

ROMAN JAKOBSON

Language in Literature

EDITED BY KRYSTYNA POMORSKA
AND STEPHEN RUDY

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Linguistics and Poetics

Fortunately, scholarly and political conferences have nothing in common. The success of a political convention depends on the general agreement of the majority or totality of its participants. The use of votes and vetoes, however, is alien to scholarly discussion, where disagreement generally proves to be more productive than agreement. Disagreement discloses antinomies and tensions within the field discussed and calls for novel exploration. Not political conferences but rather exploratory activities in Antarctica present an analogy to scholarly meetings: international experts in various disciplines attempt to map an unknown region and find out where the greatest obstacles for the explorer are, the insurmountable peaks and precipices. Such a mapping seems to have been the chief task of our conference, and in this respect its work has been quite successful. Have we not realized what problems are the most crucial and the most controversial? Have we not also learned how to switch our codes, what terms to expound or even to avoid in order to prevent misunderstandings with people using different departmental jargon? Such questions, I believe, for most of the members of this conference, if not for all of them, are somewhat clearer today than they were three days ago.

I have been asked for summary remarks about poetics in its relation to linguistics. Poetics deals primarily with the question, "What makes a verbal message a work of art?" Because the main subject of poetics is the *differentia specifica* of verbal art in relation to other arts and in relation to other kinds of verbal behavior, poetics is entitled to the leading place in literary studies.

Poetics deals with problems of verbal structure, just as the analysis of painting is concerned with pictorial structure. Since linguistics is the global science of verbal structure, poetics may be regarded as an integral part of linguistics.

Arguments against such a claim must be thoroughly discussed. It is evident that many devices studied by poetics are not confined to verbal art. We can refer to the possibility of transposing *Wuthering Heights* into a motion picture, medieval legends into frescoes and miniatures, or *L'Après-midi d'un faune* into music, ballet, and graphic art. However ludicrous the idea of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in comics may seem, certain structural features of their plot are preserved despite the disappearance of their verbal shape. The question of whether W. B. Yeats was right in affirming that William Blake was "the one perfectly fit illustrator for the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*" is a proof that different arts are comparable. The problems of the baroque or any other historical style transgress the frame of a single art. When handling the surrealistic metaphor, we could hardly pass by Max Ernst's pictures or Luis Buñuel's films, *The Andalusian Dog* and *The Golden Age*. In short, many poetic features belong not only to the science of language but to the whole theory of signs, that is, to general semiotics. This statement, however, is valid not only for verbal art but also for all varieties of language, since language shares many properties with certain other systems of signs or even with all of them (pansemiotic features).

Likewise, a second objection contains nothing that would be specific for literature: the question of relations between the word and the world concerns not only verbal art but actually all kinds of discourse. Linguistics is likely to explore all possible problems of relation between discourse and the "universe of discourse": what of this universe is verbalized by a given discourse and how it is verbalized. The truth values, however, as far as they are—to say with the logicians—"extra-linguistic entities," obviously exceed the bounds of poetics and of linguistics in general.

Sometimes we hear that poetics in contradistinction to linguistics, is concerned with evaluation. This separation of the two fields from each

other is based on a current but erroneous interpretation of the contrast between the structure of poetry and other types of verbal structure: the latter are said to be opposed by their "casual," designless nature to the "noncasual," purposeful character of poetic language. In point of fact, any verbal behavior is goal-directed, but the aims are different and the conformity of the means used to the effect aimed at is a problem that evermore preoccupies inquirers into the diverse kinds of verbal communication. There is a close correspondence, much closer than critics believe, between the question of linguistic phenomena expanding in space and time and the spatial and temporal spread of literary models. Even such discontinuous expansion as the resurrection of neglected or forgotten poets—for instance, the posthumous discovery and subsequent canonization of Emily Dickinson (d. 1886) and Gerard Manley Hopkins (d. 1889), the tardy fame of Lautréamont (d. 1870) among surrealist poets, and the salient influence of the hitherto ignored Cyprian Norwid (d. 1883) on Polish modern poetry—finds a parallel in the history of standard languages that tend to revive outdated models, sometimes long forgotten, as was the case in literary Czech, which toward the beginning of the nineteenth century leaned toward sixteenth-century models.

Unfortunately, the terminological confusion of "literary studies" with "criticism" tempts the student of literature to replace the description of the intrinsic values of a literary work with a subjective, censorious verdict. The label "literary critic" applied to an investigator of literature is as erroneous as "grammatical (or lexical) critic" would be applied to a linguist. Syntactic and morphologic research cannot be supplanted by a normative grammar, and likewise no manifesto, foisting a critic's own tastes and opinions on creative literature, can serve as a substitute for an objective scholarly analysis of verbal art. This statement should not be mistaken for the quietist principle of *laissez faire*; any verbal culture involves programmatic, planning, normative endeavors. Yet why is a clear-cut discrimination made between pure and applied linguistics or between phonetics and orthoepy, but not between literary studies and criticism?

Literary studies, with poetics as their focal point, consist like linguistics of two sets of problems: synchrony and diachrony. The synchronic description envisages not only the literary production of any given stage but also that part of the literary tradition which for the stage in question has remained vital or has been revived. Thus, for

instance, Shakespeare, on the one hand, and Donne, Marvell, Keats, and Emily Dickinson, on the other, are experienced by the present English poetic world, whereas the works of James Thomson and Longfellow, for the time being, do not belong to viable artistic values. The selection of classics and their reinterpretation by a novel trend is a substantial problem of synchronic literary studies. Synchronic poetics, like synchronic linguistics, is not to be confused with statics; any stage discriminates between more conservative and more innovative forms. Any contemporary stage is experienced in its temporal dynamics, and, on the other hand, the historical approach both in poetics and in linguistics is concerned not only with changes but also with continuous, enduring, static factors. A thoroughly comprehensive historical poetics or history of language is a superstructure to be built on a series of successive synchronic descriptions.

Insistence on keeping poetics apart from linguistics is warranted only when the field of linguistics appears to be illicitly restricted, for example, when the sentence is viewed by some linguists as the highest analyzable construction, or when the scope of linguistics is confined to grammar alone or uniquely to nonsemantic questions of external form or to the inventory of denotative devices with no reference to free variations. Voegelin has clearly pointed out the two most important and related problems that face structural linguistics, namely, a revision of "the monolithic hypothesis about language" and a concern with "the interdependence of diverse structures within one language."¹ No doubt, for any speech community, for any speaker, there exists a unity of language, but this over-all code represents a system of interconnected subcodes; every language encompasses several concurrent patterns, each characterized by different functions.

Obviously we must agree with Sapir that, on the whole, "ideation reigns supreme in language,"² but this supremacy does not authorize linguistics to disregard the "secondary factors." The emotive elements of speech, which, as Joos is prone to believe, cannot be described "with a finite number of absolute categories," are classified by him "as nonlinguistic elements of the real world." Hence, "for us they remain vague, protean, fluctuating phenomena," he concludes, "which we refuse to tolerate in our science."³ Joos is indeed a brilliant expert in reduction experiments, and his emphatic demand for the "expulsion" of emotive elements "from linguistic science" is a radical experiment in reduction—*reductio ad absurdum*.

Language must be investigated in all the variety of its functions. Before discussing the poetic function we must define its place among the other functions of language. An outline of these functions demands a concise survey of the constitutive factors in any speech event, in any act of verbal communication. The **ADDRESSER** sends a **MESSAGE** to the **ADDRESSEE**. To be operative the message requires a **CONTEXT** referred to (the "referent" in another, somewhat ambiguous, nomenclature), graspable by the addressee, and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a **CODE** fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and addressee (or in other words, to the encoder and decoder of the message); and, finally, a **CONTACT**, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication. All these factors inalienably involved in verbal communication may be schematized as follows:



Each of these six factors determines a different function of language. Although we distinguish six basic aspects of language, we could, however, hardly find verbal messages that would fulfill only one function. The diversity lies not in a monopoly of some one of these several functions but in a different hierarchical order of functions. The verbal structure of a message depends primarily on the predominant function. But even though a set (*Einstellung*) toward the referent, an orientation toward the context—briefly, the so-called **REFERENTIAL**, "denotative," "cognitive" function—is the leading task of numerous messages, the accessory participation of the other functions in such messages must be taken into account by the observant linguist.

The so-called **EMOTIVE** or "expressive" function, focused on the addresser, aims a direct expression of the speaker's attitude toward what he is speaking about. It tends to produce an impression of a certain emotion, whether true or feigned; therefore, the term "emotive," launched and advocated by Marty,⁴ has proved to be preferable to "emotional." The purely emotive stratum in language is presented by the interjections. They differ from the means of referential language both by their sound pattern (peculiar sound sequences or even sounds

elsewhere unusual) and by their syntactic role (they are not components but equivalents of sentences). "Tut! Tut!" said McGinty": the complete utterance of Conan Doyle's character consists of two suction clicks. The emotive function, laid bare in the interjections, flavors to some extent all our utterances, on their phonic, grammatical, and lexical level. If we analyze language from the standpoint of the information it carries, we cannot restrict the notion of information to the cognitive aspect of language. A man, using expressive features to indicate his angry or ironic attitude, conveys ostensible information, and evidently this verbal behavior cannot be likened to such nonsemiotic, nutritive activities as "eating grapefruit" (despite Chatman's bold simile). The difference between [big] and the emphatic prolongation of the vowel [bi:g] is a conventional, coded linguistic feature like the difference between the short and long vowel in such Czech pairs as [vi] "you" and [vi:] "knows," but in the latter pair the differential information is phonemic and in the former emotive. As long as we are interested in phonemic invariants, the English /i/ and /i:/ appear to be mere variants of one and the same phoneme, but if we are concerned with emotive units, the relation between the invariants and variants is reversed: length and shortness are invariants implemented by variable phonemes. Saporta's surmise that emotive difference is a nonlinguistic feature, "attributable to the delivery of the message and not to the message,"⁵ arbitrarily reduces the informational capacity of messages.

A former actor of Stanislavskij's Moscow Theater told me how at his audition he was asked by the famous director to make forty different messages from the phrase *Segodnya večerom* (This evening), by diversifying its expressive tint. He made a list of some forty emotional situations, then emitted the given phrase in accordance with each of these situations, which his audience had to recognize only from the changes in the sound shape of the same two words. For our research work in the description and analysis of contemporary Standard Russian (under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation) this actor was asked to repeat Stanislavskij's test. He wrote down some fifty situations framing the same elliptic sentence and made of it fifty corresponding messages for a tape recording. Most of the messages were correctly and circumstantially decoded by Moscovite listeners. May I add that all such emotive cues easily undergo linguistic analysis.

Orientation toward the addressee, the CONATIVE function, finds its purest grammatical expression in the vocative and imperative, which

syntactically, morphologically, and often even phonemically deviate from other nominal and verbal categories. The imperative sentences cardinally differ from declarative sentences: the latter are and the former are not liable to a truth test. When in O'Neill's play *The Fountain*, Nano "(in a fierce tone of command)" says "Drink!"—the imperative cannot be challenged by the question "is it true or not?" which may be, however, perfectly well asked after such sentences as "one drank," "one will drink," "one would drink." In contradistinction to the imperative sentences, the declarative sentences are convertible into interrogative sentences: "did one drink?," "will one drink?," "would one drink?"

The traditional model of language as elucidated particularly by Bühler⁶ was confined to these three functions—emotive, conative, and referential—and the three apexes of this model—the first person of the addresser, the second person of the addressee, and the "third person" properly (someone or something spoken of). Certain additional verbal functions can be easily inferred from this triadic model. Thus the magic, incantatory function is chiefly some kind of conversion of an absent or inanimate "third person" into an addressee of a conative message. "May this sty dry up, *tſu, tſu, tſu, tſu*" (Lithuanian spell).⁷ "Water, queen river, daybreak! Send grief beyond the blue sea, to the sea bottom, like a gray stone never to rise from the sea bottom, may grief never come to burden the light heart of God's servant, may grief be removed and sink away" (North Russian incantation).⁸ "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Aj-a-lon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed" (Joshua 10.12). We observe, however, three further constitutive factors of verbal communication and three corresponding functions of language.

There are messages primarily serving to establish, to prolong, or to discontinue communication, to check whether the channel works ("Hello, do you hear me?"), to attract the attention of the interlocutor or to confirm his continued attention ("Are you listening?" or in Shakespearean diction, "Lend me your ears!")—and on the other end of the wire "Um-hum!"). This set for contact, or in Malinowski's terms PHATIC function,⁹ may be displayed by a profuse exchange of ritualized formulas, by entire dialogues with the mere purport of prolonging communication. Dorothy Parker caught eloquent examples: "'Well!' the young man said. 'Well!' she said. 'Well, here we are,' he said. '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.'" The endeavor to start and sustain communication is typical of talking birds; thus the phatic function of language is the only one they share with human beings. It is also the first verbal function acquired by infants; they are prone to communicate before being able to send or receive informative communication.

A distinction has been made in modern logic between two levels of language: "object language" speaking of objects and "metalanguage" speaking of language.¹⁰ But metalanguage is not only a necessary scientific tool utilized by logicians and linguists; it plays also an important role in our everyday language. Like Molière's Jourdain who used prose without knowing it, we practice metalanguage without realizing the metalingual character of our operations. Whenever the addresser and/or the addressee need to check up whether they use the same code, speech is focused on the code: it performs a METALINGUAL (i.e., glossing) function. "I don't follow you—what do you mean?" asks the addressee, or in Shakespearean diction, "What is't thou say'st?" And the addresser in anticipation of such recapturing question inquires: "Do you know what I mean?" Imagine such an exasperating dialogue: "The sophomore was plucked." 'But what is *plucked*?' "*Plucked* means the same as *flunked*." "And *flunked*?" "*To be flunked* is to fail an exam." "And what is *sophomore*?" persists the interrogator innocent of school vocabulary. "*A sophomore* is (or means) a *second-year student*." All these equational sentences convey information merely about the lexical code of English; their function is strictly metalingual. Any process of language learning, in particular child acquisition of the mother tongue, makes wide use of such metalingual operations; and aphasia may often be defined as a loss of ability for metalingual operations.

I have brought up all the six factors involved in verbal communication except the message itself. The set (*Einstellung*) toward the message as such, focus on the message for its own sake, is the POETIC function of language. This function cannot be productively studied out of touch with the general problems of language, and, on the other hand, the scrutiny of language requires a thorough consideration of its poetic function. Any attempt to reduce the sphere of the poetic function to poetry or to confine poetry to the poetic function would be a delusive oversimplification. The poetic function is not the sole function of verbal art but only its dominant, determining function, whereas in all other verbal activities it acts as a subsidiary, accessory constituent. This

function, by promoting the palpability of signs, deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects. Hence, when dealing with the poetic function, linguistics cannot limit itself to the field of poetry.

“Why do you always say *Joan and Margery*, yet never *Margery and Joan*? Do you prefer Joan to her twin sister?” “Not at all, it just sounds smoother.” In a sequence of two coordinate names, so far as no problems of rank interfere, the precedence of the shorter name suits the speaker, unaccountably for him, as a well-ordered shape for the message.

A girl used to talk about “the horrible Harry.” “Why horrible?” “Because I hate him.” “But why not *dreadful, terrible, frightful, disgusting?*” “I don’t know why, but *horrible* fits him better.” Without realizing it, she clung to the poetic device of paronomasia.

The political slogan “I like Ike” /ay layk ayk/, succinctly structured, consists of three monosyllables and counts three diphthongs /ay/, each of them symmetrically followed by one consonantal phoneme, / ..l.. k..k /. The makeup of the three words presents a variation: no consonantal phonemes in the first word, two around the diphthong in the second, and one final consonant in the third. A similar dominant nucleus /ay/ was noticed by Hymes in some of the sonnets of Keats.¹¹ Both cola of the trisyllabic formula “I like / Ike” rhyme with each other, and the second of the two rhyming words is fully included in the first one (echo rhyme), /layk/—/ayk/, a paronomastic image of a feeling which totally envelops its object. Both cola alliterate with each other, and the first of the two alliterating words is included in the second: /ay/—/ayk/, a paronomastic image of the loving subject enveloped by the beloved object. The secondary, poetic function of this campaign slogan reinforces its impressiveness and efficacy.

As I said, the linguistic study of the poetic function must overstep the limits of poetry, and, on the other hand, the linguistic scrutiny of poetry cannot limit itself to the poetic function. The particularities of diverse poetic genres imply a differently ranked participation of the other verbal functions along with the dominant poetic function. Epic poetry, focused on the third person, strongly involves the referential function of language; the lyric, oriented toward the first person, is intimately linked with the emotive function; poetry of the second person is imbued with the conative function and is either supplicatory or exhortative, depending on whether the first person is subordinated to the second one or the second to the first.

Now that our cursory description of the six basic functions of verbal communication is more or less complete, we may complement our scheme of the fundamental factors with a corresponding scheme of the functions:



What is the empirical linguistic criterion of the poetic function? In particular, what is the indispensable feature inherent in any piece of poetry? To answer this question we must recall the two basic modes of arrangement used in verbal behavior, *selection* and *combination*. If "child" is the topic of the message, the speaker selects one among the extant, more or less similar nouns like child, kid, youngster, tot, all of them equivalent in a certain respect, and then, to comment on this topic, he may select one of the semantically cognate verbs—sleeps, dozes, nods, naps. Both chosen words combine in the speech chain. The selection is produced on the basis of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymy and antonymy, while the combination, the build-up of the sequence, is based on contiguity. *The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination.* Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence. In poetry one syllable is equalized with any other syllable of the same sequence; word stress is assumed to equal word stress, as unstress equals unstress; prosodic long is matched with long, and short with short; word boundary equals word boundary, no boundary equals no boundary; syntactic pause equals syntactic pause, no pause equals no pause. Syllables are converted into units of measure, and so are morae or stresses.

It may be objected that metalanguage also makes a sequential use of equivalent units when combining synonymous expressions into an equational sentence: *A = A* ("Mare is the female of the horse"). Poetry and metalanguage, however, are in diametrical opposition to each other: in metalanguage the sequence is used to build an equation, whereas in poetry the equation is used to build a sequence.

In poetry, and to a certain extent in latent manifestations of the poetic function, sequences delimited by word boundaries become com-

mensurable whether they are sensed as isochronic or graded. "Joan and Margery" showed us the poetic principle of syllable gradation, the same principle that in the closes of Serbian folk epics has been raised to a compulsory law.¹² Without its two dactylic words the combination "*innocent bystander*" would hardly have become a hackneyed phrase. The symmetry of three disyllabic verbs with an identical initial consonant and identical final vowel added splendor to the laconic victory message of Caesar: "Veni, vidi, vici."

Measure of sequences is a device that, outside of the poetic function, finds no application in language. Only in poetry with its regular reiteration of equivalent units is the time of the speech flow experienced, as it is—to cite another semiotic pattern—with musical time. Gerard Manley Hopkins, an outstanding searcher in the science of poetic language, defined verse as "speech wholly or partially repeating the same figure of sound."¹³ Hopkins' subsequent question, "but is all verse poetry?" can be definitely answered as soon as the poetic function ceases to be arbitrarily confined to the domain of poetry. Mnemonic lines cited by Hopkins (like "Thirty days hath September"), modern advertising jingles, and versified medieval laws, mentioned by Lotz,¹⁴ or finally Sanskrit scientific treatises in verse which in Indic tradition are strictly distinguished from true poetry (*kārya*)—all these metrical texts make use of the poetic function without, however, assigning to this function the coercing, determining role it carries in poetry. Thus verse actually exceeds the limits of poetry, but at the same time verse always implies the poetic function. And apparently no human culture ignores verse making, whereas there are many cultural patterns without "applied" verse; and even in such cultures as possess both pure and applied verses, the latter appear to be a secondary, unquestionably derived phenomenon. The adaptation of poetic means for some heterogeneous purpose does not conceal their primary essence, just as elements of emotive language, when utilized in poetry, still maintain their emotive tinge. A filibusterer may recite *Hiawatha* because it is long, yet poeticalness still remains the primary intent of this text itself. Self-evidently, the existence of versified, musical, and pictorial commercials does not separate the questions of verse or of musical and pictorial form from the study of poetry, music, and fine arts.

To sum up, the analysis of verse is entirely within the competence of poetics, and the latter may be defined as that part of linguistics which treats the poetic function in its relationship to the other functions of

language. Poetics in the wider sense of the word deals with the poetic function not only in poetry, where this function is superimposed upon the other functions of language, but also outside poetry, when some other function is superimposed upon the poetic function.

The reiterative "figure of sound," which Hopkins saw as the constitutive principle of verse, can be further specified. Such a figure always utilizes at least one (or more than one) binary contrast of a relatively high and relatively low prominence effected by the different sections of the phonemic sequence.

Within a syllable the more prominent, nuclear, syllabic part, constituting the peak of the syllable, is opposed to the less prominent, marginal, nonsyllabic phonemes. Any syllable contains a syllabic phoneme, and the interval between two successive syllabics is, in some languages, always and, in others, overwhelmingly carried out by marginal, non-syllabic phonemes. In so-called syllabic versification the number of syllabics in a metrically delimited chain (time series) is a constant, whereas the presence of a nonsyllabic phoneme or cluster between every two syllabics of a metrical chain is a constant only in languages with an indispensable occurrence of nonsyllabics between syllabics and, furthermore, in those verse systems where hiatus is prohibited. Another manifestation of a tendency toward a uniform syllabic model is the avoidance of closed syllables at the end of the line, observable, for instance, in Serbian epic songs. Italian syllabic verse shows a tendency to treat a sequence of vowels unseparated by consonantal phonemes as one single metrical syllable.¹⁵

In some patterns of versification the syllable is the only constant unit of verse measure, and a grammatical limit is the only constant line of demarcation between measured sequences, whereas in other patterns syllables in turn are dichotomized into more and less prominent, or two levels of grammatical limits are distinguished in their metrical function: word boundaries and syntactic pauses.

Except the varieties of the so-called *vers libre* that are based on conjugate intonations and pauses only, any meter uses the syllable as a unit of measure at least in certain sections of the verse. Thus in purely accentual verse ("sprung rhythm" in Hopkins' vocabulary), the number of syllables in the upbeat (called "slack" by Hopkins¹⁶) may vary, but the downbeat (ictus) constantly contains one single syllable.

In any accentual verse the contrast between higher and lower prominence is achieved by syllables under stress versus unstressed syllables.

Most accentual patterns operate primarily with the contrast of syllables with and without word stress, but some varieties of accentual verse deal with syntactic, phrasal stresses, those which Wimsatt and Beardsley cite as “the major stresses of the major words”¹⁷ and which are opposed as prominent to syllables without such major, syntactic stress.

In quantitative (“chronemic”) verse, long and short syllables are mutually opposed as more and less prominent. This contrast is usually carried out by syllable nuclei, phonemically long and short. But in metrical patterns like Ancient Greek and Arabic, which equalize length “by position” with length “by nature,” the minimal syllables consisting of a consonantal phoneme and one mora vowel are opposed to syllables with a surplus (a second mora or a closing consonant) as simpler and less prominent syllables opposed to those that are more complex and prominent.

The question still remains open whether, besides accentual and chronemic verse, there exists a “tonemic” type of versification in languages where differences of syllabic intonations are used to distinguish word meanings.¹⁸ In classical Chinese poetry,¹⁹ syllables with modulations (in Chinese *tsê*, deflected tones) are opposed to the nonmodulated syllables (*p'ing*, level tones), but apparently a chronemic principle underlies this opposition, as was suspected by Polivanov²⁰ and keenly interpreted by Wang Li;²¹ in the Chinese metrical tradition the level tones prove to be opposed to the deflected tones as long tonal peaks of syllables to short ones, so that verse is based on the opposition of length and shortness.

Joseph Greenberg brought to my attention another variety of tonemic versification—the verse of Efik riddles based on the level feature.²² In the sample cited by Simmons,²³ the query and the response form two octosyllables with an alike distribution of *h*(igh)- and *l*(ow)-tone syllabics; in each hemistich, moreover, the last three of the four syllables present an identical tonemic pattern: *lbbll/hhbll/lbbll/hbbll*. Whereas Chinese versification appears as a peculiar variety of quantitative verse, the verse of the Efik riddles is linked with the usual accentual verse by an opposition of two degrees of prominence (strength or height) of the vocal tone. Thus a metrical system of versification can be based only on the opposition of syllabic peaks and slopes (syllabic verse), on the relative level of the peaks (accentual verse), and on the relative length of the syllabic peaks or entire syllables (quantitative verse).

In textbooks of literature we sometimes encounter a superstitious contraposition of syllabism as a mere mechanical count of syllables to the lively pulsation of accentual verse. If we examine, however, the binary meters of strictly syllabic and at the same time accentual versification, we observe two homogeneous successions of wavelike peaks and valleys. Of these two undulatory curves, the syllabic one carries nuclear phonemes in the crest and usually marginal phonemes in the bottom. As a rule the accentual curve superimposed upon the syllabic curve alternates stressed and unstressed syllables in the crests and bottoms respectively.

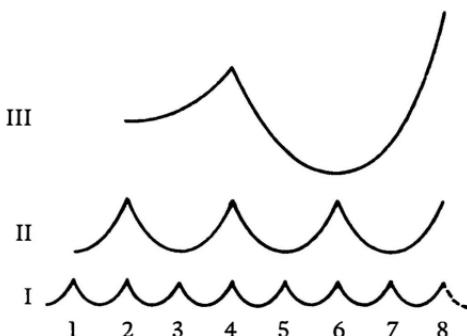
For comparison with the English meters that we have discussed at length, I bring to your attention the similar Russian binary verse forms which for the last fifty years have undergone an exhaustive investigation.²⁴ The structure of the verse can be very thoroughly described and interpreted in terms of enchain probabilities. Besides the compulsory word boundary between the lines, which is an invariant throughout all Russian meters, in the classic pattern of Russian syllabic accentual verse ("syllabotonic" in native nomenclature) we observe the following constants: (1) the number of syllables in the line from its beginning to the last downbeat is stable; (2) this very last downbeat always carries a word stress; (3) a stressed syllable cannot fall on the upbeat if the downbeat is fulfilled by an unstressed syllable of the same word unit (so that a word stress can coincide with an upbeat only as far as it belongs to a monosyllabic word unit).

Along with these characteristics compulsory for any line composed in a given meter, there are features that show a high probability of occurrence without being constantly present. Besides signals certain to occur ("probability one"), signals likely to occur ("probabilities less than one") enter into the notion of meter. Using Cherry's description of human communication,²⁵ we could say that the reader of poetry obviously "may be unable to attach numerical frequencies" to the constituents of the meter, but as far as he conceives the verse shape, he unwittingly gets an inkling of their "rank order."

In the Russian binary meters, all odd syllables counting back from the last downbeat—briefly, all the upbeats—are usually fulfilled by unstressed syllables, except some very low percentage of stressed monosyllables. All even syllables, again counting back from the last downbeat, show a sizable preference for syllables under word stress, but the probabilities of their occurrence are unequally distributed among the

successive downbeats of the line. The higher the relative frequency of word stresses in a given downbeat, the lower the ratio shown by the preceding downbeat. Since the last downbeat is constantly stressed, the next to last has the lowest percentages of word stresses; in the preceding downbeat their amount is again higher, without attaining the maximum, displayed by the final downbeat; one downbeat further toward the beginning of the line, the amount of the stresses sinks once more, without reaching the minimum of the next-to-last downbeat; and so on. Thus the distribution of word stresses among the downbeats within the line, the split into strong and weak downbeats, creates a *regressive undulatory curve* superimposed upon the wavy alternation of downbeats and upbeats. Incidentally, there is also the captivating question of the relationship between the strong downbeats and phrasal stresses.

The Russian binary meters reveal a stratified arrangement of three undulatory curves: (I) alternation of syllabic nuclei and margins; (II) division of syllabic nuclei into alternating downbeats and upbeats; and (III) alternation of strong and weak downbeats. For example, the Russian masculine iambic tetrameter of the nineteenth and present centuries may be represented as in the figure below, and a similar triadic pattern appears in the corresponding English forms.



Three out of five downbeats are deprived of word stress in Shelley's iambic line "Laugh with an inextinguishable laughter." Seven out of sixteen downbeats are stressless in the following quatrain from Pasternak's late iambic tetrameter "Zemlja" (Earth):

I úlica za panibráta
S okónnicej podslepovátoj,

I běloj nōči i zakátu
Ne razminút'sja u rekí.

Since the overwhelming majority of downbeats concur with word stresses, the listener or reader of Russian verses is prepared with a high degree of probability to meet a word stress in any even syllable of iambic lines, but at the very beginning of Pasternak's quatrain the fourth and, one foot further, the sixth syllable, both in the first and in the following line, present him with a *frustrated expectation*. The degree of such a "frustration" is higher when the stress is lacking in a strong downbeat and becomes particularly outstanding when two successive downbeats carry unstressed syllables. The stresslessness of two adjacent downbeats is the less probable and the most striking when it embraces a whole hemistich, as in a later line of the same poem: "Čtoby za gorodskóju grán'ju" [štəbəyzəgərəckóju grán'ju]. The expectation depends on the treatment of a given downbeat in the poem and more generally in the whole extant metrical tradition. In the last downbeat but one, unstress may, however, outweigh the stress. Thus in this poem only 17 of 41 lines have a word stress on their sixth syllable. Yet in such a case the inertia of the stressed even syllables alternating with the unstressed odd syllables prompts some expectancy of stress also for the sixth syllable of the iambic tetrameter.

Quite naturally it was Edgar Allan Poe, the poet and theoretician of defeated anticipation, who metrically and psychologically appraised the human sense of gratification from the unexpected which arises from expectedness, each unthinkable without its opposite, "as evil cannot exist without good."²⁶ Here we could easily apply Robert Frost's formula from "The Figure a Poem Makes": "The figure is the same as for love."

The so-called shifts of word stress in polysyllabic words from the downbeat to the upbeat ("reversed feet"), which are unknown to the standard forms of Russian verse, appear quite usually in English poetry after a metrical and/or syntactic pause. A notable example is the rhythmical variation of the same adjective in Milton's "Infinite wrath and infinite despair." In the line "Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee," the stressed syllable of one and the same word occurs twice in the upbeat, first at the beginning of the line and a second time at the beginning of a phrase. This license, discussed by Jespersen²⁷ and current in many languages, is entirely explainable by the particular import of the relation between an upbeat and the immediately preceding down-

beat. Where such an immediate precedence is impeded by an inserted pause, the upbeat becomes a kind of *syllaba anceps*.

Besides the rules that underlie the compulsory features of verse, the rules governing its optional traits also pertain to meter. We are inclined to designate such phenomena as unstress in the downbeats and stress in upbeats as deviations, but it must be remembered that these are allowed oscillations, departures within the limits of the law. In British parliamentary terms, it is not an opposition to its majesty the meter but an opposition of its majesty. As to the actual infringements of metrical laws, the discussion of such violations recalls Osip Brik, perhaps the keenest of the Russian Formalists, who used to say that political conspirators are tried and condemned only for unsuccessful attempts at a forcible upheaval, because in the case of a successful coup it is the conspirators who assume the role of judges and prosecutors. If the violences against the meter take root, they themselves become metrical rules.

Far from being an abstract, theoretical scheme, meter—or in more explicit terms, *verse design*—underlies the structure of any single line—or, in logical terminology, any single *verse instance*. Design and instance are correlative concepts. The verse design determines the invariant features of the verse instances and sets up the limits of variations. A Serbian peasant reciter of epic poetry memorizes, performs, and, to a high extent, improvises thousands, sometimes tens of thousands of lines, and their meter is alive in his mind. Unable to abstract its rules, he nonetheless notices and repudiates even the slightest infringement of these rules. Any line of Serbian epics contains precisely ten syllables and is followed by a syntactic pause. There is furthermore a compulsory word boundary before the fifth syllable and a compulsory absence of word boundary before the fourth and the tenth syllable. The verse has, moreover, significant quantitative and accentual characteristics.²⁸

This Serbian epic break, along with many similar examples presented by comparative metrics, is a persuasive warning against the erroneous identification of a break with a syntactic pause. The obligatory word boundary must not be combined with a pause and is not even meant to be audible to the ear. The analysis of Serbian epic songs phonographically recorded proves that there are no compulsory audible clues to the break, and yet any attempt to abolish the word boundary before the fifth syllable by a mere insignificant change in word order is immediately condemned by the narrator. The grammatical fact that the

fourth and fifth syllables pertain to two different word units is sufficient for the appraisal of the break. Thus verse design goes far beyond the questions of sheer song shape; it is a much wider linguistic phenomenon, and it yields to no isolating phonetic treatment.

I say “linguistic phenomenon” even though Chatman states that “the meter exists as a system outside the language.”²⁹ Yes, meter appears also in other arts dealing with time sequence. There are many linguistic problems—for instance, syntax—which likewise overstep the limit of language and are common to different semiotic systems. We may speak even about the grammar of traffic signals. There exists a signal code, where a yellow light when combined with green warns that free passage is close to being stopped and when combined with red announces the approaching cessation of the stoppage; such a yellow signal offers a close analogue to the verbal completive aspect. Poetic meter, however, has so many intrinsically linguistic particularities that it is most convenient to describe it from a purely linguistic point of view.

Let us add that no linguistic property of the verse design should be disregarded. Thus, for example, it would be an unfortunate mistake to deny the constitutive value of intonation in English meters. Not to mention its fundamental role in the meters of such a master of English free verse as Whitman, it is hardly possible to ignore the metrical significance of pausal intonation (“final juncture”), whether “cadence” or “anticadence”³⁰ in poems like “The Rape of the Lock” with its intentional avoidance of enjambments. Yet even a vehement accumulation of enjambments never hides their digressive, variational status; they always set off the normal coincidence of syntactic pause and pausal intonation with the metrical limit. Whatever is the reciter’s way of reading, the intonational constraint of the poem remains valid. The intonational contour specific to a poem, to a poet, to a poetic school is one of the most notable topics brought to discussion by the Russian Formalists.³¹

The verse design is embodied in verse instances. Usually the free variation of these instances is denoted by the somewhat equivocal label “rhythm.” A variation of *verse instances* within a given poem must be strictly distinguished from the variable *delivery instances*. The intention “to describe the verse line as it is actually performed” is of lesser use for the synchronic and historical analysis of poetry than it is for the study of its recitation in the present and the past. Meanwhile the truth

is simple and clear: “There are many performances of the same poem—differing among themselves in many ways. A performance is an event, but the poem itself, if there *is* any poem, must be some kind of enduring object.”³² This sage memento of Wimsatt and Beardsley belongs indeed to the essentials of modern metrics.

In Shakespeare’s verses the second, stressed syllable of the word “absurd” usually falls on the downbeat, but once in the third act of *Hamlet* it falls on the upbeat: “No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp.” The reciter may scan the word “absurd” in this line with an initial stress on the first syllable or observe the final word stress in accordance with the standard accentuation. He may also subordinate the word stress of the adjective in favor of the strong syntactic stress of the following head word, as suggested by Hill: “Nó, lēt thē cāndied tóngue líck ábsúrd póm,”³³ as in Hopkins’ conception of English antispasts—“régrét nēvr.”³⁴ There is, finally, the possibility of emphatic modifications either through a “fluctuating accentuation” (*schwiegende Betonung*) embracing both syllables or through an exclamatory reinforcement of the first syllable [àb-súrd]. But whatever solution the reciter chooses, the shift of the word stress from the downbeat to the upbeat with no antecedent pause is still arresting, and the moment of frustrated expectation stays viable. Wherever the reciter puts the accent, the discrepancy between the English word stress on the second syllable of “absurd” and the downbeat attached to the first syllable persists as a constitutive feature of the verse instance. The tension between the ictus and the usual word stress is inherent in this line independently of its different implementations by various actors and readers. As Hopkins observes, in the preface to his poems, “two rhythms are in some manner running at once.”³⁵ His description of such a contrapuntal run can be reinterpreted. The superinducing of the equivalence principle upon the word sequence or, in other terms, the *mounting* of the metrical form upon the usual speech form necessarily gives the experience of a double, ambiguous shape to anyone who is familiar with the given language and with verse. Both the convergences and the divergences between the two forms, both the warranted and the frustrated expectations, supply this experience.

How the given verse instance is implemented in the given delivery instance depends on the *delivery design* of the reciter; he may cling to a scanning style or tend toward proselike prosody or freely oscillate between these two poles. We must be on guard against simplistic binar-

ism which reduces two couples into one single opposition either by suppressing the cardinal distinction between verse design and verse instance (as well as between delivery design and delivery instance) or by an erroneous identification of delivery instance and delivery design with the verse instance and verse design.

“But tell me, child, your choice; what shall I buy
You?”—“Father, what you buy me I like best.”

These two lines from “The Handsome Heart” by Hopkins contain a heavy enjambment which puts a verse boundary before the concluding monosyllable of a phrase, of a sentence, of an utterance. The recitation of these pentameters may be strictly metrical with a manifest pause between “buy” and “you” and a suppressed pause after the pronoun. Or, on the contrary, there may be displayed a prose-oriented manner without any separation of the words “buy you” and with a marked pausal intonation at the end of the question. None of these ways of recitation can, however, hide the intentional discrepancy between the metrical and syntactic division. The verse shape of a poem remains completely independent of its variable delivery, whereby I do not intend to nullify the alluring question of *Autorenleser* and *Selbstleser* launched by Sievers.³⁶

No doubt, verse is primarily a recurrent “figure of sound.” Primarily, always, but never uniquely. Any attempts to confine such poetic conventions as meters, alliteration, or rhyme to the sound level are speculative reasonings without any empirical justification. The projection of the equational principle into the sequence has a much deeper and wider significance. Valéry’s view of poetry as “hesitation between the sound and the sense” is much more realistic and scientific than any bias of phonetic isolationism.³⁷

Although rhyme by definition is based on a regular recurrence of equivalent phonemes or phonemic groups, it would be an unsound oversimplification to treat rhyme merely from the standpoint of sound. Rhyme necessarily involves a semantic relationship between rhyming units (“rhyme-fellows” in Hopkins’ nomenclature).³⁸ In scrutinizing a rhyme we are faced with the question of whether or not it is a homoioteleuton, which confronts similar derivational and/or inflectional suffixes (congratulations-decorations), or whether the rhyming words belong to the same or to different grammatical categories. Thus, for example, Hopkins’ fourfold rhyme is an agreement of two nouns—

“kind” and “mind”—both contrasting with the adjective “blind” and with the verb “find.” Is there a semantic propinquity, a sort of simile between rhyming lexical units, as in dove-love, light-bright, place-space, name-fame? Do the rhyming members carry the same syntactic function? The difference between the morphological class and the syntactic application may be pointed out in rhyme. Thus in Poe’s lines, “While I nodded, nearly *napping*, suddenly there came a *tapping*. As of someone gently *rapping*,” the three rhyming words, morphologically alike, are all three syntactically different. Are totally or partly homonymic rhymes prohibited, tolerated, or favored? Such full homonyms as son-sun, I-eye, eve-eave, and on the other hand, echo rhymes like December-ember, infinite-night, swarm-warm, smiles-miles? What about compound rhymes (such as Hopkins’ “enjoyment—toy meant” or “began some—ransom”), where a word unit accords with a word group?

A poet or poetic school may be oriented toward or against grammatical rhyme; rhymes must be either grammatical or antigrammatical; an agrammatical rhyme, indifferent to the relation between sound and grammatical structure, would, like any agrammatism, belong to verbal pathology. If a poet tends to avoid grammatical rhymes, for him, as Hopkins said, “There are two elements in the beauty rhyme has to the mind, the likeness or sameness of sound and the unlikeness or difference of meaning.”³⁹ Whatever the relation between sound and meaning in different rhyme techniques, both spheres are necessarily involved. After Wimsatt’s illuminating observations about the meaningfulness of rhyme⁴⁰ and the shrewd modern studies of Slavic rhyme patterns, a student in poetics can hardly maintain that rhymes signify merely in a very vague way.

Rhyme is only a particular, condensed case of a much more general, we may even say the fundamental, problem of poetry, namely *parallelism*. Here again Hopkins, in his student papers of 1865, displayed a prodigious insight into the structure of poetry:

The artificial part of poetry, perhaps we shall be right to say 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. But parallelism is of two kinds necessarily—where the opposition is clearly marked, and where it is transitional rather or

chromatic. Only the first kind, that of marked parallelism, is concerned with the structure of verse—in rhythm, the recurrence of a certain sequence of syllables, in metre, the recurrence of a certain sequence of rhythm, in alliteration, in assonance and in rhyme. Now the force of this recurrence is to beget a recurrence or parallelism answering to it in the words or thought and, speaking roughly and rather for the tendency than the invariable result, the more marked parallelism in structure whether of elaboration or of emphasis begets more marked parallelism in the words and sense . . . To the marked or abrupt kind of parallelism belong metaphor, simile, parable, and so on, where the effect is sought in likeness of things, and antithesis, contrast, and so on, where it is sought in unlikeness.⁴¹

Briefly, equivalence in sound, projected into the sequence as its constitutive principle, inevitably involves semantic equivalence, and on any linguistic level any constituent of such a sequence prompts one of the two correlative experiences which Hopkins neatly defines as “comparison for likeness’ sake” and “comparison for unlikeness’ sake.”⁴²

Folklore offers the most clear-cut and stereotyped forms of poetry, particularly suitable for structural scrutiny (as Sebeok illustrated with Cheremis samples).⁴³ Those oral traditions that use grammatical parallelism to connect consecutive lines, for example, Finno-Ugric patterns of verse⁴⁴ and to a high degree also Russian folk poetry, can be fruitfully analyzed on all linguistic levels—phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical: we learn what elements are conceived as equivalent and how likeness on certain levels is tempered by conspicuous difference on other ones. Such forms enable us to verify Ransom’s wise suggestion that “the meter-and-meaning process is the organic art of poetry, and involves all its important characters.”⁴⁵ These clear-cut traditional structures may dispel Wimsatt’s doubts about the possibility of writing a grammar of the meter’s interaction with the sense, as well as a grammar of the arrangement of metaphors.⁴⁶ As soon as parallelism is promoted to canon, the interaction between meter and meaning and the arrangement of tropes cease to be “the free and individual and unpredictable parts of the poetry.”

Let me translate a few typical lines from Russian wedding songs about the appearance of the bridegroom:

A brave fellow was going to the porch,
Vasilij was walking to the manor.

The translation is literal; the verbs, however, take the final position in both Russian clauses (*Dobroj mólodec k séničkam privoráčival*, / *Vasilij k téremu prixázíval*). The lines wholly correspond to each other syntactically and morphologically. Both predicative verbs have the same prefixes and suffixes and the same vocalic alternant in the stem; they are alike in aspect, tense, number, and gender; and, moreover, they are synonymous. Both subjects, the common noun and the proper name, refer to the same person and form an appositional group. The two modifiers of place are expressed by identical prepositional constructions, and the first one stands in a synecdochic relation to the second.

These verses may occur preceded by another line of similar grammatical (syntactic and morphologic) makeup: “Not a bright falcon was flying beyond the hills” or “Not a fierce horse was coming at gallop to the court.” The “bright falcon” and the “fierce horse” of these variants are put in metaphorical relation with the “brave fellow.” This a traditional Slavic negative parallelism—the refutation of the metaphorical state (vehicle) in favor of the factual state (tenor). The negation *ne* may, however, be omitted: *Jasjón sokol zá gory zaljótypal* (A bright falcon was flying beyond the hills) or *Retív kon' kó dvoru priskákival* (A fierce horse was coming at a gallop to the court). In the first of the two examples the *metaphorical* relation is maintained: a brave fellow appeared at the porch like a bright falcon from behind the hills. In the other instance, however, the semantic connection becomes ambiguous. A comparison between the appearing bridegroom and the galloping horse suggests itself, but at the same time the halt of the horse at the court actually anticipates the approach of the hero to the house. Thus, before introducing the rider and the manor of his fiancee, the song evokes the contiguous, *metonymical* images of the horse and of the courtyard: possession instead of possessor, and outdoors instead of inside. The exposition of the groom may be broken up into two consecutive moments even without substituting the horse for the horseman: “A brave fellow was coming at a gallop to the court, / Vasilij was walking to the porch.” Thus the “fierce horse,” emerging in the preceding line at a similar metrical and syntactic place as the “brave fellow,” figures simultaneously as a likeness to and as a representative possession of this fellow, properly speaking—*paris pro toto* for the horseman. The horse image is on the border line between metonymy and synecdoche. From these suggestive connotations of the “fierce horse” there ensues a metaphorical synecdoche: in the wedding songs and other

varieties of Russian erotic lore, the masculine *retiv kon'* becomes a latent or even patent phallic symbol.

As early as the 1880s, Potebnja, a remarkable inquirer into Slavic poetics, pointed out that in folk poetry symbols are, as it were, materialized (*ovestvlen*), converted into an accessory of the ambiance.⁴⁷ Still a symbol, it is put, however, in a connection with the action. Thus a simile is presented in the shape of a temporal sequence. In Potebnja's examples from Slavic folklore, the willow, under which a girl passes, serves at the same time as her image; the tree and the girl are both present in the same verbal simulacrum of the willow. Quite similarly, the horse of the love songs remains a symbol of virility not only when the maid is asked by the lad to feed his steed but even when being saddled or put into the stable or tied to a tree.

In poetry not only the phonological sequence but, in the same way, any sequence of semantic units strives to build an equation. Similarity superimposed on contiguity imparts to poetry its thoroughgoing symbolic, multiplex, polysemantic essence, which is beautifully suggested by Goethe's "Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis" (Anything transient is but a likeness). Said more technically, anything sequent is a simile. In poetry, where similarity is superinduced upon contiguity, any metonymy is slightly metaphoric and any metaphor has a metonymic tint.

Ambiguity is an intrinsic, inalienable character of any self-focused message, briefly, a corollary feature of poetry. Let us repeat with Empson: "The machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry."⁴⁸ Not only the message itself but also its addresser and addressee become ambiguous. Besides the author and the reader, there is the "I" of the lyrical hero or of the fictitious storyteller and the "you" or "thou" of the alleged addressee of dramatic monologues, supplications, and epistles. For example the poem "Wrestling Jacob" is addressed by its title hero to the Saviour and simultaneously acts as a subjective message of the poet Charles Wesley (1707–1788) to his readers. Virtually any poetic message is a quasi-quoted discourse with all those peculiar, intricate problems which "speech within speech" offers to the linguist.

The supremacy of the poetic function over the referential function does not obliterate the reference but makes it ambiguous. The double-sensed message finds correspondence in a split addresser, in a split addressee, as well as in a split reference, as is cogently exposed in the

preambles to fairy tales of various peoples, for instance, in the usual exordium of the Majorca storytellers: “Aixo era y no era” (It was and it was not).⁴⁹ The repetitiveness effected by imparting the equivalence principle to the sequence makes reiterable not only the constituent sequences of the poetic messages but the whole message as well. This capacity for reiteration whether immediate or delayed, this reification of a poetic message and its constituents, this conversion of a message into an enduring thing, indeed all this represents an inherent and effective property of poetry.

In a sequence in which similarity is superimposed on contiguity, two similar phonemic sequences near to each other are prone to assume a paronomastic function. Words similar in sound are drawn together in meaning. It is true that the first line of the final stanza in Poe’s “Raven” makes wide use of repetitive alliterations, as noted by Valéry,⁵⁰ but “the overwhelming effect” of this line and of the whole stanza is due primarily to the sway of poetic etymology.

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting,
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the
floor:
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

The perch of the raven, “the pallid bust of Pallas,” is merged through the “sonorous” paronomasia /pæləd/—/pæləs/ into one organic whole (similar to Shelley’s molded line “Sculptured on alabaster obelisk” /sk.lp/—/l.b.st/—/b.l.sk/). Both confronted words were blended earlier in another epithet of the same bust—*placid* /plæsɪd/—a poetic portmanteau, and the bond between the sitter and the seat was in turn fastened by a paronomasia: “bird or beast upon the . . . bust.” The bird “is sitting / On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door,” and the raven on his perch, despite the lover’s imperative “take thy form from off my door,” is nailed into place by the words /ʒást əbÁv/, both of them blended in /bÁst/.

The never-ending stay of the grim guest is expressed by a chain of ingenious paronomasias, partly inversive, as we would expect from such a deliberate experimenter in anticipatory, regressive modus operandi, such a master in “writing backwards” as Edgar Allan Poe. In the introductory line of this concluding stanza, “raven,” contiguous to the

bleak refrain word “never,” appears once more as an embodied mirror image of this “never”: /n.v.r/—/r.v.n/. Salient paronomasias interconnect both emblems of the everlasting despair, first “the Raven, never flitting,” at the beginning of the very last stanza, and second, in its very last lines the “shadow that lies floating on the floor,” and “shall be lifted—nevermore”: /névər flítíŋ/—/flótíŋ/.. /flór/.. ./liftæd névər/. The alliterations that struck Valéry build a paronomastic string: /stí . . ./—/sít . . ./—/stí . . ./—/sít . . /. The invariance of the group is particularly stressed by the variation in its order. The two luminous effects in the chiaroscuro—the “fiery eyes” of the black fowl and the lamplight throwing “his shadow on the floor”—are evoked to add to the gloom of the whole picture and are again bound by the “vivid effect” of paronomasias: /álðə símɪŋ/ . . . /dímənz/ . . . /z drímɪŋ/—/ɔrim strímɪŋ/. “That shadow that lies /láyz/” pairs with the raven’s “eyes” /áyz/ in an impressively misplaced echo rhyme.

In poetry, any conspicuous similarity in sound is evaluated in respect to similarity and/or dissimilarity in meaning. But Pope’s alliterative precept to poets—“the sound must seem an echo of the sense”—has a wider application. In referential language the connection between *signans* and *signatum* is overwhelmingly based on their codified contiguity, which is often confusingly labeled “arbitrariness of the verbal sign.” The relevance of the sound-meaning nexus is a simple corollary of the superposition of similarity upon contiguity. Sound symbolism is an undeniably objective relation founded on a phenomenal connection between different sensory modes, in particular between the visual and the auditory experience. If the results of research in this area have sometimes been vague or controversial, it is primarily due to an insufficient care for the methods of psychological and linguistic inquiry. Particularly from the linguistic point of view the picture has often been distorted by lack of attention to the phonological aspect of speech sounds or by inevitably vain operations with complex phonemic units instead of with their ultimate components. But when on testing, for example, such phonemic oppositions as grave versus acute we ask whether /i/ or /u/ is darker, some of the subjects may respond that this question makes no sense to them, but hardly one will state that /i/ is the darker of the two.

Poetry is not the only area where sound symbolism makes itself felt, but it is a province where the internal nexus between sound and meaning changes from latent into patent and manifests itself most palpably

and intensely, as was noted in Hymes's stimulating paper.⁵¹ The super-average accumulation of a certain class of phonemes or a contrastive assemblage of two opposite classes in the sound texture of a line, of a stanza, of a poem acts like an "undercurrent of meaning," to use Poe's picturesque expression.⁵² In two polar words phonemic relationship may be in agreement with their semantic opposition, as in Russian /d'en/ 'day' and /noč/ 'night,' with acute vowels and consonants in the diurnal name of the corresponding grave vowel in the nocturnal name. A reinforcement of this contrast by surrounding the first word with acute phonemes, in contradistinction to the grave phonemic neighborhood of the second word, makes the sound into a thorough echo of the sense. But in the French *jour* 'day' and *nuit* 'night' the distribution of grave and acute vowels is inverted, so that Mallarmé's *Divagations* accuse his mother tongue of a deceitful perversity in assigning to day a dark timbre and to night a light one.⁵³ Whorf states that when in its sound shape "a word has an acoustic similarity to its own meaning, we can notice it . . . But when the opposite occurs, nobody notices it." Poetic language, however, and particularly French poetry in the collision between sound and meaning detected by Mallarmé, either seeks a phonological alternation of such a discrepancy and drowns the "converse" distribution of vocalic features by surrounding *nuit* with grave and *jour* with acute phonemes; or it resorts to a semantic shift and its imagery of day and night replaces the imagery of light and dark by other synesthetic correlates of the phonemic opposition grave/acute and, for instance, puts the heavy, warm day in contrast to the airy, cool night—because "human subjects seem to associate the experiences of bright, sharp, hard, high, light (in weight), quick, high-pitched, narrow, and so on in a long series, with each other; and conversely the experiences of dark, warm, yielding, soft, blunt, heavy, slow, low-pitched, wide, etc., in another long series."⁵⁴

However effective is the emphasis on repetition in poetry, the sound texture is still far from being confined to numerical contrivances, and a phoneme that appears only once, but in a key word, in a pertinent position, against a contrastive background, may acquire striking significance. As painters used to say, "Un kilo de vert n'est pas plus vert qu'un demi kilo."

Any analysis of poetic sound texture must consistently take into account the phonological structure of the given language and, beside the overall code, the hierarchy of phonological distinctions in the given

poetic convention as well. Thus the approximate rhymes used by Slavic peoples in oral and in some stages of written tradition admit unlike consonants in the rhyming members (e.g., Czech *bory*, *boky*, *stopy*, *kosy*, *soczy*) but, as Nitch noticed, no mutual correspondence between voiced and voiceless consonants is allowed,⁵⁵ so that the quoted Czech words cannot rhyme with *body*, *doby*, *kozy*, *rohy*. In the songs of some American Indian peoples such as the Pima-Papago and Tepecano, according to Herzog's observations—only partly communicated in print⁵⁶—the phonemic distinction between voiced and voiceless plosives and between them and nasals is replaced by a free variation, whereas the distinction between labials, dentals, velars, and palatals is rigorously maintained. Thus in the poetry of these languages consonants lose two of the four distinctive features, voiced/voiceless and nasal/oral, and preserve the other two, grave/acute and compact/diffuse. The selection and hierarchic stratification of valid categories is a factor of primary importance for poetics both on the phonological and on the grammatical level.

Old Indic and medieval Latin literary theory keenly distinguished two poles of verbal art, labeled in Sanskrit *Pāñcāli* and *Vaidarbī* and correspondingly in Latin *ornatus difficilis* and *ornatus facilis*,⁵⁷ the latter style evidently being much more difficult to analyze linguistically because in such literary forms verbal devices are unostentatious and language seems a nearly transparent garment. But one must say with Charles Sanders Peirce: "This clothing never can be completely stripped off; it is only changed for something more diaphanous."⁵⁸ "Verseless composition," as Hopkins calls the prosaic variety of verbal art—where parallelisms are not so strictly marked and strictly regular as "continuous parallelism" and where there is no dominant figure of sound⁵⁹—present more entangled problems for poetics, as does any transitional linguistic area. In this case the transition is between strictly poetic and strictly referential language. But Propp's pioneering monograph on the structure of the fairy tale⁶⁰ shows us how a consistently syntactic approach can be of paramount help even in classifying the traditional plots and in tracing the puzzling laws that underlie their composition and selection. The studies of Lévi-Strauss⁶¹ display a much deeper but essentially similar approach to the same constructional problem.

It is no mere chance that metonymic structures are less explored than the field of metaphor. Allow me to repeat my old observation that

the study of poetic tropes has been directed mainly toward metaphor and that so-called realistic literature, intimately tied to the metonymic principle, still defies interpretation, although the same linguistic methodology that poetics uses when analyzing the metaphorical style of romantic poetry is entirely applicable to the metonymical texture of realistic prose.⁶²

Textbooks believe in the occurrence of poems devoid of imagery, but actually a scarcity of lexical tropes is counterbalanced by gorgeous grammatical tropes and figures. The poetic resources concealed in the morphological and syntactic structure of language—briefly, the poetry of grammar and its literary product, the grammar of poetry—have been seldom known to critics and mostly disregarded by linguists but skillfully mastered by creative writers.

The main dramatic force of Antony's exordium to the funeral oration for Caesar is achieved by Shakespeare's playing on grammatical categories and constructions. Mark Antony lampoons Brutus' speech by changing the alleged reasons for Caesar's assassination into plain linguistic fictions. Brutus' accusation of Caesar, "as he was ambitious, I slew him," undergoes successive transformations. First Antony reduces it to a mere quotation which puts the responsibility for the statement on the speaker quoted: "The noble Brutus / Hath told you." When repeated, this reference to Brutus is put into opposition to Antony's own assertions by an adversative "but" and further degraded by a concessive "yet." The reference to the allegor's honor ceases to justify the allegation when repeated with a substitution of the merely copulative "and" instead of the previous causal "for," and when finally put into question through the malicious insertion of a modal "sure":

The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious;
For Brutus is an honourable man,
But Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honourable man.
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honourable man.
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And, sure, he is an honourable man.

The following polyptoton—"I speak . . . Brutus spoke . . . I am to speak"—presents the repeated allegation as mere reported speech instead of reported facts. The effect lies, modal logic would say, in the

oblique context of the arguments adduced, which makes them into unprovable belief sentences:

I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.

The most effective device of Antony's irony is the *modus obliquus* of Brutus' abstracts changed into a *modus rectus* to disclose that these reified attributes are nothing but linguistic fictions. To Brutus' saying "he was ambitious," Antony first replies by transferring the adjective from the agent to the action ("Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?"), then by eliciting the abstract noun "ambition" and converting it into the subject of a concrete passive construction "Ambition should be made of sterner stuff" and subsequently to the predicate noun of an interrogative sentence, "Was this ambition?"—Brutus' appeal "hear me for my cause" is answered by the same noun *in recto*, the hypostatized subject of an interrogative, active construction: "What cause withholds you?" While Brutus calls "awake your senses, that you may the better judge," the abstract substantive derived from "judge" becomes an apostrophized agent in Antony's report: "O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts." Incidentally, this apostrophe with its murderous paronomasia *Brutus-brutish* is reminiscent of Caesar's parting exclamation "Et tu, Brute!" Properties and activities are exhibited *in recto*, whereas their carriers appear either *in obliquo* ("withholds you," "to brutish beasts," "back to me") or as subjects of negative actions ("men have lost," "I must pause"):

You all did love him once, not without cause;
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason!

The last two lines of Antony's exordium display the ostensible independence of these grammatical metonymies. The stereotyped "I mourn for so-and-so" and the figurative but still stereotyped "so-and-so is in the coffin and my heart is with him" or "goes out to him" give place in Antony's speech to a daringly realized metonymy; the trope becomes a part of poetic reality:

My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.

In poetry the internal form of a name, that is, the semantic load of its constituents, regains its pertinence. "Cocktails" may resume their obliterated kinship with plumage. Their colors are vivified in Mac Hammond's lines, "The ghost of a Bronx pink lady / With orange blossoms afloat in her hair," and the etymological metaphor attains its realization: "O, Bloody Mary, / The cocktails have crowed not the cocks!" ("At an Old Fashion Bar in Manhattan"). In T. S. Eliot's comedy *The Cocktail Party*, the evocation of cocktails is interwoven with sinister zoological motifs. The play begins with Alex's exclamation:

You've missed the point completely, Julia:
There *were* no tigers. *That* was the point.

Julia recollects the only man she ever met "who could hear the cry of bats." A moment later she announces: "Now I want to relax. Are there any more cocktails?" And in the last act of the play Julia once more asks Alex, "You were shooting tigers?" And Alex answers:

There are no tigers, Julia,
In Kinkanja . . .
Though whether the monkeys are the core of the problem
Or merely a symptom, I am not so sure . . .
The majority of the natives are heathen:
They hold these monkeys in peculiar veneration . . .
Some of the tribes are Christian converts . . .
They trap the monkeys. And they eat them.
The young monkeys are extremely palatable . . .
I invented for the natives several new recipes.

As to the heathens, "instead of eating monkeys, / They are eating Christians. / Julia: Who have eaten monkeys." All of a sudden she exclaims:

Somebody must have walked over my grave:
I'm feeling so chilly. Give me some gin.
Not a cocktail. I'm freezing—in July!

Wallace Stevens' poem "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" revives the head word of the city name first through a discreet allusion to heaven and then through a direct punlike confrontation similar to Hopkins' "Heaven-Haven."

The dry eucalyptus *seeks god in the rainy cloud.*
Professor Eucalyptus of New Haven *seeks him in New Haven . . .*

The instinct for *heaven* had its counterpart:
The instinct for earth, for *New Haven*, for his room . . .

The adjective “New” of the city name is laid bare through the concatenation of opposites:

The oldest-newest day is the newest alone.
The oldest-newest night does not creak by . . .

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. Compare Majakovskij’s poem of 1915, “I and Napoleon,” which begins with the words *Ja živu na Bol’šoj Presne, / 34, 24 . . .*: “I live on the Big Presnja, 34, 24. Apparently it’s not my business that somewhere in the stormy world people went and invented war.” And the poem ends: “The war has killed one more, the poet from the Big Presnja” (*poëta s Bol’šoj Presni*). Briefly, poeticalness is not a supplementation of discourse with rhetorical adornment but a total reevaluation of the discourse and of all its components whatsoever.

A missionary blamed his African flock for walking around with no clothes on. “And what about yourself?” they pointed to his visage, “are not you, too, somewhere naked?” “Well, but that is my face.” “Yet in us,” retorted the natives, “everywhere it is face.” So in poetry any verbal element is converted into a figure of poetic speech.

My attempt to vindicate the right and duty of linguistics to direct the investigation of verbal art in all its compass and extent can come to a conclusion with the same burden which summarized my report to the 1953 conference here at Indiana University: “Linguista sum; linguistici nihil a me alienum puto.”⁶³ If the poet Ransom is right (and he is right) that “poetry is a kind of language,”⁶⁴ the linguist whose field is any kind of language may and must include poetry in his study. Let us not forget the wise precept of Paul Valéry: “literature is and cannot be anything but a sort of extension and application of certain properties of language.”⁶⁵ The present conference has clearly shown that the time when both linguists and literary historians eluded questions of poetic structure is now safely behind us. Indeed, as Hollander stated, “there seems to be no reason for trying to separate the literary from the overall linguistic.”⁶⁶ If there are some critics who still doubt

the competence of linguistics to embrace the field of poetics, I believe that the poetic incompetence of some bigoted linguists has been mistaken for an inadequacy of the linguistic science itself. All of us here, however, definitely realize that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms.