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DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When endeavoring to elaborate and complete an introductory outline of my views on the theory of poetic language, I was invited by the Institute of Literary Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences to devote to these questions a seminar held during several days in October 1958 in the town of Krynica.

In the breaks between the seminar meetings, one of its active participants, Krystyna Pomorska, discussed with me my main theses and swiftly transposed them into Polish for the use of the assembly. At the end of 1959 she prepared a Polish version of my essay “Linguistics and Poetics” as soon as its English text was ready, and we jointly sought and interpreted native poetic examples to be inserted into the Polish variant of this study (see below, p. 18 ff. and 52 ff.).

As a result of our subsequent cooperation in 1960, we ventured to draft a set of questions facing the current inquiry into poetics. With a few varied poems tentatively analyzed from a novel standpoint, a sketch entitled “Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry” (see below, p. 63 ff.) was presented in August 1960 at the Warsaw International Conference on Poetics, convoked by the same famous Institute of Literary Studies.

The further development of my inquiry into this area throughout the nineteen sixties and seventies (see below, p. 98 ff.) could hardly have been achieved without the continually encouraging, inspiring and enriching suggestions of KRYSTYNA POMORSKA, endowed as she is with an unfailing sense for poetry and, above all, for the creative legacy of the Polish and Russian peoples.

It is to her that the present volume is dedicated.

For the joy of collective research work my further recognition is due to Bayara Aroutunova, Boris Casacu, Peter Colaclides, Shirō Hattori, Lawrence Jones, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Grete Lübke-Grothues, Stephen Rudy, Luciana Stegagno-Picchio, and Paolo Valesio.

December 31, 1979
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PREFACE

Of the five volumes of Roman Jakobson's Selected Writings now in print, the present volume has the most direct bearing on his manifold contribution to literary studies. Earlier volumes have incorporated Professor Jakobson's works in the fields of epic poetry and metrics, as well as some studies devoted to particular authors or literary works, but the present tome, Grammar of Poetry and Poetry of Grammar, reveals the full scope of his inquiry into the theory and practice of "poetics", conceived in Jakobson's terms as that discipline which studies "the differentia specifica of verbal art in relation to other arts and in relation to other kinds of verbal behavior" (18), in other words, a discipline closely related to the science of language and general semiotics.

Part One of SW III contains Jakobson's chief theoretical papers on the relation of linguistics to poetics (pp. 3ff., 7ff., 18ff.), on the specific use of linguistic, especially grammatical, means in the structuration of poetic works (pp. 63ff., 87ff.), on parallelism as a universal feature of poetry (98ff.), on the question of intention and teleology in the poetic work (136ff.), and, finally, on metalanguage as a problem bordering on that of poetic language (148ff.). Several of these papers, in particular "Linguistics and Poetics" (18ff.) and "Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry" (87ff.), are celebrated pronouncements on the linguistic investigation of poetic works, but are here gathered together for the first time.


See SW IV and SW V, in particular the studies in the latter devoted to Puškin, Pasternak, Majakovskij and Xlebnikov.

Numbers in parentheses refer to the present volume.

Other works touching on the grammar of poetry, in particular Jakobson's important study of Constantine's Encomium to Gregory Nazianzus and his work on Old Church Slavonic poetry, are to be included in SW VI for thematic reasons.
Part Two, which constitutes the core of the volume, contains some thirty-four studies, mostly written during the last two decades, which apply Jakobson's principles and methods of analysis to poetic texts ranging in period from the eighth to the twentieth century and representing the most diverse cultural, aesthetic, and linguistic environments. These analyses, which Jakobson chooses to call "Readings" — perhaps to underscore the fact that even the most objective analysis remains relative, its validity to be tested by juxtaposition to rival interpretations — are written in six languages (Czech, English, French, German, Polish, and Russian), which is in itself fitting testimony to the legendary erudition of their author. The breadth of the material is astonishing: over fourteen languages are represented — Bulgarian, Czech, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, and Slovenian. Jakobon's "readings", which in many instances were pursued with the aid of native experts in the poetic cultures involved, are ordered here chronologically, according to the date of the work in question. These studies, which deal with poems of short length (cf. 770) that reveal "a great diversity of styles and themes: religious, philosophical, meditative, martial, revolutionary, and erotic" (770), nevertheless focus on certain genres and their structural properties. Of particular interest are Jakobson's detailed observations on the sonnet form as practised by Dante (176ff.), Joachim du Bellay (239ff.), Sidney (275ff.), Shakespeare (284ff.), and Baudelaire (447ff.). It is just such a form which, in its combination of severity and fluidity (cf. Baudelaire's words cited below, 781), offers the optimal test case for a structural approach to poetic texts intent on avoiding both ready-made schemes and haphazard impressionism. (On the fact that the majority of texts are lyrical in nature, we comment below, p. XVII.) Despite this fact, Jakobson can hardly be accused of any pre-selection of texts best suited for his analytical purposes. On the contrary, a distinctive feature of his career as poetician can be considered his avoidance of what may be termed "aesthetic egocentrism" (cf. in particular, 498 below), and it is characteristic that many of the texts he has singled out for analysis were ignored because of the prevailing "taste" of a given period. In many a supposed poetic "ugly duckling" Jakobson has revealed a well-wrought verbal gem whose luminous facets had failed to catch the eye of less astute observers. This is particularly true of his studies on medieval works (cf. 165ff., 176ff., 193ff., 304ff.) and more contemporary poems viewed as "primitives" (cf. 322ff., 482ff.).

The last two parts of the volume contain materials representing the cutting edge of Jakobson's quest into verbal art and a review of the paths
that took him to the present moment. Part III examines certain transitional or marginal genres in which the poetic function is nevertheless supremely manifest: an album note by Nikolaj Gogol’ (679ff.); the writings of peasant children as collected and appreciated by Lev Tolstoj (696ff.; allow me to translate its marvelous title for the English reader: ‘Leo Tolstoj in His Happy Moments of Irritation’); a sudden and rather unexpected, though highly patterned oral outburst of Ivan Turgenev (707ff.; again, for the English reader: ‘Supraconscious Turgenev’, or more colloquially: ‘Turgenev Leaves His Senses’; the title adjective alludes to the particular form of poetry the twentieth-century Russian Futurists practised, zaum’, which in its most outrageous instances verges on verbal delirium); and a Russian proverb exhibiting all the structural sophistication of that minimal yet basic form of verbal art. The final section (Part IV) gathers together certain of Jakobson’s early writings on poetics. Of particular importance are his contribution to the definition of realism (723ff.), the popular piece “What Is Poetry?”, which contains the kernel of many ideas developed in the present volume (740ff.), and his inquiries into disciplines semiotically related to verbal art, such as film (732ff.) and humor (757ff.).

Jakobson has never been an author of the “book”; his speciality has always been monographs and articles. This has been as much due to his diversity of interests and constancy of varied commitments as to his personal, at times turbulent, personal biography. In this respect, the Selected Writings represent an important moment in the reception of Jakobson’s work, which for too long has been scattered in various journals and Festschriften (he rarely forgets to honor a colleague!) or known through only certain key pieces widely anthologized and generally available. As the first two volumes of SW demonstrated beyond any doubt Jakobson’s stature as a seminal linguist of our century, the breadth, scope, and erudition of the theoretical and practical papers collected in SW III clearly establish his position as a cardinal scholar of literary science in our times, or as one author recently called him, “the master-explorer of the poetic function”. Whatever disagreements the literary-critical establishment may have with the underpinnings and application of Jakobson’s theory of poetics — and the polemic is amply reflected in the “Retrospect”

to the current volume (765ff.) — there can be no doubt that his intensive scrutiny of poetic texts from the point of view of the specific linguistic means marshalled and exploited by poets of diverse periods and aesthetic orientations is unparalleled in the history of literary criticism.\(^7\) *SW* III may be regarded as the implementation and elaboration of a program of research in a crucial area of literary research so far relatively unexplored: the poetic use of linguistic categories obligatory in everyday speech but aesthetically effective in a poetic context. It may also be seen as the logical outgrowth of a master linguist’s concern for language in all of its functions. But it should be remembered that the linguist in question has always been intensely interested precisely in the poetic function of language (cf. *SW* IV: 637ff.), and though the present volume represents the mature statement of a man about to celebrate his eighty-fifth birthday, that statement reflects the inclinations of youth and the preparatory work of more than half a century.

It was in 1960, before the First International Conference on Poetics, in Warsaw, that Jakobson summarized his program for the linguistic investigation of the role of grammar in the structure and meaning of poetic texts (cf. the Russian text, 63ff., and its English variant of 1968, 87ff.). Thus began two decades of intensive research, the main results of which are contained in the present volume. But many threads connect Jakobson’s work here with the various stages of his career as linguist and literary scholar. As early as the summer of 1917, vacationing on a friend’s estate in Baku, Jakobson turned to problems of grammatical parallelism in Kirša Danilov’s eighteenth-century transcriptions of Russian folk songs, which had been avidly analyzed in the collective discussions of the Moscow Linguistic Circle (founded in 1915; cf. *SW* II: 530). Osip Brik, a mentor and guiding spirit of Russian Formalism (cf. *SW* V: 556ff.), had commissioned Jakobson to write on this subject for a projected third volume of the Petersburg group OPOJAZ’s *Poëtika: sborniki po teorii poetičeskogo jazyka* (‘Poetics: collections on the theory of poetic language’), but his work on this theme was interrupted after his return in October 1917 to Moscow. It is indicative both of Jakobson’s perseverance and his good fortune that those early meditations were able to come to fruition almost half a century later in his paper “Grammatical Parallelism and Its Russian Facet” (98ff.), which contains a minute and exemplary analysis of the Russian folk song “Ох в горе зит некрутину быт’” (‘Oh,

\(^7\) Jakobson’s own account, in dialogic form, of his paths toward the grammar of poetry is extremely illuminating: see R. Jakobson and K. Pomorska, *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980).
to live in grief, to be unchagrined'), as well as a suggestive survey of the history of the study of grammatical parallelism from the early works of the eighteenth-century English bishop Robert Lowth on Hebrew verse to current investigations on the folk poetry of the most diverse peoples and periods. Characteristic of Jakobson's innovative approach to the question is the widening of the field of inquiry from the mere external forms of parallelism to a consideration of the interaction and hierarchic distribution of manifold syntactic, morphological, and lexical equivalences (cf. 90ff., 101ff., 105ff.), and a patient, at times ingenious, effort to account for the efficacy and meaning of seeming "orphan lines" in the parallelistic structure. Jakobson's linguistic structuralism, always atuned to the relationships of part and whole, of variant and invariant, and to the teleological nature of language and linguistic messages, helped amplify the inquiry into all levels of the poetic text, above all its correlation of form and meaning. The "readings" presented in Part II of the present volume, which grew out of Jakobson's investigations into overtly parallelistic poetic structures demonstrate that parallelism, far from being a primitive poetic device, is an essential structuring element of most poems. The more hidden, or less obvious, forms of parallelism on all levels, the intricate network any poem constitutes, are a major theme of the present volume.

Jakobson's interest in grammatical parallelism and in the interplay of sound and meaning (or, as it is termed in the index of subjects to the present volume, the "phonico-semantic knot") is apparent in his first major monograph, published in 1921, on the great Russian Futurist poet Velimir Xlebnikov (cf. SW V: 299ff.). But the laboratory that provided optimal conditions for his work on the question was a comparative one, as was the case for his path-breaking work in phonology and metrics.\textsuperscript{8} In connection with the publication of Puškin's selected works in Czech translation, edited by Jakobson and Alfred Bem on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the poet's death, Jakobson was confronted with the unique role grammar plays in Puškin's verse and the irreparable damage done to the meaning of his poems by even the best translations into the other, closely related, Slavic languages. Jakobson pointed out the importance of grammar for Puškin in a preface dated 1936: "In Puškin a striking actualization of grammatical oppositions, especially verbal and pronominal forms, is connected with a keen regard for meaning. Often

contrasts, affinities, and continuities of tenses and numbers, of verbal aspects and voices, obtain a directly leading role in the composition of particular poems; emphasized by an opposition of grammatical category, they acquire the effectiveness of poetic images, and a masterful variation of grammatical figures becomes a device of thick dramatization. There can hardly be a more skillful poetic exploitation of morphological possibilities!” (SW V: 284; cf. below, p. 63). One salient example is Puškin’s *Bronze Horseman*, in which “the potential dramatic force of the Russian morphological categories, particularly the verbal ones, and the symbolism imbedded in the Russian verbal aspects”⁹ emerge in full force, as Jakobson discovered after comparing Puškin’s text to Bohumil Mathesius’ Czech translation and, later, to Julian Tuwim’s Polish version of the poem. Puškin also provided two key texts, analyzed already in the 1930’s, as examples in Jakobson’s 1960 Warsaw Conference paper. One is a totally “imageless” poem, perhaps Puškin’s best-known lyric, “Ja vas ljubil...” (‘I loved you...’; cf. 72ff.), whose poetic power is entirely sustained by what Jakobson, after Hopkins, calls “figures of grammar”, as opposed to the conventional tropes and figures. The other is a poem containing various tropes and figures, but one whose grammatical organization vitally supports the oppositions present in semantics and imagery (“Čto v imeni tebe moem...” ‘What is in my name for you...’; cf. 78ff.). Among the numerous examples of the direct thematic relevance of grammatical (in particular, morphological) figures in the present volume, it is fitting that a most dramatic case should be provided by Puškin’s masterful erotic poem “Net, ja ne dorozu mjatežnym naslažden’em...” (‘No, I do not prize stormy delights...’). In it two types of mistresses, one qualified as a wildly voluptuous bacchante, the other as a more deeply satisfying “meek one” (smirennica), are described and contrasted in the two sections of the poem through a strict opposition of grammatical categories, all containing an indisputable semantic load (cf. 366ff.).

One of Jakobson’s most celebrated papers on an English poem, “Shakespeare’s Verbal Art in ‘Th’Expence of Spirit’”, written in collaboration with Lawrence Jones (284ff.), begins with a teasing epigraph from *Love’s Labor’s Lost*: “What is the figure? What is the figure?”. An earlier

⁹ R. Jakobson, “The Kernel of Comparative Slavic Literature”, *Harvard Slavic Studies* 1 (1953), p. 63ff. (This paper, which contains numerous remarks on grammar of poetry among the Slavic peoples, will be included in SW VI, along with Jakobson’s Warsaw Slavic Congress paper of 1973, “Iz jazykovedčeskix razdumij nad osobennostjami poezii slavjanskix narodov” ['From linguistic meditations on common peculiarities of the poetry of Slavic peoples'], which discusses in detail the role of impersonal constructions in Slavic poetry; on the latter subject cf. 577ff. below.)
paper, discussing the psychological and aesthetic gratifications of the play of unexpectedness against a background of palpable expectation, cites Robert Frost’s memorable line from “The Figure a Poem Makes”: “The figure is the same as for love.” (34). Indeed, most of the poems analyzed in the present volume are lyric poems, and like most lyric poems are about love. Their ostensive theme is love in its different guises. The entire range of love, from its spiritual and courtly aspects to lust, degradation, and incest, is represented. Clearly, the innate semantic potentialities of grammar and syntax, of sound and meter, model the modalities of love, and from a semiotic point of view Jakobson should be credited with providing us with an exemplary “grammar of love”, a suggestive dictionary of abstract relations fleshed into poems.

When faced with the richness and vividness of the relations between form and meaning that Jakobson brings to light, one can only lament the insistence of some critics that the structures he establishes are projections on the part of the linguist or mere tautological adumbrations of a clearly articulated theme. That grammar is full of semiotic potential, that it can translate the most diverse semantic values, and that a great deal of what poetry is lies in the poet’s subtle but persuasive use of linguistic categories would seem to be all too obvious from Jakobson’s research. It seem, hardly justified to label such relations as activity/passivity, proximity/distance, animate/inanimate, masculine/feminine, convergence/divergence, contraction/expansion, eternity/temporality, etc. as “reifications” of grammatical terminology when they are so evidently modeled by the grammar of a poem. That the interrelations of form and meaning, Jakobson’s chief concern in the investigation of a poem, are complex and that these two aspects of the poetic work are inseparable would seem to be beyond question. Poetry has always been the paramount combination of craft and fiction, of technique and abandon, of precision and suggestiveness. Jakobson’s search for what Poe called the “wheels and pinions” of the poetic work (15) has been perceived by some as too heavy on the machinery and by others as too much adrift with the pinions. Some wonder that Jakobson can advance a scientific method establishing certain rules and procedures of analysis, yet still be so amiable to the character of each work he touches. They cannot believe the same man — to play on the title of the present volume — measures the grammar of love while manifesting his limitless love of grammar.

In any case, it is indubitable that the present work is aimed at the future of poetics and that its chief value resides in the controversies and further research that it will spark. Jakobson has always sought above all to
provoke and inspire. It was not by chance that he self-consciously chose as an epigraph to one of the papers included here (601ff.) William Butler Yeats' bitter but respectful lines about Maude Gonne:

Why, what could she have done being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn?

Stephen Rudy
New York University