2. Roman Jakobson and the comparative study of parallelism[1]

For most of his career, Roman Jakobson was concerned with the linguistic study of parallelism. It is particularly noteworthy, therefore, to discern the firm foundations of this lifelong research in some of the youthful assertions of his earliest writings on poetry. In 1919, in an essay on the new Russian poetry, Jakobson enunciated certain of these fundamental insights in a series of clear, almost aphoristic, assertions:

> Poetic language consists of an elementary operation: the bringing together of two elements…The semantic variants of this operation are: parallelism, comparison (a particular instance of parallelism), metamorphosis (parallelism projected in time), metaphor (parallelism reduced to a point)…The euphonic variants of this process of juxtaposition are: rhyme, assonance, and alliteration (or repetition). (Jakobson 1973:21)

Decades later, on discovering similar insights in the writings of the poet G. M. Hopkins, Jakobson felt compelled to insist on their importance (Jakobson 1960:368; 1966:399; 1968:602). In 1966, for example, he began the introduction to a major article devoted to the discussion of parallelism with the following statement:

> When approaching the linguistic problem of grammatical parallelism one is irresistibly impelled to quote again and again the pathbreaking study written exactly one hundred years ago by the juvenile Gerard Manley Hopkins: 'The artificial part of poetry, perhaps we shall be right to say all artifice, reduces itself to the principle of parallelism, ranging from technical so-called Parallelisms of Hebrew poetry and the antiphons of Church music to the intricacy of Greek or Italian or English verse.' (Jakobson 1966:399)

Between the assertion and the rediscovery of his insights in Hopkins, there can be found in the various writings of Roman Jakobson innumerable comments

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1   This chapter was first published in 1977 as 'Roman Jakobson and the comparative study of parallelism', in C. H. van Schooneveld and D. Armstrong (eds), *Roman Jakobson: Echoes of his scholarship*, Peter de Ridder Press, Lisse, pp. 59–90. The research for part of the original paper was supported by a National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) grant (MH-20, 659). In surveying the literature on parallelism, I am indebted to a host of scholars who, in response to earlier papers of mine, have referred me to further instances of canonical parallelism: R. Burling, W. Davenport, M. Edmonson, P. Friedrich, G. Gossen, K. Hale, R. Jakobson, E. Leach, F. Lehman, R. Needham, H. Phillips, G. Sankoff, I. Sherzer and P. Voorhoeve. For the references in Polish, Russian and Finnish, I have had to rely on secondary sources and summaries.

on parallelism. These cover his specific research on Russian epic poetry, theoretical remarks on poetic language, detailed analyses of individual poetic creations and comparative statements on the significance of parallelism in oral literature. In this chapter, I propose to examine some of Jakobson's ideas on parallelism and to outline the influence they have had in directing linguists, anthropologists and students of folklore towards an understanding of the phenomenon of parallelism.

Parallelism has two aspects and the use of the term 'parallelism' varies in relation to these aspects. In its first sense, parallelism is an ever-present aspect of poetic language. According to Jakobson (1966:399), 'on every level of language the essence of poetic artifice consists of recurrent returns', just as in Hopkins' definition verse is 'spoken sound having a repeated figure' (Hopkins 1959:267). Parallelism, in this sense, is an extension of the binary principle of opposition to the phonemic, syntactic and semantic levels of expression. Rather than some form of deviation, poetic language is the most manifest and complex expression of binary opposition.

Parallelism, in its other aspect, refers to the specific manifestations of this binary principle as a strict, consistent and pervasive means of composition in the traditional oral poetry of a wide variety of peoples of the world. Parallelism is promoted to a canon 'where certain similarities between successive verbal sequences are compulsory or enjoy a high preference' (Jakobson 1966:399). Jakobson has described this form of parallelism as 'compulsory' or 'canonical' parallelism—what Hopkins referred to as 'the technical so-called Parallelisms of Hebrew poetry'. The study of parallelism, as indeed the initial terminology for its study, derives primarily from the recognition of canonical parallelism in specific oral traditions. Jakobson's contributions to the study of parallelism have been to draw together the separate, and at times isolated, linguistic studies of these phenomena, to call attention repeatedly to their comparative significance and to suggest directions for further research.

The comparative study of canonical parallelism

The term 'parallelism' dates back to the eighteenth century and derives from the studies of Robert Lowth. In 1753, in a series of lectures delivered as professor of Hebrew poetry in the University of Oxford, Lowth made what was, at the time, the remarkable observation that one of the major principles of composition in much of the Old Testament was a carefully contrived pairing of line, phrase and verse. In his nineteenth lecture, Lowth first expounded this view:

> The poetic conformation of the sentences, which has been so often alluded to as characteristic of the Hebrew poetry, consists chiefly in a certain equality, resemblance, or parallelism between the members of each period; so that in two lines (or members of the same period) things

for the most part shall answer to things, and words, to words, as if fitted to each other by a kind of rule or measure. This parallelism has much variety and graduations. (Lowth 1753:157)

Later, in his 'Preliminary Dissertation' on a new translation of Isaiah, published in 1778, Lowth set forth, in a more explicit fashion, a terminology for what he called '*parallelismus membrorum*':

> The correspondence of one verse or line with another, I call parallelism. When a proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it in sense, or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction, these I call parallel lines; and the words or phrases, answering one to another in the corresponding lines, parallel terms. (Lowth 1778:IX)

The impact of Lowth's research was immediate and profound. It inspired the writing of English poetry in a Hebrew vein (see Jakobson 1966:400) and influenced J. G. Herder in his *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie* (1782). Lowth's writings were soon translated and went through numerous editions. Lowth himself was made Lord Bishop of London in 1777 and, in 1783, was offered the position of Archbishop of Canterbury, which he refused.

More importantly, Lowth's research gave rise to a voluminous scholarship. Since Lowth's early observations, scholars have continued to examine the 'repetitive parallelism' of Hebrew poetry. G. B. Gray's *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915), devoted in large part to a 'restatement' of Lowth's study, carried this research into the twentieth century; L. I. Newman and W. Popper's tripartite *Studies in Biblical Parallelism* (1918–23) marked its further advance; while the 1928 discovery, at Ras Shamra, of Canaanite or Ugaritic texts led a host of recent scholars to examine, in meticulous detail, the extent to which Lowth's 'parallel terms' constitute, in the ancient oral traditions of Syria and Palestine, a standardised body of fixed word pairs by means of which verse forms were composed. An annotated bibliography on Hebrew poetry since Gray, including references to the work of such scholars as Albright, Cross, Dahood, Driver, Gevirtz, Ginsburg, Gordon and Rin on Ugaritic parallels with Hebrew, can be found in D. N. Freedman's 'Prolegomenon' to the reprinted edition of Gray (Freedman 1972:VII–LIII). Newman's introduction to his monograph *Parallelism in Amos* provides a valuable survey of a wide range of near Eastern traditions of parallelism—ancient Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Arabic—as well as a discussion of the diminished use of parallelism in the New Testament, and in rabbinical, medieval and modern Hebrew literature.[2]

Lowth's research began to have another major effect on scholarship, however, in the nineteenth century as various linguists, literary scholars and, not

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2   Newman, 'Parallelism in Amos', in Newman and Popper (1918–23:57–135).

infrequently, missionary Bible translators encountered similar traditions of oral composition in widely scattered areas of the world. The sheer accumulation of these diverse studies has created a rich comparative literature.

One of the earliest of these comparative observations of parallelism is in an essay by J. F. Davis, 'On the poetry of the Chinese' (1830). Citing Lowth, Davis contended that constructive parallelism, the equivalent of what Lowth termed 'synthetic parallelism', was the 'most common species of parallelism in Chinese'. He went on to write:

> It pervades their poetry universally, forms its chief characteristic feature, and is the source of a great deal of its artificial beauty…The constructional parallelism of sentences extends to prose composition, and is very frequent in what is called *wun-chang*, or fine writing, which is measured prose, though written line by line, like poetry. (Davis 1830:414–15)

Davis's often quoted remarks[3] initiated a long tradition of Sinological studies on parallelism (see Schlegel 1896; Tchang Tcheng-Ming 1937; Boodberg 1954–55a, 1954–55b, 1954–55c; Hightower 1959; Shih 1959:190–4; T'sou 1968). Certain features of Chinese, first observed by Davis—namely, 'the exact equality in the number of words which form each line of a poetic couplet, and the almost total absence of recurring particles' (Davis 1830:417)—provide a basis for a sustained and elaborate parallelism. This linguistic predisposition is enhanced in written Chinese and has frequently been remarked on by other writers in connection with the occurrence of parallelism.[4] Manifestations of parallelism in Chinese have been noted in a variety of forms: in the earliest of written documents (Granet 1919), in popular poetry (Jablonski 1935), in proverbs (Scarborough 1875; Smith 1902:48–62), in love songs (Clementi 1904), in *thefu* or 'rhyme-prose' of the Han period (Watson 1971) and in the later literary style *p'ien-wen*, known as 'parallel prose' (Hightower 1966:38–41). The modular design of Chinese verse, coupled with the possibility of concurrent oppositional parallelism between level and deflected tones, is itself the subject of an incisive paper by Jakobson (1969).

Granet was convinced that parallelism arose in China as a direct reflection of ancient Chinese society and of a division of the world according to the categories of Yin and Yang. This duality found expression, on ritual occasions, in poetic recitations carried on by alternating choruses of young men and women. As one of the appendices to his study of the festivals and songs of ancient China, Granet (1919:278–301) included a considerable number of 'ethnographic notes' on love dialogues and poetic choruses in different areas of China, Tibet and Japan and among different groups (Thai, Miao, Lolo, among others) on the mainland of South-East Asia. Although Granet's evidence was meagre and not altogether

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3   See Newman, 'Parallelism in Amos', in ibid., p. 69; Jakobson (1966:401).
4   See Hervey-Saint-Denys (1862:LXIV–LXVII) for essentially the same statement.

convincing, his intellectual stimulation led to further studies of parallelism. The Polish Sinologist W. Jablonski was inspired by Granet in his study of parallelism in Chinese popular poetry (Jablonski 1935), as was Nguyen Van Huyen, even more directly, in his doctoral dissertation, *Les chants alternés des garçons et des filles en Annam* (1933). This superb study deserves special note for the range of its coverage, beginning with the music of Vietnamese chants, the semantic structure of its common word pairs, its verse forms, means of improvisation and the thematic development of chants.

Vietnamese, of all the languages of mainland South-East Asia, has the greatest similarities with Chinese in its tradition of parallelism. Nguyen Dinh Hoà (1955:237), who has undertaken a linguistic examination of this parallelism, has observed:

> A characteristic feature of Vietnamese literary utterances is parallelism, which is found not only in verse but also in prose. This parallel structure requires the use of two phrases, or 'two sentences, that go together like two horses in front of a cart.' The nature of the parallelism may reside in the content and/or the form. Parallelism of form or structure is the minimum, however.

Chinese influence on Vietnamese parallel poetry is evident in what is considered Vietnam's great literary classic, the *Tryuen Thuy Kieu*, Nguyen Du's long narrative poem written at the beginning of the nineteenth century (see Huynh Sanh Thong 1973).

While Chinese influences are unmistakable in Vietnamese, it is also apparent that the various populations of South-East Asia have their own indigenous traditions of canonical parallelism. Among the first to recognise this parallelism was the missionary linguist O. Hanson (1906:XX), who noted that the 'most marked characteristic' of Katchin religious language was '*parallelismus membrorum*, or the attempt to unfold the same thought in two parallel members of the same verse or stanza'. Although these indigenous traditions have not been as well studied as in the case of the Vietnamese, anthropologists have pointed to the existence of these traditions among the Garo, Shan, Burmese and Thai.[5] One of the most intriguing aspects of this study of parallelism concerns the use, in diverse languages of the area, of what are referred to variously as 'binomes', 'doublets' or 'reduplicative formations'. These offer a ready-made lexical resource for the construction of parallel statements.[6] As Emeneau (1951:76) has stressed, 'any attempt at elevation of style, even in the most casual conversation, has as one of its marks a multiplication of pairs of verbs'.

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5   For the evidence of the prevalence of parallelism in Burmese and in Garo, I have relied on personal communications from F. Lehman and R. Burling.

6   Emeneau (1951:159 ff.) on Vietnamese; Bernot and Pemaungtin (1966) on Burmese.   **23**

Canonical parallelism is evident in the oral traditions of numerous Austronesian or Malayo–Polynesian-speaking peoples. In some cases, it is the pervasive idiom for all formal public speaking, chanting or singing. In other cases, it has become a more restricted form of speech reserved for sacred utterances or for summoning spirits, and has occasionally become a prerogative of a priestly class. Again, it was a missionary linguist, A. Hardeland, who, in 1858, described this feature of Dayak 'spirit language' (Basa Sangiang): '*Der Charakter der basa Sangiang ist poetisch, voll Sinnbilder. Die Form ähnelt der Hebräischen Dichtersprache hinsichtlich des Rhythmus und kurzen parallelen Glieder*' (1858:5).

Another missionary linguist, J. Sibree (1880:148), made a similar observation about Malagasy: 'in the more formal Malagasy speeches the parts of every sentence are regularly balanced in construction, forming a kind of rhythm very closely resembling the parallelism of Hebrew poetry.'[7]

The present writer has briefly surveyed the major collections of parallel texts among the Austronesian peoples (see Fox 1971:217–19). These include Paulhan's collection of Merina verse from Madagascar; the Rhade epic, *La Chanson de Damsan*, from the mountains of south-central Vietnam studied by Sabatier; Steinhart's large corpus of Nias texts; Dunselman's publications on the Kendayan and Mualang Dayak and Schärer's two volumes on the Ngaju Dayak; van der Veen's collection of Sa'dan Toraja chants from the Celebes; a corpus of Rotenese texts with translations (Fox 1972); and, as an example from the Pacific region, the *Kumulipo*, the Hawaiian creation chant edited and translated by Beckwith. The islands of eastern Indonesia are an area where the canons of this oral poetry are vitally maintained and where studies of these traditions are continuing.

In this same general region of the world, Hale (1971) has studied a special form of parallelism used in the rituals of the Walbiri of Australia; the French scholar L Berthe (1972) prepared a large collection of texts, mostly in parallel verse, from the Papuan-speaking Bunaq of Timor; while Sankoff (1977) has examined the parallel poetry of the Buang of Papua New Guinea. These scattered studies indicate that there is much more to be done in this linguistically complex region.

A great deal of research is also needed in the investigation of parallelism in the oral poetry of Dravidian languages. Publication of ritual texts, such as those of Rosner (1961:77–113) from the Sadars of Jashpur, Madhya Pradesh, are clear evidence of its importance, while Kailasapathy's (1968:170 ff. 46) discussion of oral verse-making in Tamil heroic poetry is also indicative. Only Emeneau, however, in a series of studies, has attentively examined such a tradition of 'formulaically fixed pairs of song units' from among the Todas (see Kailasapathy

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7   The reliance on parallelism in the work of Dutch Bible translators is discussed in van der Veen (1952:211–40) and in Onvlee (1953:16–23).

1968:170 ff. 46). As Emeneau (1937:560) has aptly phrased it, 'if we combine the Hebrew parallelism and the use of stereotyped phraseology of the epics or the Vedas, and push the combination to its furthest point, we have Toda poetry'.

Jakobson has already admirably surveyed the principal literature on parallelism among the peoples of the Ural–Altaic area (Jakobson 1966:403–5). Studies of Finnish oral poetry offer the classic case. The *Kalevala* is probably the most frequently cited example of parallel poetry after that of the Old Testament. Wolfgang Steinitz's (1934) major monograph, *Der Parallelismus in der finnisch–karelischen Volksdichtung*, traced the development of these studies. Before Lowth, the similarities between Finnish and Biblical verse were noted by Cajanus (1697), Juslenius (1728) and Porthan (1766. Marmier's (1842:96) passing observation on parallelism in Finnish was among the first occasions in which Lowth's terminology was adopted explicitly to characterise these verse forms. Ahlqvist's (1863) dissertation, Steinitz's (1934) pioneering study and his further research on Ostyak (1939–41), followed by Austerlitz's (1958) monograph on Ostyak and Vogul folk poetry, have all advanced this study and have made this group of languages a field in which parallel poetry has been examined most carefully. Furthermore, Steinitz (1934:4–14), Lotz (1954) and Austerlitz (1958:125) suggest a wider spread for this poetic tradition.

In the epic poetry of the Mongolians, parallelism was first remarked on by H. C. von der Gabelentz (1837:22): '*Das unerlässlichste Erforderniss scheint bei allen der Parallelismus der Glieder zu sein, der sich oft durch Wiederkehr derselben Endungen* (Reim) *oder derselben Worte* (Refrain) *kund giebt*.' This research begun by von der Gabelentz has been carried forward particularly by N. Poppe (1955; 1958:195–228). The major research on parallelism among Turkic languages has been that of Kowalski (1921) and Schirmunski (1965). In Lotz's (1954:374) words, 'parallelism is a common phenomenon in Uralic and Altaic folk poetry'.

Parallelism in Indo-European languages presents a less determinate case. In his three-part study, *Rig-Veda Repetitions*, M. Bloomfield (1916:5) drew attention to the 'catenary structure' of the Vedic texts and considered this to be 'analogous to so-called parallelism in Hebrew poetry'. In a long, discursive monograph, 'Stylistic repetition in the Veda', J. Gonda (1959) has similarly compared Hebrew parallelism with the 'balanced structures and symmetrical word groups' that make up the '*carmen* style' of the Vedas. Indeed, he contends that 'these parallel pairs of cola are of considerable frequency, not only in the Veda and the Avesta, but also in conservative ancient poetry of other [Indo-European] peoples, especially in the Dainos of the Lithuanians, and the Old-Norse Edda' (Gonda 1959:55).

Despite this contention, it is difficult to determine all that Gonda intends by his comprehensive concept of a *carmen* style. In some instances, this includes simple repetition, anaphoric phrasing or the recurrence of set formulae. Since, however, in Bloomfield's estimation, one-fifth of the *Rig-Veda* consists of repeated *padas*, this cannot be a form of parallelism. Nor does the frequent occurrence of 'twin

formulae' or '*Zwillings-formeln*' (Meyer 1889; Salomon 1919), 'polar expressions' (Kemmer 1903; Lloyd 1966) or, in more recent parlance, (irreversible) 'binomials' (Malkiel 1959:73; Jakobson 1966:405)—common throughout Indo-European languages—constitute, by themselves, the evidence of a tradition of pervasive canonical parallelism. Parallelism of various sorts is unquestionably an important feature of certain Indo-European poetic traditions, but often its occurrence is optional, sporadic or at times subordinate to the requirements of rhyme, alliteration, assonance and a variety of complex metrical rules.

According to Jakobson, 'the only living oral tradition in the Indo-European world which uses grammatical parallelism as its basic mode of concatenating successive verses is the Russian folk poetry, both songs and recitatives' (1966:405).[8] In other Slavic languages, parallelism possesses varying degrees of importance (see Peukert 1961), but among none of these is parallelism as consistent a principle of composition as in Russian. This parallelism and its comparative significance, as Jakobson indicated, were noted anonymously in a Petersburg periodical in 1842 and later picked up by Šafranov (1878–79:199–205) in his study of Russian folk songs. In this connection, Jakobson (1966:407–22) has analysed in detail the complex metrical and grammatical parallelism in 21 lines of an eighteenth-century Russian song of grief.

Although in many Indo-European poetic traditions parallelism does not have the status of an oral canon, it is an inseparable aspect of poetic language; less transparent, perhaps, than in pervasive parallelism, it is nonetheless of considerable importance. Chiasmus and antimetabole, for example, are literary glosses for particular syntactic manifestations of this principle. In his study *Repetition and Parallelism in English Verse*, C. A. Smith (1894) has shown by judicious selection of verses from various periods of English literature the importance of this fundamental 'technique of poetry'. Given the special attention that Jakobson has devoted to the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe, it is worth noting that Smith, too, ranks Poe as one of the masters of parallelism in English:

> And all my days are trances,
>
> And all my nightly dreams
>
> Are where thy dark eye glances
>
> And where thy footstep gleams,—
>
> In what ethereal dances,
>
> By what eternal streams. (Poe: 'To One in Paradise')

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8 See Peukert (1961), whom Jakobson cites for his discussion of parallelism in Serbo-Croatian and Macedonian lyric songs.

Such a stanza illustrates a parallelism of sound and sense in which, following Poe's precept, 'the sound must seem an echo of the sense' (see Jakobson 1960:371–3). Smith notes also Poe's influence on his passionate admirer, the poet Baudelaire. It is therefore not unreasonable to see certain poets within a tradition as more susceptible than others to certain forms of structural construction. Certainly, Blake, Poe and Baudelaire—to name only three poets whose work Jakobson has scrutinised—all possess an almost diaphanous symmetry akin to the traditions of canonical parallel poetry.

In English literature there are, however, at least two instances of pervasive parallel poetry written in a conscious attempt to imitate canonical parallelism; the first was directly inspired by Lowth. The poet Christopher Smart, a contemporary of Lowth's, was his great admirer and regarded his lectures on Hebrew poetry as 'one of the best performances that has been published for a century' (Dearnley 1968:138). In his work, Smart is often considered a precursor to Blake and is perhaps best known for his impassioned religious poem *A Song of David*, reputedly first scrawled in charcoal on the walls of the madhouse in which he was confined. During one of his confinements, he also wrote a long, cryptic and highly idiosyncratic parallel poem, *Jubilate Agno*. Since the manuscript of this poem was discovered only in 1939, it has had little influence in English literature and it has served scholars mainly in piecing together the peculiarities of Smart's life and the genesis of his other poetry:

> For I this day made over my inheritance to my mother
>
> in consideration of her infirmities.
>
> For I this day made over my inheritance to my mother
>
> in consideration of her age.
>
> For I this day made over my inheritance to my mother
>
> in consideration of her poverty. (Smart: 'Jubilate Agno')

The appearance of another long parallel poem, in the nineteenth century, caused a far greater stir. This was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, published in 1855. Three years earlier, Schiefner had translated the *Kalevala* into German and Howitt had made an English translation of it. Longfellow's critics seized on this fact and accused him of gross plagiarism, to which he replied that he had been inspired equally by American Indian poetry and Finnish poetry. Although few critics grasped this point, it was clear that Longfellow, influenced by Schoolcraft's (1839) *Algic Researches*, was conscious of the common structural principle in both these poetic traditions. On 7 December 1885, the German poet Ferdinand Freiligrath wrote to Longfellow from London:

> Of course William Howitt is right; and your trochaic metre is taken from the Finns, not from the Spanish…The characteristic feature which shows that you have fetched the metre from the Finns, is the *parallelism* adopted so skillfully vb vand so gracefully in *Hiawatha*. I wonder that just this decisive circumstance is overlooked by all the combatants. It settles the question at once.

On receiving this letter, Longfellow noted in his *Journal* on 11 January 1856:

> A letter from Freiligrath, and a short article by him on the metre of *Hiawatha*, which is making some discussion in the English papers. He puts the matter right at once. But he does not seem aware that the parallelism, or *repetition*, is as much the characteristic of Indian as of Finnish song. (Longfellow 1893:298–303)

Other nineteenth-century scholars shared Longfellow's intimations about American Indian poetry. The vocabulary of *Hiawatha*—its initial allusion, for example, to Indian legends and traditions 'with their frequent repetitions and their wild reverberations'—had its effect. D. G. Brinton, who, after Schoolcraft, was one of the earliest American pioneers in the study of American Indian literature, accepted 'repetition' as the basis of his theory of poetry. Not unlike Hopkins, he argued: 'All metres, all rhythm, all forms of alliteration and assonance are but varied applications of the principle of harmonious repetition.' According to Brinton, American Indian poetry consisted in repetition in its simplest expression.

> The same verse may be repeated over and over again; or the wording of the verses may be changed but each may be accompanied by a burden of refrain, which is repeated by the singer or the chorus. These are the two fundamental characteristics of aboriginal poetry and are found everywhere on the American continent. (Brinton 1887–89:18–19)

Boas (1927:314) provides an important link in this distinctive American tradition of studying parallelism. In his discussion of literature in *Primitive Art*, he notes that 'in poetry repetitions of identical formal units are frequent'. Citing a variety of examples of parallelism in Indian poetry, but concentrating on Kwakiutl verse, Boas extends his discussion as follows:

> Exact observations show that rhythmic complexity is quite common. Regular rhythms consist of from two to seven parts, and much longer groupings occur without recognizable regularity of rhythmic structure. Their repetition in a series of verse proves that they are fixed units… Stress is most frequently given by repetition…Emphasis is also given by an accumulation of synonyms. Alternate terms are often used in this manner and in the original they often have an added rhythmical value on account of the homology of their form. (Boas 1927:16–19)

Reichard was the only one of the Boas students in American Indian linguistics to pursue this study of parallelism. Her monograph *Prayer: The compulsive word* (1944) develops a notation and a schematic system for analysing the elaborate 'forms of rhythmic repetition' evident in Navaho chants. Her research, however, does not seem to have stimulated further comparative studies of parallelism.

Although careful and extensive work on North American Indian poetry remains to be done, a considerable amount of research has already been done on various poetic traditions of Middle America, where Brinton saw the greatest flowering of poetic canons. Garibay (1953), in his monumental study of Nahnatl literature, lists parallelism as the first principle of Mayan poetry, and his entire two volumes abound in illustrative materials. Thompson (1950:61–3) had already recognised this as the principle of the ancient literature and Leon-Portilla (1969:76) further underscored this in his book *Pre-Columbian Literature of Mexico*: 'Anyone who reads indigenous poetry cannot fail to notice the repetition of ideas and the expression of sentiment in parallel form.' The recognition of this principle has also led to the retranslation of old texts. Edmonson (1970:14–23; 1971) completed a superb retranslation of the *Popul Vuh* of the Quiche Maya, demonstrating that this long parallel poem was based on a formal canon of traditional lexical pairs.

Several Harvard-trained anthropologists have begun to study this canonical parallelism in the oral traditions of the modern Maya. Bricker has examined this 'couplet poetry' among the Zinacantecos of highland Chiapas and has considered further historical usages in the Yucatan Peninsula (Bricker 1974). Gossen (1974a, 1974b) has studied these 'metaphoric couplets' within the context of Tzotzil Maya speech genres. A number of undergraduates in the Department of Anthropology at Harvard have produced theses on the parallel language of Mayan prayer as it is used in various contexts: Boster (1973) on prayer in the curing practices of the K'ekchi Maya of British Honduras (Belize), Siskel (1974) on Tzotzil curing in Chamula and Field (1975) on Tzotzil prayer in general.

These studies of parallelism are not, however, confined to the Maya. Drawing from Steinitz and Jakobson, F. W. Kramer (1970) has devoted most of his monograph *Literature Among the Cuna Indians* to an examination of parallelism in Cuna poetry and this has, in turn, prompted further illuminating studies of these important materials (Sherzer and Sherzer 1972; Sherzer 1974a, 1974b).

Issues and problems in the study of parallelism

The extent of the literature and the frequency with which canonical parallelism has been cited in different oral traditions suggest it is a phenomenon of near universal significance. This very literature, however, raises doubts and suspicions. It is apparent that nineteenth-century scholars, in particular,

shared enough of a common cultural background to be made aware of a resemblance between Hebrew poetry and the poetry of other oral traditions that they encountered. And they had available to them, as a ready label, the term 'parallelism'. Yet a phenomenon so widely noted and so little understood warrants initial scholarly caution. When one assesses the extent to which this phenomenon has been the subject of rigorous research, a reasonable conclusion is that studies of parallelism are in their infancy. What constitutes a tradition of 'pervasive canonical parallelism' is understood only vaguely and the differences in the complexity of these traditions are all too apparent. Furthermore, the partial incomparability of both present and previous research cannot be ignored. The predominant studies on parallelism in Hebrew and Canaanite, and in Chinese and Vietnamese, have involved literary sources. In Hebrew, parallelism has often been used as a tool in disputed areas of textual reconstruction. The parallelism in the oral traditions of the Finno-Ugric, Turkic and Mongolian peoples has long been studied, yet among these many studies, only two monographs stand out for their detail and thoroughness: that of Steinitz (1934) and that of Austerlitz (1958). In contrast, basic research in Central America and in Indonesia is in its early stages. In several respects, this work holds promise. Older textual materials abound while much of the present research is directed to the study of current traditions of oral poetry. These researchers share, to a certain extent, a common theoretical framework influenced by Jakobson; they are aware of one another's present endeavours and are interested in the possibilities of comparison within their own regions and more broadly. Above all, a great deal of attention is being given to the social context of oral production (see Bricker 1974; Fox 1974; Sherzer 1974a).

Unresolved questions predominate at all stages of research. In the literature, syntactic and semantic parallelism are often distinguished although they are just as often intimately related. In his use of the term 'grammatical parallelism', Jakobson attempts to encompass both. For example, Kunene's (1971) discussion of the pattern of what he calls 'oblique' and 'cross-line' parallelism in the oral poetry of the Basotho raises fundamental questions about the syntactic positioning of semantically parallel elements. If the pattern that Kunene describes is widespread in Bantu poetry and is to be included within an understanding of parallelism, a new range of distinctions is needed for comparative purposes.

Similarly, the occurrence or non-occurrence of canonical parallelism within different language families raises various questions. Within the Austronesian-language family, canonical parallelism is so widely evident that the lack of this tradition in any particular group is not of general significance. There is enough evidence to make clear how, for example, among some small Borneo groups among whom parallel poetry had become the exclusive religious 'language' of a native priestly class, the rapid and wholesale conversion of the group led to the virtual disappearance of parallelism in a generation or two. On the other

hand, it is of problematic significance that among Indo-European speakers only Russian and possibly certain other Slavic peoples should possess a living folk tradition based on grammatical parallelism (Jakobson 1966:405 ff.).

Questions relating to the role of parallelism in the development of various poetic traditions are also of major importance. Schirmunski, for example, has sketched the rough outlines of a possible developmental sequence for Turkic and Finno-Ugric verse. The sequence begins with simple repetition and proceeds toward a formal parallelism based on syntactically paired elements. This syntactical arrangement of verse develops further metrical relations by means of rhyme and alliteration until eventually syllable counting becomes 'a dominant metrical principle' and end-rhyme becomes 'obligatory'. At this point, both alliteration and parallelism diminish. Thus Schirmunski (1965:40–1) concludes that parallelism, as a stylistic device, is often suppressed 'under the outside influence of more developed metrical forms'.

Although this may appear to be a plausible outline of what has occurred in the Turkic and Finno-Ugric traditions, it would be unwarranted to regard this construction as the only possible course of development for other traditions. It seems to imply a primitiveness to parallelism that allows its survival only until it comes into contact with more advanced forms of poetry. The persistence, therefore, of parallelism either as the hallmark of certain folk traditions or as accepted literary style would seem to belie this assumption. Rhyme, for instance, which has often been considered as the phonemic equivalent of syntactic parallelism, does not occur universally in all parallel poetic traditions. Or it may persist in conjunction with parallel poetry as a mark of a distinct form of poetic diction. It is also evident that where set metrical forms or other strict canons come to define what constitutes genuine 'poetry', parallel verse, rather than disappearing, may be displaced and may assume the status of a semi-poetry: either an 'unmetrical poetry' or a 'parallel and/or rhymed prose'. This would seem to be the case in both Arabic[9] and in Chinese (Hightower 1966:2–41). So much remains to be investigated in this regard, however, that secure generalisations are still unlikely.

Another problem in studies of parallelism has concerned attempts to define the precise nature of and semantic criteria for word pairs in parallel verse. This concern began, in fact, with Lowth, who distinguished three sorts of pairs: 1) synonymous pairs, 2) antithetic pairs, and 3) synthetic or constructive pairs. As a result, many writers, in adducing evidence for the existence of parallelism, have been content merely to list examples of Lowth's typology. In some instances, this typology has led to disputes about whether a particular tradition of parallelism was indeed similar to that of Hebrew. Davis, for example, in his

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9   Newman, 'Parallelism in Amos', in Newman and Popper (1918–23:95–109).

early article on Chinese poetry, maintained that constructive parallelism was the 'most common species of parallelism in Chinese'. In contrast, Liu (1962:146–7) has argued that Chinese poetry is unlike Hebrew poetry because it is based primarily on antithesis rather than on synonymy.

Unfortunately, this broad level of typologising offers insufficient understanding of the complexity of semantic relations in even the simplest traditions of canonical parallelism. Perfect synonymy in language is an illusion. The choice of similar words in parallel lines is intended to have a 'stereophonic' effect. 'Parallelistic juxtaposition', as Boodberg (1954–55b:17) has illuminatingly argued, gives us 'the satisfaction of experiencing the build-up step-by-step, first viewing the panorama presented by the poet from one syntactical angle, then from another, and fully savoring the stereoscopic after sensation or afterimage'. Thus an analysis that reduces lexical congruence to identity misrepresents the essential features of the language of this poetry. Similarly, as Hale (1971:481–2) has made clear, a tradition of parallelism based primarily on a principle of antonymy, such as *tjiliwiri* or 'upside-down Walbiri', used only in the context of Australian Aboriginal ritual, cannot be reduced exclusively to this single principle. Many of the fundamental oppositions in *tjiliwiri* turn out to be what Lowth would have called 'synthetic' pairs. In every tradition of parallelism, these synthetic pairs are what present the most interest for an analysis simply because they defy simplistic categorisation based on synonymy or antonymy. A further and perhaps more serious criticism of this typologising of word pairs is that this procedure generally assigns each pair to a specific category without examining the possibility of systematic connections among lexical elements in different paired relations.

The sobering conclusion to be drawn from a survey of issues and problems in the study of parallelism is that while many studies are suggestive and promising, much research adequate to deal with the richness of this verbal art remains to be done. In this connection, it is useful to consider some of the directions Jakobson has proposed for the study of parallelism.

Levels of complexity in traditions of parallelism

In *Fundamentals of Language* (Jakobson and Halle 1956), Jakobson called for an examination of parallelism in the context of his discussion of the metaphorical and metonymical poles of language: the interrelation of selection and combination or of similarity and contiguity. In this connection, he wrote:

> In verbal art the interaction of these two elements is especially pronounced. Rich material for the study of this relationship is to be found in verse patterns which require a compulsory parallelism

between adjacent lines, for example in Biblical poetry or in the West Finnic and, to some extent, the Russian oral traditions. This provides an objective criterion of what in the given speech community acts as a correspondence. (Jakobson and Halle 1956:77)

In the 'Poetry of grammar and grammar of poetry',[10] Jakobson (1968:600) repeated this statement: 'Parallelistic systems of verbal art give us a direct insight into the speakers' own conception of the grammatical equivalencies.' Once again, in his major article 'Grammatical parallelism and its Russian facet', Jakobson re-emphasised the importance of parallelism for an understanding of these linguistic equivalencies or correspondences:

> Such traditional types of canonical parallelism offer us an insight into the various forms of relationship among the different aspects of language and answer the pertinent question: what kindred grammatical or phonological categories may function as equivalent within the given pattern? We can infer that such categories share a common denominator in the linguistic code of the respective speech community. (Jakobson 1966:399)

Instead of a ready-made typology or a hasty assignment of word pairs to a limited set of formal categories, Jakobson has urged a decidedly more open exploration of the pairing of elements in corresponding sequences. The essential feature of this pairing—whether it is based on supposed synonymy, antonymy or 'synthetic' determinations—is that it involves simultaneously identification and differentiation. In this sense, parallelism is distinguished from repetition, which involves identification alone. In any parallel composition, the relation of parallelism to repetition must be considered carefully, but these two principles should not be confused. As Jakobson (1966:423) has phrased it: 'Any form of parallelism is an apportionment of invariants and variables. The stricter the distribution of the former, the greater the discernibility and effectiveness of the variations.'

On a comparative basis, there would appear to be a range of complexity in parallel traditions. One could almost construct a scale of these different traditions on the basis of the relation of parallelism to repetition or, as Jakobson has suggested, of variance to invariance. Selections from various traditions can be used to illustrate a possible range. Near one end of this scale, there is the parallelism of the Cuna of Panama. Dina and Joel Sherzer have written with great clarity on this precise issue in Cuna verbal art. By a careful textual examination of a hunting chant known as *bisep ikar* taken from Kramer (1970:51), they have been able to detail these relations. The following is the translation of the Cuna text accompanied by a simple notation that is intended to specify the repetitions and parallels (Sherzer and Sherzer 1972:190–2):

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10   Published in various versions between 1960 and 1968—for example, in *Lingua*, vol. 21 (1968), pp. 597–609.

The bisep plant, in the golden box, begins to be born	a b (c1 x1)
The bisep plant, in the golden box, is being born	a b (c1 x2)
The bisep plant, in the golden box, begins to move	a b (c2 x1)
The bisep plant, in the golden box, is moving	a b (c2 x2)
The bisep plant, in the golden box, begins to tremble	a b (c3 x1)
The bisep plant, in the golden box, is trembling	a b (c3 x2)
The bisep plant, in the golden box, begins to swing	a b (c4 x1)
The bisep plant, in the golden box, is swinging	a b (c4 x2)
The bisep plant, in the golden box, begins to rise and fall	a b (c5 x1)
The bisep plant, in the golden box, is rising and falling	a b (c5 x2)
The bisep plant, in the golden box, begins to sound	a b (c6 x1)
The bisep plant, in the golden box, is sounding	a b (c6 x2)
The bisep plant in the golden box, is making a noise	a b (c7 x2)

As the Sherzers indicate, this short text comprises: 1) 13 repetitions of the same two elements, 'a, b'; 2) the coupled repetition of seven parallel verb stems, '$c_1 \ldots c_7$'; and 3) six repetitions of syntactically parallel verbal suffixes, 'x_1, x_2'. (Further repetition not evident in the notation involves the recurrence of the same verb stem, *makke*, in parallel verbs c_2 through c_7.) For an understanding of Cuna conceptions of equivalence, it is particularly interesting to note that the seven parallel verbs equate semantic features of birth, movement and sound.[11] Also of interest is the fact that the text ends with a so-called 'orphan line' whose parallel, in this case, is clearly implied but left unstated. Among the Cuna, lengthy chants are a sign of verbal art and of a performer's ability. The steady succession of gradually changing semantic elements provides a means of extending these linguistic performances.

In the Tzotzil Maya oral traditions studied by Gossen (1974a), parallelism is the mark of ancient narratives and of a ritual language that the Chamula Maya refer to as the 'language for rendering holy'. This ritual language is used in songs, prayers and chants performed individually or collectively. Parallel verse is in couplet form and generally each line of a couplet comprises the same repeated verse frame, which involves the change of a single parallel term per line. An example of this most common form of parallelism is the following excerpt from a long curing chant (Gossen 1974a:211–12):

I seek you in this petition	a b c1
I seek you in this cure, my Lord	a b c2 x
For the payment lies at your feet	d e f1
For the payment lies before your hands…	d e f2

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11   The equation of these features is particularly relevant to the discussion of transition and percussion begun by Needham (1967:606–14).

A change of parallel terms usually occurs in an initial or final position within the verse frame but may, on occasion, occur at some intermediate location.[12] With one semantic change of parallel terms in each couplet, these Chamula chants can also become lengthy performances. From the point of view of the performer, there is an almost unremitting regularity to the composition of prayers and chants.

Parallel songs, on the other hand, are interesting in that, as Gossen points out, they are as 'redundant' as the music that accompanies them. Like certain set melodies, these short songs are repeated over and over again and can be used as 'fillers' at various rituals. Instead of being composed for the particular occasion, they are remembered and retained. When, however, one looks at the structure of 'The Song of the Jaguar' quoted by Gossen (1974a:221–22), its composition appears to be slightly more varied than most prayers (the notation is according to Tzotzil syntax):

Jaguar Animal of heaven,	a1 b1
Jaguar Animal of earth.	a1 b2
Patron of heaven,	a2 b1
Patron of earth.	a2 b2
Your legs are lame, Jaguar Animal,	c1 d1 a1
Your legs are long, Jaguar Animal.	C2 d1 a1
Your whiskers are spiny, Jaguar Animal,	C3 d2 a1
Your whiskers are long, Jaguar Animal.	C2 d2 a1
Get up, father,	e1 f1
Get up, mother.	e1 f2
Stand up, father,	e2 f1
Stand up, mother.	e2 f2
Rise up, father,	e3 f1
Rise up, mother.	e3 f2

This simple song comprises six parallel sets, four of which (a, b, d, f) are dyadic and two of which (c, e) are triadic. The recurrence of a^1 in successive couplets may be considered the only extended repetition in the song, although in fact all dyadic sets are repeated at least twice.

In his study *Ob-Ugric Metrics*, Austerlitz (1958:45 ff.) provides a complete typology of all permissible forms of parallel lines for his entire corpus of Ostyak and Vogul folk poetry. Shorter verbal lines and segments can also be parallel, but Austerlitz deals with these separately. Unlike Tzotzil couplet poetry, parallel lines in this tradition are not always contiguous, although they are hardly ever more than six lines apart. As in Tzotzil, parallel lines involving one parallel word are common. These occur most frequently initially or internally in a line

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12   See Field (1975) for a detailed dissension of these possibilities.

but rarely as a final element. Equally common, however, are parallel lines with two parallel terms. The most general pattern of occurrence of two parallel terms is conjointly in an internal position or disjointedly in initial and final positions. What is most interesting is Austerlitz's (1958:46) observation that 'generally there are no lines with more parallel words than two'. Viewed exclusively in terms of a scale of complexity of parallelism, Ostyak and Vogul poetry would seem to mark an advance on Tzotzil. Yet this poetry, too, sets an evident upper limit on its use of parallelism.

In the poetry of the Rotenese of eastern Indonesia studied by this author (see Bibliography, this volume), there is an even greater reliance on the use of parallelism. This usage is typical of the folk traditions of numerous peoples of Indonesia, in which parallelism is the defining feature of poetry. In the composition of Rotenese poetry, the overwhelmingly most common poetic form is the couplet, but the lines of couplets may often be interlaced rather than adjacent. The number of parallel terms per line varies from one to four. Three, however, is by far the most common number of parallel terms that can occur in a line. Since Rotenese is a relatively uninflected language and since inflection is further reduced in poetry, most parallel terms consist of semantic elements. The following provides a brief example of this poetry. For the sake of simplicity, the notation omits connectives that link alternating lines (Fox 1971:236):

All the great ones	a1 b
All you superior ones	a2 b
Do remember this	c (x1 d1)
Do bear this in mind	c (x2 d2)
Orphans are the froth of cooking palm syrup	e1 f1 g1
And widows are the heads of palm stalks	e2 f2 g2
Palm froth spills over twice	f1 g1 h1 j1
The spill you gather for them	j1 j1 k
And a palm stalk's head droops thrice	f2 g2 h2 i2
The drooping head you grasp for them	i2 j2 k
Leaving orphans still intact	e1 i m1
And leaving widows still in order	e2 i m2
Intact like a thick wood	m1 n1 o1
Intact for a long time	m1 p1 q1
And in order like a dense forest	m2 n2 o2
Ordered for an age.	m2 p2 q2

This poem is composed of 14 dyadic sets, 13 of which (a, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, m, n, o, p, q) are semantic pairs and one of which (x) is a verbal prefix. In addition to connectives, there are only four repeated forms (b, c, k, l). One couplet consists of a single set of parallel terms; another has four. Two couplets have two sets each while four couplets have three parallel sets each.

Certainly, some of the Chinese poetry or 'parallel prose' described by Hightower (1959) is more complex in its parallelism than Indonesian parallel poetry, especially since Chinese canons often require, in addition to semantic parallelism, a further tonal parallelism (see Jakobson 1969). The question to be asked, however, is whether the use of more than four parallel terms per line or four sets per couplet marks some kind of dividing line between oral and written literary composition.

Criteria for defining 'canonical parallelism'

The complexity of a system of parallelism relates directly to an understanding of its use in a tradition of canonical parallelism. Since parallelism is of common occurrence and since this occurrence need not involve a formal set of canons that affects the selection of parallel elements, it becomes necessary to specify what constitutes 'a tradition of canonical parallelism'.

According to Jakobson (1966:399), such a tradition is implied 'where certain similarities between successive verbal sequences are compulsory or enjoy a high preference'. Recurrent parallel patterning can, without a doubt, be found in the varied poetry of individuals who have no recourse to specific oral canons, but if one accepts the idea that canonical parallelism provides 'an objective criterion of what in a given speech community acts as a correspondence' (Jakobson and Halle 1956:77) then a very careful examination of the nature of this pairing is required.[13]

One of the most frequently encountered statements in the published literature on parallelism is the mention of prescribed word pairs. The knowledge of these is said to be essential to proper composition in a particular oral tradition. In describing the parallelism in Toda songs, for example, Emeneau provides a clear statement in this regard:

> The most striking feature of the structure of the songs is that each phrase or sentence can occur only in a parallel phrase or sentence, so that the song as a whole falls into couplets…A further peculiarity, almost a corollary of the first, is that the pairs of units used in making up the couplets are rigidly prescribed by convention. (Emeneau 1937:545)

Similarly, Gevirtz (1963) discusses these 'conventionally fixed pairs of words' in his study of Hebrew poetry. For the Hebrew poet, these fixed pairs formed

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13 From a generative point of view, Kiparsky (1974:240) has suggested that a difference between 'loose' parallelism and strict canonical parallelism can be its point of transformational derivation from some deep structure: 'The tighter the constraints on the abstract pattern, the stricter the parallelism tends to be, and the closer it holds to surface structure.'

the 'essentials of his craft' (Gevirtz 1963:11). Moreover, one of the major results of the discovery of the corpus of Ugaritic texts has been the recognition of a common poetic tradition:

> [P]airs of parallel terms occurring in both Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry number more than sixty. These form the foundations for the theory of a traditional poetic diction common to Syro-Palestinian literatures.
>
> Since Hebrew poetry contains many more than these sixty-odd pairs of fixed parallels and since extant Syro-Palestinian literature is limited, it follows that if a pair of words found in parallel relationship in the Bible can be shown to have been a fixed, or relatively fixed, pair for the Old Testament poets—even if the pair has not yet made its appearance in Ugaritic or any other 'Canaanite' literature—it must nevertheless represent an element of the same, or a similar, literary tradition. (Gevirtz 1963:8)

Although in his study of Ostyak and Vogul parallel poetry Austerlitz (1958:50-1) states that he is not concerned primarily with 'a semantic characterization' of parallel words, he nevertheless provides 'a list of the most common parallel words' from his central corpus. More intriguingly, Edmonson (1970:14) reports that the anonymous Franciscan dictionary prepared in 1787 on Quiche Maya is almost entirely composed of 'couplet entries'.

The simple listing of word pairs—however extensive these lists are—is insufficient to specify the conventions involved in the proper pairing of terms. Such lists, by focusing exclusively on individual word pairs, may actually disguise more complex interrelations that occur among elements that happen to pair. What is needed is a more comprehensive view of the semantics of a particular poetic tradition.

Research under way on Rotenese poetry is intended to provide one such view of the semantic resources and conventions of a tradition of canonical parallelism. Since this research requires the detailed analysis of a large corpus of poetry of a single speech community, present results reflect only the preliminary views of a continuing research project (see Fox 1975). To date, 25 lengthy chants that comprise approximately 5000 lines of verse have been translated (Fox 1972). These chants derive from the Rotenese dialect area of Termanu and Ba'a. An equally large number of recorded chants from this same area remain to be translated as well as a further sizeable corpus of texts from the dialect area of Thie. The research is, therefore, in its early stages. On the basis of the translated corpus, however, a dictionary for Rotenese poetry has been compiled that contains slightly more than 1000 word pairs (Fox 1972).[14] From this dictionary

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14   This dictionary has also been computerised to facilitate future analysis.

there emerges some idea of what is obligatory and what involves choice in the selection of word pairs. There appears to be, roughly speaking, three levels of word pairing.

Of the 1400 separate semantic elements recorded in the present dictionary, a significant number of elements are limited in their pairing to a single dyadic set, which has no links with any other set. The existence of such a large number of fixed, obligatory word pairs indicates that there is a great deal of specific information that must be mastered to attain a thorough competence in this art form. This would also support the frequently stated Rotenese contention that it is only as one grows old that true mastery of the language is possible. Without detailed knowledge—knowledge of the necessary and unique pairing of specific species of named trees, fish and insects, of particular cultural objects or, for example, of certain emotionally expressive verbs—an individual poet does not have this true mastery. With knowledge of only some of these sets, he can, however, begin to express himself. Since any mistake in these pairs is immediately detectable and—among Rotenese—quickly challenged, an aspiring poet must have a firm command of a good number of these unique pairs before he begins to compose. He can, however, grow in the further knowledge of these as his art improves.

Although word pairs or dyadic sets are essential to the composition of all Rotenese poetry, the significant feature of this poetic language is that many semantic elements may occur in more than one word pair or dyadic set. Any element may have a range of elements with which it forms a set and these elements, in turn, may pair with still other elements creating a network of interlinkages. Thus an element, A, may pair with elements B, C and D; B may pair as well with E and F; and C with G, H and so on to form a network: 'A…N'.

Another significant portion of the present dictionary consists of elements that have a range of linkages greater than one but rarely more than four. In other words, rather than forming unique dyadic sets, these semantic elements may pair with a few other elements to form limited semantic fields varying in size from networks of three elements to networks of perhaps 25 elements. With these pairings, the range of the poet's options is still constrained but the very fact that these options are available in the creation of the poetry is sufficient to dispel any illusion about the mechanical nature of composition (Jousse 1925).

The remaining third of the present dictionary forms a single large, complexly interrelated network. It is likely, as the dictionary expands, that this network will continue to be enlarged and joined by many of the smaller networks that are presently evident. The organisation of this large network has yet to be fully determined. It already includes virtually all elements that have a range of permissible pair linkages greater than four, but it also includes numerous elements that have a limited number of linkages. There are certain elements that

may pair with as many as 10 or more other elements to form acceptable sets. Many of these 'polysemic' elements form pairs with each other and there are some indications that these polysemic elements serve to organise elements with fewer linkages in a kind of semantic hierarchy (see Fox 1974:77–9; 1975:11–21).

From the point of view of the oral poet, speaking in pairs involves more than a routine process of combination. Certain of the pairs he uses are conventionally fixed, but the majority is based on a differing range of selection. In any learning process, knowledge of the more polysemic elements and of the range of their pairings would seem to be essential. Understanding some of the complexity of this oral composition is therefore one of the aims of the Rotenese study.[15]

Concluding remarks: Parallelism and the study of symbolic systems

Jakobson (1973:485) has noted that 'the linguistic study of poetry has a double door'. It leads to the study of the relations and functions of verbal signs as well as to the study of these same signs as vehicles of cultural expression. In this regard, the use of parallelism clearly indicates a marked form of speaking. In addition to its common formal aspects, it is impossible not to be struck by the recurrent use of parallelism for special, specific purposes: in scriptures, in the utterance of sacred words, in the preservation of ancient traditions, in ritual relations, in curing, shamans' journeys and in other communications with spirits. The study of parallelism leads immediately to the study of myth and ritual. Recent studies of myth and ritual, many of which also reflect the seminal influence of Jakobson, suggest that an understanding of the formal properties of parallelism can be of the utmost importance. The foremost question of this research concerns the relationship of the phenomenon of parallelism to the prevalent construction of systems of dual symbolic classification throughout the world (Needham 1973). Parallelism, however pervasive, does not constitute a dual symbolic classification. Such schemata are characterised by the analogical ordering of dyadic elements according to some extra-linguistic criterion of asymmetry. The study of pervasive parallelism can, however, provide some understanding of how linguistic phenomena are culturally transformed and elaborated.

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15   Another of the aims of this Rotenese study is to lay the groundwork for further comparisons. Elizabeth Traube of the Department of Anthropology at Harvard University has conducted linguistic fieldwork for more than two years among the Mambai-speaking peoples of East Timor. The Mambai possess a rich and varied oral literature, including an elaborate tradition of canonical parallelism, which should serve as material for comparison with Rotenese.