“...but it seems to me my fate is to tightrope-walk in inconceivable situations.”

Patrice Quammie-Wallen
FH6050 – Presentation of a theorist
Thursday 22 March, 2018
IN HIS 85TH YEAR...

• POLYGLOT
• PROFESSOR EMERITUS HARVARD UNIVERSITY
• PROFESSOR EMERITUS MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MIT)
• 25 HONORARY DEGREES
• NAZI PERSECUTION SURVIVOR
• SURVIVED BY 2 WIVES
• BRIDGED EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN LINGUISTIC STUDIES AND DEVELOPMENT
• BLENDED THE STUDIES OF LINGUISTICS AND LITERATURE
• NUMEROUS CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS
• CONVERT TO ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

• STRUCTURALISM
• FOLKLORE
• MYTHOLOGY
• ART
• POETRY – RUSSIAN AND CZECH
• PHONETICS & PHONOLOGY
• COMMUNICATION
• SEMIOTICS
• TRANSLATION
• PSYCHOLINGUISTICS
• LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
• APHASIA
• SOCIOLINGUISTICS
THE JOURNEY OF ROMAN JAKOBSON
1896
- Birth. Jewish.
- Industrialist dad. Chemist mom.
- Well-to-do.
- Fascinated by language.

1914
- Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages.
- Moscow University
- Nikolai Trubetzkoy
- World War 1

1915
- Moscow Linguistic Circle founding and President till 1920. “The elucidation of linguistic problems of both practical and poetic language as well as questions of folklore and ethnology.”
- Russian Formalism; science of literature
- Avant garde art and poetry.

1918
- Master’s degree
- Research Associate at Moscow University till 1920
- Execution of Imperial family

1917
- Russian Revolution March and October
- 1917-1922 Civil War
- 7-12 million people killed.

1920
- Professor of Orthoepy, Moscow Dramatic School
1920
• Arrived in Prague as a translator for the first Soviet Red Cross mission. Was viewed with suspicion in newly formed democratic Czechoslovakia
• Intellectual and artistic immersion

1922

1926
• Prague Linguistic Circle – Vilem Mathesius, Nikolai Trubetzkoy, Rene Wellek, Jan Mukarovsky
• Otto Jespersen, Emile Benveniste,

1928
• First International Congress of Linguistics, Hague

1930
• PhD Charles University

1933
• Professor, Masaryk University, Brno – 1939
• Russian Philology and Old Czech Literature
• Married Svatava Pirkova

1937
• Czech citizenship

1938
• Death of Nikolai Trubetzkoy

1939
• Flees Brno upon Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia
1939

- Arrives in Denmark April 21 after hiding in Prague
- Visiting Professor
  University of Copenhagen
- Copenhagen Linguistic Circle; Louis Hjelmslev
- Leaves Denmark for Norway
1940

- Visiting Professor at University of Oslo, Norway
1940
• Fled north to Sweden
• Prison guard
• Coffin

1941
• Published 'Child Language, Aphasia, and the Phonological Universals'. Investigated parallels between child language acquisition and its loss by brain damaged patients.
A linguist deaf to the poetic functions of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistics are equally flagrant anachronisms.

Roman Jakobson
HIS CONTRIBUTIONS

Roman Jakobson nous a fait un cadeau merveilleux: il a donné la linguistique aux artistes.

(Roman Jakobson has given us a marvellous gift; he gave linguistics to artists.)

Roland Barthes 1915-1980
JAKOBSON’S POETICS- Contributors

• Russian Formalism “sharply emphasizes **the difference between literature and life, it rejects the usual biographical, psychological, and sociological explanations for literature.** It develops highly ingenious methods for analyzing works of literature and for tracing the history of literature in its own terms.” Art was not mysterious or a social servant.

• Formalism distinguished between fabula (story) and sujet (plot).

• Jakobson developed the description of the speech event (1960)

• Saussure’s Structuralism: SIGNIFIER & SIGNIFIED=SIGN
JAKOBSON’S POETICS
JAKOBSON’S MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

Jakobson's Model of Communicative Functions (1960)
## Roman Jakobson’s Semiotic Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Component</th>
<th>Semiotic Function</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sender</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishes speaker’s emotional state</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receiver</td>
<td>Conative</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishes sender’s expectations of the receiver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Poetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of language for its own pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Referential</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishes communication context or dominant message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel</td>
<td>Phatic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keeps communication participants “on track”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Metalingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishes agreed meaning for words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since Jakobson was especially interested in what distinguished poetry from other discursive forms, he argued that the "focus on the message for its own sake" characterizes poetry. For Jakobson, the degree to which any of the constituent factors of a speech event were emphasized produces different forms of discourse.

Influenced stylistics and ethnography and succeeded by student Michael Silverstein who developed a semiotics of culture. “Jakobson’s entire work was a quest for semiotics.”

Umberto Eco
PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY

• PRAGUE LINGUISTIC CIRCLE  The Prague school worked to discover how sounds in a language were related. “Taken together, the propositions, theses, and other collaborative works (see Toman, 1995: 161 for a listing) stressed the theoretical separation of phonology from phonetics, the decomposition of sounds into oppositions among features [distinctive features], and the importance of synchronic oppositions for diachronic study. Phonemes were no longer viewed as unanalyzable entities but rather as sets of features, which constituted the real structure of the language.” Oxford Research Encyclopaedia

• This paradigmatic work in Phonology bled into the application of structuralism in other areas.

• American scholar Dell Hymes cites his 1962 paper, "The Ethnography of Speaking, as "the formal introduction of Prague functionalism to American linguistic anthropology".

• Jakobson’s seminal paper (1941) was “an attempt to identify universal dimensions to phonological analysis and to show that these un-fold at a fixed order in language development and break down at a reverse order in aphasia (the regression hypothesis).” Oxford Scholarship
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!
REFERENCES


MIT Institute Archives and Special Collections https://libraries.mit.edu/archives/research/collections/collections.mc/mc72.html Includes a listing of all Jakobson’s writings and publications.


