ROMAN JAKOBSON

Roman Jakobson, a towering figure of linguistic science for most of the 20th century, died on July 18, 1982 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at the age of 85.

Although primarily a linguist, Jakobson was a scholar of great versatility and scope, as shown both by his publications and by the students he trained. In the latest edition of *Who's who,* Jakobson is identified as a linguist and a literary historian, a characterization which (one may assume) he himself considered an adequate shorthand designation of his multiple activities. And, indeed, Jakobson was also a pioneer and a moving force in the theory of versification, in analysis of poetic form and poetic language, and in semiotic theory. But his interests and publications extended even beyond this, to cultural history, anthropology, neurology, and information theory—so much so that one of his biographers labeled him a 'polyhistor' (van Schooneveld 1977:1). Among all these interests, however, language and its structure were always the basic landmarks of Jakobson's intellectual landscape. His adopted coat of arms summed it up succinctly: *Linguista sum: linguistici nihil a me alienum puto.*

It would be difficult indeed to do justice to Jakobson's multiple achievements in a single tribute. In this journal, clearly, the focus must be on Jakobson's life and work as a linguist. In concentrating on this aspect of his rich life, I do so with confidence that others in other places will highlight Jakobson's additional accomplishments, primarily the significance of his poetic and literary contributions.

Roman Jakobson was born in Moscow on October 11, 1896, a son of a prominent industrialist and chemical engineer, Osip, and his wife, Anna, née Volpert. Young Roman's intellectual promise and inclinations were evident from his early years. Poetry was, in his own words, his first passion during his lyceum years, where his interests were fostered by a series of excellent teachers; and it was poetry, and the bold linguistic experiments of such Russian poets as Majakovskij and Xlebnikov, that aroused the young Jakobson's intense interest in language and in the role of phonological elements in poetic structures. In 1914, he received his A.B. degree from the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages, with a silver medal; and after studying linguistics, literary history, and folklore at Moscow University (1914–18), he was awarded the Buslaev prize for his study of the language of the North Russian oral epos (1914). Jakobson received his M.A. from Moscow University in 1918, and became a research associate for Russian language and literature at the University. But even prior to that he was an instrumental force in the foundation of the Moskovskij Lingvističeskij Kružok (Moscow Linguistic Circle), of which he served as President from 1915 to 1920, and in the development of the Leningrad-based OPOJAZ, the Society for the Study of Poetic Language. The experiences and interests of these early years of his career and the influence of Russian formalist thought, in the development of which Jakobson participated so actively in his youth, marked much of his subsequent scholarly activity. The linguistic ideas which influenced him during these early years were primarily the phonological

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0097850783076389 Published online by Cambridge University Press

theories of Baudouin de Courtenay and his students—L. V. Ščerba and E. D. Polivanov—and the work of the main figure of the Moscow linguistic school, F. F. Fortunatov. Through the reports of Sergej Karcevskij, who had studied in Geneva and returned to Moscow in 1917, Jakobson also became acquainted with the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure.

The post-revolutionary year 1920 was a fateful one in Jakobson's life and career. It was then that he left Russia and settled in Czechoslovakia; and it was during the next two decades in Czechoslovakia that his scientific development came to full flower, and his contacts and influence with the international scholarly community and its most distinguished members became established. One could only speculate what fate would have awaited Jakobson personally if he had not decided to leave Russia when he was still only 23 years old. There is little doubt, however, that his profound impact on Western scholarship was closely connected with his emigration and his Prague experience.

Prague's geographical position (at the crossroads of Europe, as the Czechs used to be fond of saying)—and, even more important, the fact that Czechoslovakia under Thomas Masaryk's presidency was one of the few genuine parliamentary democracies in Central and Eastern Europe—provided the opportunity for an active and rich intellectual and cultural life. There were numerous other emigrés in Prague, many of them Russian; and Vienna, where Prince Nicholas Trubetzkoy had settled, was within an easy train ride. The Czechs' interest in language, in Slavistic studies, and in philology was part of a strong tradition that had motivated the Czech cultural renaissance throughout the 19th century. Moreover, the post-war influx of new literary and cultural trends from both the West and the East allowed many new ideas to flourish freely in the Czech capital. All this was an ideal milieu for one of Jakobson's cosmopolitanism and intellectual scope. As the Czech writer, Milada Součková, remarked (1976:1), Jakobson's favorite Czech expression for evaluating a discussion or an exchange of ideas were the terms *podnětná a plodná* 'stimulating and fruitful'; and those two adjectives are clearly appropriate to the entire atmosphere of post-war Prague and Jakobson's own work during this period.

Jakobson completed his academic studies in Prague, receiving his Ph.D. from Charles University in 1930. But long before that, he had established himself as a prominent figure in the Czech capital. His first major contribution was in poetics and metrics. On the way to Prague, on the boat from Tallinn to Szcecin, Jakobson had become fascinated by the poetry of the 19th century Czech romantic Karel Hynek Mácha, and had a Czech fellow passenger recite the poems to him (cf. Jakobson & Pomorska 1980:26). Jakobson clearly saw the significance of linguistic factors in the metric structures of Czech and Russian—two languages which, although closely related, use different sets of prosodic features in their phonologies; the distinction plays a decisive role in the structures of Czech and Russian verse. Undeterred by the lack of understanding which his ideas at first received from the Prague University establishment, Jakobson completed, late in 1922 (only some two years after his arrival in Prague), a major work on prosody, *O češskom stixe preimuščestvenno v sopostavlenii s*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0097850783076389 Published online by Cambridge University Press

russkim ('On Czech verse, primarily in comparison with Russian verse'). Although a scholar of poetics, Jakobson was also personally involved with the world of poetry, poets, and writers; as he had been a friend of Xlebnikov, Majakovskij, and Pasternak in Moscow, so in Prague his circle of acquaintances included the leading poets, writers, and avant-garde artists: Nezval, Seifert, Vančura, Teige, Šíma, and others.

The investigation of prosody and linguistic factors in verse structure bears, of course, a clear connection to Jakobson's next major concentration of scholarly energies—the theory of phonology. It is this period of Jakobson's activity which is closely connected with the Cercle linguistique de Prague, of which he was a co-founder in 1926, serving as Vice-President until 1939.

The beginnings of the Prague Linguistic Circle were far from dramatic. The first meeting, on October 6, 1926, was in the office of Vilém Mathesius, Professor of English Philology at Charles University, and was attended by only six persons: Mathesius, Bohumil Trnka (another Anglicist), Jakobson, Bohuslav Havránek (a Czech Slavicist), the Orientalist Jan Rypka, and Henrik Becker, a visiting lecturer from Leipzig whose paper, delivered earlier on that day, was the subject of the discussion. Becker's paper, 'Der europäische Sprachgeist', dealt with Czech and Hungarian—which in his analysis showed, in spite of their lack of genetic relationship, similar impact from their contacts with the European cultural community. In retrospect, one can see the common interests that brought these few men of diverse backgrounds together to discuss this topic: on the one hand, their dissatisfaction with the atomistic and mechanistic neogrammarian approach to language development, and on the other, their interest in the influence of cultural factors in this process. These two strands of thought characterized much of Jakobson's work during the Prague years.

The participants of the first meeting agreed to continue their gatherings, which later shifted to an oblong table at the Café Louvre in Prague. Jakobson, the most outspoken and energetic personality of the original group, turned out to be the moving intellectual force of the Circle, while the quieter but efficient Havránek was its main organizer. In the next few years, the Circle started two influential publications, the internationally oriented *Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague* (eight volumes between 1929 and 1939) and a Czech language journal, *Slovo a slovesnost,* which first appeared in 1935.

Jakobson gave his first paper to the Circle on January 13, 1927, and chose the descriptive title 'The concept of the sound law and the teleological principle' (the original Czech title, under which it was later published, was 'O hláskoslovném zákonu a teleologickém hláskosloví'). In it, he criticized the neogrammarians for failing to offer a theoretical foundation for their hypotheses, by not taking into account the purpose which a linguistic system serves, but also criticized Saussure's rigid antonymy of synchrony and diachrony—which, in Jakobson's view, should be overcome by a transformation of historical phonetics into the history of phonemic systems. He argued, even in this early exposition, that historical changes should be analysed in their relation to the phonemic system in which they occur. It was precisely this structural approach

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which underlay Jakobson's major work of the late 1920's, *Remarques sur l'évolution phonologique du russe comparée à celle des autres langues slaves,* completed in 1928 and published as the second volume of the *Travaux* (1929).

Trubetzkoy came to Prague to give his first lecture to the Circle on February 6, 1928, on the topic of 'Alphabet und Lautsystem', a subject directly related to the phonological interests of the Circle members. Jakobson and Trubetzkoy had been acquainted since their Moscow days, having first met in the Fall of 1914 at a session of the Moscow Folklore Commission. They were able to resume their contact after both left Russia; the first letter from Trubetzkoy to Jakobson was sent from Sofia, Bulgaria, on December 12, 1920. The contacts between the two men then became more frequent and soon turned into a vigorous and fruitful exchange of ideas, opinions, and plans that lasted until Trubetzkoy's death in 1938. The letters written by Trubetzkoy to Jakobson almost miraculously survived World War II—buried by a courageous friend of Jakobson in occupied Prague, and returned to him after the war. There are 196 of them, the first few addressed politely to *mnogouvažajemyj Roman Osipovič* 'highly esteemed R. O.', most of the rest cordially to *dorogoj Roman Osipovič* 'dear R. O.'; many of them contain detailed expositions and discussion of linguistic problems. They have been preserved in the volume which Jakobson himself edited and published in 1975.

Jakobson's phonological theories, as they became formulated during the fruitful Prague years, represent the foundation of all his subsequent work in phonology—including the theory of distinctive features, developed in detail during his American period. His point of departure was the work of Baudouin de Courtenay, Ščerba, and Saussure. But Jakobson himself, in the 'Retrospect' written for the first volume of his *Selected writings* (1962), sees a larger influence in the development of his ideas (and of modern structuralist phonology in general), namely the relativistic principles evidenced in the early 20th century in such diverse areas as modern physics or in the pictorial theory and practice of cubism, where the principal notions are not of substance but of interrelationships. Jakobson (632) quotes Braque's remark: 'I do not believe in things, I believe only in their relationship.' The imaginative mind may find little difficulty in seeing the relationship of the Praguean phoneme, and its eventual distinctive-feature analysis, with the relativistic abstractions of modern science and art. Whether this is indeed the order of phenomena, this 'Zeitgeist' of the early 20th century—so wrongly expected to bring with it a peaceful and glorious world—is a generalization still in need of examination. Be that as it may, Jakobson's phonology of the 20's and 30's was both a renunciation of the phonetic atomism of the previous era and a theory of systematic relations of the ultimate functional sets of linguistic communication, and was thus a revolutionary step on its own merits.

In Jakobson's early work, one still finds the phoneme referred to as the phonological unit which cannot be further analysed into smaller sub-units (cf. *Remarques*); however, the oppositions of phoneme sets, referred to as correlations, appear in his work almost from the beginning. Since the notion of a correlation requires the identification of the salient properties that distinguish

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0097850783076389 Published online by Cambridge University Press

entire sets of phonemes, one must factor out the functionally distinct phonemic properties of each member of the set, thus arriving at the logical equivalents of the distinctive features. Moreover, the notion of the archiphoneme (also present as both a concept and a term in Jakobson's early writings) refers to the intersection of the phonemic properties in a set of phonemes in a correlated pair, and thus is an abstraction clearly requiring the identification of the 'sub-atomic' particles of the phoneme. The foundations of feature theory were laid early.

The impetus to setting up a systematic matrix of distinctive oppositions for the entire phonemic set of the language apparently came to Jakobson in the form of a challenge to find a parallelism between the systems of vowels and consonants. According to his own recollections (Jakobson & Pomorska, 32–3), he had been thinking about this problem since 1926, when the Czech poet Jaroslav Durych queried him in a letter about the possibility of a systematic classification of consonants, comparable to the investigations which allowed the insightful conclusions about the role of vowels in poetry. In spite of a certain skepticism on Trubetzkoy's part, Jakobson persisted; and by the early 1930's he was apparently convinced that all phonemic features were identifiable as binary relations, in vowels as well as in consonants. In 1932, the idea received its explicit formulation when Jakobson wrote his articles on the phoneme and on phonology for *Ottův slovník naučný*, a prestigious Czech encyclopedia. Here he defined the phoneme as a 'set of concurrent sound properties which are used in a given language to distinguish words of unlike meaning' (as translated in *Selected writings* 1:231). The concurrent properties, later christened distinctive features, then led to the central concept of Jakobson's phonology: the principle of relational invariance—though this ultimate development of the theory belongs to Jakobson's American period. In the early years, the external circumstances that spurred on Jakobson's phonological work were the three major international congresses for which the Prague Circle decided to prepare programmatic statements: the First International Congress of Linguists in The Hague in 1928, the First Congress of Slavic Philologists in Prague in 1929, and the International Phonological Meeting in Prague in 1930. Jakobson had a dominant role in the formulation of all these expositions.

The other major area to which Jakobson devoted a great deal of his intellectual energies in the 1930's was the analysis of grammatical categories. Here his striving for a unified set of principles, to explain the organization of all levels of linguistic structure, is clearly apparent: the notion of a hierarchical organization of linguistic entities—proposed in his early works on phonology, and finding its expression in the marked vs. unmarked distinction in sets of paired phonemes—is extended to the lexicon and grammar. Jakobson's first work in this area, 'Zur Struktur des russischen Verbums', was published in the Mathesius homage volume in 1932. In phonology, the relation between the marked and unmarked members of an opposition is essentially the presence vs. absence of the relevant distinctive property; but in its application to higher levels of language, the markedness relation proposed by Jakobson is a more complex one. Jakobson's first example was lexical, the Russian word *osël*

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'donkey': here the unmarked member of the opposition has, as its general meaning, the non-determinacy of a particular property; i.e., it makes no statement as to the presence or absence of the relevant feature. Thus *osël*, in its general meaning, makes no statement as to sex, and can be used for both the male and the female of the species. The corresponding marked term *oslica* 'female donkey' signals the presence of the relevant property. The unmarked term, however, can also function in a narrower, specific meaning, and can be used to signal the absence of the property; thus *osël* can designate a male donkey as well as a generic concept. This relation was applied by Jakobson to the verbal system of Russian where, e.g., the perfective aspect is considered to be marked, and the imperfective unmarked; the past tense marked, and the present unmarked, etc. Somewhat later, in his influential study of the Russian case system, 'Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kasuslehre' (1936), Jakobson extended his theory to the nominal inflections. In his analysis, the Russian system consists of eight cases exhibiting concurrent markedness relations—which, in the final development of theory, are defined as quantification, directionality, and marginality.

These theoretical constructs, too, found a further development in Jakobson's works written later in the United States: *Shifters, verbal categories and the Russian verb* (1957) and 'Morfologičeskie nabljudenija nad slavjanskim sklo-neniem' ('Morphological inquiry into Slavic declension', 1958). The latter was presented to a packed lecture hall at Moscow University in 1958 on the occasion of the 4th International Congress of Slavists—which Jakobson, after so many years of absence from his native land, attended as a member of the United States delegation.

The markedness hypothesis, as extended by Jakobson, captures two important insights: the need for linguistic expression of a certain vagueness or indeterminacy, and the efficiency of a system which utilizes two forms for three functions, with the disambiguation left to syntagmatic relations. Logically, the markedness hypothesis is a form of hyponymy, differing from simple hyponymy—as Lyons (1977:305–11) points out—as being potentially reflexive. Even if one suspects that language is too complex a phenomenon to lend itself, in all its manifestations, to such a unified analysis, one cannot but admire Jakobson's striving for the discovery of such general principles.

Jakobson's writings and his leading role in the Prague Circle won him much international recognition. He was very prolific during the Prague years: his bibliography lists 130 items published between 1920 and 1939, the period which he spent in Czechoslovakia, not counting some 60 additional essays and other miscellaneous pieces in the general press. In spite of that, the acceptance of his work on the part of the established academic community was far from unanimous. This slowed down Jakobson's academic career; although he was nominated to a professorship at the Masaryk University in Brno in 1934, the final decision was repeatedly delayed, and it was not until 1937 that the tenured appointment was made.

Jakobson was able to hold the new position for no more than a couple of years. The Munich agreement led not only to the dismemberment of Czecho-

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slovakia, but also to a stifling of the country's cultural life, in anticipation of disasters yet to come. On March 15, 1939, Hitler's armies occupied what the Munich conference had left of the republic. Jakobson escaped from Brno just in time, on the eve of the invasion, traveling first to Denmark and shortly thereafter to Norway; he arrived in Oslo on September 1, 1939, the first day of World War II. He served briefly as Visiting Lecturer at Copenhagen and Oslo, but the German armies gave him no rest there either. In 1940, he fled to neutral Sweden, walking across the border mountains, and became Visiting Lecturer at Uppsala. The major work completed during his Scandinavian sojourn was his influential *Kindersprache, Aphasie und allgemeine Lautgesetze* (1941), his statement of the role of phonological universals in language acquisition and aphasic language loss—a topic in which he remained interested for the rest of his scholarly career.

In 1941, Jakobson moved to the United States; and from 1942 to 1946 he was Professor of General Linguistics and of Czechoslovak Studies at the École Libre des Hautes Études, a 'university in exile' in New York. The initial reception accorded Jakobson by the American linguistic world was not entirely hospitable. The differences in methodology, or perhaps even the fear of competition for the available positions (cf. Hall 1969:194, note 3), may have been responsible for the coolness. The result was that Jakobson's first years in New York were not easy; throughout the war period, he was unable to secure for himself a regular university appointment in linguistics. It was not until Fall 1946 that he was named the Thomas G. Masaryk Professor of Czechoslovak Studies at Columbia University.

It was perhaps the dominant concerns of the war years, when the fate of the European nations was at stake, that channeled Jakobson's scholarly interest in this period toward issues of cultural and historical importance within the Slavic world. This is clearly evident in *Moudrost starých Čechů* ('The wisdom of the Old Czechs'), written in New York and published in Czech (1943). Here Jakobson argued, using language as an important parameter, for a Slavic orientation in Czech culture—in opposition to the more conventional notions prevalent in previous Czech scholarship, which saw the dominant if not the only significant impact on Czech culture as being West European.

In another important work of this period, Jakobson turned his attention to the question of the Russian epic *Slovo o polku Igoreve* ('The Igor tale'). Its creation had been placed in the late 12th century; however, its authenticity as an old literary monument was challenged by some scholars—particularly the French Slavist André Mazon, who suggested that, like the Ossian poems and the 'old' Czech poems discovered in the 19th century, the Igor tale was a modern forgery. In a detailed study which appeared in a collection of essays, *La Geste du Prince Igor* (published by the École Libre), Jakobson vigorously argued the linguistic case for the authenticity of the original composition, a position that he maintained until the end of his life.

When the war ended, Jakobson decided to stay in New York, in spite of far from ideal economic circumstances. I have little doubt that he could have returned to his professorship in Czechoslovakia, which at that time had a co-

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alition government and reasonable freedom of expression, if he had been willing to make the accommodations that any such post would be likely to require in a country within the Soviet sphere of influence. Jakobson told me, a few years later, that he had decided not to return because he had no illusions that the coalition government in Prague would last. In that he was certainly right. The Czechoslovak coup d'état came in 1948; and what ensued in Prague was a period of fierce Stalinism, which culminated in the horrendous purge trials and death sentences of the early 1950's. It was during the harshest years of Stalinism that Jakobson was viciously attacked, for his linguistic theories as well as his literary opinions, both in Moscow and in Prague as well as in the other capitals of Stalin's empire. During Ždanov's rule over Soviet culture, Jakobson was labeled in his native country as a 'bourgeois cosmopolitan'; and the Moscow Linguistic Circle, which he founded and of which he served as President in his youth, was denounced in the city of its birth as a 'fortress of formalism, that most reactionary bourgeois movement'. It was also duly noted that Jakobson had emigrated 'to the USA, the stronghold of bourgeois reaction, the chief source of imperialist aggression' (Desnickaja 1949:342). The politically inspired attacks from Prague, which included a general denunciation of almost all the accomplishments of the Prague Linguistic Circle, must have been particularly painful to him, since the fame of the Prague linguistic school had, after all, been in significant part the result of his contribution. In a final gesture of ideological small-mindedness, Jakobson's professorship at Brno was revoked by the Communist authorities.

The denunciations from the East provide an ironic juxtaposition to the attacks, also politically inspired, that were directed at Jakobson during the early post-war years in the US. As the Soviet-American wartime alliance cooled and collapsed, Jakobson's alleged pro-Russian biases and his long-standing associations with personalities of the European avant-garde, whose natural political sympathies were traditionally leftist, served as pretexts for denunciations by rightist emigré groups and similar circles. Undoubtedly unpleasant, these attacks did not seriously interfere with Jakobson's life or career, in part because of the support he received from Columbia officials—including the then president of the University, Dwight Eisenhower.

The academic year 1947–48 was an unhappy one for Jakobson; that winter he was involved in an automobile accident in which he suffered compound fractures of his legs, and which sent him to the hospital for a prolonged period of time. This slowed down the proverbially fast-moving Jakobson physically, but not intellectually. It was in his hospital bed that he gave the final touches to and corrected the proofs of his generative treatment of the inflectional morphology of the Russian verb, published in *Word* as 'Russian conjugation' in 1948. Thus, a good decade before generative grammar burst upon the American linguistic scene in syntax, Jakobson formulated a full generative description on the morphological level, distinguishing underlying from surface forms, and lacking only the notational formalism and the rewrite arrows.

It was at this time that Jakobson decided to leave Columbia and accept a professorship at Harvard, in its newly revitalized Slavic Department (another

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Russian, the historian Michael Karpovich, had been appointed Chairman). Almost overnight, Jakobson's decision and the subsequent hiring of additional faculty gave Harvard one of the best Slavic departments in the country. When the time for the move came, fourteen graduate students left Columbia with Jakobson and registered at Harvard—an enormous number, if one considers the size of the Slavic field at that time. Most of them finished at Harvard under Jakobson's direction.

It would surely be difficult to find a more eloquent tribute to Jakobson's teaching than this mass transfer of his graduate students. Jakobson was, of course, a vigorous and fascinating teacher; but he was more than a classroom personality. His extensive knowledge of the field and the literature, his willingness to share his ideas, the encouragement he dispensed both to advanced students and to beginners, and his almost incredible imagination in finding dissertation topics that suited the interests and the ability of his students made him something of an academic pied piper. Because he taught at several institutions on two continents, and participated in the work of more than one department until the end of his career, precise statistics about the number of doctoral dissertations that he directed during his lifetime are not available. A partial record, compiled with the aid of Horace Lunt at Harvard, shows 27 doctoral theses directed by Jakobson in the Slavic Department there, and another 19 in which he participated as second reader. To that, we would need to add the Columbia Ph.D's—at least six—and doctoral candidates in other countries and other departments. The total number of doctoral students in whose work he had a major hand thus must be close to a hundred. Those whose work he influenced by his teaching and lectures is many times that.

At Harvard, Jakobson held the Samuel Hazzard Cross Professorship of Slavic Languages and Literatures from 1949 until his retirement in 1967; from 1960, he was also a Professor of General Linguistics. In 1957 he received a concurrent appointment as Institute Professor at MIT, which he held until his retirement from there in 1970. MIT gave him an office for life, and he did much of his work there until his final months. His last annual report on his academic activities to the MIT administration, covering the period from June 1981 to June 1982, lists seventeen works published during that year, and another seventeen titles to appear.

The Cambridge period of Jakobson's activity rivaled and exceeded in productivity his Prague years. Soon after coming to Harvard, he was able to establish close contacts with colleagues working on speech analysis and related matters at MIT, particularly with Gunnar Fant. One fruit of this collaboration was the publication, in 1952, of *Preliminaries to speech analysis,* which he coauthored with Fant and Morris Halle; this represented a further development of his ideas in phonology, presenting a detailed acoustic and articulatory argumentation for the distinctive-feature analysis. Several later works contain further elaborations of the theory; including *Fundamentals of language* (with Morris Halle) in 1956—and, most recently, *The sound shape of language* (with Linda Waugh) in 1979.

The essence of Jakobson's phonological theory, in its final shape, remains

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firmly grounded in what might be called relativistic structuralism. The distinctive features clearly represent a set of invariant properties which identify all the sounds classed as members of a given phoneme set. But the invariance is relational, not articulatory or narrowly acoustic. Thus if, as in English, the velar voiceless stop /k/ has a fronted variant before front vowels, the invariant properties of the /k/ are not specified by its velarity, i.e. the feature [+grave], in Jakobson's terminology; instead, the relational invariance in this case is the feature [+compact] which distinguishes /k/ from both /p/ and /t/. The situation is different in languages like Czech or Hungarian which, in addition to /p t k/, have a palatal stop phoneme /ţ/. In these systems, both compactness and gravity are needed to specify the invariant properties of /k/. The concept of relational invariance saves Jakobson's phonology from some of the problems faced by American descriptivists, such as partial overlapping. A classical case of this type of solution, presented in *Preliminaries,* is Jakobson's treatment of Danish /t d ð/, which he grouped into two phonemic oppositions in the 'strong' and 'weak' position of a word, with /d/ as weak member, in opposition to /t/, in strong word position, but as strong member, in opposition to /ð/, in weak position. Although generative phonologists claimed to detect a logical flaw even in this relativistic position (cf. Chomsky 1964:954), Jakobson maintained it with further arguments from such languages as Gilyak, in which he proposed a similar analysis for the aspirated [kh], the weak [k], and the continuant [x] (Jakobson & Waugh, 48).

In 1965, Jakobson wrote a compact and fascinating article, entitled 'The quest for the essence of language', which appeared in *Diogenes*. The title is no exaggeration: this piece represents the essence of Jakobson's underlying assumptions. Starting from Peirce's classification of signs into icons, indices, and symbols, Jakobson focuses on the type of iconic representation that Peirce labeled diagrammatic, and from this perspective looks at the central question of the form/meaning relationship in language. His quest is for the alternate signs of language which exhibit an equivalent relation between their signantia and signata. He finds a number of such instances, e.g. in the gradation of adjectives—where, in the various Indo-European languages, the positive, comparative, and superlative degrees show a gradual increase in the number of phonemes: *high/higher/highest, altus/altior/altissimus*. The arguments in this short article represent Jakobson's continuous striving to discover the essence of the form/meaning relationship by identifying the features that function as meaning differentiators, not only in phonology, but also within the more complex relations on the higher levels of language, where the meaning is that of grammatical categories and of syntactic patterns. The theory of morphological markedness, developed in his Prague years, had addressed the same over-all concern. One can perhaps best say that Jakobson, a scholar who gave us highly imaginative theoretical models in compact form, was at the same time a realist. The form of language was real to him, and the formal structure exhibited by language was of utmost importance; his interpretation of the communicational function of language, whether in phonology or in grammar, was based

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on a concurrent analysis of form/meaning relations, and considered the speaker/addressee interaction as central for the understanding of linguistic systems. This led Jakobson to a striving for the discovery of isomorphic relations between linguistic forms and meanings—albeit an isomorphy on an abstract level of analysis, through which he attempted to transcend the atomistic views of language with which the many varieties and types of language relations tempt us.

Of his 85 years, Jakobson spent 23 in Russia, 19 in Czechoslovakia, and most of the rest—almost half his lifetime—in the United States. In this country he was affiliated with three major universities, and was a visitor at many others. The great majority of his doctoral candidates were American students. At one time or another, every Slavic department of a major university in this country had a chairman who had been Jakobson's student. And it was also during his American period that most of his honors came to him. He received twenty-five honorary degrees from some of the leading universities in the world: Cambridge (1960), Chicago and Oslo (1961), Uppsala and Michigan (1963), Grenoble, Nice, and New Mexico (1966), Rome and Yale (1967), Prague and Brno (1968), Zagreb and Clark (1969), Ohio State (1970), Louvain (1972), Tel Aviv and Harvard (1975), Columbia (1976), Liège and Copenhagen (1979), Ruhr and Georgetown (1980), and Brandeis and Oxford (1981). In one of those ironies of history which pursued him throughout his life, he received an honorary degree from Charles University in Prague, in 1968, only one week before the Soviet tanks came and crushed the Czechoslovak Spring. He was a member of nine academies of sciences—the Dutch, Polish, Norwegian, Danish, Serbian, Irish, Italian, British, and Finnish—and of many learned societies all over the world. He received numerous honors from scientific and professional societies; and his students and colleagues published three monumental Festschriften to honor him on his 60th, 70th, and 80th birthdays. His last major honor, the Hegel-Preis 1982, presented by the International Hegel Society and the City of Stuttgart, came to him on June 22, 1982, shortly before his death.

And yet, even after half a lifetime in America, Roman Jakobson remained something of a European—or, perhaps more accurately, a citizen of the world. His affection for the language, literature, and culture of his native Russia never lessened, in spite of all the periodic abuse that he had to take from those in power there. He made it his policy to converse with his foreign friends and colleagues in Russian, Czech, or French, and freely used several other languages as the need arose. And, in spite of the three decades in American academic institutions, Jakobson never quite got used to some aspects of the sober pragmatism of our academia. No one could ever call him a master of understatement: when he believed in an idea, he argued for it with vigor; and when he liked a student or a colleague, he supported him with characteristic enthusiasm. He could be devastating in his criticism when he felt the need to defend his scholarly turf; he relished the disputations and the repartees, and remembered fondly two 'unusual workshops of vigorous and ardent research', as he called them—the Moscow and the Prague Linguistic Circles: 'Recollecting

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0097850783076389 Published online by Cambridge University Press

their passionate, impetuous discussions which tested, egged on, and whetted our scientific thought, I must confess that never since and nowhere else have I witnessed learned debates of similar creative force' (*Selected writings* 2:vi).

Roman Jakobson was a man of tremendous intellectual energy and imagination, as well as of strong feelings, opinions, likes, and dislikes: there was nothing half-hearted or fuzzy about him. He was, for a large part of this century, a figure of such importance in our science that one finds it difficult to imagine linguistics without him. He will be missed by the whole profession, no doubt; but it is those among us whom he taught, guided, and encouraged who will miss him most.[1]

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[1] A complete list of Roman Jakobson's publications comprises over five hundred items. The last complete bibliography of his works, which includes all items until 1971, was published in *Roman Jakobson, A bibliography of his writings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971). Since he remained active until the very end of his life, that bibliography is now being updated, and will be published in the seventh volume of his *Selected writings* (expected to appear in 1983 or 1984).

Jakobson's selected works are being published by Mouton, The Hague, in a seven-volume edition, with each volume focusing on a particular aspect of Jakobson's scholarly activity. His phonological works are included in Vol. 1, *Phonological studies,* which appeared in 1962. Studies dealing with morphology and grammar are presented in Vol. 2, *Word and language,* 1971. The other volumes include *Poetry of grammar and grammar of poetry* (Vol. 3), *Slavic epic studies* (vol. 4), *Verse and its masters* (Vol. 5), and *Early Slavic ways and crossroads* (Vol. 6).

Major studies dealing with Jakobson's work have been written by Elmar Holenstein, *Roman Jakobson's approach to language* (English translation, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), by Linda R. Waugh, *Roman Jakobson's science of language* (Lisse: de Ridder, 1976), and by Rodney B. Sangster, *Roman Jakobson and beyond* (Berlin: Mouton, 1982).

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[Received 2 April 1983.]

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0097850783076389 Published online by Cambridge University Press