DE GRUYTER MOUTON
DOI 10.1515/css-2018-0003 —— Chinese Semiotic Studies 14(1): 41–56

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Roman Jakobson in Retrospect

Unvarnished remembrances of a stiff-necked student

Abstract: An *aperçu* of the early years (1961–1965) in the life of a working scholar with a lasting record of achievement that touches on many details in the fraught relations between Roman Jakobson and the author, one of his most outstanding students. The account of these peripeteia, framed in cultural as well as biographical terms, provides an unusual insight into the sociology of knowledge as it pertains to the development of linguistics and semiotics in the twentieth century.

Keywords: history of linguistics and semiotics; sociology of knowledge

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In the history of linguistics and semiotics, the name of Roman Jakobson (Роман Осипович Якобсон, 1896–1982) will forever be remembered for his numerous achievements as a European structuralist of the deeply Russian persuasion, whose doctrines came to change the course of intellectual history in Europe and America. After Moscow and a sojourn in Czechoslovakia and Scandinavia, he emigrated to New York in 1941, where he taught first at the École Libre des Hautes Études, then Columbia, and ultimately at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (ret. 1965). Having been an undergraduate at UCLA and taken courses from Jakobson's Harvard PhD student, the Slavic linguist Dean Stoddard Worth (1927–2016), I was impelled to continue my studies at Harvard in 1961, where Jakobson became my *Doktorvater* (*The stress of derived substantives in contemporary standard Russian*. Ph.D. thesis. Harvard University, 1965; completed in 1964; unpublished but mined for articles).

I first met Jakobson in the summer of 1961 at the home in Berkeley, California, of my father's first cousin (R *dvoiurodnyi brat*), Yakov Malkiel (Яков Львович Малкиель, 1914–1998), Professor of Romance Philology at UC Berkeley. When Malkiel learned of my being admitted to Harvard starting in the fall, and knowing that Jakobson and his then consort (later, third [NB!] wife), Krystyna Pomorska, were both Fellows at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University nearby, he invited me to come up from Los Angeles to be introduced to them, which I did. This meeting served me well socially, when I reintroduced myself to Jakobson upon taking up my studies at Harvard. Apropos, the joke going around among Slavic graduate students at Harvard when I was there was that Jakobson "majored in comparative Slavic wives," his first wife having been a Russian Jew, his second Czech, and his third Polish!

Before describing in detail my further contacts with Jakobson – and especially my disagreements on both scholarly and personal fronts – it might be of historical interest to limn in some of my own biographical data, since there are points of Russian cultural intersection between Jakobson and me that predate my period as his student at Harvard. These pertain mostly to my father's family. Note should be made proleptically – for reasons that will become apparent – that Jakobson, while born a Jew, was a convert to Russian Orthodoxy, as was my great-uncle, Viktor Zhirmunsky (Виктор Максимович Жирмунский, 1891–1971; more about him below).

My father, Constantine Shapiro (Константин Исаакович Шапиро, 1896–1992), was born in Saratov (Russia) on December 31, 1896 (the same year as Jakobson, who was born in Moscow), a descendant through his father of Reb Chaim (Rabbi Hayyim Ben Isaac) of Volozhin (also known as the Volozhiner Rebbe), who was the leading disciple of the Vilna Gaon and whose yeshiva in Volozhin (Belorussia) became the prototype of the great non-Hasidic Talmudic academies in Eastern Europe.

My paternal grandfather, Isaak Sergeevich (originally Hatskelevich) Shapiro was the head (R *direktor*) of the Saratov branch of the Siberian Bank of Commerce (*Sibirskii kommercheskii bank*), and was born in a shtetl, Radoshkovichi, in the Vilna Prefecture (*Vilenskaiia guberniia*) in what was then commonly referred to as Lithuania but was actually Belorussia. He was a self-made man who started in rather humble circumstances but graduated from the University of Königsberg (Germany) and rose eventually to become one of only two Jewish bank presidents in pre-Revolutionary Russia, attaining the rank of Merchant of the First Guild (*Kupets pervoi gil'dii*) – as did Jakobson's father, a chemical engineer – which allowed him to reside outside the Pale of Settlement (R *cherta osedlosti*). He was also awarded the title of Hereditary Honorary Citizen (*Potomstvennyi Pochëtnyi Grazhdanin*) by the czarist government, which (among other privileges) exempted him and all his heirs from corporal punishment.

My paternal grandmother, Ekaterina Yakovlevna Shapiro (née Malkiel'), was the daughter of the man who was instrumental in financing and building the Moscow–St. Petersburg Railroad; her forebears were from another shtetl in Belorussia, Drissa (now known as Verkhnedvinsk, Belarus), then located in the Vitebsk Prefecture (*Vitebskaiia guberniia*). The word "Drissa" was often used by my father as a kind of contemptuous designation for disorder or impropriety, especially in matters of dress – an apparent echo of his mother's characterization of that town's mores, pointedly by comparison to Moscow or St. Petersburg. Papa's mother was actually my paternal grandfather's second wife; his first wife died in childbirth, a death which affected him for the rest of his life and colored his (reportedly saturnine) personality.

My father had two brothers, one older – Boris – and one younger – Lev – and a younger sister, Magda. Boris got a B.A. from Oxford, a medical degree from Moscow University, and became a cardiologist in Johannesburg (South Africa), where he died a lifelong bachelor in the 1970s. Lev, the youngest son, committed suicide in his twenties over an unhappy love affair. These three Slavic names of the boys were on an approved list of names for Jewish children (not all were): the Russian authorities compiled it for use by the rabbinate in registering Jewish births (a birth certificate [Russian *metrika*] in pre-Revolutionary Russia was issued by the religious, not civil, authorities). Magda moved to Paris with her parents after the Revolution and married an influential Russian Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Lossky (Vladimir Nikolaevich Losskii), himself the son of an eminent Russian philosopher, Nikolai Onufrievich Losskii. (I knew the father when I was a young man in Los Angeles; he had moved there with another son, Andrew, who became a professor of history at UCLA.) When Magda married Vladimir Lossky she also converted to Russian Orthodoxy, which caused my father essentially to shun her as an apostate. In fact, he never saw her again after the brief time they were together with their parents in Paris in 1926. Typical of Papa's attitude toward Magda was his sole reaction when my sister-in-law (my brother Isaac's wife) called him at 4 AM to inform him of Magda's death in Paris: He complained that she had woken him up!

Through his mother, my father was related to the Malkiel and Zhirmunsky families, several of whose members became prominent scholars. His first cousin (and my *dvoiurodnyi diadia* in Russian, hence the English "Uncle"), Viktor Maksimovich Zhirmunskii, one of the founders of the Russian Formalist movement and later a leading philologist in the USSR and member of the Academy of Sciences, was the son of my paternal grandmother's sister, Alexandra. Another first cousin, Yakov Malkiel, the Romance philologist and long-time professor at UC Berkeley, was the son of her brother, Lev. My only meeting with Viktor Zhirmunsky – Diadia Vitia – was in the summer of 1965, in the sanitarium (*dom otdykha*) for Academicians in Uzkoe outside Moscow, where he was vacationing; we corresponded until his death in 1971. Malkiel – Diadia Yasha – I knew much better; we saw each other over the years in Berkeley and Los Angeles. Finally (according to Malkiel's obituary for Zhirmunsky in his journal, *Romance Philology* – although I never heard of this relation from my father or anyone else), the Malkiels were related to Yury Tynianov (Юрий Николаевич Тынянов, 1894–1943), the essayist, novelist, screenwriter, and one of the leading theorists of Russian Formalism, with whom Jakobson co-wrote a famous 1928 article. Tynianov's popular novella, *Lieutenant Kizhe* (*Podporuchik Kizhe*), was turned into a Soviet film, whose score was Prokofiev's first such orchestral composition; it is still regularly performed under the title "Lieutenant Kijé – Symphonic Suite, Op. 60."

Apropos of my father's surname, he told me that at one point there were too many persons named Shapiro in the Vilna Prefecture, so some of them changed their names to Vilenkin (< *vilenka* 'female resident of Vilna/Vilna Prefecture'; Jewish surnames are commonly derived from feminine nouns in Slavic and from their Yiddishized versions). The most common etymology of Shapiro (and its variants, e.g. Shapira, Spiro, Sapir, etc.) derives it from the medieval German city of Speyer, which once had a thriving Jewish community. However, my father, who had an enduring interest in the Cordovan caliphate, espoused (only half-facetiously) his own etymology, which derives the name from the Semitic root, specifically as in Hasdai ibn Shaprut, the tenth-century Jewish court physician, diplomat, and patron of science who served the caliph at Córdoba (Spain). It is perhaps not well-known that the name Shapiro was arbitrarily assigned to some Jews – indeed, I have met such persons – with unpronounceable Polish and Rumanian surnames by immigration officers when they entered the United States at Ellis Island, Cohen and Levy being unsuitable for religious reasons.

The first fifteen years of his life were spent in his birthplace, Saratov, on the banks of the Volga. In 1911, the family moved to Moscow, where my paternal grandfather took over as the head of the Siberian Bank of Commerce, and Papa entered the Medvednikov High School (*Gimnaziia imeni Ivana i Aleksandra Medvednikovykh*), where English was a compulsory subject. Upon graduating in 1914 with a gold medal, my father had to enter a lottery because of the *numerus clausus* – which in Russian was euphemistically called *protsentnaiia norma*, literally 'percentage norm' – like all other Jewish students wishing to be admitted to institutions of higher learning (the Jewish quota was 3% for those living in Moscow). He drew a ticket to Peter the Great Polytechnic Institute in St. Petersburg but only stayed there for one semester because (as he says in an Autobiographical Sketch for the second, expanded edition of his *Selected*

Writings) “the ruling pen was not to my liking, and I preferred the cello bow.” He finished out the year at the St. Petersburg Commercial Institute before transferring to the Law Faculty of Moscow University, where he stayed for the next three years.

Papa’s talents as a student were recognized by his professors, who extended an official invitation that would have allowed him to remain after graduation to prepare himself for an advanced degree and an eventual academic career in law (in those days one did not apply to graduate school in Russia but was invited by the faculty to continue one’s studies; the Russian phrase is *byt' ostavlennym pri kafedre*, literally ‘be kept on in the department/faculty’), but the 1917 Revolution interfered, and Papa had to abandon his studies in the beginning of his fourth year of law school after the fall of the Provisional Government. He had done some service in the cavalry while a student and joined the (White) Army as a volunteer (*vol'noopredeliaiushchiisia*) with the rank of *feierverker* ‘artilleryman,’ roughly equivalent to a non-commissioned officer in the czarist army. (His fellow cadets composed a piece of rhyming doggerel about his prowess in calculating gunnery trajectories [he was always an excellent mathematician]: “*Feierverker nash Shapiro/Znaet vse zadachi mira*” – ‘Our artillery man Shapiro/Knows all the problems of the world.’) Without seeing action, my father left Moscow for Kiev in 1918 together with his older brother, Boris, a recent graduate of the Moscow University medical faculty; from Kiev the two escaped to Germany in 1919 by crossing the border on foot and hopping on a train with all their belongings, including – in my father’s case – the precious cello his father had bought him in Moscow for 10,000 gold rubles, a princely sum in those days. (Irony of ironies: my father went to his grave believing that this cello, which had been brokered by his teacher in Moscow, a certain Mr. Ferdinand Gordel', and which he had played on all over the world, was a genuine Guarneri del Gesú. Actually, on being independently appraised in Los Angeles after my father’s death, the instrument turned out to be nothing more than a well-made German counterfeit. I can attest personally, however, that it did sound like a fine Italian violoncello.)

As a teenager in Moscow, Papa gave himself over almost entirely to music, particularly chamber music, and even participated in an orchestral concert conducted by Rachmaninoff. As an undergraduate at Moscow University, he continued his cello playing and often went to concerts and the opera, where he heard the leading instrumentalists and singers of the day, including Josef Hoffman, Sobinoff, and Chaliapin; also to the ballet, where he saw Pavlova and Karsavina dance in their most famous roles; and to the Moscow Art Theatre, where he saw Stanislavsky and Kommisarzhevskaia. This gives some indication of the privileged life that his father’s wealth and social standing made possible before the Revolution. There were also trips abroad every summer, to Germany in particular, and a dacha in Estonia on the Gulf of Finland. (Papa frequently recalled bathing in the sea from a bathhouse on wheels that was towed into deep water by a pair of horses.) The family owned a multi-room, multi-story Moscow cooperative apartment in Trubnikovsky Mews (*Trubnikovskii pereulok*) and employed a full staff of servants, including resident governesses/tutors in three foreign languages (French, German, English), a coachman, and a cook. I went to have a look at the building in May 1987 soon after arriving with my wife Marianne to spend a month in Moscow on the ACLS – Academy of Sciences exchange and discovered that it had been taken over by the Soviet government after the Revolution and housed part of the very institute to which I was assigned, namely the Institute of Slavic and Balkan Studies (*Institut slavianovedeniia i balkanistiki*). Naturally, my advisor at the institute, the Indo-Europeanist Viacheslav Vsevolodovich Ivanov (son of the Soviet novelist, latterly professor at UCLA) found this mildly amusing, as did I.

On arriving in Germany from the Ukraine in 1919, Papa made his way to Freiburg im Breisgau and enrolled at that small town's university as a student of philosophy (he also audited courses in ancient Greek). The story of his first meeting with one of the twentieth century's most influential philosophers, Edmund Husserl, who became his teacher and lifelong inspiration, is of some human interest. He came to see Husserl in order to be admitted to the latter's seminar on phenomenology. They spoke in German, of course, in which my father had been fluent since childhood. Husserl asked him what he knew of his works, so Papa mentioned the *Logische Untersuchungen* [Logical Investigations], which he had read while still in Russia. Husserl proceeded to quiz him on certain key points of this two-volume work, on which Papa expounded with complete familiarity. Husserl thereupon not only admitted him to his seminar (which met at a local tavern called "Zum roten Storch" [The Red Stork]) but offered him money when he found out that my father was a Russian refugee with no means of support.

The years Papa spent at the University of Freiburg, 1919–1921, were intellectually very fruitful. Husserl's lectures attracted listeners from all faculties, not only because of his fame and his originality but because of his superlative German style. Husserl's assistant at that time was Martin Heidegger, whose lectures on the basic features of phenomenology Papa attended (there are some notes in my father's hand labeled "W.[inter] S.[emester], 1919–20, 'Grundzüge der Phenomänologie', Privatdozent Heidegger"); but he was not attracted to the future author of *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time), nor to the philosophy of the man who later joined the Nazi Party and became an apologist for the Nazis. Papa remembered him as someone who was evidently chafing under his status as a supernumerary, waiting in the wings for the chair holder to retire (Heidegger did in fact succeed Husserl, who was Jewish and the target of Nazi persecution in the 1930s, when the latter retired in 1928).

This paternal history was part of the intellectual baggage that I imbibed in the family and bore subcutaneously when I showed up at Harvard in the fall of 1961 as a first-year graduate student in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. To characterize those days and my intercourse with Jakobson fully, I need to start indirectly by citing a passage from a book I wrote in 2007, as follows:

> Why does Nabokov write phocine instead of seal-like? Knee-jerk predilection for the highfalutin Graeco-Roman avoidance of the geminately hinged Germanic? Parading his command of English, reaching sideways for recondite vocabulary like the wall-eyed Harvard professor who instructs the fair-haired grad student on how to get buzzed into his aerie on Mass Ave with his aporetic "Ring the bell, I open, and you penetrate." The Russian exiles who war with each other in their pre-revolutionary idiolects but know their adopted language better than the aborigines. (M. Shapiro 2007: 108)

I concocted the word "geminately" by importing the word "geminate" from the language of linguistics, where a consonant that is doubled or long (as in Italian or Finnish) is called by that name, and affixing the adverbial –*ly* to it. (I use "hinged" here to describe the form of compounds that are connected by a hyphen, as in "seal-like." I would agree now if someone were to criticize it as not the most felicitous coinage.)

The "wall-eyed Harvard professor" is a reference to Roman Jakobson, who suffered from that particular ophthalmic condition (the medical designation is exotropia or divergent strabismus) and was my teacher and dissertation advisor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Harvard during the years 1961–1964. Jakobson's large private library was located in the office that he occupied on an upper floor of a building on Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge, across the street from Harvard Yard. In order to get into the building, one had to be buzzed in by Jakobson (or his secretary). The ungrammatical English of Jakobson's instructions to the "fair-haired grad student" ("aporetic," from *aporia*, here meaning something like 'fractured discourse;' "penetrate" is a direct translation of the Russian verb *proniknut'*, which would be appropriate there to mean 'enter, come in') is something I once heard him say when I went to see him in order to borrow a book. Actually, we almost always spoke Russian to each other. Jakobson's English was heavily accented and quite idiosyncratic, although sometimes one wondered whether he wasn't mangling it on purpose, given his more-than-adequate command of the written idiom. (The wisecrack that everybody knew about Jakobson's practical linguistic abilities was that "he spoke Russian in thirty languages.” This was certainly true of his accent.) There’s no telling, of course, how much help he had in writing what appeared as the published versions of his scholarship in English. One of his Polish translators, Karol Magassy (a fellow graduate student in the Slavic Department and floor-mate in Conant Hall, a Harvard graduate dormitory, when we both lived there in 1961–1963), complained to me that Jakobson failed to credit him as the translator of an article into Polish.

The word “sideways” describes the effect Jakobson produced when he reached for a book to take down from a shelf in his office. Because of his wall-eyedness, it seemed as if he were looking at the target sideways instead of straight at it.

Apropos of “fair-haired”’ there was a time, early in my graduate career, when I was in fact very much in Jakobson’s good graces. He used to call on me in class to demonstrate to the other students what the real Muscovite norm sounded like, and during my Ph.D. oral exam in January 1963, he stopped all further questioning by the committee long before the prescribed two hours were up, remarking (I remember the exact words distinctly) “one does not need to drink the whole cask in order to decide when a wine is good.” Before that, early in 1962, when the first volume of his *Selected Writings* had just been published, at my request he inscribed my copy with a (pilfered) opening line from Pushkin’s “Stansy” (Stanzas, of 1826): *Dorogomu Mikhailu Konstantinovichu Shapiro v nadezhde slavy i dobra avtor* (To dear Mikhail Konstantinovich Shapiro in the hope of glory/fame and good/kindness[.] The author’).

Passing “generals” (qualifying exams) only a year and a half after starting graduate study was an unheard-of feat for a Harvard Ph.D. candidate in Slavic linguistics, who had to pass two separate examinations, a written and an oral, and be prepared to answer questions on the structure, history, and dialectology of three Slavic languages; Old Church Slavonic; and the history of a Slavic literature as a minor subject. But my early success was squandered when I fell out with Jakobson over my dissertation. Actually, I think that the precise beginning of my fall from favor dates to the spring of 1963, when in a class on poetic analysis I was brazen enough to correct Jakobson out loud when he misattributed a Russian poem that I happened to have just read that morning. Not only did the correction evidently rankle with Jakobson, but he refused to back down, insisting with some vehemence that I was wrong and he was right.)

I was a bit of a prodigy at Harvard, and my “feat” became quasi-legendary among Slavic graduate students of the 1960s. In large part, my success was due to the unusually high-caliber of the undergraduate education I had received at UCLA, where I made straight As in my major, Slavic Languages. I graduated with Honors and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. [It should have been “Highest

Honors," but the chairman of the Slavic Department, a certain Kenneth Harper, filed the wrong form, which was only discovered after the diplomas had been distributed and the error could not be undone. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*] Thus, when I arrived at Harvard in the fall of 1961, I was far ahead of my peers and did not need the three or four years beyond the B.A. that it normally took to prepare for generals. I even wrote a Master's thesis in my first year, which was later published as my first book, *Russian Phonetic Variants and Phonostylistics* (Shapiro 1968), and is still routinely cited.

Jakobson wanted me to write about accentuation in the Russian epic poem (*bylina*), and that is what I started my research on in the early winter of 1963. (Jakobson was very much in the "Herr Professor" mode when it came to dissertation advisees, namely: they were expected to choose only topics that he assigned them.) Meanwhile, he left town on sabbatical, and since he was incommunicado, I had to fend for myself. After much labor I discovered that the migration of textual variants among different dialect areas made the topic that Jakobson had assigned impossible to work up. When, in Jakobson's absence, I showed the raw data to his colleague, Horace G. Lunt (1918–2010), the only other senior linguist in the department, Lunt agreed with me that the topic should be abandoned. I then suggested working on "The stress of derived substantives in contemporary standard Russian," which Lunt approved (and which was the eventual title of my dissertation).

I disliked Harvard and was not happy in Cambridge, so when the opportunity to return to UCLA as a fill-in for faculty away on leave materialized for 1963–1964, I readily agreed to return there as a full-time Acting Instructor in Slavic Languages. This meant working on my dissertation away from any advisors and sending in excerpts by mail. Lunt substituted for Jakobson while the latter was away, and all seemed to be going swimmingly. But then Jakobson returned to Cambridge from his sabbatical and discovered that I had switched topics without his approval. This irritated him so much that he set about making things difficult for me – without, however, insisting that I return to my original topic.

He resumed his role as my advisor but countermanded what had already been approved by Lunt. Ultimately, I sent three drafts of my dissertation to Jakobson before he allowed me to come to Cambridge to defend it in May 1964. Even then the result was only a qualified success. Jakobson was still not fully satisfied and dictated changes (almost all were excisions) that I needed to make in order to get a pass and be awarded a degree. He finally approved the fourth draft in the summer of 1964 – but only after I had made my Canossan pilgrimage, bearing the latest version of the dissertation, to his establishment at the Salk

Institute in La Jolla, where he was a Visiting Scholar. (This whole business delayed the official awarding of my degree until March 1965.)

Instead of trying to bury the hatchet at this point, I imprudently took umbrage at this shabby treatment and retaliated by publishing as articles all those parts of my dissertation that had been excised from earlier drafts at Jakobson's behest. This ruined my relations with him. So that in 1969, when I published a scathing review in *Language* (Shapiro 1969) of a book by one of his most sycophantic former Harvard students (*nomen est odiosus*), Jakobson not only published the student's rebuttal in the *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, of which he was the founder and editor-in-chief, when the editor of *Language* refused, but personally telephoned and tried to convince the dean of my college at UCLA to turn me down for tenure when I came up in 1970. At first, Jakobson also refused to publish my counter-rebuttal in *IJSLP*. Fortunately, my colleague in the Slavic Department, Dean Worth, threatened to resign as Managing Editor if I were not given an opportunity to respond in print, and Jakobson backed down.

But the damage was irreparable. A measure of the vitriol Jakobson allowed himself is a diatribe he published against my analysis of a point of Russian phonetics which took issue with his own (*Journal of Linguistics* 2 [1966], 189–194). Here is what he said about my piece (1971b:730, fn. 2):

> В корне очибочна легковесная и не в меру развязная статья
> М. Шапиро с ее утверждением о переходе конечного
> *f* в *v* перед непосредственно следующим начальным согласным.
> 'Erroneous at its root and immeasurably impudent is the lightweight article of M. Shapiro with its contention of the change of final *f* to *v* before an immediately following initial consonant'.

What had aroused his ire in particular was my takedown of Jakobson's assertions on one small point of non-distinctive voicing in contemporary standard Russian, to wit:

> An intensive examination of the extant literature, including titles listed in Halle's bibliography, fails to corroborate the aberrancy imputed to {f}and {f,} by Jakobson and Halle. An explicit statement suspending the non-distinctive voicing rule in the case of these two morphonemes is not to be found in the work of investigators other than Jakobson and Halle. Quite the contrary, several authors cite specific examples of {f } and { f, } changing to {v} and {v, }, respectively, before voiced obstruents.

Here the reference to Halle is to his 1959 book, *The Sound Pattern of Russian*, where the author blindly repeats his teacher's error.

Jakobson was not a particularly acute observer when it came to his own Russian speech. On the phonetic point at issue, in fact, his most outstanding Harvard student, the Slavic linguist Henning Andersen, makes the following telling remark (1969:126, fn. 6):

> However, according to my own observation, in Roman Jakobson's pronunciation word final /f/ and /f'/ are indeed subject to assimilative voicing before word initial voiced obstruents.

Apropos, it is my distinct recollection that Andersen and I actually heard the pronunciation he refers to when we both audited a course on Russian folk poetry Jakobson gave at Harvard in the fall 1964 term.

Jakobson went so far as to imply scurrilously that my Russian was tainted by some kind of foreign accent (Yiddish?). This low point in our relations was overcome to some extent when we patched things up at a conference in Ann Arbor in 1978 and I visited him in Cambridge later that year. We shared a taxi, and during the ride Jakobson put a tritely Freudian spin on my behavior by remarking that it had been necessary for me to go through a parricidal phase in order to reconcile myself with my teacher.

Apropos of "the Russian exiles who war with each other in their pre-revolutionary idiolects," the reference is to Nabokov and Jakobson, of course. I'm not privy to what actually motivated the enmity between them, but there's no doubt that they were antagonistic to each other. All the graduate students at Harvard were told the story about how Jakobson had opposed Nabokov's appointment as professor of Russian literature in the Slavic Department in 1956 (Nabokov did teach at Cornell for ten years, 1948–1958.) The punch line is a famous remark that Jakobson was supposed to have made to a committee assessing Nabokov's qualifications: "Gentlemen, even if one allows that he is an important writer, are we next to invite an elephant to be Professor of Zoology?" Nabokov was himself not averse to engaging in disputes with his antagonists, witness the well-known public wrangle with Edmund Wilson over Nabokov's translation of *Eugene Onegin*.

To my mind, Jakobson – and perhaps Nabokov, too – are examples of one of only two ways in which refugee writers/scholars, having suffered persecution and privations after leaving their native country, can turn out in America. Both ways involve compensatory behavior. In the first case, the outcome is benign. Having been the victim before, the refugee is particularly alert to slights and bad treatment and, therefore, makes a special effort to be compassionate and generous in dealing with students and colleagues, tolerating scholarly disagreement with equanimity. In the second case, the outcome is malign. The former victim, having reached a position of power and prestige in his new surroundings, acts with malice and duplicity, brooking no dissent and, in fact, reacting to it retributively. Jakobson was the second sort of refugee scholar. For all his greatness as a linguist, as a person he typically rewarded sycophancy and punished dissent.

A psychological addendum. Despite the animosity engendered by all the comings-and-goings of the public disputes, I continued to credit Jakobson as my teacher and to cite his work with approval. Perhaps this was my way of demonstrating that – as with other scholars (*nomina sunt odiosa*) who had acted offensively toward me, for instance by habitually eliding any reference to my writings where these were germane – my own citation practice would be based strictly on scholarly propriety and remain unaffected by personalia. But Marianne regarded my frequent invocations of Jakobson as otiose and advised me to drop them. She was right, of course, and I promptly took her advice.

The Russians have a saying, “Мертвые сраму не имут,” literally ‘The dead take on no shame,’ which derives from the so-called Primary Chronicle and refers to words supposedly uttered by Prince Sviatoslav before sending his men into battle with the Byzantines in the tenth century. However, given Jakobson’s moments of less-than-honorable behavior as chronicled above, here is one prominent case where the paroemic is irrefragably beggared by real life.

To conclude, as anyone familiar with the publications listed in the Appendix below will acknowledge, this is also a case where a student has remained faithful to his teacher’s scholarly legacy despite their initial contretemps and Jakobson’s unseemly pronunciamentos, not to mention his near-criminal chicanery behind the scenes and abjectly libelous attack on me in print (1971a: 209).

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Appendix

Publications of Michael Shapiro in semeiotic neo-structuralism

a) Books/monographs (authored and/or edited volumes)

1. *Aspects of Russian morphology: A semiotic investigation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica, 1969. Pp. 62.
2. *Asymmetry: An inquiry into the linguistic structure of poetry*. North-Holland Linguistic Series, 26. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1976. Pp. xiv, 231.
3. *Hierarchy and the structure of tropes* [coauthor, Marianne Shapiro]. Studies in Semiotics, 8. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1976. Pp. v, 37.
4. *Structure and content: Essays in applied semiotics* [coauthor, Marianne Shapiro]. Monographs, Working Papers and Prepublications of the Toronto Semiotic Circle, 1979/No. 2. Toronto: Victoria University, 1979. Pp. 69.
5. *The sense of grammar: Language as semeiotic*. Advances in Semiotics.Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983. Pp. xiv, 236.
6. *Figuration in verbal art* [coauthor, Marianne Shapiro]. Princeton, New Jersey:Princeton University Press, 1988. Pp. xv, 286.
7. *The sense of change: Language as history*. Advances in Semiotics. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. Pp. xiv, 146.
8. Editor, *The Peirce seminar papers: An annual of semiotic analysis*, Vol. 1. Providence: Berg Publishers, 1993. Pp. 141.
9. Editor, *The Peirce seminar papers: An annual of semiotic analysis*, Vol. 2. Providence: Berghahn Books, 1994. Pp. 259.
10. Editor, *The Peirce seminar papers: Essays in semiotic analysis*, Vol. 3.New York: Peter Lang, 1998. Pp. viii, 123.
11. *The sense of form in literature and language* [coauthor, Marianne Shapiro]. Semaphores and Signs. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Pp. viii, 215.
12. Editor, *The Peirce seminar papers: Essays in semiotic analysis*, Vol. 4. New York: Berghahn Books, 1999. Pp. xii, 637.

13. Editor, *The Peirce seminar papers: Essays in semiotic analysis*, Vol. 5. New York: Berghahn Books, 2002. Pp. vi, 224.
14. *The sense of form in literature and language* [coauthor, Marianne Shapiro]. 2nd, expanded edn. Scotts Valley, Calif.: CreateSpace, 2009. Pp. xxi, 373.
15. *The speaking self: Language lore and English usage*. Scotts Valley, Calif.: CreateSpace, 2012. Pp. xix, 303.
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b) Chapters in books

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2. Markedness as a criterion of phonemicity, *Phonologica 1972*, ed. Wolfgang U. Dressler and František Mareš, 49–54. Munich: Fink, 1975.
3. On the coherence of derivational relations, *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Linguists*, ed. Wolfgang U. Dressler et al., 459–462. Innsbruck: Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, 1978.
4. The structure of meaning in semiotic perspective, *Papers from the Fourth International Conference on Historical Linguistics*, ed. Elizabeth C. Traugott et al., 53–59. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1980.
5. Peirce’s interpretant from the perspective of linguistic theory, *Proceedings of the C. S. Peirce Bicentennial International Congress* (Graduate Studies, Texas Tech University, 23), ed. Kenneth L. Ketner et al., 313–318. Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1981.
6. Semiosis and (poetic) value, *Axia: Davis Symposium on Literary Evaluation* (Stuttgarter Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 94), ed. Karl Menges and Daniel Rancour- Laferriere, 51–60. Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 1981.
7. Dois paralogismos da poética, *O discurso da poesia* [*The discourse of poetry*], 69–94. Coimbra: Livraria Almedian, 1982 [Portuguese translation of #c. 6].
8. Remarks on the nature of the autotelic sign, *Georgetown University Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics 1982*, ed. Heidi Byrnes, 101–111. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 982.
9. The evaluative component in a theory of poetic language, *Russian Poetics* (UCLA Slavic Studies, 4), ed. Thomas Eekman and Dean S. Worth, 353–369. Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1983.
10. The meaning of meter, *Russian Verse Theory* (UCLA Slavic Studies, 18), ed. Barry Scherrand Dean S. Worth, 331–349. Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1989.
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12. Drift as an organic outcome of type, *Historical linguistics 1989. Papers from the 9th International Conference on Historical Linguistics* (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory, 106), ed. Henk Aertsen and Robert J. Jeffers, 449–456. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1993.
13. History as theory: One linguist's view, *Peirce and contemporary thought: Philosophical inquiries*, ed. Kenneth L. Ketner, 304–311. New York: Fordham University Press, 1995.

14. A few remarks on Jakobson as a student of Peirce, *The Peirce seminar papers*, Vol. 3, 1998. 1–10.
15. Markedness, causation, and linguistic change: A semiotic perspective, *Actualization: Linguistic change in progress*, ed. Henning Andersen, 187–202. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2001.
16. Aspects of a neo-Peircean linguistics: Language history as linguistic theory, *The Peirce seminar papers*, Vol. 5, 2002. 108–125.
17. Sapir's concept of drift in semiotic perspective, *Edward Sapir: Critical assessments of leading linguists*, ed. E. F. K. Koerner, II, 107–119. London: Routledge, 2007 [rpt. of #c. 16].
18. Paradox: Theme and semiotic variations, *Semiotics 2014: The semiotics of paradox* (SSA Yearbook, 2), ed. Jamin Pelkey et al., 1–28. Ottawa: Legas, 2015.

c) Refereed journal articles

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2. Tenues and mediae in Japanese: A reinterpretation, *Papers in Japanese Linguistics* 2, 1973. 48–65.
3. Morphophonemics as semiotic, *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia* 15, 1974. 29–49.
4. Tenues and mediae in Japanese: A reinterpretation, *Lingua* 33, 1974. 101–114[revised version of #c.2].
5. Alternative feature ranking as a source of phonological change, *Scando-Slavica* 20, 1974. 117–128.
6. Sémiotique de la rime [The semiotics of rhyme], *Poétique* 20, 1974. 501–519.
7. Deux paralogismes de la poétique [Two paralogisms of poetics], *Poétique* 28, 1976.423–439.
8. Toward a global theory of style (A Peircean exposé), *Ars Semeiotica* 3, 1980. 141–147.
9. Russian conjugation: Theory and hermeneutic, *Language* 56, 1980. 67–93.
10. Poetry and language, 'considered as semeiotic,' *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 16 (1980), 97–117.
11. Signs, marks, and diacritics, *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, 31/32 (1985), 375–384.
12. Teleology, semeiosis, and linguistic change, *Diachronica* 2, 1985. 1–34.
13. The Russian system of stress, *Russian Linguistics* 10, 1986.183–204.
14. Style as figuration, *Stanford Literature Review* 3, 1986. 195–211.
15. Sapir's concept of drift in semiotic perspective, *Semiotica* 67, 1987. 159–171.
16. Dynamic interpretants and grammar, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 24, 1988. 123–130.
17. Presidential address: The boundary question, *The American Journal of Semiotics* 10, 1993. 5–26.
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20. Broad and flat *A* in marked words, *American Speech* 72, 1997. 437–439.
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d) Non-refereed journal articles

1. Observations on the Russian case system, *Linguistics* 69, 1971. 81–86.
2. Markedness and Russian stress, *Linguistics* 72, 1971. 61–77.

Bionote

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