo-rhetoricians, members of the Liège group μ (abbr. Greek meta-), Jakobson is the most frequently quoted source, while his name is emphasized in a short introductory *Note liminaire.* Sixteen years after its appearance, the book was translated into Russian with an introductory note by A. K. Avelichev and an afterword written by S. I. Gindin (Avelichev 1986). Jakobson's ideas about poetic language are very often mentioned in Heinrich Plett's fundamental works *Systematische Rhetorik* (2000) and *Literary Rhetoric* (2010). However, Jakobson also became an object of sharp criticism. A prominent historian of rhetoric Brian Vickers (1988) rejects Jakobson's reduction of the inventory of tropes and figures to metaphor and metonymy, considering it an improper and extreme application of phonological binarism.

Let me now present some aspects of Jakobson's works which might be particularly relevant from a rhetorical point of view.

First, I shall concentrate on his interpretation of the basic strategy of poetic language linked with the attempt to classify the tropes as instances of two basic categories—tropes of similarity, dominated by metaphor, and tropes of contiguity, dominated by metonymy. Thus, in poetic texts the words are selected from a paradigm of semantically similar or identical expressions which form a potential field of metaphorical expressions, and from a syntagmatic relationship of causal, temporal or spatial contiguity. As Jakobson argues, any language sign

involves two modes of arrangement, in particular "the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (Jakobson 1960; Czech translation in Jakobson 1995, 82). For example, to characterize the behavior of Janáček's cunning little vixen, we can choose from a paradigm of possible adjectives—*clever*, *shrewd*, *crafty*, *wily*, *roguish*, *diabolic* etc., (axis of selection) and add it to the animal's proper name Bystrouška, *Sharp-Ear* (axis of combination). So the constituents of a context can be thought to be in a state of contiguity, while in an operation of substitution words are linked by various degrees of similarity. According to Jakobson, both poles, similarity and contiguity, can appear on any verbal level, be it lexical, phonemic, morphemic, syntactic, or phraseological. The binary relation allows Jakobson to apply it to the nonverbal arts such as painting, sculpture, music, cinema, as well as to distinguish two types of aphasia. One consists of a similarity disorder corresponding to metaphor (*spoon* for *knife*), the second of contiguity disorder corresponding to the functions of metonymy (distorted declensional and conjugational forms, inadmissible permutations in word order). Let me introduce an example from the language of advertising. In the sentence "Put a tiger in your tank!" we meet the metaphor *tiger* instead of *petrol*, and the phonic repetition in the combination /t/ – /t/—*tiger*, *tank*. Both stylistic devices play an important role in the marking of texts which correspond to two contrasting types of aesthetic appreciation called "pleasure of surprise" and "pleasure of satisfied expectations".

In a treatise *Two Aspects Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances* which includes the chapter *The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles* (1956; Czech translation in Jakobson 1995), Jakobson argues that these poles are not simply juxtaposed but rather their interrelation can be based on the dominance of either pole. Thus metaphor dominates in Russian lyrical songs, in Romanticism and symbolism and in surrealism, whereas metonymy dominates in Russian heroic epics, in realism and cubism. The same dichotomy, according to Eikhenbaum, prevails in the relation between poetry and prose. As Jakobson claims, "poetry is focused upon the sign, and pragmatical prose primarily upon the referent. Tropes and figures were studied primarily as poetic devices. Poetry rests on the principle of similarity, prose, on the contrary, is characterized essentially by contiguity." Thus, Jakobson applied the category pair paradigm/syntagm of Saussurean linguistics to the domain of a reorganized system of rhetorical figures. Using rhetorical terminology, Jakobson distinguished two large-scale mechanisms of semantic production, similarity and contiguity, operative in the entire field of discourse and he moved from the term "rhetoric" to the broader term "rhetoricality" as a quality of the discourse and a main constituent of a given language function (Kraus 1996).

A prominent historian of rhetoric Brian Vickers rejects Jakobson's above-mentioned generalizations, regarding them as hasty, vague and lacking solid data and argumentation (Vickers 1988). Vickers criticizes Jakobson's assertion that the realistic author Lev Tolstoy metonymically digresses from plot to atmosphere and from characters to action, supporting his claim with but two quotations. He reproaches Jakobson for using in his works a notion of rhetoric which is fragmented and subordinated to purposes far-distant from its historical origins. Consequently, the restricted polarity of two "master tropes", at the expense of others, does violence to language as well as to thought.

In fact, the examples of his textual analysis of Karel Hynek Mácha's poetry as well the case of the analysis of Charles Baudelaire's poem *Chats* (Cats), an analysis he co-wrote with Claude Lévi-Strauss, both demonstrate that Jakobson tends not to carry out a reduction of tropes and figures, instead he aims to establish their hierarchy as a system. Very often he finds in these texts alliterations, phonic equivalence, homophonic wordplays as *paronomasia*, polysemic wordplays, case alterations (*polyptoton*) and other devices. As an example of rhetorical figures he cites a well-known sequence of metaphors from Karel Hynek Mácha's poem *Máj* (May):

… zbortěné harfy tón, ztrhané strůny zvuk,
zašlého věku děj, umřelé hvězdy svit,
zašlé bludice pouť, mrtvé milenky cit,
zapomenutý hrob, věčnosti skleslý byt,
vyhasla ohně kouř, slitého zvonu hlas,
mrtvé labutě zpěv, ztracený lidstva ráj,
to dětinský můj věk.

The tones of battered harp, the sound of broken string, The deeds of a vanished age, the dying star's last glow, The track of faded planet, flames of a love long dead, A grave long since forgot, the place where eternity dwells, The dying smoke of a fire, the molten bell's last chime, The song of a long dead swan, and Eden's vanished day, All that – my childhood age.
(William E. Harkins's translation quoted in Harkins 1987, 500)

Here Jakobson refers directly to a syntactic figure of classical rhetoric "dictio ab eo quod sequitur id quod praecedit insinuans", i.e., a permutation on the level of content. To another example of a rhetorical figure from Mácha's May, *Hrdličin zval ku lásce hlas* ("To love called the voice of a turtle-dove"), a permutation on the level of syntax, Jakobson devotes a whole study called *Máchův verš o hrdličině hlasu* (Mácha's verse about the voice of the turtle-dove; Jakobson 1960).

Attempts to reduce an abundant and rather complicated inventory of tropes and figures and to interpret and generalize their meaning and effect have a long history. The name which is most frequently evoked is Giambattista Vico, the author of New Science (*Principi di scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni*) from 1744. This work discusses so-called Poetic Logic, a theory which considers things in all the forms by means of which language may signify them. According to Vico, the first form used in language was the anthropomorphic metaphor, "the most luminous and therefore the most necessary and frequent of all tropes" (Czech translation in Vico 1991, 169). "The first poets attributed to bodies the being of animate substances, with capacities measured by their own, namely sense and passion, and in this way made stories of them. Thus, every metaphor is a story in brief" (ibid.). After the metaphor, according to Vico, comes metonymy, the substitution of agent for act resulting from the fact that names for agents were commoner than names for acts. The third trope in Vico's arrangement is synecdoche "which developed into metaphors as particulars were elevated into universals or parts united with the other parts together with which they make up their wholes" (ibid., 170). The last trope of Vico's reduced inventory is irony "which could not have begun until the period of reflection, because it is fashioned of falsehood by dint of a reflection which wears the mask of a truth" (ibid., 171).

In an Appendix to the book *A Grammar of Motives* (1969) Kenneth Burke refers to Vico's system of "four master tropes" and regards them not as rhetorical devices or language procedures in their own right but as modes of thought and markers of hypothetical history of human speech and human civilization. Jacques Lacan, in an article *L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient* (1966) in which he applies Jakobson's hypothesis to the unconscious, suggested identifying the terms "condensation" and "symptom" with metaphor, and "displacement" and "desire" with metonymy. In the chapter "Historism, history and figurative imagination" in the American historian Hayden White's *Tropics of Discourse* (1978), Vico's and Burke's "four master tropes", and Roman Jakobson's principle of binarism are applied to historiography. On the grounds that a respective predominance of metaphorical, metonymic, synecdochal and ironic tropology generate a paradigm which constitutes the objects which it describes and analyzes, White approvingly cites Jakobson's view that the connection between objects, judgments and ideas can be expressed in a language that takes account of the possibility of their being otherwise. No text can represent things as they are without rhetorical figurativeness or poetic imagery. Even the pure form of a syllogism is based on synecdoche and metonymy because it moves from the plane of universally valid propositions to particular statements. Hayden White's claim opens the door to surprising and, to a certain degree, artificial generalizations that he calls "archetypal plot of discursive formations." Thus, the quarternal pattern of metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, and irony corresponds to Piaget's division of the cognitive development

of children into four phases—sensomotoric, representational, operational, and logical. Analogical correspondence governs the succession of period styles as well as the modes of emplotment—romance, comedy, tragedy, satire; four modes of explanation—idiographic, organistic, mechanistic, contextualist and, finally, four nineteenth century prominent historians—Jules Michelet, Alexis de Tocquevile, Leopold von Ranke, and Jakob Burckhardt. Each of these, in White's view, emploted his work according to the mode of one or other fictive genres: Romantic, Tragic, Comic, and Satiric. This categorization rejects the notion that language can be understood as a transparent medium, something like a glassy essence; for representing reality or for making true statements about the world. Contrary to this, a statement is accepted as credible because it is recognized to cohere within a given language game or by reference to what we already accept.

Now I shall pass on to another of Jakobson's topic that has its source in classical rhetoric. It is a criticism of de Saussure's principle of arbitrariness of language signs. This principle unquestionably plays a pivotal role in explaining a majority of facts concerning the sound-meaning (classical *verba-res*) correlation in natural languages. In his article *The Quest for the Essence of Language* (1966) Jakobson tries to demonstrate the force of the opposite principle: iconicity. It explains a marked tendency of many verbal signs to correspond with the objects signified. As Jakobson shows with numerous examples, certain sounds, rhythms, morphological structures, syntactic constructions appear to be far more iconic than hitherto assumed.

In rhetoric, the attention to the principle of iconicity has a comparatively long history which begun with the discussions about Plato's dialogue Kratylos and its conflicting opinions about *thései* and *fýsei*. The first supporters of the view that the signs of natural language are motivated were Stoics. The best source of our knowledge of their philological views, St. Augustin's treatise *On dialectics*, provides not only a series of onomatopoetic examples as *tinnitus*, ringing, *hinnitus*, horse neigh, *balatus*, sheep bleating, but also very interesting phonologic and semantic relationships such as Latin—*crux,* cross, and *crus,* shinbone. The two words are related by the quality of hardness, cross is an instrument of torture, shinbone as an object which breaks during torture, with the consonant cluster /*cr*/ expressing hardness, as opposed to the softness of /*m-/, /-l*/ in Latin *mel*, honey.

Another wave of the interest in the iconicity of language signs began with the appearance of Mannerism at the end of the 16th century. Mannerism is marked by an abstruse stylistic experimentation that can be explained as a revolt against Classicism and as the beginning of anticiceronian attacks under the banner of "new eloquence." Mannerism's ornate style had as its theoreticians the Spanish Jesuit Balthasar Grazian and the prominent poets Luis de Góngora in Spain and Giambattista Marino in Italy. They are characterized by rich verbal amplifications

and by an appeal to the reader's attention. Poetics and rhetoric became very close, as both looked to Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* as well as Horace's *Art of Poetry* as their classical sources. Teachers taught their students to write and read poetry in rhetorical terms, employing figures of speech, unusual words and expressions and unusual typography (cf. Wellek and Warren 1956). There now appeared a new term, typical of the Mannerist metaphysical style, called *concetto*, lat. *acumen*, a paradoxical connection, an audacious use of a word, verbal surprise, wit, and poetic license. One of the representatives of Mannerist poetics and rhetoric, the Pole Maciei Kazimierz Sarbiewski (Sarbievius, 1595–1640), in his treatises *De acuto et arguto* and *De figuris sententiarum* (cf. Lichański 1992; Lachman 1994)*,* claims that the vowels are capable of expressing meanings, emotions and aesthetic values. For example, the vowel /a/ evokes the feeling of dignity and magnificence, /e/ of effect of delicateness and euphony, /i/ of subtlety, /o/ of closeness, and /u/ of monumentality. The effect of these vowels is intensified when they are repeated and accumulated. Later, authors from the period of Romanticism connected the vowels with colors, e.g., Friedrich von Schlegel regarded /a/ as red, /o/ as purple, /i/ as sky-blue, /u/ as dark blue (cf. Fónagy 1970; Bense 1967). In the 19th century the theme of colorful vowels culminates in symbolism and in Arthur Rimbaud's poetry (*Vowels*. A *black,* E *white,* I *red,* U *green,* O *blue: vowels, / I shall tell, one day, of your mysterious origins…*).

Thus, the ideas of Jakobson's article, which to a certain degree undermined de Saussure's concept of total arbitrariness of the verbal sign, have a long-lasting history, while, at the same time, they reopened a rich discussion. A majority of authors gathered many examples from all levels of different languages and formulated a general law: adjoined language units and repetitions (phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, accent figures, and ablaut forms) designate more or add semantic information. Thus, plural forms are longer than singular forms, comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs are longer than their corresponding positive forms, future and perfect tense forms of verbs than their present-tense forms, conditionals than indicatives, diminutives than their basic words. Copious other examples could be mentioned (cf. Gamkrelidze 1974; Mayerthaler 1980; Posner 1980; Küper 1981).

From the point of view of rhetoric as a system of secondary grammar, the iconic expressions, which accentuate the rhetorical (i.e., persuasive, affective) as well as the poetic functions of speech, are the most important. The same holds true for word repetitions and examples of phonological equivalence figures (isophonemes), suprasegmental isophony, alliteration, rhyme, asonance, isotaxemes (parallelisms), and metatextemes (parodies, allusions, citations).

Taken together, all these examples constitute the rhetorical or literary potential of a text. This potential undergoes transformations that depend on the semiotic

interpretation of a text, taking place in a concrete time and space. The history of rhetoric and the present studies in the field of neo-rhetoric remain open to furthering the possibilities of such interpretations.

Works Cited

Bender, John and David E. Wellbery. 1990. *The Ends of Rhetoric. History—Theory—Practice*. Stanford: University Press Stanford.

Bense, Max. 1967. *Teorie textů*. Prague: Odeon.

Burke, Kenneth. 1969. *A Grammar of Motives and A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley—Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Conley, Thomas M. 1994. *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*. Chicago—London: The University of Chicago Press.

Doležel, Lubomír. 1990. *Occidental Poetics.* Lincoln—London: University of Nebraska Press.

Doležel, Lubomír. 1996. "Roman Jakobson jako badatel v oboru komunikace." *Slovo a slovesnost* 57 (3): 162–169.

Dubois, Jacques, Francis Edeline, Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, Philippe Minguet, Francois Pire and Haselin Trinon. 1970. *Rhétorique générale*. Paris: Larousse. (Russian translation: 1986. Moskva: Progress.)

Fontanier, Pierre. 1977. *Les figures du discours*. Paris: Flammarion.

France, Peter. 1988. "Rhétorique et poétique chez les formalistes russes." *Rhetorica* 6: 127–135.

Gamkrelidze, Thomas V. 1974. "The Problem of 'L'arbitraire du signe.'" *Language* 50: 102–110.

Gilman, Sander L. (ed.) 1983. *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*. New York—Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Glanc, Tomáš. (ed.) 2005. *Formalistická škola a dnešní věda ruská*. Prague: Academia.

Harkins, William E. 1987. "Karel Hynek Mácha's May." In *Cross Currents. A Yearbook of Central European Culture 6*, edited by Ladislav Matejka, 479–504. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

Havránková, Marie. (ed.) 2008. *Pražský lingvistický kroužek v korespondenci*. Prague: Academia.

Heidegger, Martin. 1977. *Grundbegriffe der Aristotelischen Philosophie*. Frankfurt am M.: Klostermann.

Isačenko, Aleksander V. et al. (eds.) 1965. *Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, Volkskunde und Literaturforschung*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

Jakobson, Roman. 1960. "Stroka Machi o zove gorlicy." *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics* 3: 98–108. (Czech translation in Jakobson 1995, 477–494.)

Jakobson, Roman. 1995. *Poetická funkce*, edited by Miroslav Červenka. Prague: H & H.

Kahn, Andrew. (ed.) 1995. "Introduction." In *A. N. Muravʼev, Institutiones rhetoricae. A Treatise of a Russian Sentimentalist.* Oxford: Willem A. Meeuws.

Kraus, Jiří. .1996. "K významovému rozpětí Jakobsonovy poetické funkce." *Slovo a slovesnost* 57 (3): 170–176.

Kraus, Jiří. 2008. "Structuralist Conceptions of Style." In *Rhetoric and Stylistics. An International Handbook of Historical and Systematic Research*, edited by Ulla Fix, Andrea Gardt, and Joachim Knape, 1010–1023. Berlin—New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Kraus, Jiří. 2011. *Rétorika v evropské kultuře a ve světě*. Prague: Karolinum. (English translation: 2014. *Rhetoric in European Culture and Beyond*. Prague: Karolinum.)

Küper, Christoph. 1981. "Ikonische Tendenzen in der Rhetorik." *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 11 (43–44): 144–163.

Lachman, Renate. 1994. *Die Zerstörung der schönen Rede*. Műnchen: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

Lichański, Jakub Zdzisław. 1992. *Retoryka od średniowiecza do baroku.* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo naukowe.

Mayerthaler, Willi. 1980. "Ikonismus in der Morphologie." *Zeitschríft für Semiotik* 2: 19–37.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2011. *Rané texty o hudbě a řeči*. Prague: OIKOYMENH.

Plett, Heinrich F. 2000. *Systematische Rhetorik*. Műnchen: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

Plett, Heinrich F. 2010. *Literary Rhetoric. Concepts—Structures—Analyses*. Leiden—Boston: Brill.

Sériot, Patrick and Janette Friedrich. (eds.) 2008. *Langage et pensée: Union Soviétique années 1920–1930. Cahiers de l'ILSL* 24.

Posner, Roland. 1980. "Ikonismus in den natürlichen Sprachen." *Zeitschrift für Semiotik* 2: 1–6.

Sloane, Thomas O. (ed.) 2001. *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*. Oxford—New York: Oxford University Press.

Toman, Jindřich. (ed.) 1994. *Letters and Other Materials from the Moscow and Prague Linguistic Circles, 1912–1945.* Michigan: Slavic Publications.

Vickers, Brian. 1988. "The Atrophy of Modern Rhetoric, Vico to De Man." *Rhetorica* VI (1): 21–56.

Vico, Giambattista. 1991. *Základy Nové vědy. O společné přirozenosti národů*. Prague: Academia.

Wellek, René and Austin Warren. 1956. *Theory of Literature.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

White, Hayden. 1992. *Tropics of Discourse*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

White, Hayden. 2010. *Tropika diskursu*. Prague: Karolinum.

Yamaguchi, Iwao. 1999. *Paróru no fukken. Roshia forumarizumu kara Puraga gengo bigaku e (Rehabilitation of the concept of "Parole". From Russian Formalism to Prague Linguistic Aesthetics)*. Tokyo: Yumani shoho.

HABENT SUA FATA INVENTIONES.
The Role of Czechoslovakian Slavistics in the Forming of the Parry-Lord Oral-Formulaic Theory

Sylva Fischerová

Charles University, Faculty of Arts, Institute for Greek and Latin Studies,
Celetná 20, 116 42 Prague 1, Czech Republic.
Email: sylva.fischerova@ff.cuni.cz

Abstract: The aim of this study is to demonstrate the—so far neglected—role Czechoslovakian slavistics played in the shaping of the Parry-Lord oral-formulaic theory. The process is presented as a genuine discovery story rooted within a specific scientific milieu (A. Meillet, Prague Linguistic Circle etc.). Among the story's important figures belong Matija Murko, the founder of Czechoslovakian slavistics Roman Jakobson, and some other scholars. Much attention is paid to Murko's and Parry's scientific research strategies undertaken especially during their journeys to the Balkans in the 1930s, which are compared in the text. The paper also reveals certain ties between Murko and Lord; some of the evidence, as far as I know, has not been published until now.

Keywords: oral-formulaic theory; Milman Parry; Matija Murko; A. B. Lord; Czechoslovakian slavistics

1. *Milman Parry, Matija Murko and the making of the oral-formulaic theory*

The aim of my study is to present the development of the Parry-Lord oral-formulaic theory as a genuine discovery story, rooted in a specific scientific milieu that has provided it with an intrinsic logic. The story has its protagonists—namely Milman Parry and A. B. Lord—but also some other important figures without whom it would have perhaps never happened. Amongst them are eminent representatives of Czechoslovak Slavistics like Matija Murko and Roman Jakobson. The story features a continuous interplay between Europe and America, between a homeland and a foreign country.

Surely, Milman Parry had no plans to found one of the world's largest collections of oral tradition (now at Harvard as the "Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature" [MPCOL]); after Parry's return from his two research trips in the 1930s, it consisted of 3,580 phonograph records and nearly 13,500 texts (Lord 1954b:XIII). Its scope has increased considerably since then due to the continuing field work of Parry's assistant and follower A. B. Lord http://chs119.chs.harvard.edu/mpc/about/intro.html). The collection came into existence as a "byproduct" of Parry's Homeric studies (Mitchell and Nagy 2000, VIII). Parry, an American, received his M. A. at the University of California, Berkeley, and then moved to Paris as a postgraduate student of Antoine Meillet, a leading French linguist, who was himself a pupil of Ferdinand de Saussure. Parry summarizes his own coming to South Slavic poetry and oral tradition in the introductory pages of his unfinished study "Ćor Huso. A study in South Slavic heroic song" as follows: "My first studies were on the style of the Homeric poems and led me to understand that so highly formulaic a style could be only traditional" (Parry, M. 1971, 439). To summarize briefly, it was the first stage of his discovery that revolutionized Homeric studies. Parry studied a group of prominent Homeric heroes and gods thoroughly and focused on the use of the noun and epithet, of the so-called *epitheton constans* in the poems. He recognized Homeric style as formulaic, composed of formulas, which form a coherent system, characterized by "economy" and "scope". Such a system could not originate as the work of an individual; rather it could be only understood as a matter of tradition. However, as Parry himself admits, the formulaic character of the Homeric *Kunstsprache* was not his discovery: in his thesis, published in Paris in 1928, *L'épithète traditionel dans l'Homère*, he quotes his teacher's thought from the study *Les origines indo-européennes des mètres grecques*: „L'épopée homérique est toute faite de formules que se transmettaient les poètes. Qu'on prenne un morceau quelconque, on reconnaît vite qu'il se compose de vers ou de fragments de vers qui se retrouvent textuellement dans un ou plusieurs passages. Et même les vers dont on ne retrouve pas les morceaux dans un autre passage ont

aussi le caractère de formules" (Meillet 1923, 61).[1] Nevertheless, Meillet did not develop a well-established and congruent theory out of this thesis.

Let us now return to Parry's own comment on the way he proceeded during the course of his study:

I failed, however, at the time to understand as fully as I should have that a style such as that of Homer must not only be traditional but also must be oral. It was largely due to the remarks of my teacher M. Antoine Meillet that I came to see, dimly at first, that a true understanding of the Homeric poems could only come with a full understanding of the nature of oral poetry. It happened that a week or so before I defended my theses for the doctorate at the Sorbonne Professor Mathias Murko of the University of Prague delivered in Paris the series of conferences which later appeared as his book *La Poésie populaire épique en Yougoslavie au début du XX siècle*. (Parry, M. 1971, 439)

Matija Murko was an important figure in the Czechoslovak Slavistics between the wars. Of Slovenian origin, he taught at various European universities until he moved to Prague in 1920, where he settled and became the first professor of South Slavic Languages at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University and a co-founder of the Institute of Slavonic Studies and of the journal for Slavic philology *Slavia*. Prague is also where he died in 1952. Parry saw the poster for his lectures,[2] but at the time, he could recognize in them "no great meaning for myself. However, Professor Murko, doubtless due to some remark of M. Meillet, was present at my *soutenance* and at that time M. Meillet as a member of my jury pointed out with his usual ease and clarity this failing in my two books. It was the writings of Professor Murko more than those of any other which in the following years led me to the study of oral poetry in itself and to the heroic poems of the South Slavs" (Parry, M. 1971, 439).

Thus, the discovery of the oral nature of a formulaic poetry represented the second step in Parry's formulating of his theory; he introduced his argumentation in two articles published in 1930 and 1932 in *HSCP* (Parry 1930, 1932). The goal of his future work ought to have been to give the knowledge of a still living oral poetry, which Parry saw as necessary if he were to go on with any sureness in his study of Homer.

However, whatever information he had at the time about oral style originated from what he had been able to gather from the remarks of different authors who,

---

[1] The Homeric epic as a whole is composed of the formulae, which the poets handed down from one to another. If you take any piece of the text, you will quickly recognize that it is a compound of lines or fragments of lines, which are to be found in one or more passages of the text. And, even the lines whose pieces we do not find in any other passage also have the character of a formula.

[2] The enlarged and completed text of these lectures appeared in French (Murko 1928) and has been translated to English by Foley in the end of the last century (see Murko 1990).

save in a few cases—Murko and Gesemann (professor at the German branch of the Charles University in Prague) for the South Slavic poetries and Radlov for the Kirgiz-Tartar poetry—were often haphazard, fragmentary or even misleading, as Parry himself admitted (Parry, M. 1971, 440; for more about Radlov's and Gesemann's work relevant to the topic see Foley 1988, 10ff.).

At first, Parry considered the Kirgizian region as his preferred place to study the mechanisms of oral poetry; but it was difficult to get a visa to Soviet Russia in those days, so he turned his interest to the Balkans (Mitchell and Nagy 2000, IX).

In 1929, after his return to the U.S.A., he became an Associate Professor of Classics at Harvard University, a move that was decisive for his continuing research. His final choice for the research area was the Balkan region of Bosnia, and especially the s. c. "Novopazarski sandžak", a "living laboratory" with a school of non-literate bards, surviving yet declining, belonging to the Muslim culture which was less influenced by the printed text of canonical publications than its corresponding Christian tradition whose texts had been sampled together earlier by Vuk Karadzić and Petar Njegoš and well documented in Murko's book (*La poésie populaire épique en Yougoslavie au début du XX siècle,* 1929), which had been published in French. Murko investigated various regions of Yugoslavia with a special focus on the "Mohameddan" area. He already attempted his research trips at the beginning of the century under the auspices of the *Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Vienna. His *Berichte* for the Academy and for the *Phonogramm-Archiv* are an example of thorough fieldwork (Murko 1913a, 1913b, 1915a, 1915b)—which, however, had its limits, as we shall see later. Nonetheless, in his review of Murko's reports, the leading Czech slavist Jiří Horák had already written in 1916 that Murko's sober, well supported expositions disqualify many existing perceptions, change fixed opinions (based mostly on the printed versions of the songs) and bring so much news about the stuff and form of the national epic and its singers that they "open a new epoch in the research of the South-Slavic epic" (Horák 1916, 354). Murko also participated in the huge project "*Das Volkslied in Österreich,*" initiated by the *Universal-Edition L. L. C.* of Vienna in the beginning of the century and later financed and organized by the ministry of culture and education. He was a member of the Slovenian committee, under the heading of Karel Štrekelj (with Slovenian folklorists and slavists he was, naturally, in close touch all his life). This monumental—and unfinished—project of a dying monarchy is described in detail in Murko (1947, 135ff.).

It was of pivotal importance to a Homeric scholar like Parry, that although the tradition was, for Muslims as well as for Christians, the same and primarily a Slavic one, i.e., springing from the same roots as the Russian oral epic tradition, the Muslims had developed songs much longer in length than those of the Christians. Probably the reason were that for centuries the Muslims were the ruling class and

had more leisure time for listening to songs and stories, and because the feast of Ramadan, with its 30 nights of entertainment, provided a rich opportunity for prolonged singing and listening from one night to the next (see Lord 1954b, 16). Murko adds another reason, namely, that the practice of listening to these songs and stories substituted for urban cultural events such as concerts, theater performances, etc. It is interesting, too, that exactly because of their length, some of the longest "Mohameddan" poems, reaching even 3,000 or 4,000 lines, were omitted from the collection made by *Matica Hrvatska* (Murko 1929, 14).

The oral tradition had been caught at perhaps its last possible moment. As Parry wrote in his application for the grant ("Project for a Study of Jugoslavian Popular Oral Poetry," now part of the MPCOL) after his return from the Balkans: "The old life and the old ways of song and speech are quickly going. I have found by experience that I risk obtaining poor material … if I collect from anyone under fifty years of age. The old men are my best subjects." (Mitchell and Nagy 2000, XXIII)

The tasks he established for his research were as follows (I am quoting again from his "Project for a Study of Jugoslavian Popular Oral Poetry"):

a) To what extent an oral poet who composes a new poem is dependent upon the traditional poetry as a whole for his phraseology, his scheme of composition, and the thought of his poem.

b) To what extent a poem, original or traditional, is stable in successive recitations of a given singer.

c) How a poem is changed in a given locality over a number of years.

d) How it is changed in the course of its travels from one region to another.

e) To investigate the different sources of the material from which a given heroic cycle is created, etc. (Mitchell and Nagy 2000, IX).

As Mitchell and Nagy comment, it is rare in humanistic endeavors to find instances in which the conception and execution of work adhere so closely to the scientific method: observation of phenomena, hypothesis formulation, experimentation to test the hypothesis, a conclusion that validates, or modifies, the hypothesis. And, all this Milman Parry did (Mitchell and Nagy 2000: VIII). Briefly, and in his own words, Parry tried to focus on nothing more or less than "defining the characteristics of oral style. … We can learn [i.e., by observing the actual practice of the oral living poetry] not only how the singer puts together his words, and then his phrases, and then his verses, but also his passage and themes, and we can see how the whole poem lives from one man to another, from one age to another, and passes over plains and mountains and the barriers of speech,—more, we can see how a whole oral poetry lives and dies. And this stylized method, unless I am

altogether mistaken, is at the same time the most rigorous and the most living of the methods of literary study. Style, as I understand the word and use it, is the form of thought: and thought is shaped by the life of men" (Parry, M. 1971, 440f.).

Parry made two trips to Yugoslavia between 1933 and 1935 under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies and of Harvard University; during the second trip he was accompanied by his assistant A. B. Lord and by family as well (including his son Adam, later to become a classicist and editor of his father's works). What was crucial for the enterprise as a whole was the method of recording and collecting the material. In his preface to the edition of the first volume of the *Serbocroatian heroic songs*, Jakobson comments on the methods of M. Parry's predecessors in this field:

In their overwhelming majority, the songs of those peoples with whom comparative epic study deals were considerably distorted when they were first collected. The songs and recitatives, instead of being delivered normally, were either artificially dictated, thus losing some of their most characteristic formal features, or they were sung or chanted expressly for dictation, that is, without *ritardando*, or special pauses. In both cases, the form was violated. When the delivery of the lines was normal, the field worker often lacked skill in setting down an entire song with the necessary accuracy, and thus the texts were either marred by all sorts of gaps or subjected to later retouching. Finally, the rhapsode was sometimes required to repeat single verses or even entire epics, and then the two performances were artificially fused. In rarer and more recent instances, when a recording machine was employed, only isolated samples, or mere parts of epics, were recorded by this means. (Jakobson 1954, XI)

Lord himself adds, when commenting on the practice of dictation, that a singer confronted by a scribe lacks two of the elements essential for the performance of an epic song: the musical instrumental accompaniment and the audience (Lord 1954b, 8). But neither did Parry abandon this kind of recording of texts, and part of the collection has been sampled in this way.

Parry's predecessor, Matija Murko, had used a recording machine that Parry found unsatisfactory for his purposes. Lord describes in detail the manner in which his teacher would decide how to collect the songs:

In 1933 [which means during the first trip to the region, without Lord's assistance] Parry took no recording apparatus with him. In Zagreb that summer, however, he purchased a 'Parlograph' of German make and a dictaphone which recorded on wax cylinders. Such machines had been used by Parry's esteemed predecessor, Matija Murko, but Parry had found it unsatisfactory. After experimenting with it, he wrote: 'the singing, which itself brings out the vowels and obscures the consonants, was completely drowned out by the sound of the gusle. It was only when I had an electrical phonographic apparatus with a device for cutting down the low frequencies of the vowels and of the gusle and a high-pitched microphone which could be placed near the singer's mouth and directed away from the head of the gusle that I was able to get transcribable recordings'. (Lord 1954b, 7)

Murko was indeed well aware of the insufficiency of his technical devices, as he repeatedly commented in the reports for the Academy of Sciences in Vienna, which provided him with the phonographic equipment as well as with the rules of how to proceed during the process of recording. First, before recording, he should write down the text of the song, and then he ought to start recording and check that the apparatus is working. The third and final step was the recording itself (Murko 1929, 16f.). He complains in the report that for his task his equipment is absolutely insufficient: "… auf eine Platte könnte man höchstens 20 bis 30 gesprochene zehnsilbige Verse bringen. Da aber der Gesang, das Vorspiel und die Begleitung mit einem primitiven Instrumente (Tambura…, eventuell … Gusle…) auch Zeit und Raum erfordern, so würde man für ein einziges Lied von 1000 Versen schon mindestens 50 Platten verbrauchen, in den meisten Fällen aber noch viel mehr" (Murko 1913b, 59).[3] Thus, he adds, for recording one long epic song he would need all 350 discs, which *Phonogramm-Archiv* had at its disposal for all expeditions! Also worth mentioning is the fact that the phonograph equipment was very heavy—weighing seventy-four kilograms—and had to be transported in three boxes (Murko 1947, 113ff.). Regardless, he tried, under the given circumstances, to proceed in the best possible manner. He decided to record various versions of the beginning of one and the same song sung by the same singer (usually with a range of 30–40 lines) to trace the changes and variations. He also focused on various versions sung by different singers, and—naturally— collected the dictated versions as well. He also paid attention to the women singers and to various forms of singing (without gusle or with tambura, or a mere recitation). Unlike Parry, he did not focus primarily on the illiterate singers and investigated both literate and illiterate bards. All this led him to the conclusion that a true singer is an improviser, always creating his songs anew out of the traditional material. However, Murko—lacking any musical education—chose to ignore the musical aspects of the matter. Not even his goals were identical with Parry's. According to Murko himself, "le but essentiel" of his enterprise was to learn how national epic poetry lives, who its singers are, to whom, how and when they sing; also whether new songs still arise and why the folk epic disappears and dies (Murko 1929, 8).[4] For those reasons he also created a rich photographic archive in which he documented individual singers and instruments as well as other details of the "epic life", "la vie épique", as he repeatedly called it in his works. Those days, life in some regions of Bosnia and Hercegovina and elsewhere was quite particular, characterized by blood revenge and danger. The third and

---

[3] … on a disc one could record from 20 to 30 decasyllabic lines at most. But since a song, its poem and accompaniment by a primitive musical instrument (tambura… or … gusle) also demand time and space, for one song with a scope of about 1000 lines one would then need at least 50 discs but in most cases even more.

[4] The above quoted Parry's words "we can see how a whole oral poetry lives and dies" (Parry 1971, 441) sound, at least to my ear, as a manifest echo of these words of Murko.

last part of his *La poésie populaire épique en Yougoslavie au début du XXᵉ siècle*, entitled "La vie épique", is devoted to this complex phenomenon (Murko 1929, 1952ff., with many photos).

Naturally, Jakobson must have known all of this, because he knew the work of both Gesemann and of Murko. Besides, he and Murko were in touch in Prague (a few pieces of their correspondence is available in Murko's estate in Prague's *Památník národního písemnictví* [Mikulová 2005, 192; Zelenka 2003, 36]). According to Murko, Jakobson, together with Gesemann and Becking, listened to his phonograms (from the 1930 trip) a year later, when examining the metrics of South Slavic folk poetry. All of them were acquainted primarily with the diction of Tanasije Vučić, the singer whom Gesemann brought to Prague—and later to Berlin—from Montenegro.[5] Due especially to Jakobson and to Frank Wollman, Murko, who belonged to an older generation of scientists, visited lectures organized by the Prague Linguistic Circle and was named later its "silent sympathizer" (Zelenková and Zelenka 2005, 157). Thanks to Murko, Jakobson also contributed to the journal *Slavia*, published by the *Slovanský ústav* in Prague. Symptomatically, Jakobson's last contribution appeared after his forced emigration in 1939, signed by the pseudonym of Olaf Jansen (Zelenka 2003, 36). The affinity of Murko's and Bachtin's and Potebnja's approaches has also been noted (Pospíšil 2003, 52).

Now, back to Parry and his technical devices. After having realized that technical equipment is of crucial importance for the sake of the entire enterprise and before his second trip to the Balkans, Parry, in a truly American spirit (and perhaps influenced by American anthropology, namely by A. L. Kroeber; see García 2001), commissioned the Sound Specialties Company of Waterbury, Connecticut, to prepare a recording device for him consisting of two turntables connected by a toggle switch. The careful back-and-forth alternation of the turntables allowed the normal time limit of several minutes of recording to be expanded virtually without end. Instead of wax cylinders, the apparatus recorded on the aluminum discs. For the scope of the enterprise, compare Parry's comment in one of his field reports: "I have already written to the purchasing agent at Harvard instructing him to order for me from the aluminum company another half-ton of discs, which will be approximately 3,000 discs" (Mitchell and Nagy 2000, X).

But, things were not that simple: during the recording process, problems with the motor generator arose (it was making considerable noise), so Parry took the machine to Zagreb and consulted with a technician from the Bell Edison phonograph works. The solution was simple and elegant: substitute the motor generator with a 300 volt battery.

---

5   By the way, he was also received by President Masaryk, which was to become a theme of one of Vučić's songs, see Murko (Cesty: 200).

Parry decided to record whole epics in their entire length. Wherever possible, he tried to record the entire repertoire of a singer, in order to compare his delivery both of the various passages within one song and of different epic songs. What's more, the epic language of a guslar could be compared with his normal, everyday speech, because Parry also collected conversations with the guslars: how they had lived before and how they were living now, where they had grown up, why they had moved into the region where they were now living, how many wives and children they had, when exactly they had begun singing epic songs, who their teachers had been, what the process of learning looked like, how many songs they knew, and also about their personal attitudes toward their art, toward individual songs, etc. (many of these topics were of primary interest for Murko as well, as we have seen). He preferred interviews to connected narrations, which was, as Jakobson comments, a "realistic" attitude because "the basic form of communication for the native is dialogue, … the only monologues which the latter uses are folk songs or folk tales" (Jakobson 1954, XII). Also the decision to use a native speaker, Nikola Vujnović, instead of interviewing the guslars and singers by himself (he had mastered vernacular in an excellent way, but of course was not that close to the subjects of his interest as was Murko, Slovenian by birth) was equally as realistic and clever. Nikola Vujnović represented another important, perhaps indispensable, figure to the research: a guslar from the district of Stolac, Hercegovina, who could read and write. However, unlike the objects of Parry's scientific interest, Nikola was Catholic (most likely Croatian on his father's side and Serbian on the side of his mother). This meant that his songs and the songs of the Bosnian guslars sprang from two distinct branches of the same tradition, "the most conspicuous difference being that the heroes and adversaries of one branch exchange places in the other," as Ranković comments (Ranković 2012, 24). According to her, neither the method of interviewing the singers can be seen as entirely correct, instead more likely evoking the "epistemic violence" strategy (the notion originates in Gayatri Spivak's works, see Ranković 2012, 8).

Anyway, the fact that Nikola was from the region and knew the people enabled the researchers to be accepted by the singers and their audience as well, and—last but not least—to get information about the singers still active in the area. This was a problem that Murko had never solved sufficiently because he used to cooperate with local intelligentsia and bureaucrats or even with *gendarmerie* as he so colorfully describes in his memoirs, and was often misled by his informers (Murko 1949, 186ff.; the assistance of gendarmes was—especially in the 1920s—a matter of necessity.) Besides, Nikola Vujnović's honesty and his knowledge of the local conditions saved Parry a fair amount of money in a country where nothing had a fixed price. Though Parry also cooperated with some other interpreters (Kutuzov and Velimirović), it was Vujnović who transcribed about 3,500 phonograph recordings at first in Dubrovnik (in 1934–5, resp. in 1937) and later

at Harvard. (There he stayed for almost eighteen months from 1938–40 thanks to the American Council of Learned Societies, the Society of Fellows, and Harvard University, Lord 1971, 474).

These conversations with the singers (and a part of the recordings) took place at first in Turkish coffee houses, which were centers for the peasants on market day, and the scene of entertainment during evenings of the month of Ramadan. However, such a "living performance" appeared too unstable for recording—various circumstances could arise or even interrupt the singing, to say nothing of background noises. For that reason, after preliminary conversations with singers in a coffee house, Parry decided to make recordings in the hotel where he and his assistants were lodged. He used to set up the apparatus in one room and placed the microphone in another room. One of them, usually Lord, operated the apparatus while the other two, Parry and Vujnović, sat with the singer and listened to his song, i.e., they made for him a small, but interested and fine audience, which Parry considered as essential (Lord 1954b, 10).

Reading the recorded conversations—available in the first volume of the *Serbocroatian heroic songs*—we get an extremely interesting and vivid picture of a world now entirely lost. Let us turn to Salih Ugljanin's description of his teacher, a famous guslar Ćor Huso (the last, unfinished study of Milman Parry is dedicated to him), and of his way of life:

He had no trade, nothing but his horse and his arms, and he went about the world. He was blind in one eye and his clothes and arms were of the finest. And he went thus from town to town and sang everybody to the gusle … He went from kingdom to kingdom and learned and sang. … He was at Vienna, at Franz's court [i.e., at the court of Franz Joseph] … and he sang to him to the gusle. And king Joseph gave him a hundred sheep and a hundred Napoleons as present."

N. Vujnović asks: All right, but afterwards, when Ćor Huso came home, what did he do with those sheep? Did he work afterwards, or did he sing again to the gusle?

S. Ugljanin: No, by Allah, he gave the sheep to his kinsmen, and put the money in his purse and went about the world … from kingdom to kingdom.

N. V.: Was he a good singer?

S. U.: There could not have been a better. (Parry 1954, 61; these conversations—*pričanja*—have been thoroughly studied by Ranković, who comments on the samples—now accessible to anyone via MPCOL—in the following way: "… far from being a neutral means for obtaining information, the *Pričanja* are also sites of subdued—though at times also vehement—power struggles, clashes of interests, and differences of intention among the three people directly involved [i.e., Parry, Vujnović and Ugljanin]." Ranković 2012, 13)

I consider as a matter of high importance that Murko also made further trips to the Balkans at the beginning of the 1930s (1930, 1931, 1932; the previous

trips after the war took place in 1924 and 1927, more details in Doležán 2007), which means that he and Parry almost switched places on the spot! Both of them traveled across some of the same regions, and Salih Ugljanin belonged to the singers that both Murko and Milman Parry had contacted and recorded. Murko recorded his song "Dojčić kapetan iz Sinja oteo ljubu Mujovu" both in Serbian and Albanian and, due to his bilingualism, Salih became an object of his thorough attention (Murko 1951, 93f.). Thus, although Murko has been designated as Parry's "forerunner" (Garbrah 2000), we can see that, at least in some aspects, they were almost co-runners! Murko as well as Parry tried to get the best technical equipment possible; at first, he contacted the Vienna Archive, then the phonetic laboratory in Prague and in April 1930, he traveled to Germany to visit the *Phonogrammarchiv* in Berlin and the *Telefunkenstation* in Potsdam. In the end, he bought two old Edison phonographs that he considered to be the only portable ones. Having two phonographs at his disposal and his own sons Vladimir and Stanislav taking turns as assistants (he was seventy!), he could now obtain long songs which would have been impossible before. However, he still preferred (with some exceptions) recording only the beginnings of the songs (Murko 1931; 1951, 533ff.). It is worth noting that during the 1930 trip he was accompanied by Frank Wollman, who was working on his study on Njegoš's *deseterec* (Doležán 2007, 55). The technical problems of recording are commented also in Murko's opus magnum, *Cesty za srbsko-chorvátskou písní 1930–1932*, a book written during the Second World War when he had, "thanks" to the Nazis and their policy towards Czech scientific institutions, finally time enough to finish his work (he was almost eighty and had to dictate a majority of the text). The book, though written in Czech, never appeared in the original, perhaps because of the political situation after the Communist *coup d'état* of 1948 while its translation into Slovenian (made by Murko's daughter Jelka Arneri and Ljudevit Jonke) was not published in Zagreb until 1951 (Murko 1951). The second volume of the book lists all of the phonograms made by Murko and his sons in the 1930s (totaling 349; see Murko 1951, 540–555) accompanied by rich photographic documentation. Unfortunately, most of these phonograph records were either damaged or, during the war, brought to Berlin where they disappeared (50 pieces, see Wollner 2003). Still, according to Buturović, some of the records may be stored in the archive of the *Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti* in Zagreb (Buturović 1999, 69). Thus, the only records available at the moment are Murko's first samples made for the Austrian Academy of Sciences in the 1910s. Nonetheless, the Academy behaved respectfully towards the samples: it had galvanized some of them before the First World War, and they are still available in its catalogue, although in a limited number of twenty items.[6] What's more,

---

6 http://catalog.phonogrammarchiv.at/ui/miha/sessions.php?nurSuchformAktualisieren=&suchformAnker=&volltext_index=murko&sortieren=signatur&synonyme=J.

there are still Murko's notes and diaries from his research trips, which form a part of the estate (the most important part of the estate being the original of the book *Cesty za srbsko-chorvátskou písní 1930–1932* mentioned above). Of the highest importance are the words of "A. Lord"—as he is quoted in the text—mentioned by Murko's son Vladimír in his short sketch about his and his father's joint travels in search of the South-Slavic epic. According to Lord, Murko's diaries and especially his remarks—made, however, with the very special stenographic technique, the so-called Gabelsberger's system—ought to be published because they offer a first class evidence of the whole topic (Murko 1958, 465). Regarding the scope of his own data, Murko summarizes the number of singers under investigation as follows: "I, myself, got to know 403 singers in person and gathered information about 379 living and 25 deceased; thus, all together they totaled 803" (Murko: *Cesty* 79–80). As for Murko and Lord, they probably did not come into contact. In Murko's last opus, mentioned above, there is no mention of Parry's and Lord's activities, instead of this we read that "it is a pity that no one has collected folk song in the Novi Pazar region, especially those of the Moslims. … Thus, there remains much worthy work for the local intelligentsia who could, in the easiest manner, become acquainted with the singers and their songs and who could be capable of contacting the singers at times when they are not busy" (Murko 1951, 282). I discovered a typed transcription, in Murko's estate, of a newspaper article from *Borba* 23. II. 1951 entitled "Američki učenjak o jugoslavenskim narodnim pjesmama", informing of Lord's lecture in the *Institut za lijepu umjetnost*. The article mentions Lord's fifteen years of research as well as the fact that the collection of about 15,500 "raznich napjeva" of Yugoslavian folk songs is housed at Harvard; Parry is also mentioned in the article. On the reverse side of the paper, one finds the beginning of a letter from 5. V. 1951, Zagreb, written most probably—on a typewriter—by Murko himself. The paper was placed on the top of the manuscript (Murko: estate). A year later, Murko passed away, so it is fair to say that Murko and Lord probably had not come into direct contact.

Among other singers who were thoroughly interviewed and recorded by Parry and Lord—Sulejman Fortić, Sulejman Makić, Demail Zogić, Alija Fjuljanin, etc.—the American scholars also found their best singer: the "singer of tales." He was Avdo Međedović, a peasant farmer of about sixty living in Bijelo Polje. Murko, by the way, had visited Bijelo Polje during his trip in 1924, but evidently, they did not meet. What would have happen if they had remains within the realm of pure speculation (Murko: *Cesty* 40–43). This is how Lord describes their first meeting with Avdo: "We listened with increasing interest to this short homely farmer, whose throat was disfigured by a large goiter. He sat cross-legged on the bench, sawing the gusle, swaying in rhythm with the music. He sang very fast, sometimes deserting the melody. … The next few days were a revelation. Avdo's songs were longer and finer than any we had heard before. He could prolong

one for days, and some of them reached fifteen or sixteen thousand lines. Other singers came, but none would equal Avdo, our Yugoslav Homer" (Mitchell and Nagy, XII).

One of the longest songs was "The Wedding of Smailagić Meho" (Ženidba Smailagić Mehe) whose dictated version runs over 12,000 lines and was published in 1974 in the Serbocroatian songs series (Parry 1974). This song has a history, which is extremely instructive when considering the multiple ties between oral and literal tradition—and, according to Murko's observations, such a history was almost an obvious one. Avdo had learned the song several years earlier from an inexpensive little song book which the butcher, who kept shop next to his, had purchased in Sarajevo. Avdo was illiterate but the butcher, Hivzo, was a self-taught reader. Hivzo had gradually and very slowly read the text of the songbook to Avdo: it was a version of less than 2,200 lines. Later Avdo elaborated on this song resulting in the long Ženidba, containing over 12,000 lines. Another very long song sung by Avdo, "Osmanbeg Delibegović and Pavićević Luka", contained 13,331 lines (Parry 1980).

And yet, even researchers themselves had to admit that the method of collecting songs as described above had its difficulties: "It is necessary to keep them in spirits with wine, rakija, turkish coffee, and cigarettes," wrote Parry in his project. "The material for the entertainment is itself not costly, coffee, wine, or rakija costing only a few cents a glass; but it must be given to many in large quantities" (Mitchell and Nagy 2000, XXII).

The material, collected on the spot, could have thus been influenced by these special circumstances as well as by the preferences of the scientists who preferred the longer songs to the shorter ones, the first object of their interest being the long Homeric poems. Their sources, who were paid as well, naturally respected what was required of them and cooperated in a very helpful manner. This fact is of extreme importance especially in the case of the above-mentioned long poems. Lord describes the circumstances of the recording of the latter one in an explicit and for the researchers themselves surely not complimentary way:

He [scil. Avdo] was encouraged to take all the time which he wished, to rest whenever necessary, and to sing as long a song as he could. He sang for a week and our turntables rolled for about two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, with short breaks every twenty minutes of half hour for a cup of Turkish coffee or some stronger refreshment. At the end of a week the song was still unfinished, but the singer's voice had gone, so medication was ordered and after a week's rest Avdo continued. Another week sufficed to complete the song. (Lord 1971, 476)

As Kirk rightly pointed out, such long songs were very much *tours de force*, being "elicited by Parry's *specific and well-paid request* for the longest possible song [Kirk's italics]" (Kirk 1962, 274); Ranković speaks even of an "experimental"

conduct from the side of the researchers towards the objects of their study (Ranković 2012, 36). As for the extent of innovation and originality, Kirk gives his guarded applause to the best Parry and Lord guslar: "One can see a limited degree of novelty even in the expansions of Avdo Međedović, although the chief basis of these is the extreme and in my view often tiresome elaboration of detail" (ibid., 329). As Lord adds, another mechanism for augmenting the scope of a poem—besides generating an almost infinite chain of episodes—is the repetition of incident and lengthy catalogues (Lord 1971, 476).

It was during Parry's second sojourn in Yugoslavia (together with A. B. Lord between June of 1934 until September of 1935) that they were able to assemble a considerable number of more than 12,500 individual texts, mostly in written form, but also a great number through sound recordings on more than 3,500 aluminum discs. The region was not limited to Bosnia, but also included Hercegovina, Montenegro, and South Serbia. Concerning genre, they were not only heroic songs (the number of which was about 350 poems collected from ninety different singers in twenty-three villages). Parry also recorded approximately 205 Serbo-Croatian so-called "women's songs" on about 210 double-faced discs, about fourteen in a Macedonian-Bulgarian dialect on nine double-faced discs, about thirty Turkish and eleven Albanian songs on about forty double-faced discs, and sixteen instrumental pieces on eight double-faced discs (Bartók 1951, XV). In view of the fact that this was a Muslim community, this process was not, especially in the case of the women's songs, straightforward at all and needed the help of the local people, notably the respected Muslims Ibrahim Hristanović and Hamdija Šaković from the village of Gacko. Without them and their authority only texts written down by the young and children would have become part of the collection. In the house of Salih Zvizdić, muezzin of the local mosque and a stanch Muslim whose faith nobody could question, the recordings took place in two rooms on the second floor (which means in similar conditions as in the hotels, see above). "The smaller of the two was the 'studio'. Rugs were hung on the walls to reduce echo. Squatting Turkish fashion on the floor, the women, unveiled and completely at their ease, gathered around Mr. Parry and Nikola Vujnović … [who], prompted by Mr. Parry, managed the whole proceedings. In the other room, seated cross-legged on the floor, I presided over the recording apparatus. In this room was also the stove on which coffee, strong, black Turkish coffee was constantly being brewed. These were by far the most comfortable surroundings in which we worked during our entire stay in Jugoslavija," writes Lord at length (Bartók and Lord 1951, 250).

These folk songs were published as the first volume of the series in a 1951 collection published by Columbia University Press, along with musical notations and a long and erudite study of the morphology of Serbo-Croatian folk melodies, written by the late Béla Bartók, who worked on the collection under the auspices of

Columbia University between 1941 and 1943. As pointed out by Herzog (Herzog 1951, X), his engagement would not have been feasible without his detailed knowledge of Eastern European folk music—especially of Hungarian, Slovak, and Rumanian tunes—which facilitated his work (ibid.). It is important to note that he also collaborated with another Czech folklorist, Ludvík Kuba. Kuba was a man of many talents—a painter and a well-trained musician—who did his research-work on the Serbo-Croatian territory at the turn of the century. His work, in Bartók's own words, "towers high above that of Kuhać [his predecessor], and his contribution of approx. 1,400 melodies to the stock … is indeed invaluable, in spite of some idiosyncrasies in his notation. He has a keen sense of observation for certain very characteristic phenomena which almost entirely escaped the attention of Kuhać (line or syllable interruption, 'swallowing' the last syllable of a line)" (Bartók and Lord 1951, 26). They had already become acquainted in the 1930s: in the summer of 1938 Kuba kindly placed at Bartók's disposal about 160 melodies still in manuscript; a facsimile of Bartók's request can be found printed in Stanislav (1963, 192–193). Kuba—not surprisingly and in line with this intricate story—was a good friend of Murko. They met in Vienna in 1892 and remained friends for years (Kuba 1955, 231); Murko called him "the best expert on the Slavic folk song" (Murko, *Cesty*: 11–12). Their mutual correspondence is archived by the *Památník národního písemnictví* in Prague. Similarly to Jakobson, Bartók held high regards for the fact that every song in the collection had been recorded in full—a procedure that was not very often used in the recordings of Eastern European folk music. Other collections did not usually contain more than the first three or four stanzas when it came to the longer folk poems (Bartók and Lord1951, XV; for Kuba's collection see Kuba 1953).

As some commentators note, the comparative methods used by Parry and Lord in collecting and analyzing the songs are closely connected to the *méthode comparative* of historical linguistics, as exemplified especially by Antoine Meillet (Mitchell and Nagy 2000, XVII). Nevertheless, this thesis is undermined by Parry's son Adam in his long preface to *The Making of Homeric Verse*—Adam Parry discounts the influence of Meillet, speaking about his father as more of a "positivist" (Parry, A. 1971, XXIII). In fact, Adam Parry's attitude towards his father's work was quite specific: it looks as if he were constantly accusing Lord's engagement of shifting the research in a different way than Milman Parry himself would have intended. Others have also noticed strong structuralist features in Parry's and Lord's work (e.g., Dundes 1988, X; de Vet 2005). As for de Vet's analysis, I think she overemphasizes the influence of M. Jousse on Parry's work.

Naturally, much of the criticism of both scholars and their methods appeared afterwards. First of all, the difference in character between the Greek and Yugoslavian traditions was rightly stressed as well as between the works under scrutiny: the artistic qualities of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* highly exceed that of

the songs of the Yugoslavian singers, and this is simply not a matter of chance but instead must be taken into (scientific) account. What's more, the so-called *deseterac* (or: *deseterec*), the epic verse in which most of the Yugoslavian epic songs are written, has a different character than Greek hexameter: having a stable number of syllables, i.e., ten, and an obligatory caesura after the fourth foot, *deseterac* simply behaves in a different way than hexameter whose number of syllables runs from twelve to seventeen and whose caesurae form a rich and diverse metrical tool. This very specific structure has immediate consequences for an oral singer who has to compose, or, more precisely, pile up lines specifically from the formulae fitting these verse junctures. The "epistemic violence" and the "*tour de force*" treatment from the side of the researchers have already been mentioned (for more criticism see Kirk 1962, 83ff.; the critical reflection of the oral-formulaic theory in general is briefly referred to in the end of the study).

Let me end this sketch of the first stage of the oral-formulaic theory with two characterizations of Milman Parry, the first being written by Harry Levin:

No one who knew Parry is likely to forget his incisive powers of formulation or to underrate the range and depth of his cosmopolitan mind. He has been appropriately hailed, by an eminent archeologist, as the Darwin of oral literature; for if the évolution des genres has been scientifically corroborated, it is largely owing to his discovery. Yet, as he himself would have been the first to admit, it was only a beginning; and he generously acknowledged the prescient counsel of his own teacher, Antoine Meillet. Albert Lord, in his turn, has become much more than the ablest of Parry's disciples. It should be recognized, in spite of his devoted modesty, that he too has pioneered; he has contributed many ideas and important modifications. (Levin 2000, XXXIII)

The second characteristics was devoted to Milman Parry by Milovan Vojićić, a guslar, in his song sung in the village of Nevesinje on September 20th, 1933. It is about Parry's journey to Yugoslavia and back (on a ship called the *Saturnia*) and about his investigation: "To je čovjek dobrih osobina,/ A kiti ga mudrost i vrlina,/ Dobra srca a pogleda blaga./ A naša mu istorija draga" (He is a man of good qualities,/ Wisdom and uprightness adorn him,/ Of good heart and mild glance./ And our history is dear to him" (Lord 2000, 272). Symptomatically, something similar was experienced by professor Murko a year earlier in Montenegro where the singer Marko Kilibardo began to sing in beautiful decasyllables and "à la façon des chants héroïques monténégriens, me rapellant comment nous nous étions déja rencontrés, le 2 août 1932, chez notre hôte, et se répandant en compliments adressés tant aux pays de Masaryk et à moi même qui venais de Tchécoslovaquie et avais reçu à Belgrade des 'directions' pour étudier les chansons populaires" (Murko 1933, 43).[7]

---

[7] In the manner of the heroic Montenegrin songs, he reminded me of how we had already met, the 2nd August 1932, at our hosts, and he lavished compliments addressed as much to the land

2. The reshaping of the theory by A. B. Lord: The second stage of the theory

After Parry's sudden and untimely death in December of 1935, shortly after his return from Yugoslavia (he shot himself from his own gun, by accident, in a hotel room in Los Angeles), A. B. Lord was able to continue in their work. He made several additional trips to Yugoslavia. The first one was in the summer and fall of 1937, when he made a collection of over a hundred dictated texts from northern Albania (which later became a part of the Houghton Library at Harvard University). The second and third one were after the war, in May and June of 1950 and in August 1951, when he revisited most of the districts, in which Parry had collected and tried to find singers with whom Parry had worked years before, in some cases being successful (including Avdo). The last series of research journeys to the region took place in the 1960's together with David A. Byman (the engagement of Zlatan Čolaković in the process of publishing these texts is a well-known affair); thus, he could augment the existing material in a considerable way.

As for his academic career, in 1949 Lord defended his dissertation entitled "The singer of tales" before the Department of Comparative Literature at Harvard University. The title of his thesis came from the few surviving pages of a study that Milman Parry was planning before his death but its result was a significant extension of that blueprint. It took several more years before the thesis would see print in 1960. His thesis defense, according to those who were present, "was a defense in the real sense of a new and controversial thesis, which called on all of Lord's expertise and powers of persuasion, and many of the committee members—Maurice Bowra, John Finley, Roman Jakobson, Harry Levin, Francis Magoun, and Renato Poggioli—left the room with their points of view changed" (Mitchell and Nagy 2000, XX).

Jakobson's presence on the committee was neither a matter of chance nor of rounding out the number of committee members, but rather of an extreme importance motivated by his studies on Slavic verse, poetry and folklore, which he had worked on since the 1920s, as mentioned above. A few years later, he devoted a synthetic work *Studies in comparative Slavic metrics* to these problems (published in Oxford in 1952; for more details see below). All his works on this topic are now available in his *Selected writings IV. Slavic epic studies*.

What then followed was the publication of the *Serbo-Croatian folk songs* in 1951, mentioned above, and especially of *Serbocroatian heroic songs* (Srpsko-hrvatske

---

of Masaryk as to myself, who had arrived from Czechoslovakia and had received in Belgrade the „directions" on how to study popular songs.

junačke pjesme) in 1954. In the editor's—which means in A. B. Lord's—preface, we read the following words addressed to Roman Jakobson:

In 1948 the Parry Collection acquired a new friend and tireless champion in Roman Jakobson, Samuel Hazzard Cross Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Harvard. His leadership in all branches of Slavic studies is everywhere acknowledged and not the least in the field of Slavic Epic Poetry. For his valued advice and suggestions I am deeply grateful as well as for his kindness in writing a preface to the collection from the point of view of the Slavist. (Lord 1954b, XV)

Jakobson's preface to the book begins with an almost classical and truly Jakobsonian thesis: The modern science of language has come to realize that the most efficient way to obtain a thorough understanding of the linguistic events of the past is to study closely the linguistic processes which we ourselves witness (Jakobson 1954, XI). Then, he continues:

It became clear to Milman Parry that the *Iliad*, or any epic tradition of the past, in order to be grasped fully, demands a preliminary study of a living epic tradition. With realism and with a rare capacity for overcoming obstacles Parry approached one of the most vital of extant epic and oral traditions, that of the Balkan Slavs. He mastered Serbo-Croatian and undertook an expedition to collect and study the Serbian epic. His enterprising spirit was admirable, his recording equipment excellent. The harvest from this fieldwork is unique, not only in the history of Serbo-Croatian and of other Slavic epic studies, but also, without overstatement, in the whole world history of inquiry into the epic heritage. (Jakobson 1954, XI)

Jakobson also appraised Parry's collecting methods from a technical point of view (quoted above at length) and emphasized his strategy of obtaining as many versions of a poem as possible. Parry's attitude was unique not only concerning the number of verses and of songs collected, but also "in the diversity of the investigation and in the accuracy and refinement of the methods used" (ibid., XI–XII).

However, this was not the end of the Lord/Jakobson cooperation. In the foreword to *The Singer of tales* edition from 1960, Lord gives thanks to Jakobson who "has always given unstintingly of his breadth of learning, particularly in the field of folklore and epic poetry. He also read the manuscript and suggested a number of criticisms. I was not able in every case to follow his suggestions, but I have noted them where I could" (Lord 2000, XXXVI).

In this book, Lord repeatedly quotes the aforementioned work of Jakobson on Slavic metrics—*Studies in comparative Slavic metrics* (Jakobson 1952) where an important number of the Serbocroatian heroic songs are also analyzed, especially from the point of view of their meter and its character. However, quite aside from Lord's interest, Jakobson's main thesis remains: he followed Meillet's argument made in his *Les origines indo-européennes des mètres grecques*.

Jakobson appraised Meillet for the first systematic application of the technical devices of comparative philology to metrics and was himself able to find striking similarities between Greek *paroemiacus* and Slavic *deseterec* (which was also used in proverbs, similarly to *paroemiacus*). This led Jakobson to the conclusion that "this combination of formal and functional relation between the two metres is hardly explicable except in terms of the common Indo-European prototype," which he called *agnomic epic-decasyllable*. Thus, Meillet's theory of the common Indo-European origin of this type of meter had been proven right. Jakobson also mentioned Meillet's response, after reading the first draft of his study: "Je suis bien heureux de voir que vous apercevez le moyen de relier le mètre de la chanson baltique et slave aux mètres indo-européens. J'avais bien l'instinct que la question se pose. Mais, faute de travaux préparatoires, je n'ai pu y toucher"[8] (Jakobson 1966, 463; Meillet himself had compiled a dictionary of Serbo-Croatian and for several years directed the *Revue des études slaves*, see de Vet 2005, 268). The validity of Jakobson's conclusions has recently been confirmed (Franklin 2004).

Of great importance is also Lord's polemic with Jakobson's thesis, introduced in his and Bogatyrev's influential article, published in 1929, "Die Folklore als eine besondere Form des Schaffens." Both authors apply, on a theoretical level, the Saussurean distinction between *langue* and *parole* to folklore. The oral performances, deeply rooted in an inherited tradition, they understand as a *langue*, whereas a poet, living in the literary mode of existence, produces individually distinct uses of *parole*. Lord, however, rejected this distinction and argued that in the case of oral epic performance "we have something that is neither *langue* nor *parole*, but some third form"—or, as he proposes, inspired by Lévi-Strauss, that it is both *langue* and *parole* at the same time (Lord 2000, 279, no. 7f.). Nevertheless, all the authors agree that the character of oral literature is entirely different from that of written one and that our attitudes towards an oral literature should be completely rethought and changed ("so werden die gewohnten Vorstellungen egozentrisch auch ins Gebiet der Folklore projiziert," assert Bogatyrev and Jakobson; see Jakobson 1966, 5). How groundbreaking those thoughts were in the moment of their appearance is best attested by the review of the study written in 1929 by Jiří Polívka, an emminent slavist. At the end of his short critical survey, he still insists on the "traditional" attitude towards the topics, namely that the main difference between the oral and written literature lies in the fact that in the case of the former we only do not know the name of the author who thus remains anonymous (Polívka 1929, 281). Another of Murko's studies, written after the journeys in the 1930s, is mentioned in Lord's book as well (Murko 1933), and Murko is pointed out by Lord as "a true pioneer" (Lord 2000, 280).

---

[8] I am very happy to see that you figured out the way to connect the metre of the Baltic and the Slavic songs to the Indo-European metres. I instinctively felt that this was a relevant question. But, for lack of preparatory work, I could not come around to it.

The date of appearance of *The singer of tales* (in 1960) coincided with the publication of another work which influenced folklore and literary studies in Western scholarship. In 1958, the English translation of Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the folktale* was released—a work presenting Russian structuralist and formalist approach to folklore material, notably to the fairytale and its structure. Since then folklore scholarship has been almost "revolutionized" and various new approaches, such as ethnopoetics and performance theory (which were anticipated in Parry's and Lord's works) have emerged (Mitchell and Nagy 2000, XXI).

The oral-formulaic theory (which, in the meanwhile, has been applied in various fields, e.g., in Medieval Studies on the analyses of *Béowulf*, *Cid*, *chansons de geste*, *Nibelungslied*, etc.) had to face some serious attacks, especially towards the end of the last century. Consequently, it underwent considerable development or even revision. It seems that, in particular, the multiple ties between literacy and orality in various societies represent a very complex phenomenon, one that needs to be studied more thoroughly. When taking into account evidence from certain Asian or African cultures, the gap, which Parry and Lord delimited between the "oral" and the "literal", is perhaps not as huge as it seemed to be decades ago (see e.g., de Vet 2005). Among the classicists, a whole spectrum of attitudes and a rich and diverse range of opinions between the "Oralists" and "Scripsists", as well as between the "Traditionalists" and the "Post-Traditionalists", have been established. All this would deserve a special study or, better still a monograph, for which there is not sufficient space in this paper. However, no one can deny that the oral-formulaic theory changed the shape of many various disciplines, including the classics, literary history, comparative studies, and folklore. It influenced anthropology, ethnology, musicology, linguistics, history, etc. Thus, the seminal character of the theory is incontestable. What can be said about the role of Czechoslovakian slavistics during the process of shaping the theory is that it undoubtedly represents an important, and until now in fact unnoticed, chapter in scientific thinking that Czech Slavists can be proud of—even though or indeed significantly due to the fact that its protagonists were neither Czech nor Slovak by birth. They came to Czechoslovakia—and mostly, though not exclusively, to Prague—which became for them an amicable milieu able to inspire, with its variety and basic tolerance, new ideas and approaches.

With the end of my paper I would like to introduce another tie or interconnection within this knotted and textured story, i.e., speak to Jakobson's activity in Czechoslovak slavistics—or, more broadly, culture—from a different and more personal point of view, one that is closely tied to the university where this conference is taking place. This tie is embodied by the persona of the first rector and postwar rebuilder of Palacký University and of my father, Josef Ludvík Fischer.

Fischer was a Czech philosopher and sociologist whose work belongs to the first structuralist and functionalist approaches within the realm of the social sciences. Fischer was Jakobson's colleague in Brno at Masaryk University in the 1930s. He devoted a very vivid and, might I add, sharp portrayal to Roman Jakobson in his memoirs, *Listy o druhých a o sobě*, from which I quote here at length:

Towards the end of July 1934, a contracted professorship at Masaryk University was appointed to Roman Jakobson whom professor Bohuslav Havránek had successfully habilitated a year before, despite the obstinate opposition met from professor Beer. I had already known Roman from Prague from when he was a member of the Soviet trade mission. And not even then was he any more attractive. Watching you, were his wandering, bulging eyes; and so you never quite knew what they were looking at, and below them, on quite an intense and slightly crooked nose, there sat, somewhat uselessly, a small wart. Also light hair, inadvertently spiky, and a body not exactly of great volume, but—it seemed to me—as if expanding towards you while you talked to him. If and when he spoke, you were irritated by his unusual Russian accent, pronouncing softly where it should not, and bearing down on you with a sort of insistency, as if conspiratorial. This has not exactly been an amiably depicted portrait, but all this was again by no means important about Roman. … Because Roman was a regular reservoir of stimuli and discoveries, and of information of the widest selection, an initiator and organizer and a diplomat in all things, even with those sometimes behind-the-scenes manners. The Prague Linguistic Circle was his creation, and, in fact, he was its soul, but he even managed to middleman other coups of Soviet science, for instance Shklovsky's formalism. He acted in an equally initiative manner when it came to collaborating with Slavists from the German University in Prague (and due to him I also came into contact with their board, the *Slavische Rundschau*, to whom I bestowed a series of profiles on Czech philosophers and with it some reports) … With Jakobson's arrival the relationships between professors at the faculty began to change, sometimes in a truly unbelievable manner. Roman had the ability to bring together, associate and even create new constellations. (Fischer 2005, 349–350, translated by Andrew J. Hauner)

The series of profiles (or, more precisely, obituaries) on Czech philosophers and scientists/slavists, published in the *Slavische Rundschau*, was discussed by another participant of the conference, professor Henryk Baran. This fact also illustrates something that all of us, as participants of the conference, could have been capable of experiencing: that Roman still has the ability to bring us together, associate, and—who knows?—maybe even create new constellations. However, I think that it is possible due to the fact that we are all a part of the same story; we belong to it. Generally, there are multitudes of stories in the world and in our lives; sometimes we perhaps feel as if we would prefer not to be a part of this or that one, even when we have to. Speaking for myself, this story is a good story—a good one to be part of.

Works Cited

Bartók, Béla. 1951. "Preface." In Parry, Milman: *Serbo-Croatian folk songs. Text and transcriptions of seventy-five folk songs from the Milman Parry collection and a Morphology of Serbo-Croatian folk melodies, with a foreword by George Herzog*, edited by Béla Bartók and Albert B. Lord, XV–XVI. New York: Columbia University Press.

Parry, Milman. 1951. *Serbo-Croatian folk songs. Text and transcriptions of seventy-five folk songs from the Milman Parry collection and a Morphology of Serbo-Croatian folk melodies, with a fore-word by George Herzog*, edited by Béla Bartók and Albert B. Lord. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bogatyrev, Petr and Roman Jakobson. 1929. "Die *Folklore* als eine besondere Form des Schaffens." In *Donum Natalicium Schrijnen. Verzameling van opstellen door oud-leerlingen en bevriende vakgenoten opgedragen aan Mgr. Prof. Dr. Jos. Schrijnen bij gelegenheit van zijn zestigsten ver-jaardag*, edited by St. W. J. Teeuwen, T. Baader, A. and Baumstark, 900–913. Nijmegen: Dekker and Van der Vegt. (Reprinted in: Jakobson Roman. 1966. *Selected writings. Slavic epic verse*, 1–15. The Hague—Paris: Mouton and Co.)

Buturović, Đenana. 1999. "Doprinos Matije Murka proučavanjima južnoslavenske epike." In *Traditiones-Inštitut za slovensko narodopisje, Ljubljana* 28: 69–80.

Doležán, Libor. 2007. *Matija Murko a jeho výzkumy lidových písní jižních Slovanů*. Brno: Masaryko-va univerzita. Diploma work online

Dundes, Alan. 1988. "Editor's foreword." In Foley, John M: *The theory of oral composition: history and methodology*, IX–XII. Bloomington—Indianopolis: Indiana University Press.

Fischer, Josef L. 2005. *Listy o druhých a o sobě*. Prague: Torst.

Foley, John M. 1988. *The theory of oral composition: history and methodology*. Bloomington—Indianopolis: Indiana University Press.

Franklin, John C. 2004. "Structural sympathies in ancient Greek and South-Slavic heroic song." In *Music archaeological sources: Artifacts, oral tradition, written evidence*, edited by E. Hickmann and R. Eichmann. Serie Studien zur Musikarchäologie, Orient-Archäologie (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Berlin, Orient-Abteilung), 241–251.

Garbrah, Kweku A. 2000. "The forerunners of Milman Parry: I. Matthias Murko on South-Slavic popular epic." In *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 27 (1): 274–306.

García, John F. 2001. "Milman Parry and A. L. Kroeber: Americanist Anthropology and the Oral Homer." In *Oral Tradition* 16 (1): 58–84.

Herzog, George. 1951. "Foreword." In Parry, Milman: *Serbo-Croatian folk songs. Text and transcrip-tions of seventy-five folk songs from the Milman Parry collection and a Morphology of Serbo-Croatian folk melodies, with a foreword by George Herzog*, edited by Béla Bartók and Albert B. Lord, IX–XIV. New York: Columbia University Press.

Horák, Jiří. 1916. "Prof. Dr. Matthias Murko: Bericht über eine Reise zum Studium der Volksepik in Bosnien und Herzegowina im J. 1913; Bericht über phonographische Aufnahmen epischer Volkslieder in Mittleren Bosnien und in der Herzegowina im Sommer 1913." In *Listy filologické* 43: 352–354.

Jakobson, Roman. 1954. "Preface." In *Serbocroatian heroic songs*, vol. 1, edited and translated by Albert Bates Lord, XI–XII. Cambridge, MA—Belgrade: Harvard University Press—Serbian Academy of Sciences.

Jakobson Roman. 1966. *Selected writings. Slavic epic verse*, 414–463. The Hague—Paris: Mouton and Co. (The first edition: Jakobson, Roman. 1952. "Studies in comparative Slavic metrics." *Oxford Slavonic Papers* 3: 21–66.)

Kirk, Geoffrey S. 1962. *The songs of Homer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kuba, Ludvík. 1953. *Cesty za slovanskou písní. 1885–1929. S hudebními příklady a vlastními kresbami.* Prague: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění.

Kuba, Ludvík. 1955. *Zaschlá paleta. Paměti*. Prague: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění.

Levin, Harry. 2000. "Preface." In Lord, Albert B.: *The singer of tales*, edited by Stephen Mitchell and Gregory Nagy, XXXI–XXXIV. Cambridge, MA—London: Harvard University Press.

Lord, Albert B. 1954a. "Editor's preface." In Parry, Milman: *Serbocroatian heroic songs*, vol. 1, edited and translated by Albert Bates Lord, XIII–XVI. Cambridge, MA—Belgrade: Harvard University Press—Serbian Academy of Sciences.

Lord, Albert B. 1954b. "General introduction." In Parry, Milman: *Serbocroatian heroic songs*, vol. 1, edited and translated by Albert Bates Lord, 3–20. Cambridge, MA—Belgrade: Harvard University Press—Serbian Academy of Sciences.

Lord, Albert B. 1971. "Homer, Parry, and Huso." In Parry, Milman: *The making of Homeric verse: The collected papers of Milman Parry*, editedy by A. Parry, 465–478. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lord, Albert B. 2000. *The singer of tales*, edited by Stephen Mitchell and Gregory Nagy. Cambridge, MA—London: Harvard University Press.

Meillet, Antoine. 1923. *Les origines indo-européennes des mètres grecques.* Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France.

Mikulová, Helena. 2005. "Matija Murko a sbírky Památníku národního písemnictví." In *Matija Murko v myšlenkovém kontextu evropské slavistiky*, edited by Ivo Pospíšil and Miloš Zelenka, 188–197. Brno: Masarykova univerzita v Brně.

Mitchell, Stephen and Gregory Nagy. 2000. "Introduction to the second edition." In A. B. Lord: *The singer of tales*, edited by S. Mitchell and G. Nagy, VII–XXX. Cambridge, MA—London: Harvard University Press.

Murko, Matija. 1913a. "Bericht über eine Bereisung von Nordwestbosnien und der angrenzenden Gebiete von Kroatien und Dalmatien behufs Erforschung der Volksepik der bosnischen Mohammedaner." In *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiser. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien. Philos.-histor. Klasse* 173. Band 3. Abhandlung, 1–52.

Murko, Matija. 1913b. "Bericht über phonographische Aufnahmen epischer, meist mohamedanischer Volkslieder in nordwestlichen Bosnien im Sommer 1912." In *Mitteilungen der Phonogrammarchivs-Kommission der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften* VIII, 58–75.

Murko, Matija. 1915a. "Bericht über eine Reise zum Studium der Volksepik in Bosnien und Herzegowina im J. 1913." In *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiser. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien. Philos.-hist. Klasse* 176. Band 2. Abhandlung, 1–50.

Murko, Matija. 1915b. "Bericht über phonographische Aufnahmen epischer Volkslieder in Mittleren Bosnien und in der Herzegowina im Sommer 1913." In *Mitteilungen der Phonogramm-Archivs-Kommission. Sitzungsberichte der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien,Philos.-hist. Klasse* 179. Band 1. Abhandlung, 1–23.

Murko, Matija. 1928. "L'état actuel de la poésie populaire épique yougoslave." In *Le Monde Slave. NST II*: 321–51.

Murko, Matija. 1929. *La poésie populaire épique en Yougoslavie au début du XXe sicle*. Paris: Librairie ancien Honoré Champion.

Murko, Matija. 1931. "Zpráva prof. M. Murka o vědecké cestě po Jugoslavii r. 1930." In *Ročenka Slovanského ústavu 1930* III: 103–104.

Murko, Matija. 1933. "Nouvelles observations sur ľétat actuel de la poésie populaire épique en Yougoslavie." In *Revue des études slaves* 13: 15–60.

Murko, Matija. 1947. *Rozpravy z oboru slovanského národopisu*. Prague: nákladem Slovanského ústavu.

Murko, Matija. 1949. *Paměti*. Prague: Fr. Borový.

Murko, Matija. 1951. *Tragom srpsko-hrvatske narodne epike. Putovanja u godinama 1930–1932*. I–II. Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti.

Murko, Matija. *Cesty za srbsko-chorvátskou písní 1930–1932*. A manuscript, with a partial pagination. In Památník národního písemnictví v Praze. (In the text I quote as Murko, *Cesty*.)

Murko, Matija. 1990. "The Singers and Their Epic Songs." In *Oral Tradition* 5.1: 107–30.

Murko, Matija. Estate. In Památník národního písemnictví v Praze.

Murko, Vladimír. 1958. "Vzpomínky na cesty Matyáše Murka za jihoslovanskou epikou." In *Franku Wollmanovi k sedmdesátinám*, edited by A. Závodský, 464–473. Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.

Parry, Adam. 1971. "Introduction." In *The making of Homeric verse: The collected papers of Milman Parry*, edited by A Parry. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Parry, Milman. 1928. *Ľépithète traditionel dans Homère. Essai sur un problème de style homérique*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Parry, Milman. 1930. "Studies in the epic technique of oral verse-making I. Homer and Homeric style". In *Harvard studies in classical philology* 41: 73–147.

Parry, Milman. 1932. "Studies in the epic technique of oral verse-making II. The Homeric language as the language of an oral poetry." In *Harvard studies in classical philology* 43: 1–50.

Parry, Milman. 1954. *Serbocroatian heroic songs*, vol. 1, edited and translated by Albert Bates Lord. Cambridge—Belgrade: Harvard University Press—Serbian Academy of Sciences.

Parry, Milman. 1971. *The making of Homeric verse: The collected papers of Milman Parry*, edited by A. Parry. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Parry, Milman. 1974. *Serbocroatian heroic songs*, ed. and trans. by Albert B. Lord and David E. Bynum. Vol. III: *Weddings of Smailagi Meho*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Parry, Milman. 1980. *Serbocroatian heroic songs*, vol. VI: Ženidba Vlahinjić Alije, Osmanbeg Delibegović i Pavičević Luka. *Kazivao i pjevao Avdo Međedović*, edited by David E. Bynum. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Polívka, Jiří. 1929. "Die *Folklore* als eine besondere Form des Schaffens." In *Národopisný věstník českoslovanský* XXII: 279–281.

Pospíšil, Ivo. 2005. "Matija Murko a vybrané problémy literární vědy." In *Matija Murko v myšlenkovém kontextu evropské slavistiky*, edited by Ivo Pospíšil and Miloš Zelenka, 46–53. Brno: Masarykova univerzita v Brně.

Ranković, Slavica. 2012. "Managing the 'Boss': Epistemic Violence, Resistance, and Negotiations in Milman Parry's and Nikola Vujnović's Pričanja with Salih Ugljanin." In *Oral Tradition* 27 (1): 5–66.

Stanislav, Josef. 1963. *Ludvík Kuba—zakladatel slovanské hudební folkloristiky*. Prague: nakladatelství SČS Panton.

de Vet, Thérèse. 2005. "Parry in Paris: Structuralism, Historical Linguistics, and the Oral Theory." In *Classical Antiquity* 24 (2): 257–284.

Wollman, Slavomír. 2003. "Osobní vzpomínky na Matyáše Murka." In *Slavia. Murkova epocha slovanské filologie* 72 (1): 5–12.

Zelenka, Miloš. 2003. "Matija Murko a česká literární komparatistika." In *Slavia. Murkova epocha slovanské filologie* 72 (1): 27–40.

Zelenková, Anna and Miloš Zelenka. 2005. "Matija Murko v dokumentoch (príspevok k dejinám európskej slavistiky)." In *Matija Murko v myšlenkovém kontextu evropské slavistiky*, edited by Ivo Pospíšil and Miloš Zelenka, 148–187. Brno: Masarykova univerzita v Brně.

Murko's phonograms in the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv: http://catalog.phonogrammarchiv.at/ui/miha/sessions.php?nurSuchformAktualisieren=&suchformAnker=&volltext_index=murko&sortieren=signatur&synonyme=J.

Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature at Harvard: http://chs119.chs.harvard.edu/mpc/about/intro.html.

Words that refer to their utterance: Jakobson and Benveniste on shifters

Eva Krásová

Charles University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Czech and Comparative Literature
nám. J. Palacha 2, 116 38 Prague 1, Czech Republic.
Email: eva.sta@seznam.cz

Abstract: the paper maps the relationship between Roman Jakobson and the French linguist Émile Benveniste concerning the question of "shifters," or deictic expressions, a topic on which both authors published important studies in the years 1956 and 1957. Based on manuscript sources and other documents, I indicate two possible points of inspiring meetings, in 1957, in Prague and, in 1950, in Paris. Rather than finding a one-sided inspiration, it is clear from the content analysis of the work of both linguists during this period that we are looking at a productive exchange of opinions that was mutual. Benveniste's project of a new linguistics of *parole* operates with the conception of two independent regions of language. In contrast, Jakobson's approach remains closer to the idea of a code and its realization, which, in turn, does not force him to make such radical claims and allows him to better observe the nature of shifters as signs that consist of a symbolic and indexical component.

Keywords: personal pronouns; shifters; Benveniste; Husserl; Bühler; Hjelmslev; Jespersen; Linguistic Society of Paris

The problem of 'shifters' or 'deictic word' expressions like "I", "here", and "now", which are defined by their relation to the utterance in which they occur, is one of the typical questions of 20th century linguistics. Roman Jakobson took part in the debate on their nature by his 1956 study *Shifters, verbal categories, and the Russian verb* (Jakobson 1957). Émile Benveniste, a French linguist known among other things for his analysis of the deictic function of personal pronouns, published his study "La nature des pronoms" one year earlier in a *Festschrift* to Roman Jakobson's 60th birthday (Benveniste 1956). My article aims to track the contact between the two great linguistic personalities before the debate and examine the anatomy of its genesis. While posing the problem of the 'shifter', I will first summarize the two seminal articles and then go back to the past to discover the possible originator of the whole problem.

In his study *Shifters, verbal categories and the Russian verb*, Roman Jakobson introduces the problem by pointing out the double nature of a sign: apart from its nature of being a sign, which we can call transparence, it always keeps its materiality, which enables it to stand as an object referred to. For Jakobson, not only the message, but also the code work that way: "Both the message (M) and the underlying code (C) are vehicles of linguistic communication, but both of them function in a duplex manner; they may at once be utilized and referred to (= pointed at)" (Jakobson 1981, 131). The two modes of functioning applied to both modes of existence create four special sorts of signs: M/M (message referring to message), with reported speech as a typical example, C/C (code referring to the code), instantiated by proper names, i. e., expressions that cannot be understood without a reference to themselves as pieces of code, as in the phrase "Jerry means a person named Jerry"; M/C (message referring to code), or metalinguistic use of speech, and finally, C/M (code referring to message), or a shifter, as Jakobson defines it with Jespersen: "…the general meaning of a shifter cannot be defined without a reference to the message" (Jakobson 1981, 131).

As Jakobson reminds us, Husserl and Bühler articulated an earlier iteration of the problem. Designating a different thing each time, some deictic expressions seem not to have a general meaning: people designated by the expression "I" do not share any common property and therefore "I" does not correspond to any sort of logical concept. Jakobson grounds his answers to this problem on Peirce's theory as it was reported by Arthur W. Burks in his article "Icon, Index, and Symbol" (1949): Shifter is an 'indexical symbol'. That means that its function is divisible into two elements: first, it has a symbolic part, established conventionally, which can pass the translation test, and can be described by a definition (for example, 'I' means the person pronouncing "I"). The second, indexical part is the fact that "the word 'I' designating the utterer is existentially related to his utterance" (Jakobson 1981: 132, referring to Benveniste). Burks' former analysis used terms

'type – token' to show that only the indexical part (the 'token') of the complete meaning distinguishes a shifter from a non-shifter, while on the level of symbolic meaning (or 'type'), words like "now" and "red" are the same (Burks 1949: 681–2). I would like to enhance this analysis by means of Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni's formulation. She accomplishes the same analysis by using the terms 'meaning' (*sens*) and 'reference' (*référence*): Regardless of the fact that the reference of a shifter is given by the situation of utterance, it carries a meaning, which can be translated to different languages and therefore is general (Orecchioni 2006, 42).

Jakobson's analysis has as its (at times explicit) target Benveniste's characterization of the nature of deictics in the latter's "La nature des pronoms". Benveniste's article has become well known for its pregnant formulation of the unique nature of pronouns and for pointing out that their meaning cannot be defined without the reference to the speech event.

Each instance of use of a noun is referred to a fixed and 'objective' notion, capable of remaining potential or of being actualized in a particular object and always identical with the mental image it awakens. But the instances of the use of "I" do not constitute a class of reference since there is no 'object' definable as "I" to which these instances can refer in identical fashion. Each "I" has its own reference and corresponds each time to a unique being who is set up such.

What then is the reality to which "I" or "you" refer? It is solely a 'reality of discourse,' and this is a very strange thing. "I" cannot be defined except in terms of 'locution' rather than in terms of objects as a nominal sign is. "I" signifies "the person who is uttering the present instance of the discourse containing I. (Benveniste 1996, 286)

From the perspective of Jakobson's analysis, Benveniste lingers on the earlier positions, conceiving of deictics as "empty signs" which are deprived of a "class of reference", or, shall we say, a "general meaning". What is new and interesting is the impact given to the role of the speech act: because the reference of a deictic expression has been defined just and only in the unique situation of a speech act, this reference is also unique. It cannot be understood in terms of language as a system, because it is a typical property of *parole* (or *discourse*, in Benveniste's terms).

Acknowledging the general course of Benveniste's thought will help appreciate this statement. From the beginning of the fifties he started to publish articles dealing with problems we would today classify as part of pragmatic linguistics. He was interested in expressions whose meaning was in some way related to the reality of speech. Apart from the problem of deictics, he dealt with the system of the verbal person, ways of expressing temporality, the problem of interrogative clauses or with delocutive verbs and illocution in general (for more, see Aya Ono 2007, 141–143). In the early sixties this interest resulted in a more complex theory of two aspects of linguistics or of two sciences within linguistics: one was to be

called "semiotics" (*sémiotique*)—the study of language as a system ("Saussurean" or "structuralist" linguistics), the other was to be called "semantics" (*sémantique*) and must deal with language as used, the "language in exercise and in action" ("*langue en exercice et en action*", Benveniste 2000). The problem of personal pronouns (or shifters) is a typical example of a linguistic problem that cannot be solved within the realm of structural linguistics. Since shifters have no meaning in general, they only acquire their meaning when they become part of "language in action" and so—Benveniste says—only semantics, the science about speech as it is used, can define them. It is understandable that these ideas were inspiring for so-called post-structuralism and deconstruction. We should name Paul Ricoeur, among others, who uses Benveniste's distinction between semiotics and semantics in his explicit criticism of Jakobson's poetic function and of his theory of metaphor in *The Rule of Metaphor* (*La Métaphore vive* 1975).

The distinction between the two sciences is *in nuce* already present in "La nature de pronoms", only the two attitudes are not called semiotics and semantics, but "syntax" and "instance de discours":

… pronouns do not constitute a unitary class but are of different types depending on the mode of language of which they are signs. Some belong to the syntax of a language; others are characteristics of what we shall call instances of discourse, that is, the discrete and always unique acts by which the language is actualized in speech by a speaker. (Benveniste 1996, 285)

Benveniste follows the same scenario everywhere in his work (see especially "Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe" 1946, "Les relations de temps dans le verbe français" 1959). He takes an established linguistic category (such as 'pronouns') and shows that it is in fact divided into two different categories based on the distinction between language as a system and language in use. The conclusion of the study consists in an appeal to distinguish two different 'languages':

Even a brief analysis of the forms that are imprecisely classed as pronominal leads thus to the recognition among them of classes of entirely different natures and, consequently, to the distinction between, on the one hand, language as a repertory of signs and the system combining them and, on the other, language as an activity manifested in instances of discourse which are characterized as such by particular signs. (Benveniste 1996, 290)

The force of Benveniste's article is in a decomposition of the category of pronouns: a deep reflection on their situation-bounded nature shows that "I" and "you" does not belong to the same class as "he"/ "she"/ "it", the former being necessarily defined by their relation to the speech event, the latter not. Pronouns like "I" and "you" or "tomorrow", in contrast to "he", or "the next day", are designed to express subjectivity. They are instruments through which we conceive ourselves, through

which the subject articulates himself. Their 'emptiness' is here to be fulfilled with the unique experience of here and now (and me). Benveniste admits that they are in some way general, but their function is entirely different: while ordinary words refer to general concepts, these special kinds of words refer to the situation itself, to the present, to place in the Heideggerian sense.

A few remarks should be added concerning this account. In her very complex treatment of the notion of *énonciation* (act of speech) C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni remarks that regardless of the extreme utility of Benveniste's category of the deictic, she cannot see the difference between "I" and "he". Distinguishing precisely between meaning and reference, she shows that a shifter has a meaning the same as other words. What cannot be distinguished without the help of the situation is the *reference* of a shifter. Thus, "I" means "the person who is speaking" in every situation, but to see who is actually referred to as the referent of "I" the circumstances of the actual speech act must be taken into account (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2012, 42).

It can be objected that not only the reference, but also the meaning of a shifter is defined with regard to a speech act ("I" means "person uttering I") and that this is what both Jakobson and Benveniste have in mind. That objection can be met by pointing out that in this sense, not only deictics, but the meanings of all words are defined with regard to the situation: the meaning of the word "chair" (described for example as: "A thing with four legs and a backrest, made for sitting"), always has to be adjusted to the actual situation in which the word is uttered (the instructions to finding its reference can be formulated for example like this: "'Chair' means the thing with four legs and a backrest made for sitting, *which is pertinent in the given situation*". The reference to the situation (the real world) is implicit in every meaning of every word and it is not a prominent feature of deictics.

It has been observed that with the course of time, Benveniste's inventory of grammatical features revealing "*langue en action*" in his studies increases (ibid., 65; for more, see Koblížek 2012, 36nn).The problem is not marginal. On the contrary, it reveals the core of Benveniste's attitude. He started as a revolutionary proposing a new science, which draws a strict line in the middle of language as we know it, dividing it into an objective and subjective part (or *langue* and *discours*, or 'semiotics' and 'semantics'). Gradually, it turned out that all linguistic material belonged to the newly discovered land of semantics and nothing was left in the old realm of semiotics. In other words, nothing is a pure code, everything has a meaning. Originally, Benveniste treated the system and the process as two domains posed one next to the other, each one possessing its special expressions and grammar categories. But with the former being a realization of the letter, they in fact occupy the same domain and cannot be divided. By this we do intend to

say that the category of deictics does not exist. We are only emphasizing that it is placed inside the system of language and does not go beyond its boundaries.

That is exactly the position of Jakobson who is not that emphatic about establishing new brunches of linguistics. We can see that Jakobson makes use of Benveniste's impulse, but does not interpret it as radically as Benveniste. The discovery of shifters is no reason for revising the grounds of linguistics since the analysis has never moved beyond them. Shifters are signs just like other signs: their meaning is defined in opposition to other categories (for example to proper names, "messages referring to the code", or to the metalinguistic use of language, where the "code refers to another code"). Benveniste is explicitly given credit for discovering (or formulating) the indexical part of deictics. However, by dividing the problem into two, Jakobson implicitly shows that Benveniste was not able to see the other part, the symbolic function of a deictic expression.

Despite this, Benveniste must be given credit for the importance he places on the fact that subjectivity is expressed by language. His study on pronouns has the rhetorical power of drawing attention to the fact that some meanings are somehow related to the act of speech. Based on the temporal succession of the two articles and the circumstances of their publication, one could see a clear influence of Benveniste on Jakobson. In the rest of my paper, I will try to revise that statement by trying to answer the question whether it was Benveniste himself who pointed out the importance of deictics to Jakobson.

To answer that question, I will undertake the pure historical method of mapping the physical and intellectual contact between the two in the period between 1930 and 1960. Before immersing myself into the historical enquiry, it is prudent to make a few preliminary remarks. First, it is obvious that a simple line of influence cannot be drawn between the two eminent scholars. The shared intellectual space, the relatively small size of the linguistic community at the time, together with the well-known fact that it is common for two great minds to discover the same thing at the same time, raises a reasonable concern that it will not be possible to say who was first. Second, it would be ridiculous to think that the topic, such as the problem of deictic expressions, is something that needs to be discovered by a linguist or pointed out to him. Since the problem is intimately tied to the question of the nature of language itself, the theoreticians who actually did not treat the problem are rather scarce. Third, as for the historical evidence of the contact, the meetings between Jakobson and Benveniste are known to have happened but are difficult to document, as will be well shown in the following passages.

The common source of both articles—at least of the term shifter as declared by Jakobson—can be traced to Otto Jespersen. Jespersen defines shifters within the chapter on children's difficulties in language acquisition. Shifters are words, "whose

meaning differs according to the situation, so the child hears them applied to one thing and now to the other" (Jespersen 1922, 123). Except the personal pronouns ("the most important class of shifters"), the category of shifters is demonstrated by examples such as "father", "mother", "the one…the other", "enemy" or "home" (relative terms in Kerbrat-Orecchioni terminology).

Jespersen's description is very suggestive, but confusing. What differs is not the meaning of the situation but rather the reference. Children's difficulties do not come from the non-presence of the meaning, but from its high abstractness. While a proper name like "Sam" is (in the child's noetic universe) connected to a unique object, to understand a word like "you" the child has to perform a generalization and understand that in every situation the word will apply to a different person, depending on whether she is speaking or not. In fact, the same generalization is necessary for the use of any noun not used as a definite description. The word "chair" also requires that its utterer holds a general notion of a chair and applies it correctly to the situation. The difference between "chair" and "I" is in the fact that for "I", the meaning is defined relatively to the present situation. From the point of view of language acquisition, it takes more time to grasp the notion of a shifter than of an ordinary noun, so it can be judged more difficult or maybe more complicated, but not empty. Again, the distinction between sense and reference is vital: the proper name does not have a meaning, but it has a stable reference. The shifter does not have a stable reference, but it has a meaning (see also Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2012, 62, as we already commented above).

A very different definition can be found in Jakobson's first treatment of the problem in a minor article from 1937 about the mechanisms of "humor" in the so-called Liberated Theatre (*Osvobozené divadlo*) in Prague. (For a complex presentation of the way, in which Jakobson shows the work of the deictic function in *Vest pocket revue*, see the article of Eva Šlaisová in this volume). I here quote the decisive passage:

Studies in recent years have drawn a particular attention to the serious differences between two linguistic functions: expressive speech, on the one hand, is directed to the fullest coherence, and is the most independent from the extra linguistic context; on the other hand there is speech that only supplements this context, always referring to the situation, and beyond this situation unintelligible. Every concrete utterance oscillates between these two extreme poles. The elements that fulfill these two functions interpenetrate; it is necessary to delimit them, and by far the most important experiment would be to find whether or not we could remove our speech from the situation. (Jakobson 1987, 157)

As we see, the problem of deictics is treated as a problem of two extreme poles of language function, defined by their relation to the context. The use of context is actually the only criteria. Both modes are simply ways of using the speech:

either objectively (without the context), or subjectively (with a need of the actual context). Four points should be highlighted in Jakobson's approach:

1) He distinguishes two modes of languages, two ways of using it, not two separate languages. In opposition to Benveniste, who, in 1956, will see the two modes as two different systems instantiated by the different sets of elements of language, Jakobson, in 1937, treats them as two different actualizations of the same potential. For that reason, the study does not make a difference between 1st and 3rd person and only focuses on the transition in their use, i.e., the comic potential of the use of " he" instead of "I" as a polite form.

2) The positive appreciation is entirely on the side of objective language, which "is directed to the fullest coherence" and clearly is able to serve as both an instrument of thinking and the object of linguistic research. The context language is "merely supplementary", something necessary, but not typical. With this attitude, Jakobson represents the clear Saussurean doctrine of the day. We may suppose that words like "chair" are on the side of expressive speech (we shall say objective…) since they correspond to some sort of ideas, and words like "I" are on the other side of "speech supplementing the context", substituting for the unique things (in the most pejorative sense), those, that cannot be examined, because they are not general and they are therefore ungraspable by the reason.

3) As in his later study *Linguistics and poetics*, the word 'context' is here used by Jakobson to describe situational circumstances. Therefore, reference to the context must be understood as reference to the situation (however bizarre it may seem), we see it clearly from the expression as "extra linguistic context". Jespersen's "meaning relative to the situation" is the same thing as Jakobson's "speech supplementing the context".

4) We see nothing of Benveniste's stress on the articulation of subjectivity in language. For Jakobson, it is a mere play of language forms. But we should not forget that Jakobson builds his theory in the general frame of subjectivity—objectivity given by Husserl and also Bühler. Considering Jespersen's witty remark on Fichte's philosophy and the articulation of subject (Jespersen 1922, 123), we should not consider the problem as foreign to Jakobson, but it is true that a strong understanding of the articulation of subjectivity cannot be found in Jakobson's text.

Jakobson published his study on The Liberated Theatre on April 19, 1937. On March 8, 1937 Benveniste and other representatives of The Linguistic Society of Paris (*Société de Linguistique de Paris*) visited with the Prague Linguistic Circle (*Pražský lingvistický kroužek*). Benveniste gave a lecture entitled "L' expression linguistique de la quantité" (Benveniste 1937a), which, although showing interest

in linguistic categories, is not important to our problem. There is no evidence of a contact, discussion, or time spent together. Since Jakobson was living in Brno, it is hard to even prove his attendance at the meeting. The idea of some sort of contact is supported by a small note sent by Benveniste to V. Lesný, in which Benveniste apologizes for not being able to meet him, since he has to "leave tomorrow, the 11th, on the beginning of afternoon, for Brno." This very small note with very uncertain dating[1] is our only indication of the possibility of contact between Jakobson and Benveniste at that time. Further, Benveniste's communication with Prague is limited to a letter dated January 1, 1938 informing him of his election as an honorable member of Prague Linguistic Circle, (Academia 2012, 465). Benveniste replied with polite thanks on February 5, 1938 (Benveniste 1938b).

It would be easy to conclude that in 1937 Benveniste came to Prague as a linguist not aware of the urgency of the question of the situation-dependency of language meaning and left as somebody determined to inquire about it. Moreover, it would be nice to infer that Czech—no doubt ingenious—play *Vest pocket revue* (premiered at April 19, 1927) was the work of art that opened the problem to Jakobson, who later transferred it to Benveniste, inspiring him to become one of the theoreticians of "language in action". This line of development, however seducing, is from our point of view simplistic. The very short time between Benveniste's presence in Prague and the appearance of Jakobson's article leaves some room for speculation on the possibility of Benveniste influencing Jakobson. It is well known that Jakobson wrote his articles impulsively and in few days. The first lines of the "Open letter…" declare this haste (Jakobson 1937, 153). It would be therefore possible to speculate that Jakobson talked to Benveniste during the session and immediately used the topic in a paper that needed to be urgently written. As we have said, no physical document allows us to make this speculation. In addition, it would be necessary to ignore Jakobson's Bühler—Husserl background and, finally yet importantly, prove that Benveniste in 1937 was so secure in his theory that he could transmit it to someone else.

---

[1] The letter is dated March 10, the year is missing. Even though it is included in a folder with another letter from 1950 to V. Lesný, which reminisces about their gathering "almost one year ago," we do not consider the first letter to be from 1949. The date of March 10 corresponds very well to Benveniste's visit to Prague on March 8, 1937 and mainly, the style of both letters is entirely different. The first letter is very formal and Benveniste expresses his regret for not being able to make V. Lesný's acquaintance ("faire votre connaissance"). The second letter is friendly and instead of bothering with pleasantries, it comments on V. Lesný's article on Dhammapada, as well as recalls the happy memories Benveniste holds for the gathering "almost a year ago." It is not likely that the two letters are separated only by one year and I am convinced that the hypothesis that the note was written in 1937 during Benveniste's first visit to Czechoslovakia, is more likely. The striking fact, that Benveniste may have visited Prague in 1949, will require further examination.

Benveniste's communications in *Linguistic Society of Paris* from 1930s testify to his great interest in the problem of verbal categories, which can be understood as a kind of interest in the bondage between language and reality, but it is never expressed as precisely as by Jakobson in the same era. Before 1939, Benveniste did not publish any article on a general topic; all his publications have concrete and historical subjects. Benveniste did not even take part in debates on structuralist principles, such as the von Wartburg's lecture on synchrony and diachrony in January 17, 1931; even though he was verifiably present (Société de Linguistique de Paris, 1932, xi). On the other hand, we can observe his lasting conviction that meaning is the only criteria of linguistic analysis (a core theme of Benveniste's seminal study "Les niveaux de l'analyse linguistique" 1964) exemplified by the communication from 1936 on the meaning of the word *filos* (Benveniste 1937a, x), but we see no prominent interest in deictic expressions.

The same conclusion should be inferred from the communications of the International congresses of linguists. Jakobson attended all of them except the 5th and 7th one (both in London). The first congress Benveniste attended was the 4th congress in Copenhagen, hosted by L. Hjelmslev. One of two Benveniste's presentations is on origin of morphological differentiation. Part of the abstract describes its content as follows: "The problem of the verb. Structure of forms and value of types of present tense: Origin of verbal endings and situation of verbal forms in relation to the noun." (Benveniste 1938a, 62). This presentation should be understood as an expression of Benveniste's attempt to determine the difference between the noun and the verb (he stresses "the anteriority of a noun before verb", ibid., 63). This is an organic follow up to his thesis on the origin of nouns from 1935. It will lead him to an examination of the characteristic features of the verb, in this case its ending (*désinance*) and the present tense, and will later result in an analysis of verbal categories ("Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe" 1946) and of pronouns as expressions analogous the category of verbal person ("La nature des pronoms" 1956).

Building on the article of Kenji Tatsukawa on the correspondence between Benveniste and Louis Hjelmslev, Aya Ono notes the importance for Benveniste's thought of Hjelmslev's article on case in Indoeuropean. She shows effectively the traces of this inspiration in the post-war article "Le système sublogique des prépositions en latin" (1949). Hjelmslev's role in the whole contact is by all accounts interesting. Benveniste published his first theoretical study "Nature du signe linguistique" in first *Acta linguistica* of the Linguistic circle of Copenhagen (*Cercle Linguistique de Copenhague*), the same volume that Roman Jakobson was asked to edit (Glanc 2005, 280) during his short stay in Copenhagen from April 23 to September 3, 1939 (Rudy 1999, 84). Benveniste's article is highly interesting, but not explicitly related to the problem of deictics. It states the necessity of

turning attention towards "linguistics of speech", a program shared by most of the participants of the first volume (for illustrative sample, see Bröndal 1939). Again, we have no evidence as to the precise nature of the contact. The very informative correspondence between Hjelmslev and Benveniste unfortunately starts after the appearance of the second volume of *Acta linguistica* in 1939 (Tatsukawa 1997, 130).

During the war, Benveniste was hiding in Switzerland (Redard 2012, 159) and continued working with very limited sources (Tatsukawa 1997, 133). Jakobson continued his work in USA. In 1942 he published an article on Paleosiberian languages, which—while providing general descriptions of the language—paid significant attention to the fact that they express verbal person in very limited way. This fact would figure as one of the rare quotations in Benveniste's post-war article on verbal person (which included all his thoughts on the subject), entitled "Structure des relation de verbe", published in 1946 in *Bulletin de la société de linguistique de Paris*.

The argument presented in this text is analogous to the article on pronouns published ten years later. It examines the morphological category of the verbal person by drawing a line in its midst: the 3rd person is defined as a non-person in opposition to the 1st and 2nd (in fact, the 3rd person is a marked element while the two others are unmarked). The 2nd person is defined by its relation to the 1st person, which is a category of the speaking subject (thus 2nd person is "the one who is not the speaking subject"). As we can see, the theory of subjectivity is formulated almost completely as early as 1946. The whole inquiry is not motivated by the question of the difference between deictics and ordinary words, but by the question of the subject and the desire to show how he articulates himself in language. As I mentioned above, we see the root of this question in Benveniste's interest in the difference between the verb and the noun.

That is the biggest difference from the text of Jakobson's presentation for the Linguistic Society of Geneva (*Societé linguistique genevoise*) on June 29, 1950. Only a short abstract from the lecture is available, from which we learn that Jakobson noted that "the difference between ordinary terms like 'dog' and 'me'— which children learn to use very late and aphasics loose very soon—reveals a very interesting feature of the letter, a reference to the utterance of which they make part…"[2] (Jakobson 1950, 6). Given the publication of Jakobson's treatise on aphasia in 1942 and the famous hint that children learn deictics late in their

---

[2] The complete entry says: "The analysis of the difference between an ordinary term like 'dog' and certain terms like 'me'—whose usage is acquired very late by children and lost very soon by people with aphasia—reveals a peculiar traits with the latter, a reference to the utterance of which they are part. When applied on three constitutional elements of verbal form: the participants of the process, the process, the relation between participants and the process, the distinction allows us to establish 6 classes, each using different formal means, which encompasses the

development, we consider the conception to be inspired mostly by Jespersen. What is new is the definition of a shifter by its reference to the utterance in which it is present. This idea is not present in any of Benveniste or Jakobson's publication before 1950. As we saw before, Jakobson's 'context language' was defined by its substituting function and the relativity to context was the criterion for dividing speech into two ways of using it. Now, the same role is attributed to the "reference to the utterance of which they make part" (*un renvoi à l'énoncé dont ils font partie*). We could attribute this idea to Benveniste, who, as we saw, already had an elaborate theory of subjectivity in language. However, we have previously noted that the problem of deictics was not significant to him. On the other hand, Jakobson does clearly treat the problem of deictics but not in that strong relation to subjectivity. In the discussion with Gödel after his presentation, Jakobson declared his preference for the information theory terms 'speech event' and 'narrated event' instead of Bally's *dictum* and *modus* and so both sources should be considered as the possible source. As I have said in the introduction, perhaps it is not productive to try to stipulate who was the one to formulate the problem first since the problem was obviously present in the intellectual *milieu* of the moment.

It is nevertheless useful to continue tracing possible contacts between Jakobson and Benveniste since their formulations, as we have seen, are so similar that they could have been formulated together during a discussion. We have no evidence that Benveniste attended the July presentation in Genève (*Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure* does not keep records of present members of the society). It is more likely that he had spoken to Jakobson two weeks earlier during Jakobson's stay in Paris in May 20 and 23, 1950, when Jakobson held two lectures at the House of Humanities (*Maison des sciences de l'homme*, reffered to as "*Maison de l'homme*"), one on sounds and meaning. Benveniste was well aware of Jakobson's presence, as we can see from the record of a discussion in Linguistic Society of Paris, which mentions the generality of linguistic meaning and the problem of two ways of looking at it (Benveniste 1950, xxxi). Again, the same speculation regarding 1937 comes to mind, considering Jakobson's habit to write quickly and impulsively. Again, we must answer with the same skepticism, since we have no direct evidence of contact.

Other documents from the time do not help us much. Benveniste's letter to Jakobson from April 26, 1948, assures us of the fact that the two linguists were in some, though not very close, contact. In this short letter, which has the 6th congress of linguists as its major topic, Benveniste only mentions that he "has been thinking about the principles of morphological structure in general,

---

whole conjugation. Illustration of the theory by examples taken from the Russian conjugation" (Jakobson 1950, 6).

but not enough to produce a coherent text", a sentence that can mean almost anything (Benveniste 1948). Benveniste's following letter, dated June 13, 1952, seems more interesting since it discusses Jakobson's *Preliminaries to the speech analysis* (Benveniste 1952). He politely judges the project "unfeasible" and – more importantly – stresses that since the book projects an analysis of speech and not "the immaterial system of language", (ibid.), it should be placed under psychology, not linguistics.

The following years are marked by Benveniste's field trips to Alaska in 1953 and 1954 (Redard 2012, 162–164) which were not organized in any direct connection with Jakobson and instead probably isolated Benveniste from any potential contact, since the trips were held in very inaccessible parts of the US and Canada. One of the outcomes of this this work, Benveniste's study "Problèmes semantiques de la reconstruction" (1954), was published in Jakobson's journal *Word*. The study is a practical example of Benveniste's tendency to stress the semantic point of view and the necessity of a linguistic analysis. This tendency was first systematically expressed at a small conference organized by Benveniste in 1951 to which he had invited, among others, J. Lotz, a member of American semantic group, with whom Benveniste had a lively exchange earlier that year. From all of that we see that even though Benveniste was travelling to the United States and was in contact with American linguistics, Jakobson is not the person he is addressing.

Jakobson's development in the same years displays and interest in pragmatic aspect of linguistics, while Benveniste tries to take the point of view of semantics, or 'meaning', which—as I have shown at the beginning of my paper—he partly combines with the reference of a word, thus mixing semantics and pragmatics. Jakobson's attitude is more marked by the development of information technologies and problems of purely formal analysis of a speech. During early 1950's, Jakobson is working on *The Fundamentals of Language* (1956) and does not publish too much, which will change in 1956, the year of his 60th birthday and the publication of above mentioned article on shifters. The short comment in the1952 letter shows us that Jakobson was not in any way a source of Benveniste's distinction between semantics and semiotics, nor did Benveniste have a big impact on Jakobson's thought. Benveniste was heading towards a theory of language that will prefer the features of 'speech' and neglect the 'system of language'. Jakobson, on contrary, was immersed in the problems of formal analysis. This development is significant for the distinction drawn at the beginning of my paper: Benveniste will try to discover a new zone in linguistic material, a zone, which is important from an existential (or philosophical) point of view since it expresses the basic situation of the human subject and therefore requires a different methodological approach. Jakobson will continue seeing all linguistic phenomena as some sort of

realizations of *langue*, a code that can fulfil many functions including the deictic one. This attitude will allow him to formulate more precisely the function of the shifter and distinguish the symbolic and indexical parts of its function.

*

It is hard to conclude an investigation that has more speculations in it that cannot be proven than those that can. I had hoped to show, effectively, that the lives of Benveniste and Jakobson intersected repeatedly and significantly. There are at least two moments—one in spring of 1937, the second during the summer of 1950—when they were in the same place at the same time. Immediately after the occasion, Jakobson produced a text that had significant connections to Benveniste's favorite topics. A sober evaluation shows us not a one-way influence but, instead, two scholars thinking on similar topics in their own way, meeting each other from time to time and exchanging ideas in a productive way that could give birth to the parallel interest in the problems of deictics. The influence of other theories and personalities, namely Bally's distinction *dictum* vs. *modus*, Burks' article on Peirce's three-fold theory of linguistic sign, Otto Jespersen's book on language, must all be taken into consideration. The problem of shifters is always present to those who try to define language as a self-supporting phenomenon. I tried to show that a careful distinction between meaning and reference is necessary for their correct analysis and that Benveniste deserves the credit for distinguishing one aspect of their function—the fact that their relation to the utterance defines them. However, his incorrect conclusion that relative reference meant empty meaning resulted in too strict a calling for "linguistics of speech". Yet, as Jakobson showed in consecutive articles, the indexical aspect is not limited to only some expressions; it is a way to use language in general and is therefore spread across the linguistic system. That leads to a more effective theory of subjectivity in language, one that assumes that the human subject performs its articulation not only in some parts of speech but in all of them.

Acknowledgements

Works Cited

Benveniste, Émile. 1937a. "Gr. *filos* au point de vue du sens". *BSL* XXXVII: x.

Benveniste, Émile. 1937b. "Ľexpresion linguistique de la quantité". *Slovo a slovesnost* 3 (4): 255.

Benveniste, Émile. 1938a. "Problèmes de morphologie indo-européenne" [résumé]. *Actes du 4me Congrès international de linguistes, tenu à Copenhague, du 27 août au 1er septembre 1936*, publié par Kaj Barr, Viggo Bröndal, L. L. Hammerich et Louis Hjelmslev. Copenhague: E. Munksgaard.

Benveniste, Émile. 1939a. "Répartition des consonnes et phonologie du mot." *Travaux du cercle linguistique de Prague* 8. Études phonologiques dédiées à la mémoire de N. S. Trubetzkoy. Prague.

Benveniste, Émile. 1939. "Nature du signe linguistique." *Acta linguistica* I: 23–29. Reprinted in Benveniste, Émile. *Problèmes de linguistique générale 1*, 49–55. Paris: Gallimard.

Benveniste, Émile. 1950. "Communication de séance du 5 mai 1950." *Bulletin de la Société Linguistique de Paris* XXXXIX, 1949/1950: xxx–xxxi.

Benveniste, Émile. 1996. "The nature of Pronouns." In *The Communication Theory Reader*, edited by Paul Cobley. London: Routledge.

Benveniste, Émile. 2000. "Les niveaux de l'analyse linguistique." In *Problèmes de linguistique générale 2*, 119–131. Paris: Gallimard.

Benveniste, Émile. 2006a. "Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe". In Benveniste, Émile. *Problèmes de linguistique générale 1*, 225–236. Paris: Gallimard.

Benevniste, Émile, 2006b. "Le système sublogique des prépositions en latin." In *Problèmes de linguistique générale 1*, 134–139. Paris: Gallimard.

Benveniste, Émile. 2006c. "La nature des pronoms." In *Problèmes de linguistique générale 1*, 251–257. Paris: Gallimard.

Benveniste, Émile. 2006d. "De la subjectivité dans le langage." In *Problèmes de linguistique générale 1*, 258–266. Paris: Gallimard.

Benveniste, Émile. 2012. *Dernières leçons—Collège de France 1968 et 1969*, edited by J.-Cl. Coquet and I. Fenoglio, 151–174. Paris: EHESS—Gallimard—Seuil.

Bröndal, Viggo. 1939. "Linguistique structurale." *Acta linguistica* I: 2–10.

Burks, Arthur W. 1949. "Icon, Index, and Symbol." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 9 (4): 673–689.

Čermák, Petr, Claudio Poeta, and Jan Čermák. 2012. *Pražský lingvistický kroužek v dokumentech*. Prague: Academia.

Glanc, Tomáš, 2005. "Životopisné body." In Jakobson, Roman. 2005. *Formalistická škola a dnešní literární věda ruská—Brno 1935*, edited by Tomáš Glanc, 268–295. Prague: Academia.

Jakobson, Roman. 2005. *Formalistická škola a dnešní literární věda ruská—Brno 1935*, edited by Tomáš Glanc. Prague: Academia.

Jakobson, Roman. 1981. "Dopis Jiřímu Voskovcovi a Janu Werichovi o noetice a sémantice švandy." In *Selected writings III. Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry*, edited by Stephen Rudy, 757–762. Berlin—New York—Amsterdam: Mouton.

Jakobson, Roman. 1942. "The Paleosiberian languages." *American Anthropologist* 44 (4): 602–620.

Jakobson, Roman. 1950. "Les catégories verbales (séance de 29 juin 1950)." *Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure* 9: 6.

Jakobson, Roman. 1981. "Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb". In *Selected writings III. Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry*, edited by Stephen Rudy, 130–147. Berlin—New York—Amsterdam: Mouton.

Jakobson, Roman. 1987. "An open letter from Roman Jakobson to Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich on the epistemology and semantics of fun." Translated by Michael Quinn. *Stanford Slavic Studies* 1: 155–162.

Jespersen, Otto. 1922. *Language, Its Nature, Development and Origin*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Kerbrat-Orecchioni, Catherine. 2012. *L'Énonciation*. Paris: Armand Colin.

Kenji Tatsukawa. 1997. "Sous le signe de Saussure: La correspondance L. Hjelmslev—E. Benveniste (1941–1949)." *Linx*. Put online July 5 2012. Accessed October 12 2012. http://linx.revues.org/1013.

Koblížek, Tomáš. 2012. *Nová poetika—kapitola z francouzského myšlení o literatuře*. Prague: Polemos.

Moïnfar, M. Dj. 1975. "Bibliographie des travaux d'Émile Benveniste." In *Mélanges linguistiques offertes à Émile Benveniste*, edited by M. Dj. Moïnfar. Louvain: Société de Linguistique de Paris, Éditions Peeters.

Ono, Aya. 2007. *La Notion d'énonciation chez Émile Benveniste*. Limoges: Lambert Lucas.

Redard, Georges. 2012. "Bio-bibliographie d'Émile Benveniste." In Benveniste, Émile. *Dernières leçons—Collège de France 1968 et 1969*, edited by J.-Cl. Coquet and I. Fenoglio. Paris: EHESS—Gallimard—Seuil.

Ricœur, Paul. 1975. *La Métaphore vive*. Paris: Seuil.

Rudy, Stephen. 1999. "Roman Jakobson: A Chronology." In: Baran, Henryk. 1999. *Roman Jakobson: teksty, dokumenty, issledovaniâ*, edited by H. Baran, S. I. Gindin, and N. N. Grincer, 83–103. Moskva: Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj gumanitarnyj universitetj.

Société de Linguistique de Paris. 1932. "Communication du séance du janvier 17, 1931." In *Bulletin de la Société Linguistique de Paris* XXXII: xi.

Non-edited sources:

Documents located in Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Institute Archives and Special Collections:

1. Benveniste, Émile. 1948. "La geste du Prince Igor: Correspondence", letter to R. Jakobson, 12 April 1948. Box 11, folders 28–31.

2. Benveniste, Émile. 1952. "Un lettre à MM. Jakobson, Fant et Halle sur Preliminaries of Speech Analysis." June 13, 1952. Box 12.

Documents located in Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits orientaux, *Archives Émile Benveniste*:

1. "Linguistic meetings", January 9 1951, *Archives Émile Benveniste*, *Papiers d'orientalistes* Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits orientaux, coté PAP. OR. boite 29, dossier 2, f. 85.

Documents located in Masarykův ústav, Academy of Sciences of Czech Republic

Fond Pražský lingvistický kroužek, inventory number 18, content: E. Benveniste, karton 2.

1. Benveniste, Émile. 1930. "A letter to the director of Prague linguistic circle." 5. I. 1930
2. Benveniste, Émile. 1938b. "Letter to B. Trnka." February 5, 1938

Letters in the archive of Vincenc Lesný:

3. Benveniste, Émile. [1937?]. "Letter." March 10.
4. Benveniste, Émile. 1950. "Letter to V. Lesný." May 25, 1950.

Janua linguarum or
At the beginning was the word

Božena Bednaříková

Palacký University, Philosophical Faculty, Department of Czech Studies,
Křížkovského 10, 771 80 Olomouc, Czech Republic.
Email: bozena.bednarikova@upol.cz

Abstract: This contribution revisits Jakobson's efforts to find the key to significant laws that control the functioning of language and its relationship to social institutions. Of interest here are the initial studies to the series of essays *Janua linguarum*, namely those on aphasia that demonstrate Jakobson's way of thinking about language as a bipolar scheme. The separateness as well as the interrelation of the two functions of language (selection/substitution vs. combination/contexture), are contrasted with Mathesius's notions of *onomasiological and syntactical needs*, and with the two-pole approach to the notion of *word* (as textual vs. pre-textual unit operator). The structure of the word in the Jakobsonian sense, and as reflecting the specific co-operation of both modes of language arrangement, are the active points of departure for the author's own research on Czech word formation stems, specifically in demonstrating the existence of so-called conversion.

Keywords: aphasia; bipolar scheme of language; onomasiology; syntax; word; word structure; conversion; Mathesius

Janua linguarum (reserata) and the word

Janua linguarum is a transparent allusion to the work *Janua linguarum reserata quator linguarum, sive compendiosa methodus latinam, germanicam, gallicam & italicam…* by Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670), the great humanist thinker, and also respected figure in the science of language. *Janua linguarum*, i.e., "The Gate of languages," is a title for a series of essays published by Mouton Publishers, which set itself the task of seeking the key to the laws that govern language and its relationship with other social institutions. The series started in 1956 and was dedicated to Nicolaas van Wijk, the eminent Dutch linguist, specializing in phonology, who pioneered the inquiry into the structure of language and into the principles of its evolution. He, together with Antoine Meillet, encouraged Jakobson's initial attempts to grasp the structural laws of language and supported his efforts to dissolve language into its ultimate components, the dyadic distinctive features. Accordingly, it is no wonder that the first edition was published a quarter of a century after the International phonological conference held in Prague in December 1930 that is generally believed to have introduced a new concept of phonological opposition, a concept of crucial importance to Prague functional and structural phonology (Bičan 2005, 7).

The above-mentioned effort to understand the relationship between language and other social institutions needs particular emphasis because the interest in the expressive needs of a linguistic community is just the feature that distinguishes the Prague School from other structuralist schools. The functional aspect of language as a criterion for linguistic analysis and assessment is a specific contribution of the Prague School to the development of modern linguistics. An appreciation for serving the linguistic community was also reflected in the domain of language pedagogy. The authors of textbooks and dictionaries had the opportunity to verify their linguistic theories of foreign language teaching (Bohumil Trnka, Josef Vachek, Ivan Poldauf, Karel Hais, Leontij V. Kopeckij and others). *Janua linguarum* is thus a concise and important name for the whole series.

At the Beginning was the word (John 1, 1) is also a clear allusion to the Gospel of Saint John (even as the English translations of the bible use the preposition *in*). However, here it appears as the title of a collective volume published by Harper (New York, 1955)—with whom Jakobson also published his study *Two Aspects of Language*—and which he used, together with the study on phonology and phonetics, to inaugurate the *Janua Linguarum* series.

On the other hand, the title seems both convenient and advantageous for any Jakobsonian paper. The fight for the term *word* and for its conceptualization, for grasping and handling that concept, has been very topical in (not just) Czech linguistics and grammar descriptions. Hence, this paper only recognizes that

a great source of inspiration for promoting the concept *word* stems from an understanding of the concept by the Prague School, namely by Roman Jakobson and Vilém Mathesius.

Jakobson and/vs. Mathesius

It is no secret that the two linguists represent the inner differentiation of the Prague School into two distinct directions (Vachek 1999):

a) The Mathesius – Havránek direction focuses on the fine analysis of the relations of language's interior system with special reference to the functional specialization of its expressive means.

b) The Trubetzkoy – Jakobson direction stresses the vision of a general system and the importance of language modeling (a model of means and ends/ objectives, i.e., a means-end model).

As Vachek (1999) has pointed out, in the compound word "functional-structural" the component 'functional' is closer to Mathesiusian direction, while the component 'structural' points more in the Jakobsonian direction. Yet, one finds no contradiction in these two approaches; instead they are seen as complementary. Thus, the strength of the Prague School lies in the synthesis of both directions thereby avoiding potential unilateralism.

To put it in a nutshell, what Mathesius calls "the scientific analysis of a language" depends on the description of how each language addresses two basic needs of expression, the semantic activity of naming and the syntactic activity of putting the names into mutual relations:

The preparation of every articulated utterance consists of two acts, viz. of breaking down what we want to say into elements that can be named and of bringing them into mutual relations in a way that is customary in the language in question. In the final act the result of these formative acts is then either uttered orally or embodied in writing. From the functional point of view we can thus distinguish functional onomatology, functional syntax and the phonic aspect of speech in linguistic analysis. The result of the onomatological (naming) activity which is of course often inseparably intermingled with syntactic activity is the word. (Mathesius 1929, 124; translation in Vachek 1983, 132)

Jakobson, rather than of a word speaks, instead, of the linguistic sign and strives to reveal its arrangement.

Alice, the cat, and two modes of language sign arrangement

„Did you say *pig* or *fig*?" said the Cat. "I said *pig*," replied Alice in the sixth chapter of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. And, it is this repetition that helps Jakobson demonstrate the twofold character of the linguistic sign (Jakobson and Halle 1980, 72–96). The feline addressee, i.e., the Cat and the addresser, i.e., Alice share a common code. The cat is therefore aware of the fact that the difference between [p] and [f] (stop vs. continuant) may change the meaning of the message. Alice chose the former, thus rejecting the latter. Simultaneously she combined this solution with other distinctive features using the gravity and tenseness of [p] in contradistinction to the acuteness of [t] and laxness of [b]. All those attributes having been combined into the bundle of distinctive features formed what is called a phoneme.

The phoneme [p] was then followed by the phonemes [i] and [g], also bundles of distinctive features. Consequently, the concurrence of entities and concatenation of successive entities are the two ways in which speakers combine linguistic constituents, in other words selection and combination are two basic modes of language behavior by which language users encode and decode linguistic messages. It should be stressed that the code sets limitations on the possible combinations of the phonemes with other preceding or following them. Only parts of the permissible phoneme-sequences are actually utilized in the lexical stock of a given language. In this sense, a speaker is a word-user, not a word-coiner. Speech implies selection of certain linguistic entities and their combination into linguistic units of a higher degree of complexity. The selection must be made from a storehouse that the speaker and the addressee possess in common. Here Jakobson speaks of "the same filing cabinet of prefabricated representations" (Jakobson and Halle 1980, 117).

The forgoing points imply that any linguistic sign involves two modes of arrangement:

a) Selection and substitution: by selection is meant a selection between alternatives and by substitution the possibility of substituting one item for the other. Consequently, selection and substitutions are two faces of the same operation;

b) Combination and contexture: what is meant here is that any sign is made up of constituents and that any linguistic unit serves at the same time as a context for simpler units and finds its own context in more complex linguistic units. Consequently, combination and contexture are two faces of the same operation.

Elements in the selection set are associated by similarity, in combination by contiguity. The two relations underlie language structures. The addressee perceives that the given message is a combination of constituent parts selected from the repository. The constituents of a context are in the state of contiguity, while in a substitution set signs are linked by various degrees of similarity (Jakobson and Halle 1980, 75).

Bipolar aphasia and bipolar language structure

Jakobson applied the dichotomies to the study of abnormal speech behavior. He did not use the classical distinction indicating which of the two functions in speech exchange, i.e., encoding or decoding of verbal messages, has been particularly affected, nor did he follow the distinction between emissive and receptive forms of aphasia. On the contrary, he followed the mechanism of the two-modes of arrangement, as described above, to distinguish two basic types of aphasia depending on whether the major deficiency lies in selection and substitution (with relative stability of combination and contexture) or, conversely, in combination and contexture (with relative retention of selection and substitution). For aphasics of the first type, i.e., with the selection deficiency, the context is the indispensable and decisive factor: the more the word is dependent on other words of the same sentence and the more it refers to syntactic context, the less it is affected by the speech disturbance (Jakobson and Halle 1980, 78). Words syntactically subordinated by grammatical agreement or governance are more tenacious while the subject tends to be omitted. As the ability for selection and substitution is affected, the patient cannot switch to synonyms, circumlocutions or to heteronyms. Words are grasped in their literal meaning since the patient cannot understand their metaphoric character. Of the polar figures of speech, metaphor and metonymy, the latter tends to be employed: *smoke* for *pipe*. Consequently, if the selective capacity is impaired while the ability for combination is at least partly preserved, this type of aphasia is defined as the similarity disorder.

In contrast, the contiguity disorder affects the ability to form propositions; i.e., the ability to combine simpler linguistic entities into more complex units is impaired. There is no wordlessness, since the word as entity in most of these cases has been preserved. The syntactic rules organizing words into higher units have been lost which results in a sort of a-grammatism where the sentence seems to degenerate into a mere word heap. This type of aphasia gives rise to an infantile like one-word sentence. Normally, a word is both a constituent part of a superimposed

context (the sentence) and, at the same time, serves as a context superimposed on smaller constituents (i.e., morphemes as minimum units endowed with meaning). However, a typical feature of this type of a-grammatism is the abolition of inflection: the infinitive might be used instead of diverse finite verbal forms, the nominative instead of all the oblique cases due to the elimination of governance and concord and partly due to the loss of the ability to dissolve words into stems and desinence. The derived words (*grant—grantor—grantee*) are semantically related by contiguity. The patient under discussion is either inclined to drop the derivative suffixes, or the combinations of root and derivational suffix(es) become irresolvable for him. If the derivative word constitutes a semantic unit that cannot be entirely inferred from the meaning of its components, the gestalt is misunderstood. In Jakobson's example, *mokríca* signifies a woodlouse, while *mokr* means something humid, and *ica* designates a carrier of the given property (Jakobson and Halle 1980, 87). In this type of aphasia, the word is the sole linguistic unit preserved while at the same time the patient has only an integral, in-dissolvable image of it. The last to remain is either a class of significative values (a word), or a class of distinctive values (a one-phoneme utterance).

Jakobson found aphasia particularly illuminating for linguists because it disclosed the two poles in search of a language: selection/substitution and combination. In normal verbal behavior, both processes are continually operative, but in aphasia, one of them is restricted or totally blocked. One should add that under the influence of a cultural pattern, age, personality, verbal style, etc. a preference might also be given to one of the two processes. The bipolar structure is also inherent in other semiotic system, for example in the verbal arts. Whereas in lyric songs metaphoric constructions prevail, in heroic epics metonymic phrasing predominates. As far as the fine arts are concerned, one could mention surrealist painters who tend to retain a metaphorical attitude while cubism tends to follow a metonymical orientation.

Word (and/vs. a unit of morphology)

Going back to linguistics and to the term *word,* it would be too courageous and misleading to say that this important theory of the Prague School was a straightforward source of inspiration for the concept of word and even for the related concept of grammatical, especially morphological description. On the other hand, one could argue that since those ideas continue to be discussed today, they continue to deserve further reflection. Mathesius provided a definition of both word and the sentence: "The word is the smallest meaningful, independently

utilizable part of an utterance, arrived at by means of associative analysis" (Mathesius 1975, 24).[1] What is stressed in his studies is that the word is the result of both activities – onomasiological and syntactical (see above). Jakobson evidently counts on the word when describing the contiguity disorder (see above). Nevertheless, according Bauer, "the word is the fundamental unit of morphology, and yet it is its least well-defined unit, and word and morpheme between them are the terms which have the most different uses. Some of the authorities have even stated overtly that no universal definition of the word is possible" (Bauer 2004, 108). As there is no universal theory of the word, it seems necessary to correlate it with a theory of the text (Kořenský 1992, 265; 1994, 301; 1998, 83). There seem to be two poles to such a correlation: a) word → text, b) text → word. The first one represents a traditional approach to the notion of the word: it is a discrete, bilateral language unit; it is a pre-textual unit semantically interpretable from its structure alone. The other pole considers the word as an actual text operator, i.e., a linearizing structural factor, its semantic properties being determined by the (con)text. The truth probably lies somewhere in between. Furthermore, it is necessary to work with a strong, typologically bound, theory of the word. The Czech linguistic tradition tends to treat it as a functional, lexical and grammatical unit barely admitting that the onomasiological needs may arise not pre-textually but rather during the process of syntactic build-up.

In the 1990s, when the word returned to morphology as its basic unit at the expense of the morpheme, one might speak of WP morphology and IP morphology models, and about for-word-orientated stream of generative morphology, foremost represented by Katamba (Katamba 1993). By morphology, we understand a discipline studying the inner structure of a word since the structure is the result of a series of morphological processes. According to the character of those processes, a boundary may be drawn between various branches of morphology, i.e., lexical and inflectional morphology. Nevertheless, those boundaries are not necessarily impenetrable. The inflectional device may be used for the formation of a more complex word, that is, it may be used as an onomasiological morphological process, as the phenomenon of lexical morphology (as seen below).

"At the heart of the study of morphology in modern linguistics is the effort to segment words into smaller meaningful elements and to determine the rules according to which those elements combine" (Lieber and Mugdan 2000, 404). Even a very simple example (Figure 1) may demonstrate the overlapping morphological functions:

---

[1]   Original wording: "Slovo je nejmenší významová, samostatně použitelná část promluvy, ke které docházíme asociativní analýzou" (Mathesius 1961, 23).

Rybáři

rybář   i

ryb   ář (+ /MUŽ/)
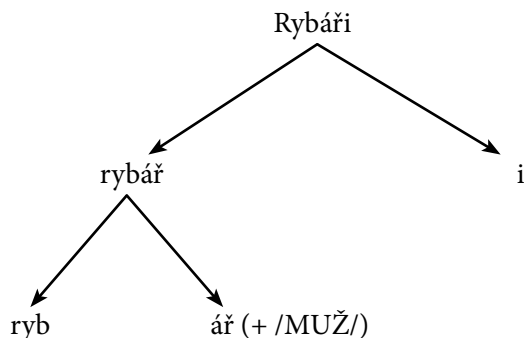
Figure 1

The morphematic analysis (according to Bednaříková 2009) performed here displays the varied status of the segment *-i* (ending in traditional grammar descriptions):

a) *Současní rybář-i prý už ryby neloví.*
   The segment *-i* signalling a nom. pl. has an onomasiological function, thereby reflecting a reality.

b) *Odpočinek u Sečské přehrady přinesl třemošnickému rybář-i kapitální úlovek.*
   The segment *-i* has a syntactic function, i.e., it serves as the obligatory complement of the verb (indirect object).

c) *Pachatelé ukradli rybář-i pruty za 20 tisíc.*
   The segment *-i* has a communicational function – drawing the content of the utterance into the sphere of interests of an individual. It mostly bears the terminological description *dativus commodi*.

The segment proves to be a cumulative, multifunctional morpheme and shows a clear allusion to the asymmetric dualism of the linguistic sign.

Word and word-formation

There are other quite recent research activities related to Czech that reflect the twofold character of language, thus referring explicitly to Jakobson. A good example may be metonymy. Generally, metonymy has been described as the use of one word to substitute for another word. Contemporary cognitive linguistics has focused on whether to describe metonymy as a shift of meaning that occurs within a single domain or as a contiguity relationship (Janda 2010). Dokulil's

onomasiological model seems to be highly compatible with a metonymic interpretation of word-formation, since Dokulil presents a set of terms used to define the relationships between the "mark" and the "base," and he analyzes derived words in terms of onomasiological types (Dokulil 1962). As Janda shows, metonymy is present when one item (a vehicle) is used to access another item (a target). (Janda 2010) Hence the sentence *The milk tipped over* illustrates a contained (milk) for container (bottle) as a substitutional metonymy, i.e., one word has the power to substitute for another word. Parallel relations may be found within suffix word-formation. The derivation of the word *květin-áč* uses a contained for container relationship by referring to the naming of the container by its content (here the container is referred to as *-áč*, however, by using the name of its content, namely *květina*). This illustrates the relationship of contiguity as well as the contextual mode of linguistic sign arrangement.

Another good example may be the natural language need of a human being to express a substance as a dynamic symptom (a process), or vice versa a dynamic symptom (a process) as a substance, or even a dynamic symptom as static symptom (an attribute of a substance). Those most general meanings of a substance and its static/dynamic symptom(s) form the cognitive basis of the part of speech theory (Komárek 2006). The syntactic theories found their way of describing the above mentioned transition phenomenon in the so-called nominalization/ verbing/adjectivization process. In this paper, I tried to find its relevant links to both lexical and inflectional morphology. One of the frequently employed means of part of speech transfer in inflectional (Slavic) languages, including Czech, is morphological addition – morphological process of derivation: *kop-a-t → kop-a-c(í) míč* (to kick – the ball for "kicking," i.e., a football). This is evidently a pre-text process; the sufix *-c(í)* represents the onomasiological basis (head) of the new lexical unit, it bears the generalized meaning of purpose. The verb itself expresses what the exact purpose is (the ball is intended for "kicking"). On the other hand *kopající (kopat/kop-aj-íc-Ø) → kop-aj-íc-í)* in *Díval se na malé chlapce kopající do gumového míče* (he was looking at young boys kicking a rubber ball) is not the result of a pre-text word-formation process since the onomasiological need appeared in the process of building up the sentence. Nor is it the result of derivation with a pre-textually generalized meaning in a suffix (as there is no derivational suffix at all). Therefore, it is more a result of dynamic relations between parts of speech as shown in the two-step transposition. The point of the so-called two-step transposition is to prove that not all word-formation processes are pre-text processes. *Verbum finitum* VF *loví* in *Rád loví kapry* (he likes fishing for carps) serves its genuine syntactic function, e. i., the predicate. Syntactic needs may command the expression of verbal action in the position of the subject. This brings about the process of inflection (in inflectional languages), here the change of verbal form from VF to infinitive (*loví → lovit*). Still, the word

form dwells at the rank of a verb: *Lovit kapry je fascinující* (fishing for carps is fascinating). Consequently, the first step of transposition is called grammatical transposition. What happens/may happen next? The syntactic/communication needs can bring about the onomasiological process, namely a part of speech sign finds itself in the position which is reserved for another part of speech. Here the original verbal form can gain characteristics of that part of speech for which the respective syntactic function is primary: nominal inflection, nominal syntactic functions, the power of congruency, etc.: *Lov kaprů je fascinující* (fishing for carps is fascinating), *lovit → lov.* Accordingly, the second step of transposition is referred to as the word-formation transposition. The crucial device that complies with the needs of word-formation transposition (thus with the needs of nominalizations/ verbings) perfectly, is conversion (Bednaříková 2009). The secret of its word-formation power lies in a mere change of form, in a mere change of morphological characteristics that result in an added onomasiological value.

Conclusions

The paper discussed the separateness and the interrelation of the two functions of language (selection/substitution and combination/contexture) in relation to Mathesius' notions of onomasiological, or syntactical needs and in relations to the two-pole approach to the notion of the word (a pre-text unit vs. a text operator).

Any linguistic theory that does not take into account transitive phenomena is incomplete, simple and elliptical (see also Filipec 1972). A transition may mean an oscillation between functions but, at the same time, a hierarchy between them. In this context, Jakobson complained that studies focusing on linguistic signs, on verbal art, etc., often neglect the bipolar character of language, replacing it with an amputated, unipolar scheme, coinciding with one of the two aphasic patterns, namely with the contiguity disorder (Jakobson and Halle 1980).

Works Cited

Bauer, Laurie. 2004. *A glossary of morphology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Bednaříková, Božena. 2009. *SLOVO a jeho KONVERZE*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.

Bičan, Aleš. 2005. "Phoneme in Structural and Fucntional Phonology." *Linguistica Online* 1–15. Stable url: http://www.phil.muni.cz/linguistica/art/bican/bic-001.pdf

Dokulil, Miloš. 1962. *Tvoření slov v češtině 1. Teorie odvozování slov*. Prague: Academia.

Filipec, Josef. 1972. "K otázce konverze a přechodu slovních druhů v dnešní češtině." *Slovo a slovesnost* 33 (2): 122–129.

Jakobson, Roman and Morris Halle. 1980. *Fundamentals of Language*. Hague—Paris—New York: Mouton Publishers.

Janda, Laura Alexis. 2010. "The role of metonymy in Czech word formation." *Slovo a slovesnost* 71 (4): 260–275.

Katamba, Francis. 1993. *Morphology.* London: The Macmillian Press LTD.

Komárek, Miroslav. 2006. *Příspěvky k české morfologii*. Olomouc: Periplum.

Kořenský, Jan. 1992. "K otázce procesuálního pojetí slovní zásoby." *Slovo a slovesnost* 53 (4): 265–272.

Kořenský, Jan. 1994. "Ještě několik slov k možnostem výkladu lexikální složky jazyka." *Slovo a slovesnost* 55 (4): 301–302.

Kořenský, Jan. 1998. "Slovo v textu." *Jazykovědné aktuality* 35 (zvláštní číslo): 83–88.

Lieber, Rochelle and Joachim Mugdan. 2000. "Internal structure of words." In *Morphologie / Morphology. Ein Internationales Handbuch zur Flexion und Wortbildung. An International Handbook on Inflection and Word-Formation.* Volume 1, edited by G. Booij, Ch. Lehmann, J. Mugdan, and S. Skopeteas, 404–416. Berlin—New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Mathesius, Vilém. 1929. "Funkční lingvistika." In *Sborník přednášek pronesených na Prvém sjezdu československých profesorů filosofie, filologie a historie v Praze 3.–7. dubna 1929*, 118–130. Prague: Vyd. výbor sjezdový.

Mathesius, Vilém. 1961. *Obsahový rozbor současné angličtiny na základě obecně lingvistickém*. Prague: Nakladatelství československé akademie věd.

Mathesius, Vilém. 1975. *A Functional Analysis of Present Day English on a General Linguistic Basis.* Prague: Academia.

Vachek, Josef. (ed.) 1983. *Praguiana. Some Basic and Less Known Aspects of the Prague Linguistic School*. Prague: Academia.

Vachek, Josef. 1999. *Prolegomena k dějinám Pražské školy jazykovědné*. Prague: H & H.

Frequency of parts of speech in Adolf Heyduk's poetry

Petr Plecháč – Robert Ibrahim

Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Institute of Czech Literature,
Na Florenci 3/1420, 110 00 Prague 1, Czech Republic.
Email: plechac@ucl.cas.cz, ibrahim@ucl.cas.cz

Abstract: The paper explores the relationship of the frequency of parts of speech with i) verse length, ii) literary genre (lyrics vs. epics) and iii) metre (trochee vs. iamb). For the purpose of this analysis, approximately 110,000 verse lines from a Czech poet Adolf Heyduk (1835–1923) have been processed, most of which rhyme. The analysis has demonstrated that the frequency of parts of speech depends on the verse length and on the literary genre. The frequencies of parts of speech in the trochee and iamb and in rhymed and unrhymed verse do not differ. The frequency of parts of speech in the beginning and end of line differs from their frequency in the whole text.

Keywords: Czech poetry; 19th century; Adolf Heyduk; parts of speech; theory of verse; computational linguistics; prosody; digital humanities

The aim of the present paper is to analyse the frequency of parts of speech in Adolf Heyduk's poetry.[1] It is a preliminary study based on extensive material, which may have an impact on the achieved results. Therefore, we wish to point out that our conclusions are not generalizable to all Czech poetry. Let us first briefly outline what will be analysed and on what material.[2]

The Institute of Czech literature AS CR have at their disposal The Czech Electronic Library, which is a publicly accessible database of nineteenth century Czech poetry comprising approximately 1,700 collections (available at www.ucl.cas.cz). The authors of this study used this database in order to compile the Corpus of Czech verse (Korpus českého verše – KČV, henceforth). It contains more than 2 million verse lines, (approximately 15 million words), i.e., a phonetically, morphematically, morphologically and metrically annotated collection of texts. These annotations are carried out automatically.[3] The automatic morphological annotation is based on part-of-speech tagging. The frequency of parts of speech in KČV can be compared for example with the frequency of parts of speech in the SYN2005 corpus, i.e. a corpus of contemporary written Czech, containing 100 million words (tokens) and consisting of three subcorpora (fiction, technical literature, journalism)—see Czech National Corpus (http://ucnk.ff.cuni.cz/syn2005.php).

The present paper is a follow up to our study *Frequency of parts of speech in Czech poetry* (Ibrahim and Plecháč, in press). There we compared the parts-of-speech frequency in KČV and SYN2005 (and its subcorpora), the relation of morphological and syntactic level to the length of verse, and the dependence of the frequency of parts of speech on the school of poetry or the author's style. Here we look at the relationship of the frequency of parts of speech with i) the verse length, ii) literary genre (lyrics vs. epics) and iii) metre (trochee vs. iamb).

Since the metrical annotation is currently manually controlled, we were forced to select one author, whose texts had been subjected both to automatic computer and manual analysis. The author is a Czech poet Adolf Heyduk (1835–1923). For

---

[2] The following works dealing with the problems of sentence and verse length, the relation of parts of speech, clause elements to verse have been helpful: Pszczołowska (1965), Mazáčová (1973), Červenka and Sgallová (1984), and Gasparov and Skulačeva (2004).

[3] We have finished the phonetic annotation. We are currently working on morphematic annotation in cooperation with the Institute of Formal and Applied Linguistics MFF UK and wish to thank Jaroslava Hlaváčová for her assistance. We acquired the morphological annotation thanks to our cooperation with The Department of Theoretical and Computational Linguistics (we would like to thank the head of the department Vladimír Petkevič and Hana Skoumalová). As for the metrical annotation, we are in the process of verifying the results. The author of the PC programme for phonetic and metrical analysis is Petr Plecháč.

the purpose of this analysis, we processed approximately 110,000 verse lines from his works, most of which rhyme (approx. 84 per cent). As regards the metre that Heyduk uses, an iamb and a trochee prevail; they account for 97 percent of all the analysed verse lines (approx. 54 per cent of iambs, 44 per cent of trochees). For this reason, we will only deal with iambic and trochaic verse lines.

In the next section, we attempt to answer the following questions:

Q1 Does the frequency of individual parts of speech differ depending on the verse length?

Q2 Does the frequency of individual parts of speech differ depending on the literary genre?

Q3 Does the frequency of individual parts of speech differ depending on whether the verse is trochaic or iambic?

Q4 Does the frequency of individual parts of speech differ depending on whether the verse is rhymed or unrhymed?

Q5 Is there any deviation in the beginning or end of a verse line in view of the frequency of parts of speech in the whole text?[4]

Q6 Does the frequency of parts of speech in the beginning of a line differ depending on whether the verse is trochaic or iambic?

Q7 Does the frequency of parts of speech in the end of line differ depending on whether the verse is rhymed or unrhymed?

Here are the answers:

A1

We are working with the assumption that in Czech syllabotonic verse the correspondence of verse and syntactic segmentation is considered unmarked. In that case, enjambment (the discrepancy between verse and syntactic segmentation) is one of the means of differentiation of verse style. Nevertheless, even in the works of those authors who typically use enjambment, it represents only a relatively small percentage of verse, and hence the statistical significance of correspondence of verse and syntactic boundaries remains strong (see Červenka and Sgallová 1984, 13–14). From short to long verses, the number of positions that need to be occupied by lexical units grows. Thus, if the equation "verse boundary = boundary of a syntactic unit" holds to a large extent true, the poet has three possibilities of "filling" more positions in long verses: 1) "to fill" the longer verse by more syntactic units (clauses), 2) to use longer words and/or 3) "to fill" a longer verse by optional clause elements. In the present study, we focus on the

---

[4] In the present paper, the extent of the beginning and the end of a verse line have been restricted to the first and the last word, respectively.

last possibility (the cases 1 and 2 were analysed in Ibrahim and Plecháč; in press). From the parts-of-speech point of view the optional clause elements are realized predominantly by adjectives and adverbs. However, it is not the frequency of these parts of speech that is the main indicator, but the ratio of basic to optional parts of speech that can be expressed by the coefficient NV/AD, i.e., the ratio of the frequency of nouns and verbs to the frequency of adjectives and adverbs. The tendency is that the longer a verse is the lower its NV/AD coefficient, i.e., it contains more optional parts of speech—see Table 1 (we provide only six- and twelve-syllable verse lines, the remaining sample of the *n*-syllable lines being very small).

A2

Table 2 demonstrates that there are no great differences between Heyduk's lyric and epic poetry.[5] However, the analysis has confirmed our expectations: the lyric has a higher frequency of nominal groups (nouns and adjectives) than the epic, while the epic has a higher frequency of verbal groups (verbs and adverbs). In the lyric, the AN/DV coefficient is 1.80, in the epic it is 1.42. In the basic parts of speech (nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs and adverbs), the values of the epic resemble the average values in KČV, or the values in SYN2005 (the subcorpus fiction).

A3

Table 3 shows the frequency of parts of speech in the trochee and iamb. The data concerning trochaic verse very much resemble the data in the whole KČV. The frequency of parts of speech in iambic verse does not differ from the frequency of trochaic verse, the only difference being the reverse order of conjunctions and adjectives. Below we discuss the question why there are more conjunctions and fewer adjectives in iambic verse (see A6).

A4

The frequency of parts of speech in rhymed and unrhymed verse does not differ (see Table 3).

---

5   The values concerning Heyduk's epic are based on the works *Oldřich a Božena*, *Dědův odkaz*, *Dudák*, *Na přástkách*, *Pod Vítkovým kamenem*, *Mohamed II.*, *Dřevorubec*, *Za volnost a víru*, *Běla*, *Na vlnách*; the values concerning Heyduk's lyric are based on the works *Hořec a srdečník*, *V zátiší*, *Šípy a paprsky*, *Lesní kvítí*, *Na potulkách*, *Ptačí motivy*.

A5

The frequency of parts of speech in the beginning and end of a line differs from the frequency in the whole text (see Table 3).

A6

The beginning of a trochaic verse line

Let us start with the beginning of a trochaic verse line (see Table 3). We can see that there is a considerable increase in prepositions and conjunctions as well as a slight increase in the frequency of verbs and adverbs, while the frequency of nouns and pronouns decreased.

Miroslav Červenka (2006, 94) included among the correspondence rules of the Czech syllabotonic verse a rule that the first strong position of trochaic verse corresponds to the stressed syllable. This rule may explain the higher frequency of prepositions and the lower distribution of pronouns in the trochaic beginning of a line: in the prosody of Czech verse prepositions are always stressed, while monosyllabic pronouns are unstressed. However, this rule cannot explain the higher frequency of conjunctions (in Czech monosyllabic conjunctions are unstressed). Miroslav Červenka even quotes Heyduk's example "A všed v jizbu, pravil: 'bude krásně!'" pointing out that such trochaic verses (i.e., verses with unstressed first syllable) are rare. Petr Plecháč demonstrated (2012, 402n) that the above-mentioned correspondence rule is not justified in the description of the metrical norm of Czech syllabotonic verse. This is because the frequency of unstressed beginnings of a line in the trochaic verse exceeds language probability (i.e. the number of unstressed trochaic beginnings of a line in Heyduk and in the whole KČV is higher than we would expect based on probability). The reasons for the realization of the trochaic beginning of a line by an unstressed syllable (e.g., a conjunction) may differ depending on the author or text. The reasons are several: the effort for rhythmic diversification, the influence of syllabic verse or rhythmic habits (see Červenka 2006, 94nn). The higher frequency of conjunctions in the beginning of a line is also associated with the fact that the beginning of a line is identical with the beginning of a syntactic unit and that it always follows the prosodic boundary. The anacruses (some of them are of course units beginning with a monosyllabic conjunction) cluster (see Červenka 2006, 88) after the prosodic boundary.

Petr Plecháč – Robert Ibrahim

The beginning of an iambic verse line

Even greater deviation from the values counted for the whole text can be found at the beginning of a line in iambic verse. Here conjunctions, pronouns and adverbs prevail (there is also a higher frequency of particles). On the other hand, the frequency of nouns, verbs and particularly adjectives is lower than their frequency in the whole iambic or trochaic verse (or the trochaic beginning of a line). The iambic beginning of a line in the Czech theory of verse has received much attention (see Jakobson 1979). Miroslav Červenka proposes five types of line beginnings in the Czech iamb. Adolf Heyduk belongs to the strictest type, i.e., the first position of a line is always occupied by a monosyllable, the frequency of unstressed monosyllables being higher than the frequency of stressed ones (the strictness or orthodoxy of this type stems from the radical interference in the rhythmic lexicon), which is represented in KČV only by a few authors (see Červenka 2006, 89). This explains the noticeable deviation in the distribution of individual parts of speech at the beginning of lines in Heyduk's iambs (we could obtain different results with another author; here it is the type of beginning of a line that plays a role).

If the author needs monosyllabic words, a part of speech that meets this requirement most is the conjunctions (89 per cent of Heyduk's conjunctions are monosyllabic), pronouns (82 per cent of Heyduk's pronouns are monosyllabic), particles (81 per cent), or adverbs (48 per cent). The parts of speech that meet this requirement the least are for instance adjectives (only 3 percent of Heyduk's adjectives are monosyllabic).[6] These values have been counted on the basis of Heyduk's verse and they can be compared with the data in SYN2005 and SYN2005 (the subcorpus fiction). In SYN2005, or more precisely in SYN2005 (the subcorpus fiction) there are 71.7 per cent, or more precisely 70.4 percent of monosyllabic conjunctions, 70.8 per cent, or more precisely 75.4 per cent of monosyllabic pronouns, 40 per cent, or more precisely 45.7 per cent of monosyllabic particles, and 30.7 per cent, or more precisely 34.4 per cent of monosyllabic adverbs. Hence, in verse (at least in Heyduk's verse) there are more monosyllabic words than in SYN2005 and SYN2005 (the subcorpus fiction), which is to a great extent caused by iambic verse.[7]

---

6   Note that many monosyllabic words can also be found among interjections and prepositions. Prepositions are always stressed in Czech. The combination preposition + noun are considered a polysyllabic word, and thus they do not comply with the strictest type of the iambic beginning of a line.

7   The statistics of n-syllabic words with selected Czech poets and in prose clearly confirm the increase in the frequency of disyllabic words in trochee and monosyllabic words in iamb (Červenka and Sgallová 1978).

The end of a line

In the case of the end of a verse line, we do not distinguish between the iambic or trochaic verse, or between the masculine and feminine ending. Table 3. shows that at the end of lines nouns and verbs prevail absolutely, while the number of pronouns decreases considerably.[8] The values of adjectives and adverbs are similar to the values in the whole text. The frequency of the other parts of speech does not exceed 1 percent. The explanation relates to the position at the end of a line: some parts of speech (e.g., prepositions and conjunctions) do not occur before the syntactic boundary, or their occurrence would be marked (an adjective in the end of a line would be either an instance of inversion or enjambment). The end of a line is thus a place where not only the syntactic, prosodic and sound accentuation but also the semantic reinforcement occur (there is an accumulation of lexical parts of speech).

The frequency of parts of speech in the last position of a line influences the frequency of parts of speech in the penultimate position of a line. If the most frequent parts of speech in the end of a line are nouns, it is likely that there will be an increase in the occurrence of adjectives in the penultimate position and Heyduk's verse confirms this.[9] Thus, at the end of a line we observe a frequent occurrence of the syntagma adjective + noun. Gasparov and Skulačeva (2004, 271–272) point out that this strong syntactic bond is typical for the end of a line, as it underlines—in contrast with the weak line-internal bonds—the end of a line and it enables to single out the verse as an independent, by senses perceivable, unit (in prose, the present authors have not encountered such tendency). More verbs in the end of a line cause more pronouns in the penultimate position.[10]

A7

At the end of a line, in rhymed and unrhymed verse, there is not a great difference in the frequency of parts of speech.[11] On the other hand, at the end of rhymed verse lines, there is a slightly higher number of nouns and verbs and a slightly lower number of adjectives and pronouns than at the end of unrhymed verse lines. This might be caused by grammatical rhymes. As can be seen from Table

---

[8] A high prevalence of nouns and verbs at the end of a line was also observed in Russian verse (based on works of A. S. Puškin, K. N. Batjuškov a J. A. Baratynskij). See Shaw (1993); Gasparov and Skulačeva (2004, 67).

[9] On the increase in the frequency of nouns in the last position of an utterance (the samples are from journalism, technical literature and fiction), or the increase in the frequency of adjectives in the penultimate position—see Průcha (1967).

[10] According to SYN2005 (subcorpus fiction) the noun is most frequently preceded by an adjective, the verb by a pronoun—see Bartoň et al. (2009).

[11] The same holds true also for Puškin's rhymed and unrhymed verse (Shaw 1993, 17).

4., approximately three fifths of rhymed pairs are realized by the combination of a noun and a noun, a verb and a verb, and a noun and a verb.

Conclusions

The analysis of Adolf Heyduk's poetry (approximately 110, 000 verse lines) has demonstrated that:

1. The frequency of parts of speech depends on the verse length. The longer the verse is, the more optional parts of speech (i.e. more adjectives and adverbs) it contains.

2. The frequency of parts of speech depends on the literary genre. We can confirm the assumption that the lyric has a higher frequency of nominal group (nouns and adjectives) than the epic, and the epic has a higher frequency of verbal group (verbs and adverbs).

3. The frequencies of parts of speech in the trochee and iamb do not differ.

4. The frequency of parts of speech in rhymed and unrhymed verse does not differ.

5. The frequency of parts of speech in the beginning and end of line differs from their frequency in the whole text.

The deviation from the values in the whole text is associated with both syntax and rhythm.

The beginning of a line is often identical with the beginning of a syntactic unit and it always follows the prosodic boundary. There is a higher concentration of certain parts speech (e.g., conjunctions and pronouns) on the prosodic boundary and, at the beginning of a line, this tendency is reinforced by rhythmical aspects. At the beginning of iambic lines, we observe a greater deviation than at the beginning of trochaic lines. At the beginning of Heyduk's iambic verse there is a strong preference for an unstressed word or a stressed monosyllabic word (this accounts for the increasing frequency of those parts of speech which are typically monosyllabic in Heyduk's poetry, i.e. conjunctions, pronouns, particles and adverbs). At the beginning of Heyduk's trochaic verse, on the other hand, there is a strong preference for a stressed word (e.g., verbs, nouns and prepositions, the stress of which always falls on the first syllable). However, the beginning of Heyduk's trochaic lines also shows the increasing frequency of conjunctions, which may be connected with the effort for rhythmic diversification of the beginning of trochaic lines.

The end of a line is often identical with the end of a syntactic unit. At the end of a syntactic unit, the occurrence of certain parts of speech (conjunctions, prepositions) is excluded. At the end of a line, we also observe a higher concentration of nouns and verbs, and thus a semantic accentuation. The increasing frequency of nouns and verbs influences the frequency of parts of speech in the preceding position, i.e. in the penultimate position of a line. There we observe an increasing frequency of adjectives (in the corpus of Czech texts (fiction) SYN2005 a noun is most frequently preceded by an adjective) and pronouns (in the corpus of Czech texts (fiction) SYN2005 a verb is most frequently preceded by a pronoun).

At the end of rhymed verse lines there is, apart from the syntactic requirement, also the requirement of sound repetition, which might cause a slightly increasing frequency of nouns and verbs (related to the use of grammatical rhyme).

Translated by Gabriela Brůhová

Table 1: 6–12 syllable verse lines.

number of syllables per line	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
N	36.92	35.67	33.82	33.51	34.08	33.59	33.58
A	9.24	8.76	8.5	8.84	9.32	9.48	10.52
P	13.72	13.32	13.48	13.66	14.21	13.96	14.4
C	0.66	0.67	0.68	0.57	0.73	0.57	0.69
V	19.99	19.58	20.47	20.02	19.03	19.95	18.58
D	5.99	6.73	7.4	7.23	6.54	6.05	5.86
R	8.96	9.87	9.55	10.66	10.15	10.65	10.69
J	3.53	4.26	4.56	4.28	4.62	4.48	4.51
T	0.86	0.96	1.26	1.07	1.19	1.10	1.07
I	0.14	0.17	0.3	0.18	0.12	0.16	0.11
NV/AD	3.74	3.57	3.41	3.33	3.35	3.45	3.18

Table 2: Lyric vs. epic poetry.

	Lyric	Epic	Syn2005 (fiction)	KČV
N	32.93	30.33	24.3	30.19
A	9.96	8.50	8.9	9.91
P	12.98	13.53	14.9	13.69
C	0.44	0.70	1.6	0.64
V	17.18	19.42	21.2	18.38
D	6.67	7.96	8.4	7.75
R	10.65	11.18	9.8	10.02
J	7.42	6.50	8.9	7.13
T	1.29	1.52	1.8	1.39
I	0.47	0.37	0.11	0.89
AN/DV	1.8	1.42	1.12	1.52

Table 3: Trochee vs. iamb; Beginning of a trochaic verse line vs. beginning of an iambic verse line; Unrhymed vs. rhymed verse lines; End of unrhymed verse vs. end of rhymed verse.

	Beginning of a trochaic verse line	Trochee	Beginning of an imabic verse line	Iamb	End of unrhymed verse	Unrhymed verse	End of rhymed verse	Rhymed verse	KČV
N	17.59	31.4	10.31	29.54	48.04	30.26	52.44	30.34	30.19
A	9.41	9.12	1.13	7.61	10.05	8.41	6.69	8.2	9.91
P	6.83	13.15	17.5	13.84	6.88	13.38	3.13	13.6	13.69
C	0.97	0.78	0.41	0.58	0.48	0.87	0.5	0.62	0.64
V	21.58	19.09	10.11	18.86	25.81	19.23	29.76	18.96	18.38
D	9.4	7.09	13.53	8.1	7.15	7.61	6.34	7.67	7.75
R	17.61	11.33	7.3	9.69	0.02	10.04	0.05	10.44	10.02
J	12.88	6.27	32.21	9.33	0.47	7.69	0.27	8.06	7.13
T	2.47	1.4	4.95	1.82	1.03	1.74	0.71	1.62	1.39
I	1.26	0.37	2.55	0.64	0.07	0.77	0.11	0.49	0.89

Table 4: Rhymed pairs (we provide only pairs whose frequency exceeded the limit of 1 per cent).

NN	34.56
VV	17.04
NV	9.83
VN	8.14
DN	4.53
ND	3.38
AN	2.75
NA	2.47
AV	2.21
PN	1.70
AA	1.63
VA	1.54
NP	1.42
DV	1.12

N – Noun
A – Adjective
P – Pronoun
C – Numeral
V – Verb
D – Adverb
R – Preposition
J – Conjunction
T – Particle
I – Interjection

Works Cited

Bartoň, Tomáš et al. 2009. *Statistiky češtiny*. Prague: Nakladatelství lidové noviny and Ústav Českého národního korpusu.

Červenka, Miroslav. 2006. *Kapitoly o českém verši*, edited by Květa Sgallová and Jiří Holý. Prague: Karolinum.

Červenka, Miroslav and Květa Sgallová. 1978. "Český verš." In *Słowiańska metryka porównawcza I. Słownik rytmiczny i sposoby jego wykorzystania*, edited by Zdzisława Kopczyńska and Lucylla Pszczołowska, 45–93. Wrocław: PAN.

Červenka, Miroslav and Květa Sgallová. 1984. "Český verš." In *Słowiańska metryka porównawcza II. Organizacja składniowa*, edited by Zdzisława Kopczyńska and Lucylla Pszczołowska, 11–61. Wrocław: PAN.

Gasparov, Michail and Tatiana Skulačeva. 2004. *Статьи о лингвистике стиха*. Москва: Языки славянской культуры.

Ibrahim, Robert and Petr Plecháč. In press. "Частотность частей речи в чешской поэзии." In *Славянский стих*.

Jakobson, Roman. 1979. "Toward a description of Mácha's verse." In *Selected Works V*, edited by Stephen Rudy and Martha Taylor, 433–485. The Hague: Mouton.

Mazáčová, Stanislava. 1973. "Sylabická délka věty v českém trocheji a jambu." In *Semiotyka i struktura tekstu*, edited by Maria Renata Mayenowa, 259–273. Wrocław: PAN.

Plecháč, Petr. 2012. "Miroslav Červenka a generativní model metrické normy českého sylabotónického verše." *Česká literatura* 60 (3): 398–408.

Průcha, Jan. 1967. "On word-class distribution in Czech utterances." *Prague Studies in Mathematical Linguistics* 2: 65–76. Prague: Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

Pszczołowska, Lucylla. 1965. "Długość wersu a budowa zdania." In *Poetyka i matematyka*, edited by Maria Renata Mayenowa, 79–96. Warszawa: PIW.

Shaw, J. Thomas. 1993. "Parts of speech in Puškin's rhymewords and nonrhymed endwords." *Slavic and East European Journal* 37 (1): 1–22.

Roman Jakobson's Research into Judeo-Czech

Robert Dittmann

Charles University, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Czech Language and Theory of Communication,
nám. J. Palacha 2, 116 38 Prague 1, Czech Republic.
Email: robert.dittmann@ff.cuni.cz

Abstract: The genius of Roman Jakobson strongly also influenced the scholarship dealing with the earliest evidence of Old Czech. Dating back to Jakobson's youth and reaching its summit in the early 1940s, the topic of Judeo-Czech, i.e., Old Czech written in Hebrew script in the form of the so-called Canaanite glosses, had been emerging in Jakobson's publications for decades. It reappeared again at the end of his life. This contribution traces the history of Jakobson's interest in Judeo-Czech (or Old Czech) glosses written in Hebrew script. In addition to extant publications, it makes use of unpublished materials from the Roman Jakobson Papers, kept at MIT, Cambridge, MA. It further presents the overview of Jakobson's work in the field, published and unpublished, and compares selected points from Jakobson's research with the current state of scholarship.

Keywords: Judeo-Czech; Canaanite glosses; Old Czech

Roman Jakobson, the *russkij filolog* (Birnbaum 1998, 85) and universal *intellectual giant* (Rosenblith 1983, 85) had also a strong influence on scholarship dealing with the earliest evidence of Primitive and Old Czech.[1] The topic of the language of Czech Jews before 1300, as recorded especially in the form of the so-called Canaanite glosses in Hebrew script, had been appearing in Jakobson's publications for decades, virtually until the end of his life. Most of these glosses are attested to in two masterpieces of the first half of the 13th century, namely *Or Zarua* completed in 1246 and *Arugat ha-Bosem* completed in about 1234. Jakobson's Jewishness and his interest in early stages of Slavonic languages were united in this field of research as his long-time pursuit of the topic was further encouraged by close personal friendships with eminent scholars like Max Weinreich and Morris Halle. Studying the language of Czech Jews provided him with parallels to trends or constructs he defined with respect to other topics. His effort to present the Czech lands as neither East nor West found a noteworthy parallel and support in the bipolar Eastern-Western origins of Czech Jews while the expansion of Czech into Old Polish in the Christian milieu resembled the Czech influence on Polish Jews during the Middle Ages.

In this paper I will attempt to trace the history of Jakobson's interest in the language of medieval Czech Jews as it is reflected in glosses written in Hebrew script,[2] present the overview of his published and unpublished works in this field, and compare selected points in his research with the current state of scholarship.

Tracing the history of Jakobson's interest

The topic first caught Jakobson's attention when he was nineteen years old. He later acknowledges this in his correspondence and unpublished manuscripts and there is additional evidence confirming this early interest of his. In a manuscript stored in Roman Jakobson Papers at the MIT, he himself writes: "Славянские глоссы в др.-евр. памятниках привлекли мое внимание уже в 1915 г."[3] (Slavic glosses in Old Hebrew literature caught my attention as early as 1915.) He also discloses

---

[2] Cf. also Dittmann (2012), Bláha et al. (2014a, 2014b). This study presents a modified and completed version of the studies mentioned.

[3] Roman Jakobson Papers, MC 72, Institute Archives and Special Collections, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA (hereafter, RJP, box number / folder number), box 16, folder 68. A translation of this statement appears also in RJP 13/58: "Slaviše glosn in hebryjiše gəšribəne denkmaln hobn mix farinteresirt šyjn in 1915…" (Slavic glosses in documents written in Hebrew have interested me since 1915.) The author would like to thank Prof. L. R. Waugh, the Executive Director of Roman Jakobson Intellectual Trust, for permission to publish materials from the RJP.

his long-term interest in this topic in his postwar correspondence with his Czech friends Antonín Stanislav Mágr[4] and Jindřich Chalupecký.[5] A newspaper report on Jakobson's New York lecture of October 1941 quotes Jakobson recalling his Brno colleague, the historian Dr. Vladimir Groh. About the topic of language among Czech Jews during the Middle Ages, Jakobson said: "Chtěl jsem už dávno … napsat o tom dílo, a slíbil jsem profesoru Grohovi, který se o to nesmírně zajímal, že mu je ukáži v rukopise."[6] (I intended some time ago … to write a book about it and I promised prof. Groh, who was extremely interested in it, to show him the manuscript.) Finally, Jakobson's own handwriting in his early excerpts of Slavic glosses offers further objective evidence. The excerpts, deposited in his papers at MIT (RJP 29/61), are written with ink and in handwriting quite similar to his early poems (cf. RJP 31/21). At the time, he excerpted several Slavic glosses, including their Hebrew context (in a Russian transcription), and numbered them. The glosses include those contained in the *Arugat ha-Bosem* (e.g., *potemněla, temná, osvietiti s'a, po mém obznamenání s'a* etc.) and glosses of the Munich Codex No. 346, namely *stegna, rataj* and *žagavič̌e*. The sources for the excerpts were two articles of 1877 and 1886, respectively. Obvious is also his uncertainty how to interpret some glosses, e.g., in the case of a most probably corrupted pair of neighboring glosses from the *Arugat ha-Bosem* he notes "prišno – prisk'ci (?)" (RJP 29/61).

Jakobson's first brief mention of the Jewish–Czech language in Přemyslid Bohemia appeared in 1923 in his Russian book on Czech verse О чешском стихе: преимущественно в сопоставлении с русским published in Germany and in 1936 in his published polemics against a Nazi-inclined historian Konrad Bittner. One year later, he mentions for the first time that the oldest Czech sentence occurs not in the Leitmeritz Chapter Foundation Charter, but in Joseph Kara's writings predating the Leitmeritz record by a century. In 1938, the ongoing polemics against Bittner forced Jakobson to elaborate on medieval Prague Jewish literature. He describes in more detail the Old Czech glosses and compares the number of French and German glosses in the *Or Zarua* and *Arugat ha-Bosem*. In the late 1930s the topic of Old Czech glosses became allegedly the central research subject for Jakobson (cf. Rudy 1985, xvi). There are extensive excerpts among his unpublished papers (e.g., RJP 29/61–76, 30/1–9) dating most probably from this time. After his arrival in the USA, he had already all the necessary excerpts and thoughts well prepared.

[4] A letter of 1948, RJP 44/7: "Zabýval jsem se těmito věcmi a sbíral materiál od svých studentských let." (I have been occupying myself with these things and collected material since my student days.)

[5] A letter of 2nd April 1947, RJP 40/32: "[p]roblém, pro který jsem sbíral materiál od dob studentských…" (a problem on which I have been collecting materials since my student days…).

[6] Undated newspaper clip of 1941 on Jakobson's New York lecture, see RJP 38/46.

Jakobson's research in this field reached its peak in New York in the first half of the 1940s. On October 2, 1941 he lectured in New York's Public Library (RJP 38/46) on the topic *Zapomenuté památky k poznání Přemyslovské Prahy* (Forgotten documents shed light on Přemyslid Prague) and spoke extensively on Prague Jews of the 13th century.[7] His first published article in the US appeared on December 5th 1941—quite uncharacteristically in the *American Hebrew*, intermingled with advertisements—about half a year after his arrival. His article was wholly devoted to this topic. In fact, all the central topics of his research into the Czech of Jews in the Middle Ages are summarized in this short article including the Eastern origin of Czech Jewry, the Czech Jewish tradition in Přemyslid Prague, the oldest Czech sentence, and the value of and differences between Old Czech glosses in *Or Zarua* and *Arugat ha-Bosem* etc. During his sojourn in Scandinavia, he had already discovered medieval documents voicing admiration for the Czech lands by Jewish merchants (Jakobson 1995, 18). He also found a supportive environment for the continuation of these studies in the collaboration with the Norwegian semitist H. Birkeland and, after relocating to New York, especially thanks to Max Weinreich and others at YIVO and, later, in Morris Halle. We can document his research in this field in the first half of the 1940s by following the many traces he left behind. Between 1941 and 1944, Jakobson gave at least 4 lectures in which he focused on the topic (see below) while the drafts of all the articles published later originated between 1942 and 1944, as indicated by the end notes in his *Selected Writings*. 1943 saw the publication of his highly controversial *Moudrost starých Čechů*, which also briefly mentions the speech of Czech Jews in the Middle Ages.

An almost completed, lengthy Russian monograph devoted to this topic originated in the period of the late 1930s and most probably in the first half of the 1940s. It is partially preserved as a RJP manuscript. His postwar correspondence with B. Havránek, A. S. Mágr, H. Volavková, U. Weinreich, M. Weinreich, N. P. Savickij, and K. Wehle confirms that he had almost finished the manuscript and prepared it for print (see Dittmann, 2012, 273–274 for details). The title underwent slight changes in the course of time: *Bohemika v hebrejských textech XI.–XIII. stol.* (Bohemica in Hebrew texts of the 11th–13th centuries), *Bohemika v hebrejských rukopisech 11.–13. století* (Bohemica in Hebrew manuscripts of the 11th–13th centuries), *Bohemica v hebrejském písemnictví 11.–13. století* (Bohemica in Hebrew literature of the 11th–13th centuries), *Čeština v židovských památkách 11.–13. st.* (Czech in Jewish documents of the 11th–13th centuries) etc., (cf. Bláha et al., 2014b, 284).

Wisely, after WWII, Jakobson did not return to Czechoslovakia. In the late 1940s he sent to the Czechoslovak publishing house Sfinx a study on the speech and

---

[7] As a lecture summary published in the *New-Yorské Listy* in October 1941 (see RJP 38/46) reports it.

literature of the Czech Jews under the Přemyslid rule but the publication was not realized because of the postwar lack of paper. Most probably, it finally appeared in 1957 (Jakobson1957). Even in the 1950s, Jakobson listed a completion of his monograph on Judeo–Czech among his current research projects. This intention of his is further supported by the correspondence with M. Weinreich. In 1957, Jakobson lectured in Czechoslovakia on the language of medieval Czech Jews but the lecture could only be published abroad. In 1964, he issued (in collaboration with M. Halle) his longest and most famous study on the topic called *The Term* Canaan *in Medieval Hebrew*. In that study Jakobson used a large part of the manuscript monograph, nearly completed in New York in the early 1940s, in addition to some upgrading additions (e.g., a critique of Kupfer and Lewicki's Polish monograph of 1956 at the end, the completion of footnotes, etc.). Once again, he announced his plan to publish a monograph on the topic. He completed his last contribution to this field when he was over eighty, once again resuming the draft outlined in 1942–44.

Overview of Jakobson's works in the field of Judeo–Czech

Printed works dealing wholly with the topic were published in 1941 (Jakobson 1941), 1957 (Jakobson 1957), 1964 (Jakobson and Halle 1964) and 1985 (Jakobson 1985). Apart from these major works, scattered mentions appear in other Jakobson's writings, e.g., in *Moudrost starých Čechů* (The Wisdom of Ancient Czechs).

Jakobson's lectures that were not published include *Zapomenuté památky k poznání Přemyslovské Prahy* (Československý kulturní kroužek, New York, 2nd October 1941, cf. RJP 38/46), *Čeští středověcí žídé a jejich jazyk* (New York, École Libre des Hautes Études, 1943), *Slovanské prvky v jazyce židovském* (ibidem, 1944.) The latter is possibly the basis for his later study The Yiddish Sound Pattern and Its Slavic Environment published in 1953.[8] Finally, *Řeč a písemnictví českých Židů v době přemyslovské* (Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1957). We do not know how much of this lecture was actually published in Jakobson 1957.

Following is a survey of the unpublished yet preserved writings.

RJP 16/68 the main part entitled Язык и правописание ханаанских глосс и имен в др.-еврейской средневековой письменности (Language and orthography of the Canaanite glosses and names in Old Hebrew medieval writings)—92 handwritten pages (written by Jakobson's hand) on the language

---

8 In his report on scholarly activities of 1939–1945 (RJP 1/16), Jakobson states that he has written an article for the Journal of the Yiddish Scientific Institute dealing with the Slavic impact on Yiddish phonology.

and orthography of Canaanic glosses, about 35 normalized pp. Published by the present author and colleagues in *Jews & Slavs* 24 (2014).

RJP 13/59 (*Šprax un ujslyjg fun* כנען *-iše glosn un nemen in hebryjšen mitlalterlaxer literatur* /Speech and orthography of Canaanite glosses and names in Hebrew medieval literature/)—a 23-page-long Yiddish manuscript, partial but not identical translation of RJP 16/68, not in Jakobson's handwriting.

RJP 13/60—a 9-page typed Yiddish manuscript (untitled, starting with an excuse "*Cum erštn mol in lebn lejen jich a referat in jideš…*" /for the first time in my life I am giving a paper in Yiddish…/ in Jakobson's handwriting). Very probably a lecture *Čeština pražských židů v XI–XIII stol.* (Presented at the Yiddish Scientific Institute, New York, 1942), cf. RJP 13/54.

RJP 13/54—an untitled 13-page-long Russian manuscript written by Jakobson, a Yiddish translation of this manuscript is in RJP 13/60. The lecture was definitely intended for an American audience as it draws e.g., a parallel between multilingual milieu of medieval Jews and multilevel stylistic diversification of English.

RJP 13/55—a 20-page-long manuscript in Russian, the basis of Jakobson's article in *American Hebrew* (the manuscript starts with an English title *Cultural Prosperity of Czech Jews in Middle Ages*).

RJP 34/44 *The Languages of the Diaspora as a Particular Linguistic Problem* (transcript of a lecture delivered on 7th April 1958, Columbia University, New York), cf. the annual report in RJP 1/28.

There are also plenty of background materials, for example secondary literature excerpts, lists, outlines, a glossary of excerpted Canaanite glosses, correspondence, etc.

Comparison of selected points with the current state of scholarship

Jakobson's excellent insight into the problem of Canaanite glosses, i.e. Slavic, especially Czech medieval word in Hebrew script, requires only minor corrections and additions today. Let us name but a few:

It is essential that the original manuscripts be consulted for the exact readings rather than extant published editions, which frequently corrupt the Slavic gloss. Surprisingly, even modern critical editions, when available, are frequently misleading. Some differences appear between published editions and the original manuscripts, as for example missing vocalization in the edition, e.g., בֵּילמוֹ *bělmo* (*Or Zarua*, manuscript, London, British Library, Or. 2859, fol. 184a)—*Or Zarua*, edition of 1888, p. 71 בײלמו, בלַאֵזֵין *blažen* (manuscript with Kara's commentary, St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Evr. I 21, fol. 60b)—edition Harkavy

(1867, p. 50) בלאזין; קְרבּוֹשְׁקָא *kraboška* (manuscript *Or Zarua*: Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Rosenthal 3, II, fol. 57b)—*Or Zarua*, edition of 1862, p. 42 קרבושקא; קרוּג *krug* (manuscript in St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Evr. I 11, fol. 155a, a marginal gloss)—edition Harkavy (1867, 64f.) קרוג; קְוֵיטַני *květný* (*Or Zarua*, manuscript, Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Rosenthal 3, II, fol. 25a)—*Or Zarua*, edition of 1862, p. 18: קויטני.

Newly found "glosses" (or *bohemica*) have to be added to the corpus, e.g. סמוסטרל (*samostriel/samostřiel*),[9] הַטְוָוארוֹג (*ha-tvarog*; Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Cod. Parm. 2413, fol. 1a), פלכטיצא (*plachtica*; New York, Jewish Theological Library, Lutzky 778, fol. 42b), חבושתישצו [< חבושתישצי] (*chvoštišče*; Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, ebr. 301, fol. 134a), קוֹטְוִי (*kotvy*; Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, ebr. 301, fol. 138b), פְּשׁוּ (*pažú*; Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, ebr. 301, fol. 175a) etc. Furthermore, newly found facts as for example the likely first mentions of the influence of Slavic pronunciation compared to the Ashkenazic and Tsarfatic (possibly from the second half of the 13th c.) in the work of Jequtiel ha-Kohen ben Jehuda, need to be added to the contributions of medieval Jews to Slavic and Czech studies.

Jakobson's extrapolation that all Canaanite glosses are Old Czech may be revised in a few individual cases (cf. Kulik 2012, 399–400) while some further exceptions to his otherwise correct generalizations can also be adduced. Jakobson (1985, 857) argues that the sound *s* is in Judeo–Czech glosses invariably represented by the grapheme ס, but this does not hold true for the gloss מוֹנִיסְטָשׁ (*monisto-s*), cf. Dittmann (2012, 279).

The parallel corpus of Czech appellatives prior to 1300 written in the Latin script has to be significantly enlarged (e.g., with newly issued volumes of *Codex diplomaticus et epitolaris regni Bohemiae*), new analyses for word formation productivity, phonology of Old Czech etc., have to be considered, and new theories like that of P. Wexler have to be tested. On the other hand, the recent scholarship also requires some corrections, e.g., the gloss *ožeg* (אוֹשֶׁג, *Or Zarua* manuscript: Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Rosenthal 3, II, fol. 214a) for which Shapira (2007, 149) excludes West–Slavonic provenance, fits Old Czech perfectly and is, moreover, introduced by the typical phrase *in the language of Canaan*.

---

9 We would like to thank Prof. Dr. E. Hollender of Frankfurt a. M. University for sharing with us the information regarding this gloss.

Conclusion

Even though a final appreciation of Jakobson's fruitful, long-term interest in Judeo–Czech may be achieved only after the publication and critical assessment of his manuscript materials, most of his known conclusions continue to be generally valid. Nevertheless, some corrections, additions and new contextualizations would certainly have to be made while the lively discussions of problems, such as the Old Czech layer in and influence on Yiddish, would also have to be taken into account. Even though Jakobson's close friend M. Weinreich in his history of Yiddish fundamentally disagreed with Jakobson's conclusions (cf. Bláha et al., 2014b, 318) concerning the Canaanite language—for Weinreich the *Knaanic language* is a language combining only various West Slavonic features—recent scholarship is in line with Jakobson, considering it is basically Old Czech, cf. Uličná 2011. The value of the Primitive/Old Czech "glosses" for diachronic Czech studies is immense. They contribute to the knowledge of Czech phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicology, to phonetics and grammatography, they include possibly the oldest Czech complex sentence, evidence of multilingual environment (equivalents in Slavic, French and German) and feature some archaic phonological traits due to the stability of the writing system or possibly greater conservativism of the Jewish population. It is to Jakobson's merit that he based this research on truly scholarly foundations as far as the linguistic interpretation of the data is concerned. His generalizing genius formulated apt overall tendencies and outlined tasks of research valid even today.

Works Cited

Birnbaum, Henrik. 1998. *Sketches of Slavic Scholars*. Bloomington: Slavica Publishers.

Bláha, Ondřej and Robert Dittmann, Karel Komárek, Daniel Polakovič, Lenka Uličná. 2014a. "On the Problem of Judeo–Czech and the Canaanite Glosses of the 11th to the 13th Centuries in Hebrew Manuscripts." *Jews & Slavs* 24: 117–151.

Bláha, Ondřej and Robert Dittmann, Karel Komárek, Daniel Polakovič, Lenka Uličná. 2014b. "Roman Jakobson's Unpublished Study on the Language of Canaanite Glosses." *Jews & Slavs* 24: 282–318.

Dittmann, Robert. 2012. "K významu raných česko-židovských kontaktů v oblasti českých zemí pro diachronní bohemistiku." *Listy filologické*, no. 135 (3–4): 359–385.

Harkavy, Albert. 1867. הסלווים ושפת היהודים. Vilna: Romm.

Isaac ben Moses. 1862. *Or Zarua I–II*. Žitomir: Spira.

Isaac ben Moses. 1887–1890. *Or Zarua III–IV*. Jerusalem: Chajim Hirschensohn.

Jakobson, Roman. 1941. "The City of Learning." *American Hebrew* (5th December 1941): 6–7, 13 and 16–17.

Jakobson, Roman. 1957. "Řeč a písemnictví českých židů v době přemyslovské." In *Kulturní sborník ROK*, edited by Ladislav Matejka, 35–46. New York: Moravian Library.

Jakobson, Roman and Morris Halle. 1964. "The Term *Canaan* in Medieval Hebrew." In *For Max Weinreich in His Seventieth Birthday. Studies in Jewish Languages, Literature and Society*, 147–172. The Hague: Mouton.

Jakobson, Roman. 1985. "Из разысканий над старочешскими глоссами в средневековых еврейских памятниках." In *Selected Writings VI. Early Slavic Paths and Crossroads. Part Two. Medieval Slavic Studies*, edited by Stephen Rudy, 855–857. Berlin—New York—Amsterdam: Mouton.

Jakobson, Roman. 1995. "Dodatek k úvodu: přípitek z r. 1969." In *Poetická funkce*, edited by Miroslav Červenka, 17–19. Jinočany: H & H.

Kulik, Alexander. 2012. "Jews from Rus' in Medieval England." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 102 (3): 371–403.

Rosenblith, Walter A. 1983. "[A tribute to Roman Jakobson]." In *A Tribute to Roman Jakobson*, 84–85. Berlin—New York: Mouton.

Rudy, Stephen. 1985. "Preface." In *Selected Writings VI. Early Slavic Paths and Crossroads. Part Two. Medieval Slavic Studies*, edited by Stephen Rudy, i–xxiii. Berlin—New York—Amsterdam: Mouton.

Shapira, Dan D. Y. 2007. "Notes on Early Jewish History in Eastern and Central Europe." *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 15: 125–157.

Uličná, Lenka. 2011. "Hlavní proudy středověkého (pre)aškenázského myšlení a tzv. pražská komentátorská škola. Hledání identity v podmínkách izolace a integrace." In *Dialog myšlenkových proudů středověkého judaismu. Mezi integrací a izolací*, edited by Jiřina Šedinová et al., 268–331. Prague: Academia.

Jakobson's Ruse: "Artifice" in the Context of Functional Aesthetics and Sign Theory

Richard Müller – Pavel Šidák

Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Institute of Czech Literature,
Na Florenci 3/1420, 110 00 Prague 1, Czech Republic.
International Art Campus Prague (Literary Academy), Department of Literature and Czech Language,
Na Pankráci 420/54, 140 00 Prague 4, Czech Republic.
Email: muller@ucl.cas.cz, pavel.sidak@art-campus.cz

Abstract: In this paper, the authors offer an overview and analysis of Roman O. Jakobson's concept of "artifice" and contextualize this concept within two critical traditions: functional aesthetics and sign theory. Within both traditions and through several examples the paper draws attention to certain weak points of this concept, namely the problematic assumption of the immanent character of parallelism as an artistic procedure as well as its unclear position within the Saussurean and Peircean semiological paradigms. Lastly, the concept of artifice is briefly contextualized within what could be called inherent symmetricism of certain trends of 20th century literary theory.

Keywords: sign; semiotics; artifice; icon; index; symbol; parallelism; aesthetic function; F. de Saussure; Ch. S. Peirce

1. Artifice and Its Two Contexts

In modern literary criticism, the prevailing belief is that literature—in the sense of the *belles lettres*—cannot be defined essentially by objective means or by any feature that would guard its identity, drawing the line that separates the non-literary usage of language from the literary. With this in mind, we would like to look back at a concept, by now half-forgotten, that attempts to make this very definition and to draw this very line: the concept of "artifice" as proposed by Roman O. Jakobson.

Artifice is a notion both new and old in literary criticism that draws on different trends of thought. First, artifice designates the specificity of verbal art and, in that sense, harkens back to the Formalist search for "literariness". While Formalist literariness—the characteristic, immanent essence of all literature—is supposed to be a manifestation of language as a system, *langue*, artifice is not specified in terms of the *parole – langue* opposition and is postulated, like Peirce's typology of signs, outside this distinction.[1]

Secondly, artifice belongs to the context of semiotics; it is meant to indicate the specificity of artistic speech by extending the triadic classification of signs as proposed by Charles S. Peirce. As Irene Portis-Winner (1994) observes, a similar tendency to define art in semiotic terms, rather than in terms of rhetoric or philosophy, can be traced in Ferdinand de Saussure's notion of the anagram. Anagram, transposed into the intellectual context of 1960s by Jean Starobinski, was elaborated on the material of Homeric texts; it is defined as a key word (word-theme – for instance, the name of the deity), whose lexical and graphematic properties are inserted and scattered in the text (de Mauro 1989, 285). In other words, the text is saturated with phonic paraphrases of the key word. (Starobinski's and Riffaterre's hypogram and syllepsis as well as Kristeva's dual sign draw from the same Saussureian and semiological roots.)

Artifice, however, is supposed to be the direct answer to the question: What constitutes the specifically artistic character of the verbal artefact?

2. The Notion of Artifice

Jakobson adopts the word "artifice" from an English Jesuit, poet and critic, Gerard M. Hopkins (1844–1889); Hopkins also provides the Russian theoretician

---

[1] In "Closing Statements: Linguistics and poetics", Jakobson (1960) speaks of the communicative situation, but artifice, as a sign, must by definition possess some systematic features.

with the underlying thesis that "all artifice reduces itself to the principle of parallelism. The structure of poetry is that of continuous parallelism, ranging from the technical so-called Parallelisms of Hebrew poetry and the antiphons of Church music up to the intricacy of Greek or Italian or English verse" (Hopkins 1959; quoted in Jakobson 1960, 368).[2] Artifice is based on the structural principle of parallelism. Jakobson further defines parallelism as "a system of steady correspondences in composition and order of elements on many different levels: syntactic constructions, grammatical forms and grammatical categories, lexical synonyms and total lexical identities, and finally combinations of sounds and prosodic schemes. This system confers upon the lines connected through parallelism both clear uniformity and great diversity" (Jakobson 1983, 102–103). Parallelism, according to Jakobson, is a constitutive feature of poetry and the *belles lettres*. Especially in the former, it acquires the most dominant position in the hierarchy of linguistic phenomena and levels.

Artifice, conceived as parallelism, and thus a phenomenon of the suprasegmental level of language (like de Saussure's anagram), is what presumably makes an artistic text artistic. As we know, however, Jakobson approached the question of verbal art through the concept of function and this has become his true trademark. How then does artifice relate to the *poetic function*, and, *mutatis mutandis*, Mukařovský's *aesthetic function*?

In Jakobson's famous phrase, the poetic function "*projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination*", so that "[e]quivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence" (Jakobson 1960). It is this projection that creates parallel series of elements on various levels of speech. Parallels, as Jakobson points out, are not simply identical units; they are based on relations of both congruity and contrast. Both kinds of relations can be illustrated in a poem by E. E. Cummings "[love is more thicker than forget]" (1939, 175):[3]

---

[2] Jakobson uses the word artifice first in his "Linguistics and Poetics" (Jakobson 1960), quoting from Hopkins's *Journals and Papers* (Hopkins 1959). He returns to the idea of artifice in the paper "On Visual and Auditory Signs" in 1964, and later in "About the Relation between Visual and Auditory Signs" (1967; both were later conflated into one for the second volume of his *Essais de linguistique générale*, 1973). The way parallelism ("convergences and divergences") on various—phonological, grammatical and semantic—levels acquires "an autonomous poetic value" is also described, and the term artifice used, in his "Grammatical Parallelism and its Russian Facet" (Jakobson 1987a). The most elaborated discussion of artifice appears in the opening address to the First International Congress of Semiotics in Milan, first published in French in 1975 under the title "Coup d'œil sur le développement de la sémiotique" (alluding to Émile Benveniste's *Coup d'œil sur le développement de la linguistique*, 1963); in English as "A Glance at the Development of Semiotics" (Jakobson 1989).

[3] For instance, the arithmetic surplus of 1 (220 subtracted from 221) could be claimed to represent a symbolic surplus connoting pleasure: an implicit signal that travel by train is gratifying. Isn't,

love is more thicker than forget
more thinner than recall
more seldom than a wave is wet
more frequent than to fail

it is most mad and moonly
and less it shall unbe
than all the sea which only
is deeper than the sea

love is less always than to win
less never than alive
less bigger than the least begin
less littler than forgive

it is most sane and sunly
and more it cannot die
than all the sky which only
is higher than the sky

Let us, for the sake of clarity, concentrate solely on parallelisms at the lexical and syntactic levels. The formal design of the poem, as shown in Figure 1, is built on a series of corresponding agrammatisms (more thinner, more thicker, less always, less never, less bigger, less littler; underlined), antonymic pairs (thicker – thinner, forget – recall, seldom – frequent, fail – win etc.; in bold), contrasting pairs (moon – sun, sea – sky; in italics), a-syntactical constructions (less it shall unbe, more it cannot die; in capitals), neologisms (moonly, sunly, unbe, littler; strikethrough) and anaphors and epiphors (double strikethrough).

---

after all, the power of inducing one to "read too much into it" supposed to be the privilege of artistic texts?

love is <u>more thicker</u> than forget
<u>more thinner</u> than recall
<u>more seldom</u> than a wave is wet
<u>more frequent</u> than to fail

it is most mad and moonly
and less it shall unbe
than all the sea which only
is deeper than the sea

love is <u>less always</u> than to win
<u>less never</u> than alive
<u>less bigger</u> than the least begin
<u>less littler</u> than forgive

it is most sane and sunly
and more it cannot die
than all the sky which only
is higher than the sky

love is more thicker than **forget**
more thinner than **recall**
more seldom than a wave is wet
more frequent than to **fail**

it is most **mad** and moonly
and **less** it shall unbe
than all the sea which only
is **deeper** than the sea

love is less always than to **win**
less never than **alive**
less bigger than the least begin
less littler than forgive

it is most **sane** and sunly
and **more** it cannot **die**
than all the sky which only
is **higher** than the sky

love is more thicker than forget
more thinner than recall
more seldom than a wave is wet
more frequent than to fail

it is most mad and *moonly*
and less it shall unbe
than all the *sea* which only
is deeper than the *sea*

love is less always than to win
less never than alive
less bigger than the least begin
less littler than forgive

it is most sane and *sunly*
and more it cannot die
than all the *sky* which only
is higher than the *sky*

love is more thicker than forget
more thinner than recall
more seldom than a wave is wet
more frequent than to fail

it is most mad and moonly
and LESS IT SHALL UNBE
than all the sea which only
is deeper than the sea

love is less always than to win
less never than alive
less bigger than the least begin
less littler than forgive

it is most sane and sunly
and MORE IT CANNOT DIE
than all the sky which only
is higher than the sky

love is more thicker than forget
more thinner than recall
more seldom than a wave is wet
more frequent than to fail

it is most mad and ~~moonly~~
and less it shall ~~unbe~~
than all the sea which only
is deeper than the sea

love is less always than to win
less never than alive
less bigger than the least begin
less ~~littler~~ than forgive

it is most sane and ~~sunly~~
and more it cannot die
than all the sky which only
is higher than the sky

~~love is~~ more thicker than forget
~~more~~ thinner than recall
~~more~~ seldom than a wave is wet
~~more~~ frequent than to fail

~~it is most~~ mad and moonly
~~and~~ less it shall unbe
~~than~~ all the sea ~~which only~~
~~is~~ deeper than the sea

~~love is~~ less always than to win
~~less~~ never than alive
~~less~~ bigger than the least begin
~~less~~ littler than forgive

~~it is most~~ sane and sunly
~~and~~ more it cannot die
~~than~~ all the sky ~~which only~~
~~is~~ higher than the sky

~~love is~~ <u>more thicker</u> than **forget**
~~more~~ <u>thinner</u> than **recall**
~~more~~ <u>seldom</u> than a wave is wet
~~more~~ <u>frequent</u> than to **fail**

~~it is most~~ **mad** and ~~moonly~~
~~and~~ **LESS** IT SHALL ~~UNBE~~
~~than~~ all the *sea* ~~which only~~
~~is~~ **deeper** than the *sea*

~~love is~~ <u>less always</u> than to **win**
~~less~~ never than **alive**
~~less~~ bigger than the least begin
~~less~~ ~~littler~~ than forgive

~~it is most~~ **sane** and *sunly*
~~and~~ **MORE** IT CANNOT **DIE**
~~than~~ all the *sky* ~~which only~~
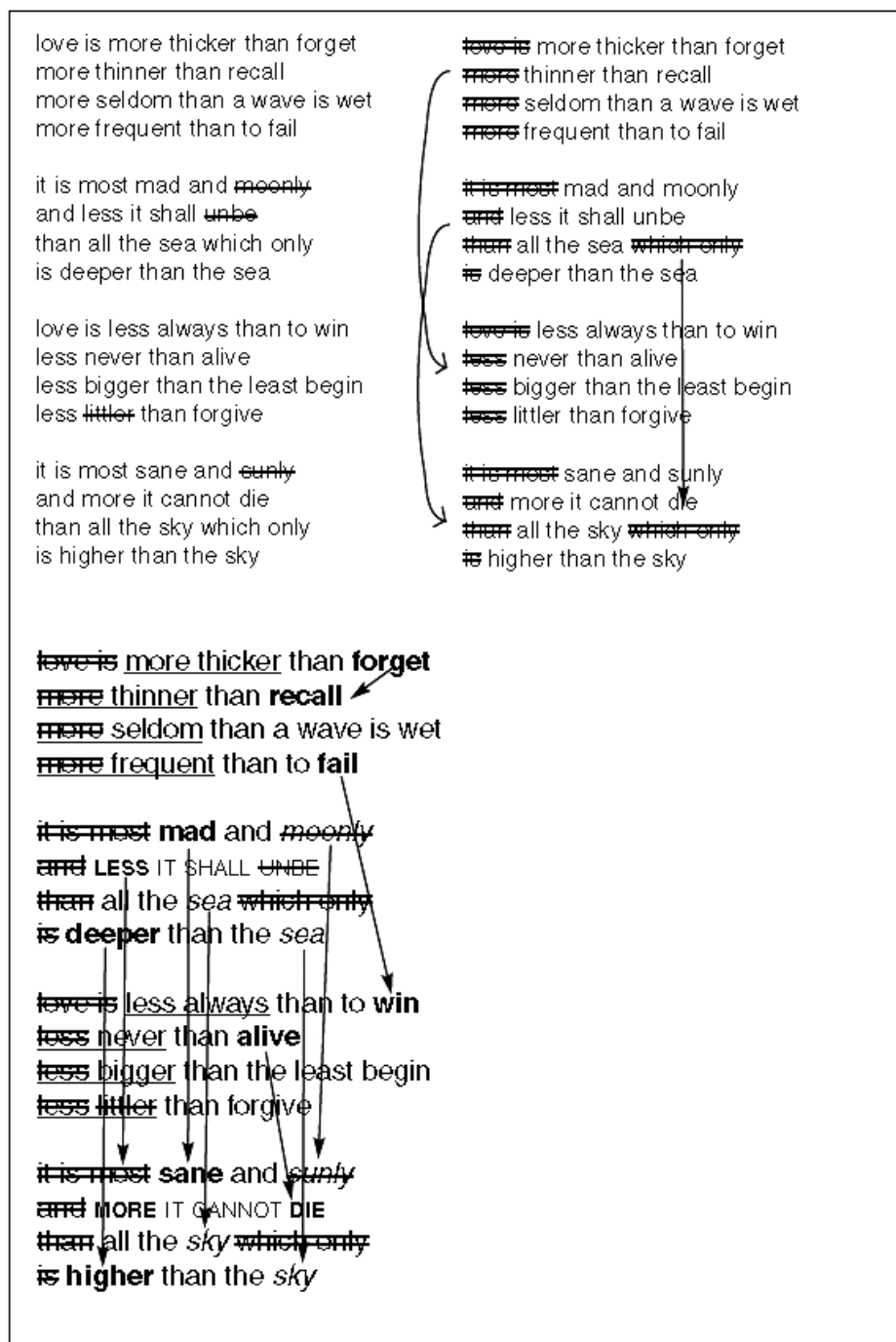~~is~~ **higher** than the *sky*

Figure 1

This poem is a structuralist's paradise and Promised Land; whatever it says about the topic ("love") is the result of its usage of conventional motifs through the *expressive possibilities of language as a system of opposites*. For Jakobson, this poem results from a projection of the principle of comparability, of the paradigmatic, vertical axis of language into the syntagmatic, horizontal axis, the concrete verbal sequence. This projection is a consequence of the focus on "the message for its own sake" (Jakobson 1960) and is an objective, immanent property (function) of a certain text or communicative act. From the semiotic perspective, this is the moment when the artifice is born from within, with its innate artistry.

However, the notion that this process is of an inherent, non-contingent character as well as the claim that parallelism is dominant in art, are both problematic. We can take as an example a timetable of the train connection from Prague to Olomouc, as shown in Figure 2.

Detail spojení Praha hl.n. » Olomouc hl.n.

Informace o spojení

Úsek:	Praha hl.n. > Olomouc hl.n.
Tarif:	tarif RJ Promo / tarif RegioJet internetové jízdné / tarif RegioJet akční internetové jízdné
Cena:	220 Kč / 215 Kč / 180 Kč (tar. vzd. 250 km)

Jízdné

Datum:	10.12.2012 Pondělí
Doba:	2 hod 21 min
Vzdálenost:	250 km
Cena:	220 Kč / 215 Kč / 180 Kč
Omezení:	nutno zakoupit místenku - povinná rezervace míst. Místenka je součástí jízdenky; možnost Wi-Fi připojení

Stanice	Příj.	Odj.	Pozn.	Km
Praha hl.n. ☛		9:12		0
Pardubice hl.n.	10:13	10:14		104
Olomouc hl.n.	11:33	11:35		250
Havířov	12:56			374

- 🚆1005 RegioJet ☲⊠⊙⊙, 2 hod 21 min, 250 km
- RegioJet a.s.; náměstí Svobody 86/17, 602 00 Brno; +420 841 101 101
- občerstvení roznáškovou službou
- nutno zakoupit místenku - povinná rezervace míst
- ve vlaku řazen vůz s přípojkou 230 V
- vlak nečeká na žádné přípoje
- místenka je součástí jízdenky; možnost Wi-Fi připojení

Figure 2

The formal design of this inadvertent poem can be shown (as in Figure 3) to connote serial organization and order, when it repeatedly uses enumerative forms and tables as well as "paronomastic" (and alliterative) correspondences of connection ("přípojka", "přípoje", "připojení"), place ("místenka", "míst", "místenku") or digits (Arabic numerals) within whole numbers.[4] This "poem" strongly suggests the prearranged and controlled character of spatiotemporal transition (cf. the "anaphoric" sequence of 9, 10, 11, 12, etc.), while the formal correspondence of time and price strengthens an overarching structural metaphor: "time is money".

---

[4] The Arabic numeral system thus, under the logic of the decimal system, incorporates the principle of double articulation. For that reason, in order to qualify digits or digital sequences (by analogy) as "paronomastic", the functional structure of the figure within the decimal system has to be taken into account.

The process of interpreting this text (as, in principle, any other text) as artistically encoded could be potentially carried on *ad infinitum*.[5]

Detail ~~spojení~~ Praha ~~hl.n.~~ » Olomouc ~~hl.n.~~

Informace o ~~spojení~~

Úsek:	Praha hl.n. > Olomouc hl.n.
Tarif:	tarif RJ Promo / tarif *RegioJet* internetové *Jízdné* / tarif *RegioJet* akční internetové *Jízdné*
~~Cena~~:	**220** Kč / 215 Kč / 180 Kč (tar. vzd. 250 km)

Jízdné

Datum:	10.12.2012 Pondělí
Doba:	**2 hod 21** min
Vzdálenost:	250 km
~~Cena~~:	**220** Kč / 215 Kč / 180 Kč
Omezení:	~~nutno~~ zakoupit místenku - ~~povinná~~ rezervace míst. Místenka je součástí *Jízdenky*; ~~možnost~~ Wi-Fi PŘIPOJENÍ

Stanice	Příj.	Odj.	Pozn.	Km
Praha ~~hl.n.~~		9:12		0
Pardubice ~~hl.n.~~	10:13	10:14		104
Olomouc ~~hl.n.~~	11:33	11:35		250
Havířov	12:56			374

- 1005 *RegioJet* ⚏🚻☺, **2 hod 21** min, 250 km
- *RegioJet a.s.*; náměstí Svobody 86/17, 602 00 Brno; +420 841 101 101
- občerstvení roznáškovou službou
- ~~nutno~~ zakoupit místenku - ~~povinná~~ rezervace míst
- ve vlaku řazen vůz s PŘÍPOJKOU 230 V
- vlak nečeká na žádné PŘÍPOJE
- místenka je součástí *Jízdenky*; ~~možnost~~ Wi-Fi PŘIPOJENÍ

Figure 3

Jakobson's answer to this would be that the poetic function is part of a hierarchical order of functions and is subordinated here to the referential function. It is hard to see, however, how the dominance of one function should inhere to the communicative act outside any historical contingency, as its immanent feature. Communicative functions, as we know, should not include an evaluative moment: they are defined outside of the distinction between the positive and the negative (aesthetic) value. In other words, we might as well have to do here, in Jakobson's theory, with an immanent case of bad poetry.

---

5   He can do so, because, as he claims, "the Stoic tradition, which conceives of the sign as a referral on the part of the signans to the signatum, remains strong in Peirce's doctrine" (Jakobson 1987b, 443).

It becomes apparent that similar interpretative operations can be applied to any text the moment its signification, its organization of form and content is brought into focus. Note, for instance, the surprising thematic and formal correspondences found on the front page of any given newspaper once it becomes re-coded by the 'poetic function'. Timetables, telephone books and lists of all kinds are, likewise, a fertile ground for poetic analysis.

In this respect, it is worth referring briefly to the concept of aesthetic function as it was developed by Jan Mukařovský. According to Mukařovský (2007), the aesthetic function seems to be, in the end, a consequence of the attitude adopted by the recipient though, of course, related to the intrinsic characteristics of the text. It is not an immanent, but an emergent feature of the text. There seems to be room for further research into the inherent *institutional* dimension of aesthetic *functionality*, as it does or does not pertain to the text within a socially organized system of production. A further question is how this conceptual framework can be reconciled with the idea of the aesthetic norm (which, as we know, is also historically contingent).

3. Artifice as a Sign

But let us return to Jakobson's artifice. Artifice, as mentioned, is meant to extend the triadic classification of signs according to Charles S. Peirce: icon, index and symbol. "The 'artifice,'" Jakobson says, "is to be added to the triad of semiotic modes established by Peirce. This triad is based on two binary oppositions: contiguous/similar and factual/imputed. The contiguity of the two components of the sign [*signans*, *signatum*] is factual in the *index* but imputed in the *symbol*. Now, the factual similarity which typifies *icon* finds its logically foreseeable correlative in the imputed similarity which specifies the *artifice*" (Jakobson 1987b, 451–452). We can represent this model by the following table:

	contiguity (relations of contact, adjacency)	similarity (relations of symmetry, homology)
factual (actual)	index	icon
imputed (arbitrary)	symbol	artifice

Figure 4

The artifice is like icon in terms of similarity, this similarity, however, is not factual, based on the correspondence of the *signans* and the *signatum*, but on imputed likeness, conceived as equivalence within the same context: "'Parallelism' as a characteristic feature of all artifice is the referral of a semiotic fact to an equivalent fact inside the same context, including the case where the aim of the referral is only an elliptic implication" (ibid., 452). As the fourth type of sign, it should be understood as an "artistic procedure" (Mitoseková 2010, 284).

To illustrate this typology of signs, let us imagine a concrete semiotic situation. There are two triangles on two toilet doors:

Figure 5

Where does one go? Depending on the interpretation of the signs, its objects—and the actions of the interpreting subject—vastly differ. If we take them as icons they might refer to the male and female symbols of biology, as introduced by the Swedish naturalist Carl Linné (Linnaeus) in mid-18th century: the shield of Mars and the Mirror of Venus. These, as shown in Figure 6, were in all probability derived from the usage of the Greek alphabet in the Renaissance alchemy, where Mars, Thouros, represents iron and the male principle and Venus or the Phosphoros, copper and the female principle (Stearns 1962).
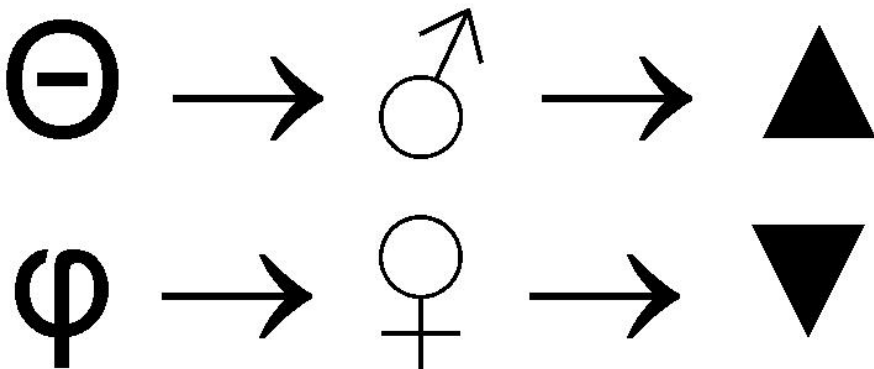

Figure 6

Alternatively, they could also iconically refer to the male and female physiognomy, as in the broader hips of women and the broader shoulders of men. As indices, they apparently refer to the contiguous gendered space and function as deictic signals. In either case, the symbolic character of these signs (i.e., the *arbitrary* relation between the *signans* and the *signatum*) is made obvious by the fact that we stand puzzled in front of the doors. Is there, however, a Jakobsonian artifice? There is, indeed: It seems to inhere in the very imputed (arbitrary) character of the two signs when we begin to perceive them as one (as parts of a message). Divorced from its object, the sign complex becomes parallelized, a symmetrically mirrored shape. All this corresponds to Jakobson's Peircean thesis: "The signs of a given art can carry the imprint of each of the three semiotic modes described by Peirce; thus they can come near to the symbol, to the icon, and to the index, but it is obviously above all in their artistic character that their significance (*sēmeiōsis*) is lodged" (Jakobson 1987b, 451). Depending on where we begin to read, the "artifice" resembles the logic of the trocheic or the iambic meter.

The question is how are we to understand the above mentioned terms *signans* and *signatum*? Are they supposed to be representative of the Saussurean *signifiant* and *signifié*? Do they correspond to the Peircean representamin and object? In either case, Jakobson performs a somewhat non-standard operation. In the first case, he would project the Saussurean concept of the sign on to the Peircean semiotic triangle, converting the triad into a dyadic relation of signans and signatum, the signifying and the signified (object?).[6] In the latter case, Jakobson seems to omit to account for the key element of the Peircean semiosis: the interpretans. The Peircean model, let us point out, is crucially subordinated to the universal "phenomenological" order of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. The inseparable feature of this order, as Jakobson knew all too well, is the *irreducibility* of Secondness to Firstness and Thirdness to Firstness and Secondness. Let us take 'text' as an example; Firstness would be its very existence, the unconditional fact of writing; Secondness is the impulse of its conception, text as a reaction to the world; Thirdness, its presentability to the other, or the other within oneself (i.e., the necessity of interpretation). Saussure, on the other hand, conceives the (linguistic) sign as the pure relation of the acoustic image, the signifying, to the concept, the signified; there is no room for "referent" here. Peirce, to be sure, emphasizes the universal significative nature of thought (including, needless to say, language) in the fact that interpretans itself tends to become a fully developed sign (which, in a sense, divorces the interpretans from the hypothetically signified

---

6   Unfortunately, it is beyond our present scope to explore either the implications of Jakobson's "actualization" of the Peircean triad for the more complex typologies of sign by Peirce, or the implications of the Peircean system of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness, together with the ideas of Dynamic and Immediate Object for Jakobson's concept of reference (or "context"). For an introduction to the second of these issues see Portis-Winner (1994).

object). There is a certain circular or spiral motion that makes objects subject to a continuous process of interpretation, signification.

In sum, Jakobson performs two non-Peircean operations: in his conception of the sign he converts a triad into a dyad, and, on the other hand, in his typology of signification he converts a triad of signs (where index corresponds to Firstness, icon to Secondness and symbol to Thirdness) into a tetrade (constituted by two "binary oppositions"). Jakobson never provides an explanation of what could be the Peircean object of artifice.[7] However, if we apply the principle of poetic function to the artifice, taken again in the Perican sense, it becomes apparent that the interpreted object is neither a referent of a certain world (possible, fictional, or actual) nor one of these worlds as a whole, but, in Jakobson's words, the message for its own sake, its organization—i.e., the sign itself, the significative nature of the sign.

What is also unclear in Jakobson's account is the scope of artifice. Like any other sign, artifice will necessarily be a discrete unit (separate from other signs). Unlike the icon, index and symbol, whose scopes are variable (morpheme, lexeme, phrase; image, image complex etc.) and limited only to the process of semiosis, artifice will become actualized only in the entirety of the work it itself defines. We can refer here to the importance of the notion of the 'frame' in Lotman's semiotics or the idea of a 'whole' as it appears in Frank Kermode's thinking (*The Sense of an Ending*, 1967). Mukařovský's conception of the aesthetic function, referred to earlier, also seems illuminating here: artifice appears as artifice only in the act of reception, not as a given, encoded in the *signans*.

4. The Symptom of Artifice

In conclusion, Jakobson's definition of artifice, as well as the extension and the collapse of the Peircean triads into a dyad and a tetrade, barely conceal a certain apriority of thought and a penchant for tabular forms and binary oppositions. Given two axes defining semiotic typology and a four-membered complex with only three positions occupied, it seems logical to add the fourth "foreseeable" type. (This procedure is, incidentally, reminiscent of Mendeleev's periodic table of elements; the table also suggests apriori functional positions defined by pre-existing categories.)

The predilection for inherently symmetrical and/or predictable systems can be easily detected in other critics of a structuralist and/or semiotics orientation. These tabular or axial types of systemic solutions can be found in Roland Barthes's

connotative order, Franz Stanzel's typological circle or Zdeněk Mathauser's square of artistic situation. (Gerard Genette's table of narrative situations, on the other hand, contents itself with leaving some positions vacant.) Jakobson's table, like Stanzel's circle, is led by the belief in the systematic nature of literary phenomena, that an imputed existence of one constituent inevitably gives rise to its corresponding opposite. Similarly, Tzvetan Todorov in his *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (1970) speaks of "theoretical", qualified, yet historically non-existent genres. Our argument seems to have made a full circle and to end here: can we think of artifice even in the case of these parallelisms? Is the reappearing form of these symmetrical models in literary theory a "surplus" and, by virtue of this, also a constitutive element of what we tend to call the aesthetic function? Should we talk of the aesthetic function, or a symptom of the aesthetic function? And last, but not least, if this desire to crack the code of the artifice should be discarded as a mere illusion, how exactly do we account for its compulsive recurrence? Is it a context-specific and historical tendency or does it possess a more universal character?

Works Cited

Cummings, E. E. 1939. "[love is more thicker than forget]." *Poetry* 53 (4): 175.

Forrest-Thomson, Veronica. 1978. *Poetic Artifice: A Theory of Twentieth-Century Poetry*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hopkins, Gerard M. 1959. *The Journals and Papers*. London: Oxford University Press.

Jakobson, Roman. 1960. "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics." In *Style in Language*, edited by T. Sebeok, 350–377. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jakobson, Roman. 1987a. "Grammatical Parallelism and its Russian Facet." In *Language in Literature*, edited by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, 145–179. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Jakobson, Roman. 1987b. "A Glance at the Development of Semiotics." In *Language in Literature*, edited by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, 436–454. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Jakobson, Roman. 1983. "Parallelism." In *Dialogues*, translated by Christian Hubert, 99–109. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

de Mauro, Tulio. 1989. "Bibliografické a kritické poznámky o Ferdinandovi de Saussurovi." In Ferdinand de Saussure: *Kurs obecné lingvistiky*, edited by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, 257–346. Prague: Odeon.

McHale, Brian. 1982. "Against Interpretation: Iconic Grammar, Anxiety of Influence, and Poetic Artifice." *Poetics Today* 3 (1): 141–158.

Mitoseková, Zofia. 2010. *Teorie literatury: Historický přehled*, translated by Marie Havránková. Brno: Host.

Mukařovský, Jan. 2007. "Místo estetické funkce mezi ostatními." In *Studie* I, edited by Miroslav Červenka and Milan Jankovič, 169–184. Brno: Host.

Portis-Winner, Irene. 1994. "Peirce, Saussure and Jacobson's Aesthetic Function: Towards a Synthetic View of the Aesthetic Function." In *Peirce and Value Theory: On Peircean Ethics and Aesthetics*, edited by Henri Parret, 123–142. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Co.

Stearns, William S. 1962. "The Origin of the Male and Female Symbols of Biology." *Taxon* 11 (4): 109–113.

Waugh, Linda R. 1985. "The Poetic Function and the Nature of Language." In Roman Jakobson: *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, edited by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, 143–168. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

"What is Poetry?" Reconsidered

David Skalický

University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Faculty of Arts, Department of Czech Studies,
Branišovská 31a, 370 05 České Budějovice, Czech Republic.
Email: dskalicky@ff.jcu.cz

Abstract: The paper looks back to Jakobson's definition of poetry as formulated in his "What is Poetry?" and "Linguistics and Poetics". It begins with a polemic essay written by Petr Fidelius that criticized Jakobson's functional approach to poetry for its reliance on a specific attitude of the reader. Is an artistic status of a text determined by its author's intention (as Fidelius believes), by properties of an artifact (as, according to Miroslav Červenka, is suggested in Jakobson's later reformulation of the poetic function), or by a recipient's attitude? These questions are discussed in view of several key studies asking "What is Art?" (Shklovsky, Beardsley, Goodman, etc.). In conclusion, the author of the paper emphasizes the present significance of Jakobson's conception of poetry that, despite the fact that it does not provide us with a universal definition of what is art, continues to give us very stimulating answers to a question that might be even more important: "What does art do?"

Keywords: poetic function; definition of art; aesthetic functionalism; author's intention; Prague School Structuralism; Petr Fidelius

David Skalický

On the poetry and poeticity of the Šumava Forests[1]

In 1996, there appeared an essay "Looking for Poetry", which returned to the famous and often quoted lecture by Roman Jakobson from the 1930s entitled "What is Poetry?" Arguing against Jakobson's interpreters, the author Petr Fidelius stresses the theoretical limits of the original lecture:

A scholar gave way to a publicist who contended himself with easy effects. Since there are warning examples of its reception by the next generation of interpreters, we find ourselves looking at the text even more confused, today, after more than sixty years. We are faced with a paradox: an author, who did so much for a deeper knowledge of how a work of poetry is *created,* contributed through this paper (although unintentionally) to obscuring the notion of poetry as just a *work* of art. (Fidelius 1996, 1; translation DS)

Now, after more than fifteen years, I find myself instead confused by Fidelius's essay. This is not only because the very easy effects that are the object of his criticism become paradoxical features of Fidelius's own text but also, and foremost, because of his own disregard of the literature that deals with the definition of art that became, mainly in American and English aesthetics in the second half of 20th century, one of its central issues.

The cornerstone of Fidelius's conception is a distinction between *poetry* and *poeticity*: poetry is a result of a specific type of creativity and poeticity (though often called poetry, as well) is a specific way of perceiving the world. Only *poetry* relates to the category of art whereas *poeticity* can be connected to anything: to the beauty of Christmas, loveliness of a home, or the "poetry" of the Šumava Forests. The momentary mood of the recipient is what matters, nothing else. According to Fidelius, an author's intention (or a gesture, or an invention, as he specifies later) defines poetry as a kind of art, not the attitude of the recipient:

Poetry as artistic creation can hardly be defined by aesthetic impact because art—we should not forget this—is a skill, a craft at its core: a bad poet will make bad poetry, the same as a bad shoemaker will make bad shoes; but bad as they may be, they are shoes, not a hat. As for the poetry of life, on the contrary, it is the momentary mood of the man living the life that is the decisive factor: sometimes life is magical and poetry just drizzles from it, other times it seems to be grey, void of any beauty, unbearably boring. One may see Christmas as the height of poetry, for someone else it is a purely "practical" matter. The poeticity of the Šumava Forests depends completely and solely on the kind of person and the kind of mood they are in when they walk through them. In this second sense, however, poetry is something excessively unstable and volatile as well as historically contingent: until Romanticism, for example, it never crossed anyone's mind that ruins might be "poetic". (Fidelius 1996, 1–2; translation DS)

According to Fidelius, Jakobson, proceeding in his functionally based characteristics of poetry from the receptive pole of the aesthetic situation only, confuses poetry in its correct sense with poetry in its metaphorical sense. That is, he confuses poetry with poeticity: one can perceive the language of a newspaper advertisement as poetic. However, that does not make the advertisement a poem, the same as a poem, despite completely lacking poetic qualities for a reader, does not cease to be a poem.

Fidelius's argument against Jakobson's delimitation of poetry points to one of the key arguments against the functionally based definition of art:

Although an aesthetic impact is surely also part of creative intention, the result is always uncertain. A work of art can miss the intended impact, it can lose it (and, possibly, gain it back) under certain conditions; the aesthetic impact can differ from recipient to recipient; it is a factor as unstable and changing as the "poeticity" of Christmas or the Šumava Forests. That is why we resist accepting it as a crucial criterion of a work's art-ness. (Fidelius 1996, 6; translation DS)

It seems that when Fidelius assigned the author, rather than the reader, as the arbiter of the status of a work of art, he only properly turned back on its feet an inverted aesthetic situation. His solution, however, is too simple (reducing the question to either the reader or the author). It is so simple that Fidelius himself must make it more complicated by replacing the term *intention* (suggesting psychological explanations leading to often unavailable as well as, in its character and importance, problematic mental event foregoing or accompanying the creation of a work of art) with contemplations of a *creative gesture* or *invention* unifying the subjective and the objective. In consequence of that, it is not clear any longer whether it is the ungraspable content of the author's mind or the properties of a work of art that is crucial to the status of art. In the conclusion of his paper, Fidelius's writing turns into the open and uninformed ridicule of aesthetic functionalism, which, under his interpretation, becomes a caricature taken seriously only by a few uncritical epigones of Jakobson's esoteric doctrine now transformed in their hands into boundless blabber.

Fidelius's interpretation of Jakobson pretends to be a reflection freed of the obligatory, uncritical awe for Jakobson's work and personality, devoted only to the obligation of rigorous thinking and common sense. Milan Jankovič, provoked by Fidelius's contemplation, shows convincingly in his short polemic that behind Fidelius's interpretation (seemingly just putting right some ridiculous thoughts so easily sketched by Jakobson's essayistic pen and thoughtlessly followed by his devotees) hides nothing but ostensible dilemmas and the unwillingness to understand (see Jankovič 1997). However, Jankovič's reaction is also to a significant degree confined within the discourse of Prague school structuralism. The following pages resulted from an attempt to cross the frontier of the Šumava

Forests and invite to the debates a few more texts mostly written far away from its borders.

Looking for art

Traditional attempts to define art, by way of revealing a specific property that all artifacts belonging to the class of art (and only them) have in common, failed because they could not convincingly prove either what sensually perceivable quality is shared by artifacts as different as the sculptures from Ancient Greece, Mozart's *Requiem*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory*, Bergman's *Persona*, and *Notre-Dame de Paris*, or which relevant perceivable quality distinguishes Duchamp's *Fountain* from urinals produced on the same assembly line, yet not rated among works of art. It seems that many avant-garde and neo-avant-garde works of art that resemble more common non-artistic things or activities (Duchamp's transformation of a urinal into *Fountain* is probably the most famous and the most discussed examples) have caused any such attempt to fail in advance. It seems that it is necessary to ask the question "What is Art?" in a different way.

That is also what Nelson Goodman states in his *Ways of Worldmaking*: "If attempts to answer the question 'What is art?' characteristically end in frustration and confusion, perhaps—as so often in philosophy—the question is the wrong one." (Goodman 1978, 57) It is necessary to ask not of perceivable properties of a work but rather under what conditions an artifact functions as a work of art, because, "a thing may function as a work of art at some times and not at others. In crucial cases, the real question is not 'What objects are (permanently) works of art?' but 'When is an object a work of art?'" (ibid., 66–67)

Such a turn to "when", that is, from the perceptible features of an artifact to its relational attributes, the circumstances of art production or reception, from a text to the context of its creation and reflection, to art evolution or its social role, is a significant turn in aesthetic theory of the second half of the twentieth century. It was especially English and American aesthetics that pursued the topic with hitherto unprecedented concern. Disputes primarily concern the importance placed on the role played by the constituent dimensions of an aesthetic situation. Some aestheticians stress especially the art-historical relations (see e.g., Ziff 1953; Danto 1964; Levinson 1979; or Carroll 1993), others the social institution of the "artworld" conferring the status of a work of art (see e.g., Danto 1964; Dickie 1974), and still others the specific function fulfilled by art in our lives.

Since not every question one can formulate really makes sense (a point emphasized by analytic philosophers), it is necessary, in the first instance, to defend the question we ask: "What is Art?" Is it possible, desirable or important to draw a definition of art that would fulfill the rigorous requirements of philosophical discourse? In anthologies on the topic, Morris Weitz's article "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics" usually represents the negative answer:

The very expansive, adventurous character of art, its ever-present changes and novel creations, make it logically impossible to ensure any set of defining properties. We can, of course, choose to close the concept. But to do this with "art" or "tragedy" or "portraiture," etc., is ludicrous since it forecloses on the very conditions of creativity in the arts. (Weitz 1956, 32)

On the opposite side from Weitz stand aestheticians defending the meaningfulness and importance of answering the question "What is art?" They defend its meaningfulness with the argument that a definition of a term neither necessarily presupposes gaining essential properties, nor inevitably prevents art from adding new instances or developing creativity. The relevance of the question is sustained through the need for an adequate delimitation of the object of art history or aesthetics (see e.g., Beardsley 1973, 15–17), its interpretation and evaluation or, by necessity to consider the role art plays in our lives. After all, that is—as functionalists believe—both the reason and source of identity of art and thus the way to its proper interpretation and evaluation.

As the key term *poetic function* suggests, Jakobson's conception of poetry is a functional one as well. The domain of poetry is not, as Jakobson states in "What is Poetry?", identifiable by means of a specific category of poetic topics or means of expression, but through the purpose fulfilled by a poem, so that "the word is felt as a word and not a mere representation of the object being named or an outburst of emotion." (Jakobson 1987b, 378) That is how Jakobson defines poeticity, not poetry. Poeticity is not a unique feature of poetry, it is also a common part of non-artistic communication. In art, however, it acquires—and this is what defines it—a dominant role. This does not entail a quantitative dominance of poetic means, but a modification of our attitude toward the utterance that lies in a reevaluation of the complete nature of its semantics. Thus, a different attitude toward the word, not a substantive attribute of an artwork, is concerned, even though the properties of the work of art can be hardly irrelevant. This can be considered a general principle of functionalism: I can use a stone, a shoe, or my own hand to hit a nail. A hammer, however, will serve me, thanks to its properties, definitely better. Together with Russian poets, we can also admire the poeticity of a wine list, a timetable, or a laundry bill; their poems will work in this respect undoubtedly better. A urinal or a bottle rack as well, as Duchamp proved, can be of use to satisfy our aesthetic interest. However, compared to most paintings or sculptures, their aesthetic potential is much smaller. Even though we

concentrated on the reception or use of an object, we cannot omit its properties as well.

Nevertheless, should we not take an additional step back in aesthetic communication? If the properties of an object are not (and cannot be) irrelevant, than neither can the intention to create an object possessing certain properties (or, functionally speaking, an object adapted to fulfill—as optimally as possible—particular aims). Let us recall another functionally based definition of art, a definition from Jakobson's OPOJAZ colleague Viktor Shklovsky. In his "Art as Technique" (published in his essay collection *Theory of Prose*, 1925), Shklovsky characterizes art as a technique of defamiliarization of reality whose aim is to actualize our everyday life [Russ. *byt,* быт] that tends toward automation. Art achieves this not through the representation of specific-artistic contents ("art-ness" is not an essential property of some themes or motives) but by way of the *technique of representation* of any content:

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.* (Shklovsky 2007, 778)

We can find all poles of aesthetic communication in Shklovsky's words: *creation* aiming toward an object's defamiliarization, its *product* characterized by its more-difficult-made-form, a process of *perception* slowed down by an unusual formal configuration. The process of creation (defended by Fidelius) seems to be decisive because it stands at the beginning of aesthetic communication: it aims to produce an artifact possessing some properties that cause a specific type of perception. But it is rather the substantive unity of all the poles of the communicative situation predicated by Shklovsky's words: a creation *giving* the work of art some properties that, in the context of our praxes, *entail* that a work as an object of reception can fulfill certain aims (that is: serve needs) better than others. However, if art is identified through its purpose or the role it plays in society—which is, according to Shklovsky, the actualization of the recipient's perception of reality—then it is reception that seems to be the principal aspect from which all the others (that is the author's intention or technique of creation as well as the resulting properties of a work of art) are derived and which constitutes their character and evolution.

The serious difficulty with an outright identification and classification of art based on reception is that the reception of a verbal or iconic sign is neither in its course nor in its achievement universal. Consequently, this means that the historical set of artworks (or, in other words, the artistic status of a work) is not stable.

The borderline dividing what is a work of poetry from what is not is less stable than the frontiers of the Chinese empire's territories. Novalis and Mallarmé regarded the alphabet as the greatest work of poetry. Russian poets have admired the poetic qualities of a wine list (Vjazemskij), an inventory of the tsar's clothes (Gogol), a timetable (Pasternak), and even a laundry bill (Kručenyx). How many poets now claim that reportage is a more artistic genre than the novel or short story? Although "Pohorská vesnice" (A Mountain Village)—a story by one of the leading mid-nineteenth-century Czech prosaists, Božena Němcová (1820–1862)—can boast but few enthusiasts today, her intimate correspondence is for us a brilliant work of poetry. (Jakobson 1987b, 369–370)

Jakobson's comparison might raise doubts—is the realm of art really changing that much? Can we really add among works of art a wine list or intimate correspondence, just because we are truly captivated by it at that moment, and—on the other side—exclude a poem that does not give us aesthetic pleasure any longer?[2] It is not common, and for Fidelius it is just another piece of evidence that proves how ridiculous such an idea is. Although we can find a wine list or a reportage *poetic*, this does not make them *poetry*. Although the aesthetic impact on the reader is also important, poetry, let us remember Fidelius's notion, is determined by the author's intention; it is the author who embodies in the poetic form his aesthetic vision of the world.

Back to the author's intention

For those who know Monroe C. Beardsley as a co-author of the famous and influential essay "The Intentional Fallacy", it might be very surprising to learn that Beardsley also addressed the author's intention as the key parameter of the identification of art. At first, Beardsley had stressed entirely the reception pole of an aesthetic situation (see Beardsley 1979). Such a conception, however, results in a questionable instability of the art category that may have later caused Beardsley to make an important revision to his answer to the question "What is Art?" In "An Aesthetic Definition of Art" he defines art this way: "An artwork is something produced with the intention of giving it the capacity to satisfy the aesthetic interest" (Beardsley 1983, 21). Anchoring the category of art to the event of art production seems to be the way for Beardsley to make it indisputable and stable—the author's decision is an absolute gesture that cannot be canceled, assuring us that this is a work of art, either good or bad, either capable to fulfill

---

[2] Mukařovský handles the issue through anchoring the aesthetic in the social context—a work of art is understood as a social fact the artistic status or value of which is not determined by a momentary mood of an individual subject. See e.g., Mukařovský (1970).

an aesthetic interest or not.[3] Fidelius's distinction between poetry and poeticity causes a productive and receptive pole of the aesthetic situation to fall apart in a problematic way (see Jankovič 1997). Beardsley, on the other hand, projects their conceptual connection: "But to characterize the specific type of intention needed we must turn to the second central artistic activity, which I have (for want of a better word) called reception" (Beardsley 1983, 20).[4] Moreover, stability in the classification of art guaranteed by the author's intention—and this is very important—is not ahistorical, since the term "author's intention" can be taken as a category that respects the cultural and historical diversity of people's interaction with art. Nevertheless, some other aspects of the definition strategy based on the author's intention raise doubts.

There are artifacts treated today as artworks (displayed in galleries, discussed in books on art history, etc.) although the intention of their creators very probably was a religious or utilitarian one. Ancient ceramics can look very similar to contemporary ceramic jars. While originally both were produced for the practical purposes in the kitchen, nowadays only the former are placed on a pedestal in galleries and addressed in art history books (see e.g., Ziff 1953, 65–66). Other examples of artifacts very probably created with a not-artistic intention can be medieval sacral art or texts like legends, biographies of saints or old chronicles. Beardsley takes it into account, inferring: "According to the definition I propose, and am defending, the aesthetic intention need not be the only one, or even the dominant one" (Beardsley 1983, 23). Of course, the aesthetic intention goes very often together with other intentions (Greece vases, even though originally intended for practical use, were also often creatively decorated). However, that applies today as well. As Jakobson or Mukařovský pointed out (see e.g., Mukařovský 1970), the poetic/aesthetic function is potentially present in any human activity or product: it is a common property of advertisement, political slogans, cars, erotica, etc. In consequence of that, they postulate *a dominant role* of the aesthetic function as the key distinguishing feature of art. Outside of art, the aesthetic function is subordinated to another function. Do we not lose the

---

[3] Critics of the functional strategy of defining a work of art pointed out that the identification of art based on its ability to satisfy the aesthetic interest excludes works that lack this ability, which is, in consequence, the existence of bad art. This dependency of the status of art on its evaluation was a subject of many reflections (see e.g., Dickie 1974; Wollheim 1980; Zemach 1986). Beardsley himself in "An Aesthetic Definition of Art" accepts the necessity to separate the classificatory and evaluative meaning of the notion of art.

[4] Another definition strategy that operates—albeit in a significantly different way—with the concept of intention, is Levinson's historical definition, elaborated in his article "Defining Art Historically." Levinson's definition, among others, seeks to take into account the fact that the person, because of whose intention a certain object is presented as a work of art, is not necessarily the creator of the object in the usual sense of the word (this is an example of ready-mades). Thus, instead of the intention of the creator, Levinson operates with the intention of a person in proper possession of an artifact (see Levinson 1979).

identifying feature in our pursuit of a definition of art when we, together with Beardsley, claim only the presence and not the dominance of aesthetic intention and/or function?

Beardsley explicitly identifies another important issue with the intentionally based definition of art:

To identify the artistic activities and the artworks of a society we must make correct inferences about intentions. And intentions, being private, are difficult to know. But artistic activities are no different in this respect from all other significant activities of a society; if the anthropologist cannot understand what the observable behavior means to the people so behaving, what their desires and beliefs, purposes and motives, are, then he does not understand their culture. We must make use of available verbal testimony, but inferences can legitimately reach beyond that. Once we discover that people in a given society have the *idea* of satisfying an aesthetic interest, and once we know at least some of their ways of satisfying this interest, we can reasonably infer the aesthetic intention (that is, the intention to produce something capable of satisfying the aesthetic interest) from properties of the product. (Beardsley 1983, 23)

Properties of the work of art that seemed to be already out of the question and that are bypassed in Beardsley's definition, appear again. They can also be found in Fidelius who—like Beardsley—has to turn, from the ungraspable subjectivity of a mental state of an author to the effort to "express a concrete unity of subjective and objective … in a unique form of a work of art" (Fidelius 1996, 5; translation DS). This, after repudiating a notion of poetry dependent on the fluid attitude of a reader. Once again, we have to ask, is it not, after all, a property of artworks that is decisive for the identification of art? Is it not the case that only a property of works of art can give us a sufficient clue necessary to formulate a coherent definition of art, independent of the too-problematic mental states of an author or a reader? Despite the inability to find perceptual properties that would represent necessary and sufficient conditions shared by all artifacts selected into the class of art that were mentioned at the beginning of our consideration, we can still search for properties of a different type. Besides, it seems that Jakobson later turned to such properties as well.

Redefining poetic function?

Jakobson returned to the poetic function in "Linguistics and Poetics" to define it in a new way: "The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (Jakobson 1987a, 71). The difference between the definition that is a quarter of a century older ("What is Poetry?") and this definition is considered by Miroslav Červenka in an editorial note to the representative Czech collection of Jakobson's essays entitled *Poetická*

funkce (The Poetic Function*, 1995), where he defends his inclusion of some of Jakobson's earlier texts:

I see their advantage, in comparison with later conceptions, especially in that poeticity is not seen as something we can grasp by an omnipresent, describable, and calculated property. In "Linguistics and Poetics" the poetic function is permanently delimited by the "substantial" feature of projection from one axis to the other. On the other hand, in the essay "What is Poetry?"—likewise in Mukařovský as well as in correspondence with the experience of modern art—poetry does not possess any such generally accepted feature and the poetic function finds its way in various manners of language usage. Only the function itself, or better its dominance, delimits poetry through its intangible presence. (Červenka 1995, 724; translation DS)

However, is it really a substantial feature of poetry that Jakobson is talking about when characterizing poetic function? In one of the last paragraphs of "Linguistics and Poetics," Jakobson recalls: "When in 1919 the Moscow Linguistic Circle discussed how to define and delimit the range of *epitheta ornantia*, the poet Majakovskij rebuked us by saying that for him any adjective appearing in a poem was thereby a poetic epithet, even 'great' in the Great Bear or 'big' and 'little' in such names of Moscow streets as Bol'šaja (big) Presnja and Malaja (little) Presnja." He draws the following conclusion: "Briefly, poeticalness is not a supplementation of discourse with rhetorical adornment but a total reevaluation of the discourse and of all its components whatsoever" (Jakobson 1987a, 93). It is not—in my interpretation—any substantial feature of language, but our attitude toward an utterance that determines the status of poetry (even though, certainly, properties of the utterance as well as the context of its presentation like the peritext, the placement of a book in a bookstore, literary education, etc. can influence and affect the attitude).

So is it, after all, the attitude of the recipient that is in the last instance crucial for the status of artwork? I am afraid that this contemplation is going around in circles. The question of whether it is the author's intention, or the properties of an artwork, or a recipient's attitude that determines if a text or a photograph or anything else is a work of art or not, is posed much too simply. Certainly, if we read a discussion on the subject it is obvious that I take into account only a very few notions that should be considered. If we believe, as Fidelius does, that a definition is the only possible goal of anyone asking "What is art?", than my text is definitely worthless and the value of Jakobson's essay "What is Poetry?" is disputable. I think, however, that there can also be a different goal to asking, "What is art?" than suggesting another definition of art. I also believe that the crucial aim of Jakobson's consideration on the topic lied somewhere else.

Although Nelson Goodman, in his *Ways of Worldmaking*, outlines an answer to the reformulated question "When is art?" he, at the same time, relativizes the importance of such a question:

The further question of defining stable property in terms of ephemeral function—the what in terms of the when—is not confined to the arts but is quite general, and is the same for defining chairs as for defining objects of art. The parade of instant and inadequate answers is also much the same: that whether an object is art—or a chair—depends upon intent or upon whether it sometimes or usually or always or exclusively functions as such. Because all this tends to obscure more special and significant questions concerning art, I have turned my attention from what art is to what art does. (Goodman 1978, 70)

In addition, Jakobson, Mukařovský, Beardsley and other aestheticians ranked among functionalists focus on *what art does*. They believe it is very important, quite possibly the most important question of aesthetics, regardless of whether it provides us with the definite answer to the question of what art is. "What does art do?" is a question we can ask without being able to define where art exactly begins and where it ends. It is a question about the role art plays in our society, a legacy bequeathed already by Plato by exiling the poets from his ideal state. From that moment, we have to defend the arts and we need to consider their impact on our lives. This is especially the case in today's society where art is very often taken as a domain of no importance, left on the periphery of our lives where we can stray only after all the "important" things have been taken care of. What does art do? Does it have a unique significance for us? What do we lose without art and what do we get when we engage with art? It seems to me that a functionalist approach to the question "What is art?" understood as "What does art do?" provides us with the most significant answers to these questions.

I believe we can still find in Roman Jakobson one of the most significant explanations of the unique value of art in people's lives. It is interesting that Czech critics find it usually in the earlier characteristics of the poetic function in "What is Poetry?" (quoted very rarely in American criticism):

Poeticity is present when the word is felt as a word and not a mere representation of the object being named or an outburst of emotion, when words and their composition, their meaning, their external and inner form, acquire a weight and value of their own instead of referring indifferently to reality. Why it is all this necessary? Why is it necessary to make a special point of the fact that sign does not fall together with object? Because, besides the direct awareness of the identity between sign and object (A is A_1), there is a necessity for the direct awareness of the inadequacy of that identity (A is not A_1). The reason this antinomy is essential is that without contradiction there is no mobility of concepts, no mobility of signs, and the relationship between concept and sign becomes automatized. Activity comes to a halt, and the awareness of reality dies out. (Jakobson 1987b, 378)

I believe that Jakobson's conception of "semiotic recovery through art" is still one of the strongest responses to Plato's judgment of art, the response that in a very interesting way corresponds to both poststructuralist semiotics and post-analytic philosophy of language. It is also continues to be—as the recent study by Michal Ajvaz entitled "What is Poeticity?" proves (see Ajvaz 2010)—an inspirational source that is worth reading and thinking over again.

Works Cited

Ajvaz, Michal. 2010. "Co je poetičnost?" *Svět literatury* 20 (41): 7–29.

Beardsley, Monroe C. 1979. "In Defense of Aesthetic Value." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 52 (6): 723–749.

Beardsley, Monroe C. 1983. "An Aesthetic Definition of Art." In *What is Art?*, edited by Hugh Curtler, 15–29. New York: Haven.

Carroll, Noël. 1993. "Historical Narratives and the Philosophy of Art." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (3): 313–326.

Červenka, Miroslav. 1995. "Ediční poznámka." In Roman Jakobson: *Poetická funkce*, edited by Miroslav Červenka, 723–725. Jinočany: H & H.

Danto, Arthur. 1964. "The Artworld." *The Journal of Philosophy* 61 (19): 571–584.

Dickie, George. 1974. "What is Art? An Institutional Analysis." In *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*, 19–52. Ithaca—New York—London: Cornell University Press.

Fidelius, Petr. 1996. "Hledá se poesie." *Kritický sborník* 16 (1): 1–11.

Goodman, Nelson. 1978. *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.

Jakobson, Roman. 1987a. "Linguistics and Poetics." In *Language in Literature*, edited by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, 62–94. Cambridge—London: Harvard University Press.

Jakobson, Roman. 1987b. "What is Poetry?" In *Language in Literature*, edited by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, translated by M. Heim, 368–378. Cambridge—London: Harvard University Press.

Jankovič, Milan. 1997. "Hledá se opravdu poezie?" *Česká literatura* 45 (1): 64–72.

Levinson, Jerrold. 1979. "Defining Art Historically." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 19 (3): 232–250.

Mukařovský, Jan. 1970. *Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts*, translated by Mark E. Suino. Michigan: Ann Arbor.

Shklovsky, Victor. 2007. "Art as Technique." In *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, edited by David H. Richter, translated by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, 775–784. Boston—New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Weitz, Morris. 1956. "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15 (1): 27–35.

Wollheim, Richard. 1980. "The Institutional Theory of Art." In *Art and Its Objects*, 157–166. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zemach, Eddy. 1986. "No Identification Without Evaluation." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 26 (3): 239–251.

Ziff, Paul. 1953. "The Task of Defining a Work of Art." *The Philosophical Review* 62 (1): 58–78.

Jakobson: The Experimental Stage and the Beginnings of Multimedia Theory

Veronika Ambros

Toronto University, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures,
121 St. Joseph Street, Toronto, ON, M5S 1J4, Canada.
Email: veronika.ambros@utoronto.ca

Abstract: Roman Jakobson was, according to the Czech Surrealist and theoretician Vratislav Effenberger, an "inventor and fighter, friend of modern artists and truly one of their ranks." Effenberger's statement applies to Jakobson's encounter in 1937 with E. F. Burian, the experimental theater director, and his presentation of A. S. Pushkin's famous novel *Eugene Onegin*, staged in commemoration of the centenary of the poet's death. Jakobson used the event to revisit his own positions toward biography and literary history. Moreover, his study on the statue in Pushkin's work laid the ground for a modern theory of multimediality.

Keywords: experimental stage; realism; biography; literary history; actualization; Alexander Pushkin; E. F. Burian

---

Roman Jakobson was, according to the Czech Surrealist and theoretician Vratislav Effenberger, an "inventor and fighter, friend of modern artists and truly one of their ranks" (Effenberger 1983, 13). Jakobson, who published futurist poetry in Russia under the penname Aljagrov, continued his collaboration with contemporary artists in Czechoslovakia and contributed substantially to several fields of Czechoslovak science. In his view the "science of poetic form has to go hand in hand with poetry … In Russia, new literature often goes side by side with the young science of literature (the OPOJAZ group)" (Jakobson 1996, 562).[1]

There are several studies on the subject of Jakobson's relationship to the Czech avant-garde (e.g., Vratislav Effenberger, Jindřich Toman, and T. G. Winner[2]). Here I wish to explore a hitherto unnoticed aspect of this connection, namely

---

[1] Original wording: "Věda o poetické formě musí kráčet ruku v ruce s básnictvím. V Rusku nová literatura a mladá věda o literatuře (skupina OPOJAZ) jdou namnoze bok po boku."

[2] See Effenberger (1983); Toman (1987); Winner (2009).

Jakobson's articles about the Russian romantic poet Alexander S. Pushkin in the context of the staging of *Eugene Onegin* by the theatre director E. F. Burian in 1937.[3] Whereas the above-mentioned quote marks Jakobson's transition between his Russian and his Czechoslovak period, the texts discussed here revisit his positions with regard to the biography of the poet and his approach to history proposed initially in his studies on Realism and the most recent Russian poetry, i.e., Velimir Khlebnikov (Jakobson 1981, 1979). In addition, Jakobson expands his interest in modern artistic experiments in a letter to the authors, actors and theater directors Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich, in which he examines their sources of humour and fun (see Eva Šlaisová in this volume).[4] This analysis confirms the attention Jakobson paid to two formally different contemporary theaters in Prague, and informs us of the changing focus of experiments which moved from poetry in the nineteen twenties to stage poetry in the nineteen thirties.

Jakobson's article "Puškin v realistickém světle" (Pushkin in realistic light) appeared in Burian's theatre program alongside other prominent artists and theorists, such as Boris Pasternak, Mordechai Gorelik, Bohumil Mathesius, Petr Bogatyrev, and K. H. Hilar. Unlike the American playbill, which provides information about the performers and other artists directly involved in the particular production, this theatre program was closer to a literary journal. Burian's theatre used the programs as a platform for artists and scholars, including theorists of the Prague School (Jan Mukařovský, Petr Bogatyrev, Karel Brušák) who also delivered public lectures to the friends-of-the-theatre Club. It will therefore come as no surprise that Jakobson joined the above-mentioned authors who endorsed Burian's staging of *Eugene Onegin* with their contributions to this publication. Jakobson's article "Pushkin in Realistic Light," included there, predates his ground-breaking study "Socha v symbolice Puškinově" [The Statue in Pushkin's Symbolism] about "Pushkin's *myths of the destructive statue*," (translated into English as "Pushkin and His Sculptural Myth") and published in the same year in the journal of the Prague Linguistic Circle *Slovo a Slovesnost* (1937, vol. 3, no. 1, 2–24).[5]

Both Burian and Jakobson offer a new reading, an "interior actualization" of the novel, which shows the affinity between the artist and the theorist with regard to

---

[3] John Burbank edited and translated a collection of texts Roman Jakobson wrote about Pushkin in Czech under the title *Pu*škin and his sculptural myth. Three articles in this book were originally published as introductions to separate volumes of Pushkin's *Selected Works* in Czech that Jakobson edited together with A. Bem (i.e., "Nespoutaný Puškin" published in *Lidové noviny* in 1937; "K Puškinovým ohlasům lidové poesie" published in *Vybrané spisy A. S. Puškina* in 1938; 248-254.). See Jakobson (1975).

[4] See Jakobson (1971).

[5] The word *symbolika* might be understood as a symbolic system rather than the ambiguous expression 'symbolism', which evokes a specific artistic trend. Burbank's translation offers either "poetic mythology" or indirectly in the title of the entire collection of articles as *Sculptural Myth*.

their interpretation of Pushkin. "Interior actualization" is a term introduced by the Czech theatre historian Adolf Scherl to describe Burian's attempt to evoke the emotional world of the characters by means of movements, film projections, photographs and music i.e., to use Jakobson's terminology, in an "intersemiotic translation" of Pushkin's work (Jakobson 1959). While Jakobson offers arguments against the realistic interpretation of Pushkin and uncovers in the poet's work some devices hitherto unnoticed, Burian accomplishes a similar task by finding several techniques for breaking the mimetic illusion on stage.

As Scherl explains, Burian used the dramatizations / adaptations of narrative works because they allowed him to "present life in a much more complex and multifaceted way than the traditional drama and traditional stage would permit" (Obst and Scherl 1962, 235). To achieve this task in *Eugene Onegin,* Burian applied his invention of the so-called *theatergraph*, a system of curtains and scrims used for the film projection introduced for the staging of Frank Wedekind's *Spring Awakening* in 1936. As Burian pointed out, the modern technology allows the contemporary stage to achieve even more than film can (ibid.). Hence, film was only one of the elements he used in Onegin in order to "liberate the limited space and fulfill a function similar to that of ancient chorus" (ibid., 233). A film inserted on projected images was used to create the set. In addition, Burian presented the text as a montage of two translations.
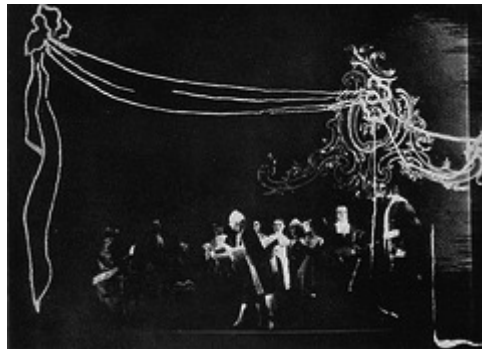

Figure 1: Puškin, A. S. Evžen Oněgin. D37; 1937; dramatisation: E. F. Burian; set: M. Kouril; "At the ball of Larinas." (Obst and Scherl 1962, 21)

In his book, *Scenography of the Twentieth Century* the French theatre historian Denis Bablet describes Burian's contribution to the modern theatre:

Alongside the theatrical research work of Piscator, Traugott Müller, the experiments of Burian and Kouril helped pave the way to new theatrical forms in which the projection screen and colors no longer characterized stage design. These came to be replaced by architectural structures, light, and projected images. A new civilization of audiovisual communication was born. (Bablet 1977)

It will come as no surprise that Jakobson who conceptualized the artistic experiments in Russia, in particular the futurist poetry by the poet Velimir Khlebnikov written in *zaum*, the transrational language, turned his attention to film and theatre in Czechoslovakia of the thirties. Herewith, as will be discussed later, he joined the company of the aesthetician Otakar Zich, and the members of the Prague Linguistic Circle such as Jan Mukařovský, Petr Bogatyrev, Jiří Veltruský and Jindřich Honzl as well as a number of contemporary artists (cf. Ambros 2006, 2008).

In fact, even in his study on Khlebnikov as the representative of the most recent Russian poetry, Jakobson considers Pushkin at "the core of a certain poetic culture." In the same text Jakobson laid the foundation for the functionalist position of both Russian formalism and Prague structuralism by proclaiming that "poetry is language in its aesthetic function" (Jakobson 1979, 305) thus initiating his own reflections on the topic (see his "Linguistic and Poetics," in which the poetic function replaces the original aesthetic one; Jakobson 1960).

Furthermore, he contended that:

Poetry is language in its aesthetic function. Thus the subject of literary scholarship is not literature but literariness (literaturnost), that is, that which makes of a given work a work of literature. And yet literary scholars up to now have often behaved like policemen who, in the course of arresting a particular person, would pick up, just in case, everybody and anybody who happened to be in the apartment, as well as people who happened to be passing on the street. Similarly, the literary historian used anything that came to hand: biographical evidence, psychology, politics, and philosophy. Instead of a literary science they created a conglomeration of homegrown disciplines. They seemed to forget that their articles deviated in the direction of those other disciplines—the history of philosophy, the history of culture, psychology, and so forth, and that while the latter may of course make use of literary works, these are for their purposes only defective, second-rate documents. If literary history wishes to become a science, it must recognize "device" as its sole concern … (Jakobson 1973, 62)

Jakobson's article on Khlebnikov, written in 1919 in Moscow and published in 1921 in Prague, illustrates not only his keen interest in contemporary artistic production but also his rejection of the biographical approach. In contrast, his study on artistic realism is an attempt to define the term itself and to separate

the historical artistic trend from other meanings of this designation. The text "Pushkin in Realistic Light" that appeared in Burian's theatre program, pursues a similar goal with respect to Mayakovsky and Pushkin, yet this time the incentive for it is less aesthetic than political, initiated by the Soviet campaign against formalism (Erlich 1981, 147) and the newly proclaimed 'method' of socialist Realism. By contrast, using Pushkin's texts as an argument, Jakobson seeks to free both Mayakovsky and Pushkin from the "chains of realism". He argues that Pushkin himself contested the notion of verisimilitude in a "building divided into two parts, one of which is filled with spectators—people who have agreed to be treated as if they were invisible by those who are on stage" (Jakobson 1975, 64). Jakobson continues by pointing out that Pushkin is used as an argument against irrational elements in the art, despite the fact that dreams and madness are prominent in his poetry.

Jakobson's analysis also exposes the contemporary efforts to imitate Pushkin's verse in contradiction with the fact that the poet himself strove constantly to *defacilitate* the form; he "attempted a complicated form" (Jakobson 1975a, 65). Similarly, by exposing the poet's predilection for some second rate French authors and his negative response to Balzac and Stendhal, Jakobson further debunks the myth surrounding Pushkin by questioning the notion that his knowledge of the Western canon was superb and his taste with respect to literature was excellent. Furthermore, Jakobson contests Anna Akhmatova's view of Pushkin as a moralist and suggests that Pushkin's work is entirely lacking any moral charge. In fact, the spectator or reader is forced not to judge the petit bourgeois Eugene in Медный всадник: Петербургская повесть (The Bronze Horseman: A Petersburg Tale [1833]), or the immoral misère in Каменный гость (The Stone Guest [1830]). Finally, Jakobson concludes that Pushkin's image designed by the devotees of realism is far removed from historical reality.

Paradoxically, while Jakobson countered the political demands of Soviet cultural bureaucrats Burian faced a similar reaction albeit not a prescriptive one: a group of young students wished to see not old dramatic texts but contemporary plays that would educate them. He refused to accept their rejection of classical texts and their expectations to see in theater the reflection of real life. Burian said about the tasks of the new audience: "To perceive theater is the same complex process as that of creating theatre" (Srba 1981, 88). In practice, the film projections, use of lights and mirrors fragmented the space and appealed to the spectators' imagination, activating them and to a certain degree turning them into participants of the performed action.

Burian's transformation of literature into multimedia shows *avant la letter* resonates with Jakobson's readings of Pushkin and, more specifically, with his understanding of the statue in Pushkin's work (Jakobson 1975b). The opening

lines of his article are devoted to Mayakovsky who supposedly noted that there were unifying elements in the work of a poet that signify his system of symbols (*symbolika*). This observation in fact bears a resemblance to Mukařovský's notion of *semantic gesture* and Jakobson's own *dominant*, which he presented in 1935 in an unpublished lecture (Jakobson 1981b). Jakobson continues by using a theatre analogy, more specifically the distinction between the roles and the stock characters (*emploi*), which implies a division into mobile and stable features. By contrast to his previous position he evades his police officer metaphor and admits the use of some homegrown disciplines, at the same time he cautions against the use of either vulgar biographism or anti-biographism.

However, akin to his article (in fact an obituary) on Mayakovsky (Jakobson 1985), Jakobson introduces biographical material thus indicating not only his changed position toward biography but also setting an example of a revised approach to the life of a poet. In effect, one can discern here a parallel to Burian's "interior actualization," especially since Jakobson mentions *actualization* and *estrangement* several times, for instance when he speaks about the statue that "is depicted ('is estranged', according to Shklovsky's term) as a living being" (Jakobson 1975b, 38).

Although he does not speak about *ekphrasis*, he describes the transposition of a work belonging to one kind of art into another artistic mode—into poetry:

A statue, a poem—in brief, every artistic work—is a particular sign. Verse about a statue is accordingly a sign of a sign or *an image of an image*. In a poem about a statue, a sign (*signum*) becomes a theme or a signified object (*signatum*). The conversion of a sign into a thematic component is a favorite formal device of Puskin, and this is usually accompanied by exposed and pointed internal conflicts (*antinomies*) which are the necessary, indispensable basis of any semiotic world." (Jakobson 1975b, 31)

As Jakobson points out, the titles of three of Pushkin's works refer to a statue and the material out which each of them is made. He refers to Медный всадник: Петербургская повесть (The Bronze Horseman: A Petersburg Tale, [1833]), the poetic drama Каменный гость (The Stone Guest [1830]) and the fairy tale Золотой петушок (The Tale of the Golden Cockerel [1834]). However, they differ with respect to their size, their origin and genre. Incidentally, in this context he mentions Frazer's terms "*imitative*" and "*contagious magic*" (Jakobson 1975b, 6) that in the English translation refers to the relationship of the representation to the represented. However, the original speaks about the relationship between the presentation to the presented or depiction and depicted ("poměr zobrazení k zobrazenému"). Since this terminology refers to Bühler's term *darstellende Funktion*, it is an important semantic shift because the meaning of presentation is more appropriate for theatre and does not necessarily evoke mimesis or a direct reference to an object, but to its transformation, which is at the core of Jakobson's argument about the statues.

As Jakobson notes:

In the drama, in the epic poem, and in the fairy tale, the image of the animated statue evokes the opposite images of rigidified people, whether it involves a mere comparison of them to a statue, an accidental situation or actual dying and death. Here the boundary between life and immobile dead matter is deliberately obliterated. (Jakobson 1975b, 8)

When Jakobson concludes that "the statues of Pushkin's poems cannot be identified in any glyptotheca," (ibid., 43), he in fact restates his previous position toward the interpretation of Pushkin as a realist. However, this article reaches beyond an analysis of an individual poet and the mere polemics with the normative poetics of socialist Realism. It suggests several approaches to modern art, especially to the modern stage. Moreover, his analysis of the role of the statue is congruent with both theatrical experiments and numerous observations of his colleagues (see below) with regard to the function of puppets and statues on stage such as Zich's notion of a stage figure:

As much as marble is not a sculpture, only shaped marble is, in much the same way, only the shaped actor is the character with the difference that the actor himself accomplishes the shaping of the character while being shaped himself. (Zich 1986, 45; translation VA)

Following the text by Jiří Veltruský on "Man and Object in Theatre" Jan Mukařovský expanded the topic of statues with regard to theatre and placed it in the context of the modern history of the stage in his article "On the Current State of the Theory of Theater" published in 1941:

The immobility of a statue and the mobility of a live person is a constant antinomy of the poles between which the dramatic figure oscillates on stage. And when Craig posited his famous requirement of the actor—as 'Übermarionette'—he … drew attention to this hidden but always present antinomy of the art of acting. (Mukařovský 1978, 206)

Mukařovský's statement appears to have developed Jakobson's thoughts, especially Jakobson's and Bühler's notion of functions, and Jakobson's notion of aesthetic function.

In sum, Jakobson not only revised the formalist approach to the biography of an author, actualized a classical author, and confronted the simplified understanding of realism. He also contributed to our understanding of history and theater. In correspondence with contemporary theatre practice, he conceptualized the use of visual arts in literature, which laid ground for multimedia theories and predated many contemporary thoughts on that matter. Moreover, Jakobson expanded the "literariness" of the aforementioned article on Xlebnikov and extended notion of science beyond any national label, and a specific aesthetic discipline. Unfortunately, this experimental stage of theory and practice came to a sudden end, never to be resumed.

Works Cited

Ambros, Veronika. 2008. "Prague's Experimental Stage: Laboratory of Theatre and Semiotics." *Semiotica* 168: 45–65.

Ambros, Veronika. 2006. "Milenci z kiosku V. Nezvala aneb Národní divadlo na vlnách avantgardy." Česká literatura 54 (2–3): 228–239.

Bablet, Denis. *Revolutions in Stage Design of the XXth Century Paris and New York*, Leon Amiel, 1977.

Burian, Emil František. 1946. *O nové divadlo 1930–1940*. Prague: Ústav pro učebné pomůcky průmyslových a odborných škol.

Effenberger, Vratislav. 1983. "Roman Jakobson and the Czech Avant-Garde between Two Wars." *The American Journal of Semiotics* 2 (3): 13.

Erlich, Victor. 1981. *Russian Formalism. History—Doctrine*. 's-Gravenhage: Mouton & Co.

Jakobson, Roman. 1937. "Puškin v realistickém světle." *Program D37*, 134.

Jakobson, Roman. 1959. "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation." In *On Translation*, edited by R. A. Brower, 232–239. Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press.

Jakobson, Roman. 1960. "Linguistics and Poetics." In *Style in Language*, edited by T. Sebeok, 350–377. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jakobson, Roman. 1971. "Dopis Romana Jakobsona Jiřímu Voskovcovi a Janu Werichovi o noetice a sémantice švandy." In *Studies in Verbal Art* [Michigan Slavic Contributions 4], 299–304. Ann Arbor: Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences in America/ Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures of the University of Michigan.

Jakobson, Roman. 1973. "Modern Russian Poetry: Velimir Khlebnikov [Excerpts]" In *Major Soviet Writers. Essays in Criticism*, edited by Edward J. Brown, 58–82. London— Oxford—New York: Oxford University Press.

Jakobson, Roman. 1975a. *Puškin and His Sculptural Myth*, translated and edited by John Burbank. The Hague—Paris: Mouton de Gryuter.

Jakobson, Roman. 1975b. "The Statue in Puškin's Poetic Mythology." In *Puškin and His Sculptural Myth*, translated and edited by John Burbank, 1–45. The Hague—Paris: Mouton de Gruyter.

Jakobson, Roman. 1979. "Noveišaia russkaia poèzia." In *Selected Writings V. On Verse, Its Masters, and Explorers*, edited by Stephen Rudy and Martha Taylor, 299–354. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Jakobson, Roman. 1981. "O Khudozhestvennom realizme." In *Selected Writings III. Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry*, edited by Stephen Rudy, 723–731. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Jakobson, Roman. 1981b. "The Dominant." In *Selected Writings III. Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry*, edited by Stephen Rudy, 751–756. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Jakobson, Roman. 1985. "On the Generation that Squandered Its Poets." In *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, edited by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, 111–132. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Jakobson, Roman. 1996. "Konec básnického umprumáctví a živnostnictví." In *Poetická funkce*, edited by Miroslav Červenka, 562–566. Jinočany: H & H.

Mukařovský, Jan. 1978. "On the Current State of the Theory of Theater." *Structure, Sign and Function*, translated and edited by John Burbank and Peter Steiner, 201–219. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Obst, Milan and Adolf Scherl. 1962. *K dějinám české divadelní avantgardy. Jindřich Honz—E. F. Burian.* Prague: Nakladatelství československé akademie věd.

Srba, Bořivoj. 1981. *Emil František Burian a jeho program poetického divadla.* Prague: Divadelní ústav.

Toman, Jindřich. 1987. "A Marvelous Chemical Laboratory and Its Deeper Meaning: Notes on Roman Jakobson and the Czech Avant-Garde between the Two Wars." In *Language, Poetry, and Poetics. The Generation of the 1890's: Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, Majakovskij.* Proceedings of the First Roman Jakobson Colloquium, edited by Krystyna Pomorska et al., 313–346. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Veltruský, Jiří. 1964. "Man and Object in the Theater." In *A Prague School Reader on Aesthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*, edited by Paul L. Garvin, 83–91. Georgetown: Georgetown University Press.

Winner, Thomas G. 2010. *The Czech Avant-Garde Literary Movement between the Two World Wars*. Accessed October 12 2012. http://www.thomasgwinnerczechavantgarde.com/uploads/5/8/4/3/5843028/tgwinnerczechavantgardedec2010.pdf.

Zich, Otakar. 1986. *Estetika dramatického umění*. Prague: Panorama.

Roman Jakobson's "Semiotics of Fun": A Contribution to the Prague School's Theories of Drama and Theatre, and to a Conceptualization of Voskovec and Werich's "Free-floating" Comedy

Eva Šlaisová

Toronto University, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures,
121 St. Joseph Street, Toronto, ON, M5S 1J4, Canada.
Email: slaisovaeva@seznam.cz

Abstract: According to Jiří Veltruský, there is not a single area of the Prague School studies to which Roman Jakobson would not have contributed. However, some of his interests have remained relatively unexplored by scholars. This is the case with Jakobson's contribution to the theory of drama and theatre in general, and to the conceptualization of Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich's comic plays with language/ dialogue in particular. This presentation focuses on this underrepresented field; namely, it centers on Jakobson's 'semiotics of fun,' which he introduced in the study "An Open Letter from Roman Jakobson to Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich on the Epistemology and Semantics of Fun." I will address specific features of this semiotics, which was largely informed by his studies on poetic language as well as the theories of Karl Bühler, Sergej Karcevskij, and Viktor Shklovsky. In addition, I will examine the impact of Jakobson's "Letter" on Jindřich Honzl's, Jan Mukařovský's, and Jiří Veltruský's studies of drama and theatre.

Keywords: semiotics; the Prague School; deixis; asymmetric dualism; estrangement; comedy; theatre; Jiří Voskovec; Jan Werich

---

According to Jiří Veltruský, there is not a single area of the Prague School to which Roman Jakobson did not contribute (1981, 16). However, as Michael Quinn has argued, some of Jakobson's interests have remained relatively unexplored by scholars (1987, 153). This is the case with Jakobson's contributions to the theory of drama and theatre in general, and to his conceptualization of Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich's comic plays with language/dialogue in particular. This study focuses on this underrepresented field; namely, it centers on Jakobson's "semiotics of fun" which he introduced in the study "Dopis Romana Jakobsona Jiřímu Voskovcovi a Janu Werichovi o noetice a semantice švandy" [An Open Letter from Roman Jakobson to Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich on the Epistemology and Semantics of Fun] (1937). His casual letter, the purpose of which was to celebrate 10th anniversary of two prominent theatre practitioners, Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich,[1] explores the key principles of their so-called "free-floating" stage comedy and presents a pioneering study on dramatic communication.

Psina and the "Radical" Dialogue

Jakobson claimed that Voskovec and Werich's theatre was "a laboratory animal for semasiologists and semiologists" (1987, 161). In particular, he was referring to their type of linguistic comedy, which they variably referred to as *švanda*, *sranda*, *srandovno*, *hlína,* or *psina* (Voskovec and Werich 1971a, 1971b; Voskovec 1966).[2] *Psina*, Voskovec and Werich emphasized, should be free of satire and offer comedy for the sake of comedy, a criterion that manifested itself fully in their linguistic play during their improvised scenes on the proscenium. The aims of these scenes were to initiate surprise in the partner/audience, to create an absurd situation, to entertain the audience, and to improvise and play with linguistic conventions. Jakobson aimed to explain the process by which Voskovec and Werich broke these conventions.

Voskovec and Werich's dialogues, as observed by Jakobson, defied all laws of dramatic communication (1937, 28–29; see also Honzl 1937, 42) as they placed the poetic function, that is, the sign itself, at the center of their attention. Through the foregrounding of language, they estranged the subject (*předmět*) of communication and minimized the extra-linguistic situation, that is, the relationship to time and space and the relationship between interlocutors. In doing

---

1   Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich were exceptional playwrights and theatre practitioners who created a unique form of experimental drama and theatre in the 1920s and 1930s. Their theater is comparable, for example, with that of Bertolt Brecht or Vselovod Meyerchold.

2   Voskovec and Werich introduced their type of comedy in their first play *Vest Pocket Revue* (1927).

so, Voskovec and Werich challenged the notion of dramatic dialogue centered on an interpersonal story which takes place in the present time and created what later Jan Mukařovský called "extreme," (1948a, 138) and Elaine Aston and George Savona "radical drama and dialogue" based on "rule-breaking" (1991, 65). From his informal letter it is clear that Jakobson perceived Voskovec and Werich's "rule-breaking" as a departure from the Bühlerian model of communication, that is, as a minimization of the expressive, appellative and referential functions while emphasizing the poetic one (Bühler 1990, 35).

Voskovec and Werich downplayed the above-mentioned functions through a specific treatment of the protagonists and the space in which their conversations took place. The most important dialogues in terms of *psina* usually took place in front of the curtain. This space stood outside of the fictional world and did not signify anything except a performance space (Bogatyrev 1971, 146). In an empty space such as this, attention to the dialogues themselves came naturally. In addition, as Jakobson observed, their play with language was facilitated by the nature of the characters represented by Voskovec and Werich. They were a duo of clowns/servants defined very generally as two colleagues, who did "not have any specific occupation" (Voskovec and Werich 1956a, 11) and created an illusion that they happened to be in the fictional world accidentally. Their general nature and marginal position in the story allowed them to step out of the fictional world. They could change their identity throughout the play and "draw out through an entire evening their own world of absurd fictions and far-reaching misunderstandings" (Voskovec and Werich 1955a, 11; quoted in Jakobson 1987, 157), which were mostly rooted in language, namely in deictic ambiguity and the asymmetric nature of linguistic signs.

Deixis

As pointed out by Jakobson, Voskovec and Werich's play with deictic words occupied the central role in the "divorce [of their] dialogue from a situation" (1937, 29). Deictic words and deixis are important in establishing dramatic speech. According to several scholars, the ability of the dialogue to generate an interpersonal dialectic rooted in the time and space is a result of deixis (Elam 1980, 139; see also Honzl 1956, 267; Mukařovský 1948a, 88). Particularly important is the use of personal and demonstrative pronouns (I, you, them, that, etc.), and deictic adverbials (here, now, there, etc.). In order for deixis to be successful, it is necessary that a speaker (I), a listener (you), and an object of communication have evident referents. Otherwise, deixis remains ambiguous (Elam 1980, 140). In

most types of drama, deixis is firmly rooted in the context and situation, leaving almost no room for ambiguity. In contrast, Voskovec and Werich played with the potential ambiguity of deixis, as showed by Jakobson, creating situations in which personal pronouns, demonstratives and other words had more than one referent or no referent at all. For example:

HOUSKA: Poslouchal, Áčku, já byl onehdá v klubu a mluvil jsem tam s tím dlouhánem doktorem, ví? A von mi povídal, že prej von měl v Ritzu na Zbraslavi ňákej škandál. Tak se ho jdu na to zeptat.
RUKA: No tak šel, šel, já ho nebudu zdržovat.
HOUSKA: No jak to, Áčku, von mi nerozumí, teď jsem tu, tak von mi to musí říct.
RUKA: Poslouchal, Bobíku, von je divnej, jak mu to může říct, když tu nikde není.
HOUSKA: Kdo?
RUKA: No von?
HOUSKA: Ale já tu přeci jsem, Áčku.
RUKA: Jo tak von měl ten škandál, Bobíku! Tak povídal!
HOUSKA: Ale ne, Áčku! Netahal do toho mne, vo kom vlastně mluví? Vo něm, anebo vo něm?
RUKA: Prominul, Bobíku, kdybych mluvil vo něm, tak řeknu von, né? A když mluvím vo něm, jakože mluvím, tak řeknu von, no!
HOUSKA: Áčku, teď mi do toho natahal aspoň šest lidí, a zatím, je v tom jen a jen von…
(Voskovec and Werich 1956b, 53)

[BUN. … Listen, Big A. The other day I was in the club, and I talked to that tall doctor there, you know? And he told me they say he caused some kind of scandal in the Ritz in Zbraslav. So, I'm coming here to straighten it out.
HAND. So go ahead; go on. I won't hold him up.
BUN. Well how come, Big A? He doesn't understand me. Now I'm here, so he has to tell me.
HAND: Listen, Buddy. He's weird. How can you tell him when he isn't here?
BUN: Who?
HAND: Well, him.
BUN: But surely I am here, Big A.
HAND: So he caused a scandal, eh, Buddy? So, talk.
BUN: But, no, Big A. Don't drag me into it. Who's he talking about? About him, or about him?
HAND: Excuse me, Buddy, but if I had spoken to him, I'd have said he, right? And when I speak of him, like I'm speaking, so I say he, right?
BUN: You Big A, now you have dragged at least six people into it, when there's him and only him.] (quoted in Jakobson 1987, 158)

The misunderstanding here is based on multiple referents of the personal pronoun *von* (he). First, it refers to the addressee of an utterance. At one time in Czech, the third-person singular (he, she) was used in the function of the second-person singular (you), in the form *onikání*. Voskovec and Werich resurrect this archaic form for comic purposes. Second, it refers to the object of communication—a

doctor. The purpose of the play with deictic words is, of course, to foreground the ambiguity of language, which results from the fact that the meaning of a pronoun depends on its relation to the extra-linguistic situation. Its meaning is established through pointing (either physically or through indications in language), which Voskovec and Werich do not want to use.

Using this example with Big A, Jakobson alludes to Bühler, who defines pronouns as situational words (1937, 29), and illustrates how, not respecting this rule, Voskovec and Werich defied the fundamental principle of meaningful conversation. In general, Jakobson points to the importance of deixis for establishing dramatic dialogue and the possibility of play with it. In doing so, he prefigured other Prague school scholars who pointed to the deictic character of dramatic communication, namely Jan Mukařovský (1948a), Karel Brušák (1991), and, most importantly, Jindřich Honzl (1956), who is considered the originator of the idea of deictic articulation of language in drama (Elam 1980, 139).

Asymmetric Dualism

By downplaying the extra-linguistic situation, Voskovec and Werich brought attention to language itself and its "fossilized" conventions (Shklovsky 1973, 41 and 43). According to Jakobson, Voskovec and Werich's dialogues "interfere… with the automatism of habit and teach… us anew how to touch, grasp, and evaluate a thing and a sign" (1987, 162). To break the automatism of language and to engage the perceiver with the language itself is, according to Jakobson (as well as Shklovsky, Tynianov, Mukařovský and others) considered the main purpose of poetry. Yet, Jakobson shows that it was also an aim of Voskovec and Werich's comedic play on words/dialogues, which, according to him, laid bare the sign "with greater courage (*odvaha*) and obtrusiveness (*vtíravost*)" than poetry (1937, 34).

By equating techniques of poetry with Voskovec and Werich's comedy, Jakobson demonstrates that Voskovec and Werich's art corresponds to the vision of a new poetry as presented by the proponents of Poetism. These artists (*poetisté*) called for new poetry liberated from restrictions of reason and logic (Vodička 1969, 100; Wurtsdorff 2006, 106) and considered the key principle of their creation the defamiliarization of words.[3] This was possible because of the "asymmetric" nature

---

[3] Jakobson's idea echoes Shklovsky's theory of ostranenie, which he introduced in the essay "Art as Device" (1917). Similar opinions also appeared in Teige's article "Slova, slova, slova" (1927) and Nezval's article "Kapka inkoustu" (1928), not mentioning studies by Mukařovský, Havránek and others. These artists and scholars were friends of Jakobson who came to Czechoslovakia from

of signs, which is rooted in the fact that "a sign and its signification do not form a perfect fit… a single sign always has several semantic functions and a single signification is always expressed by several signs" (Karcevskij 1982, 49; see also Jakobson 1976). This means that when displaced from its common usage, a word may function as a synonym and/or a homonym.

Most of Voskovec and Werich's linguistic comedy, as Jakobson shows, is based on this principle. Yet, in contrast to poetry, which is a readymade monological discourse and in which the art of naming is solely linked with an artistic subject (i.e., the poet), Voskovec and Werich's dialogues spring from the clashes of/in more or less improvised communication between two subjects—clowns, who perceive and evaluate a semantic unit differently. For example:

Vilém Tell: Prokristapána!
Gala Petr: Prokristapána!
Vilém Tell: Co je pro Krista Pána?
Gala Petr: Já myslil, že vy máte něco pro Krista Pána.
Vilém Tell: Ne, já říkám: Prokristapána, esli nejsme odvázáni.

[Vilém Tell: Jesus Christ!
Gala Petr: Jesus Christ!
Vilém Tell: What is for Jesus Christ?
Gala Petr: I thought you have something for Jesus Christ.
Vilém Tell: No, I'm saying: Jesus Christ, aren't we untied?]
(Voskovec and Werich 1955b, 45; translation EŠ)

As Jakobson pointed out, here the shift in meaning is caused, by "the discrepancy between the emotive function and the direct reference of words" (1987, 161). In other words, the discrepancy is caused by the fact that a sign (*prokristapána)* fulfils two semantic functions. As a result of this ambiguity, an aesthetically effective comic uncertainty is created with regards to both the composition of words and their meaning (Mukařovský 1948b, 103). The goals of these juxtapositions are to explore the possibilities of communication and language, to permit a change in our perspective, and to laugh at conventions which have become flat and tasteless.

Because of the ambiguity of meaning, Voskovec and Werich called their stage comedy *bezpředmětná* ("objectless comedy" or, in Quinn's translation, "free-floating comedy") (Voskovec and Werich 1972a, 602). This terminology was adopted by Jakobson and later used, for example, by Jan Mukařovský (1948a), Jiří Veltruský (1942), Oleg Sus (1965), and Jakub Škorpil (2000). Jakobson was the

---

Russia and brought with him the theories of Russian Formalists. Jakobson could be thus one possible link between Shklovsky's and Czech's opinions on the automatization of expressions and our perception (see Toman 1987).

first to introduce Voskovec and Werich's notion of objectless comedy into theories of the Prague School, and he was thus responsible for its conceptualization. However, the use of this term, which was popular thanks to Jakobson, with regard to Voskovec and Werich's comedy, is puzzling.[4] The idea of free-floating or objectless language is mainly linked with so-called trans-rational (*zaumnyi*) language which is based on a lack of signifieds. In contrast, Voskovec and Werich's type of linguistic comedy is based on a plurality of meanings, that is, an excess of signifieds. Mainly, Voskovec and Werich's comedy is not objectless, but rather a multi-object form of comedy which results from the ambiguity, paradoxes, or, to use Karcevskij's term, asymmetric nature of linguistic signs.

To conclude, despite the sketchy nature of Jakobson's article, his letter has contributed to Czech theory and art in several ways. As suggested by Quinn, "by comparing theatrical discourse with developments in linguistic theory, [Jakobson] was able to clarify the ideas in each field and increase our understanding of both" (Quinn 1987, 154). Jakobson's article, which is based on his linguistic theories, shows the possibility of the expansion of these theories to other fields, particularly theatre, and reveals the points of contact between them. In addition, it presents his departure from an interest in linguistic and literary discourses toward dramatic and theatrical ones. Jakobson's letter could be seen as a pioneering study on the semiotics of drama and theatre, considered alongside other more famous studies on this subject, such as those of Mukařovský and Veltruský, most of which came after Jakobson's.

In addition, Jakobson contributed to the conceptualization of Voskovec and Werich's stage comedy and even after seventy six years, his letter remains one of the few semiotic studies of their art. In one of his interviews, Voskovec mentions that while many things had been written about them, there were few studies that had touched upon the elementary principles of their art. Among these few, Voskovec listed Jakobson, who (according to Voskovec) did not simply offer impressions ("*dojmologii*"), but explained how their stage comedy was done.

---

[4] In the 1966, Voskovec questioned the term objectless comedy. According to him, "objectless comedy does not exist. Comedy can be fantastic, … absurd, … light, ironic, … intellectual, folk, … cruel, etc.—but never *objectless*. If the humor did not reflect … any trait of human or non-human reality, nobody would laugh. It would not be comedy" (12; italics in original).

Works cited

Aston, Elaine and George Savona. 1991. *Theatre as Sign–System: A Semiotics of Text and Performance*. London: Routledge.

Bogatyrev, Petr. 1971. "Znaky divadelní." In *Souvislosti tvorby*, edited by Jaroslav Kolár, 146–160. Prague: Odeon.

Brušák, Karel. 1991. "Imaginary Actional Space in Drama." In *Drama und Theater: Theorie, Methode, Geschichte,* edited by Herta Schmid and Hedwig Král, 144–161. München: O. Sagner.

Bühler, Karl. 1990. *Theory of Language.* Amsterdam—Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publisher Company.

Elam, Keir. 1980. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama.* New York: Methuen.

Honzl, Jindřich. 1937. "Inspirované herectví." In *10 let Osvobozeného divadla 1927–1937: V+W*, edited by Josef Träger, 35–48. Prague: Fr. Borový.

Honzl, Jindřich. 1956. "Hierarchie divadelních prostředků." In *K novému významu umění*, 265–272. Prague: Orbis.

Jakobson, Roman. 1937. "Dopis Romana Jakobsona Jiřímu Voskovcovi a Janu Werichovi o noetice a semantice švandy." In *10 let Osvobozeného divadla 1927–1937: V+W*, edited by Josef Träger, 27–34. Prague: Fr. Borový.

Jakobson, Roman. 1976. "What is Poetry?" In *Semiotics of Art*: *Prague School Contributions*, edited by Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R. Titunik, 165–75. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jakobson, Roman. 1987. "*An Open Letter* to Jiři *Voskovec* and Jan *Werich on the Epistemology* and *Semantics of Fun.*" Translated by Michael Quinn. *Stanford Slavic Studies* 1: 155–162.

Karcevskij, Sergej. 1982. "The Asymmetric Dualism of the Linguistic Sign." In *The Prague School: Selected Writings, 1929–1946*, edited by Peter Steiner, 47–54. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Mukařovský, Jan. 1948a. "Dvě studie o dialogu." In *Kapitoly z české poetiky I. Obecné věci básnictví*, 129–156. Prague: Nakladatelství Svoboda.

Mukařovský, Jan. 1948b. "O jazyce básnickém." In *Kapitoly z české poetiky I. Obecné věci básnictví*, 78–128. Prague: Nakladatelství Svoboda.

Quinn, Michael. 1987. "Jakobson and the Liberated Theatre." *Stanford Slavic Studies* 1: 153–155.

Shklovsky, Viktor Borisovich. 1973. "The Resurrection of the Word." In *Russian Formalism,* edited by Stephen Bann and John E. Bowlt, 41–47. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.

Sus, Oleg. 1965. "O bezpředmětné komice slov." In *Metamorfózy smíchu a vzteku*, 11–42. Brno: Blok.

Škorpil, Jakub. 2000. "Nesmyslný(?) humor." *Divadelní revue* 11 (3): 48–61.

Toman, Jindřich. 1987. "A Marvelous Chemical Laboratory and Its Deeper Meaning: Notes on Roman Jakobson and the Czech Avant-Garde between Two Wars." In *Language, Poetry and Poetics*. *The Generation of the 1890's: Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, Majakovskij.*

Proceedings of the First Roman Jakobson Colloquium, edited by Krystyna Pomorska et al., 313–346. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Veltruský, Jiří. 1942. "Drama jako básnické dílo." In *Čtení o jazyce a poezii*, 401–502. Prague: Družstevní práce.

Veltruský, Jiří. 1994. "Divadelní teorie pražské školy." In *Příspěvky k teorii divadla*, 15–33. Prague: Divadelní ústav.

Vodička, Felix. 1969. "O modernosti v literatuře historicky." In *Struktura vývoje*, edited by Miroslav Červenka, 97–109. Prague: Odeon.

Voskovec Jiří. 1966. *Klobouk ve křoví*. Prague: Československý spisovatel.

Voskovec, Jiří and Jan Werich. 1955a. "Hlavní postavy." Preface. *Sever proti jihu*. In *Hry Osvobozeného divadla II*, 9–11. Prague: Československý spisovatel.

Voskovec, Jiří and Jan Werich. 1955b. *Sever proti jihu*. In *Hry Osvobozeného divadla II*, 13–89. Prague: Československý spisovatel.

Voskovec, Jiří and Jan Werich. 1956a. "Vest Pocket Revue na jevišti." Preface. *Vest Pocket Revue*. In *Hry Osvobozeného divadla III*, 9–12. Prague: Československý spisovatel.

Voskovec, Jiří and Jan Werich. 1956b. *Vest Pocket Revue*. In *Hry Osvobozeného divadla III*, 13–121. Prague: Československý spisovatel.

Voskovec, Jiří and Jan Werich. 1972a. "Humor v revui. (Jenom hlína)." In *Avantgarda známá a neznámá II. Vrchol a krize poetismu 1925–1928*, edited by Štěpán Vlašín, 601–602. Prague: Svoboda.

Voskovec, Jiří and Jan Werich. 1972b. "Humor na scéně a jeho chemie." In *Avantgarda známá a neznámá II. Vrchol a krize poetismu 1925–1928*, edited by Štěpán Vlašín, 632–638. Prague: Svoboda.

Wutsdorff, Irina. 2006. *Bachtin Und Der Prager Strukturalismus: Modelle Poetischer Offenheit Am Beispiel Der Tschechischen Avantgarde*. Paderborn: W. Fink.

Program konference
Jakobson ve struktuře (české) vědy

10.–11. prosince 2012

1. den
pondělí 10. 12. 2012

od 9:00 prezence účastníků

1. blok

Předsedající: Lubomír Doležel

9:30–10:00   **Lubomír Doležel – Tomáš Kubíček:** *Úvodní slovo*

10:00–10:40   **Henryk Baran:** *Roman Jakobson and International Science: Keeper of Memory, Creator of Structures*

10:40–11:20   **Andrew Lass:** *Elective affinities: Roman Jakobson, Claude Levi-Strauss and his Antropologie structurale*

11:20–12:00   **Tomáš Glanc:** *Jakobson's Kernel(s) of Slavic World*

Oběd: 12:00–13:30

2. blok

Předsedající: Wolf Schmid

13:30–14:10   **Patrick Seriot:** *Jakobson's anti-positivism and his renewal of Naturphilosophie in the 1920–1930s*

14:10–14:50   **Jiří Kraus:** *Roman Jakobson's work on poetic language from the point of view of the revival of rhetoric in the 20th century*

14:50–15:30   **Petr A. Bílek:** *Roman Jakobson within the poles of the "gehobenes Kulturgut" vs. "gesunkenes Kultrugut" concepts in 1930s Czechoslovakia*

Přestávka na kávu 15:30–15:50

3. blok

Předsedající: Andrew Lass

15:50–16:30 **Peter Nesselroth:** *Reopening the "Closing statement": Jakobson's factors and functions in our Google Galaxy*

16:30–17:10 **David Skalický:** *Jakobson in Czech Literary Criticism 1982–2012*

17:10–17:50 **Sylva Fischerová:** *Habent sua fata inventiones. The Role of Czechoslovakian Slavistics in the forming of Milman Parry's Oral-formulaic Theory*

<div align="center">

2. den
úterý 11. 12. 2012

</div>

1. blok

Předsedající: Henryk Baran

9:30–10:10 **Wolf Schmid:** *Equivalence in prose*

10:10–10:50 **Veronika Ambros:** *Animated Statues – Rigidified People (a structuralist bridge between Russian literature and Czech theater)*

10:50–11:30 **Eva Šlaisová:** *Roman Jakobson and his Semiotics of Fun*

11:30–12:10 **Richard Müller – Pavel Šidák:** *Jakobson's ruse: the concept of "artifice" in the context of the functional conception of aesthetics and the theory of sign*

Oběd: 12:10–13:30

2. blok

Předsedající: Patrick Seriot

13:30–14:10 **Jindřich Toman:** *Between Constantine the Philospher and Ahasverus: Jewish Presence in Jakobson's Slavic Project*

14:10–14:50 **Robert Dittmann:** *Roman Jakobson's research into Judeo-Czech*

14:50–15:30 **Eva Šťastná:** *Roman Jakobson and Emile Benveniste*

Přestávka na kávu 15:30–15:50

3. blok

Předsedající: Jiří Kraus

15:50–16:30 **Petr Plecháč – Robert Ibrahim:** *Frequency of parts of speech in Czech poetry of 19th Century*

16:30–17:10 **Božena Bednaříková:** *Janua Linguarum or At the Begining Was the Word*

Závěr

Předsedající: Lubomír Doležel – Tomáš Kubíček – Oldřich Král

17:10 –17:50 *Závěrečná diskuse – kulatý stůl*