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RESPONSE

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE DISCUSSION ON GRAMMAR OF POETRY

ROMAN JAKOBSON

The linguistic study of poetry is double in scope.

On the one hand, the science of language, which obviously should examine verbal signs in all their arrangements and functions, cannot rightfully neglect the *poetic function,* which together with the other verbal functions participates in the speech of every human being from earliest infancy and plays a crucial role in the structuring of discourse. This function entails an introverted attitude toward verbal signs in their union of the *signans* and the *signatum,* and it acquires a dominant position in poetic language. The latter calls for a most meticulous examination by the linguist, especially since verse seems to belong to the universal phenomena of human culture. Saint Augustine even judged that without experience in poetics one would hardly be able to fulfill the duties of a worthy grammarian. On the other hand, all research in the area of poetics presupposes an initiation to the scientific study of language, because poetry is a verbal art and therefore implies, first of all, a particular use of language.

At present linguists who venture to study poetic language run into a whole battery of objections from literary critics, some of whom stubbornly contest the right of linguistics to explore the problems of poetry. At most, they propose to assign to this science, in its relation to poetics, the status of an auxiliary discipline. All such restrictive and prohibitive procedures are based upon an outdated prejudice that either deprives linguistics of its primordial objective, i.e. the study of verbal form in relation to its functions, or allots to linguistics but one of the various tasks of language, the referential function.

Other biases, which in turn result from a misconception of contemporary linguistics and its vistas, lead the critics into serious blunders. Thus, the idea of linguistics as a discipline enclosed within the narrow limits of the sentence, which consequently makes the linguist incapable of examining the composition of poems, is contradicted by the progressing study of multinuclear utterances and by discourse analysis, one of the tasks which is now at the forefront of linguistic science.

At present the linguist is preoccupied with semantic problems at all levels of language, and when he seeks to describe what makes up a poem, then its meaning—in brief, the semantic aspect of the poem—appears precisely as an integral part of the whole, and we may ask why there still are critics who imagine that the semantic analysis of a poetic message involves a transgression of the linguistic approach. If the poem raises questions which go beyond its verbal texture, we enter—and the science of language provides us with a host of examples—into a broader

concentric circle, that of semiotics, which incorporates linguistics as its fundamental part.

Finally, the "universe of discourse," in the terms of Charles Sanders Peirce, i.e. the relation between discourse and the environment referred to and common to both addresser and addressee (see II, 536),[1] is an acute problem that concerns the poetic text, as well as all other varieties of verbal enunciation. This problem, which is inevitable for the comprehension of discourse, can hardly remain foreign and irrelevant for inquirers faithful to the motto: *linguistici nihil a me alienum puto*. In the sound linguistic tradition, even such components of discourse as single words have been treated in relation to things (according to the slogan *Wörter und Sachen*).

Poetics can be defined as the linguistic scrutiny of the poetic function within the context of verbal messages in general, and within poetry in particular. The tendency "to define a poetic wording as abnormal," although attributed to linguists by some critics, is actually nothing but an abnormal attitude, which as a matter of fact is a rare and incidental occurrence in the thousands of years that the science of language has existed and developed.

"Literariness," in other words, the transformation of a verbal act into a poetic work and the system of devices that bring about such a transformation, is the theme that the linguist develops in his analysis of poems. Contrary to the accusation leveled by literary criticism, such a method leads us toward a specification of the "literary acts" examined and hence opens the way toward generalizations which suggest themselves.

Although that poetics which interprets the work of a poet through the prism of language and which studies the dominant function in poetry represents, by definition, the starting point in the explication of poems, it is self-evident that their documentary value, be it psychological, psychoanalytical, or sociological, remains open to investigation—of course, by true experts in the named disciplines. Nevertheless, those specialists must take into account the fact that the dominant exerts its influence upon the other functions of the work and that all the other prisms are subordinated to that of the *poetic* texture of the *poem*. This italicized tautology retains all of its persuasive eloquence.

Poetry sets off the structural elements of all the linguistic levels, from the network of distinctive features to the arrangement of the entire text. The relation between the *signans* and the *signatum* (or in Saussure's translation of the traditional Stoic terms, *signifiant* and *signifié*) involves all of these levels and acquires a particular significance in verse, where the introverted nature of the poetic function reaches its apex. In Baudelairean terms, it is a complex and indivisible totality where everything becomes *significatif, réciproque, converse, correspondant* and where a perpetual interplay of sound and meaning establishes an analogy between the two facets, a relationship either paronomastic and anagrammatic, or figurative (occasionally onomatopoeic).

No open-minded student of poetry would deny the legitimacy and significance of monographic studies devoted to questions of metrics or strophics, alliterations or rhymes, or to questions of poets' vocabulary, whereas the varied problems of poets' grammatical means have remained for the most part nearly unnoticed. When finally there arose attempts to withstand this ingrained disregard, such efforts met with an encouraging comprehension on the side of scholars with a thorough sense for poetry and its investigation. Among those scholars there may have been differences in literary platforms, but a genuine insight into intrinsic problems of verbal art and of its linguistic roots prompted them to welcome our efforts to reveal the intimate ties between the structural problems of language and of literary creation. The general state of affairs was formulated well by the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who, I vividly recall, toward the middle of our century, manifested an eager interest in the newest attainments and outlooks of linguistic research: "Chez l'écrivain la pensée ne dirige pas le language du dehors: l'écrivain est lui-même comme un nouvel idiome qui se construit, s'invente des moyens d'expression et se diversifie selon son propre sens. Ce qu'on appelle poésie n'est peut-être que la partie de la littérature où cette autonomie s'affirme avec ostentation" (p. IV).

[1] *References are provided in the bibliography at the end of this article. They will be noted in abbreviated form, in parentheses, throughout Professor Jakobson's text.*—Ed.

Let us quote a few inspiring encouragements received in response to our attempts to link ever closer linguistics and poetics. Roland Barthes acclaims our accomplishment in "joining one of the most exacting sciences with the creative world" (p. 9). David Lodge, himself a novelist and theoretician of literature, shows a wide and promising way of applying to prose our devices worked out on poetry. Jurij Lotman defends the new inquiry into the artistic function of grammatical categories, which is to a certain degree equivalent to the interplay of geometric structures in the spatial kinds of art (p. 195). In his illuminating essay "Linguistics into Poetics," Ivor Armstrong Richards, as a master of language and poetry, accepts the conclusive necessity of revealing also those poetic constituents which the reader responds to without being conscious of them, and of promoting an "ability to read better, more discerningly, and justly" (p. 39ff). Notwithstanding theoretical divergences, Benvenuto Terracini, equally attentive to language and poetry, acknowledges the grammatical aspect of Baudelaire's sonnet *"Les Chats,"* one of the first attempts to disclose the grammar of poetry. Whereas such investigators—who combine a true mastery of linguistic and literary problems—have greeted the first steps to cross the bridge between poetry and grammar with lucid reflections, critics unfamiliar with the structural analysis of language endeavor to convince us that the "narrow, rigorous methods" developed by the science of language that the linguist attempts to introduce into poetics "could never catch the subtle, indefinable *je ne sais quoi* that poetry is supposed to be made of" (Riffaterre, "Describing Poetic Structures: Two Approaches to Baudelaire's 'Les Chats'," p. 213). But this *je ne sais quoi* remains equally elusive in the scientific study of language, or of society, of life, and even of the ultimate physical secrets of matter. It is quite useless to oppose pretentiously the *je ne sais quoi* to the insuperable approximations of science.

During the last decades my research in the realm of poetics has been mainly concentrated on a scrutiny of what that clear-sighted discoverer in world poetry and poetics, Gerard Manley Hopkins, has defined as "figures of grammar," an area within the problems of language and verbal art which has, until recently, remained virtually unexplored. Let's repeat that nobody would ascribe the intention of restricting poetics to metrics or the art of rhyming to those monographs which limit their study to problems of rhyme or meter. Yet some polemicists have put forward the gratuitous thesis that our studies devoted to the grammatical configuration of poems are bent on reducing the structure of a literary work to an overestimation of grammatical categories and that we attribute the sole suggestive power of poetry to correlations between morphological classes and to syntactic parallelisms or contrasts. The pleonastic statement of one of the most bellicose participants in the discussions indeed comes closer to the truth: "No grammatical analysis of a poem can give us more than the grammar of the poem" (Riffaterre, p. 213). However, the supposed corollary that he draws from this thesis—the "irrelevance of grammar" for poetry (Riffaterre, p. 206) —is obviously erroneous. Counter to the assurances of critics that poets don't care for grammatical categories, it was Baudelaire himself who resolutely denounced in advance this line of reasoning, which, strange as it may seem, was put forth most insistently with regard to his poems: "Grammar, barren grammar, itself becomes something akin to an evocative sorcery." A penetrating characterization of the parts of speech concludes the poet's *profession de foi* in his *Paradis artificiels:* "words revive anew, clothed in flesh and blood: the substantive in its substantial majesty, the adjective, that transparent garment clothing and coloring it like glaze, and the verb, the angel of motion who gives impetus to the sentence." The author of *Les Fleurs du mal* returns many times to the idea of the *evocative sorcery* exercised by language in general and by poetic language in particular: "There exists in the word, in the verb, something sacred which prohibits us from viewing it as a mere game of chance. To manipulate language with wisdom is to practice a kind of evocative sorcery."

The poet's deliberate veto of any game of chance puts an end to the puerile conjectures of critics who pretend that "the poem may contain certain structures which play no part in its function and effect as a literary work of art" (see Riffaterre, p. 202). Linguistic analysis, which necessarily takes into account the diversity of

verbal functions and consequently is adapted "to the specificity of poetic language" (*ibidem*), cannot fail to recognize the particular structures that characterize this language. Thus Baudelaire, for whom, in Gautier's appraisal, *les mots ont, en eux-mêmes et en dehors du sens qu'ils expriment* (i.e. beyond their lexical meaning) *une beauté et une valeur propres,* stands very close to the younger poet and theoretician of the last century, G.M. Hopkins, who succeeded in assigning a particular poetic significance to the "figure of grammar" which, according to his lecture notes of 1873-74 on poetry and verse, "may be framed to be heard for its own sake and interest, over and above its interest of meaning" (p. 289).

We can arrive at an adequate response to the question of the relative pertinence of the role of grammatical oppositions in the analyzed texts by observing consistently the distribution of the marked and unmarked opposites, their accumulation and avoidance, their textual extension and relative numbers in regard to different metric and strophic units, to the diverse types of rhymes, and finally to the total configuration of a given poem.

Contrary to our critic's judgment on the futility of the analysts' tendency to link the distribution of grammatical categories "to the most extrinsic aspects of the text, particularly to versification," it is by just such a confrontation that the explorer manages to escape from the danger of a blind, mechanical, and arbitrary recording of the grammatical oppositions involved and can grasp the hierarchy of their functions in the poetic work.

Some critics accuse me of a preconceived opinion that impels me to pay attention only to certain types of texts and to ignore the rest. However, my accounts and essays on the grammar of poetry, those published and those merely drafted, subject numerous poems, written primarily from the eighth to the twentieth century and in nearly twenty languages, to a detailed analysis. They include works of various schools and literary traditions and reveal a great diversity of styles and themes: religious, philosophical, meditative, martial, revolutionary, and erotic pieces. In this repertory of texts, songs alternate with recited verse and oral with written production. When dealing with poems in an alien language, I strove to proceed in their analysis together with specialists in the language and literature, or preferably with native experts.

The only restriction that I have allowed myself to place on the selection of texts regards their length: in his *Philosophy of Composition,* E.A. Poe, later supported by Baudelaire, indicates clearly the particular quality of short pieces, which allow us to retain at the end of the poem a strong impression of its beginning; this brevity consequently makes us particularly sensitive to the poem's unity and to its effect as a whole. In a letter of Feb. 18, 1860, Baudelaire affirms that "anything that exceeds the period of attention which a human can pay to the poetic form is no longer a poem." The simultaneous synthesis accomplished by the immediate memory of a short poem plainly determines its structural laws and distinguishes them from those which underlie the network of lengthy poems. Such poems, similar in some principles of their construction to long musical compositions with leitmotifs running through the work, offer a separate theme that I try to outline in examining diverse specimens of epic genre, for example the long poems of Camoens, Pope, Pushkin, and Majakovskij, as well as the Russian folk *byliny.* Any attempt to analyze fragments of such works without paying attention to the whole of the text is no less futile than a study of detached pieces of a vast fresco as if they were integral and independent paintings.

Franz Boas and Edward Sapir have revealed the stable and obligatory nature of grammatical meanings within a given state of language, as opposed to the lexical meaning of the words, which is considerably vaguer and much more subject to change. This stability is strikingly confirmed by the great resistance that grammatical structures manifest to the constraints which experimental poetry imposes on the verbal pattern; on the other hand, the lexicon and phraseology bend readily to the bold experiments of the innovator.

As Baudelaire underscores, *l'ordre entre les mots* bestows incontrovertible value on them (*valeur irréfutable*). The grammatical categories of words (or, in the limpid terminology of medieval scholars, *modi significandi essentiales et accidentales*), as

well as the syntactic functions of these classes and subclasses, form, so to speak, the skeletal and muscular systems of the language; consequently, the grammatical texture of poetic language constitutes a large part of its intrinsic value. As the mathematician René Thom has shown in his fundamental book of 1972, the science of language is advancing toward a topological interpretation of grammatical categories and their functions able to reveal the pertinent equivalences.

To the rash abuse which attributes to us the specious opinion "that any reiteration or contrast of a grammatical concept makes it a poetic device" (Riffaterre, p. 213), I must reply that in the distribution of grammatical classes and subclasses, all the accumulations and oppositions observable in a given poem—so manifestly distinct from everyday language and from journalistic, legal, or scientific prose—appreciably belong to the resources of poetic language. As soon as we confront the different phenomena of this type, we are invariably led to discover that they are related to each other, and the difference between them within the poem brings out a full scale of values.

The analysis of poems uncovers a striking relationship between the distribution of grammatical categories and the metrical and strophic correlations, and the critic, obliged to acknowledge an evident "linguistic actualization" of these categories, stumbles on an illusory dilemma: "Are linguistic and poetic actualizations coextensive?" (Riffaterre, p. 213). But if this organization of grammatical parallelisms and contrasts, a property characteristic of poetry, does not function as a poetic device, the linguist has the right to ask the question: for what purpose is this framework introduced, scrupulously maintained, and remarkably diversified by poets?

The import of the symmetrical arrangement of grammatical oppositions in the poem has been called into question: "but in what way does this symmetry contribute to our poetic pleasure?", exclaims one of the inveterate skeptics, Georges Mounin (p. 159). Baudelaire has, however, answered him in advance by underscoring, in agreement with Poe, on the one hand "the regularity and symmetry which are among the primordial needs of the human mind," and on the other the "slightly misshapen" curves which stand out against the background of this regularity: "the unexpected, the surprise, the wonder" (see *Fusées*) constitute in turn "an essential part" of the artistic effect or, in other terms, the "indispensable condiment of all beauty." Now for some seventy years our work in poetics has always made good use of this condiment under the label of "frustrated expectation" or "deceived anticipation."

Likewise Leo Bersani, another critic inclined to neglect "the principle of equivalence" in an "imaginative work which produces richly asymmetrical structures" (541), has received in advance Baudelaire's fitting reply: "You understand nothing (*Vous n'entendez rien*) concerning the architecture of words and the plasticity of language." In trying to point out in this poet's works what are, according to Théophile Gautier's commentary, "his distinctive architectonics, his individual formulas, his recognizable structure, his secrets of the trade, his craftsmanship," we find ourselves accused by the critic of secretly or even overtly cherishing "the structuralist dream," e.g. "the perenially appealing fantasy of total control," which could, he insinuates, "easily serve authoritarian political ambitions" (Bersani, 549). This antiscientific denunciation reminds us *mutatis mutandis* of that of a Prague informer who indicted structural linguistics for "serving only to prolong and justify the domination of the bourgeoisie" (cf. my quotations in *Selected Writings II,* 535).

Notwithstanding any such polemic reproaches, the framework of grammatical patterns, whether iterative or oppositional, is neither preconceived nor "aprioristic" (cf. Riffaterre, p. 213). Three fundamental principles serve to unify and to diversify the stanzas of short poems, but the hierarchy of these principles varies according to the poems, their style and genre, and the individuality of the poet or the poetic school. These three interrelations between stanzas are based—in a fashion similar to the three distributive types of rhymes—on succession (cf. *aa-bb* rhymes), alternation (cf. *ab-ab* rhymes), and enclosure (cf. *ab-ba* rhymes).

Despite the critics' incredulity regarding structural affinities between distant stanzas, one of the patent devices observed consists in a contraposition of striking

correspondences between the odd stanzas to the contrary correspondences which bind together the even stanzas. These similarities and contrasts tend to involve the various levels and aspects of language, from phonology to semantics and from morphological and syntactic parallels to lexical congruences.

Gautier's comment on Baudelaire's rhymes is not only valid for rhymes and for Baudelaire's poetic art in general, but also for any structuration of verses: "He loves the harmonious interlacing (*entrecroisement*) of rhymes that distances the echo of the note which was first struck and presents the ear with an unforseen sound *qui se complétera plus tard comme celui du premier vers.* " As Hopkins in turn emphasizes, proportion expresses itself not only in continuity, but also in the interval.

The critic who quibbles most and who is, we must admit, one of the most superficial, calls in question the strophically remote affinities: "Equivalences established on the basis of purely syntactic similarities would seem particularly dubious" (Riffaterre, p. 207). As an example he cites the parallel which, according to the two authors of the essay on *"Les Chats"*, Baudelaire established between the two lines that conclude the odd stanzas of the sonnet—its first quatrain and its final tercet. These are the only relative clauses in the entire poem; both are introduced by the pronoun *qui,* and in both cases the pronoun is linked to the object of the main clause and is followed by a plural verb.

First, this critic seems to forget not only the primordial role that verses attribute to grammatical, especially syntactic, parallelism in nearly the majority of the world's languages (see Fox, 1971 and 1977, and Greenstein, 1974), but also the striking fact which, in accordance with Hopkins' prediction made in his luminous undergraduate essays "On the Origin of Beauty" and "Poetic Diction," "will surprise anyone when first pointed out." It is "the important part played by parallelism of expression in our poetry." The poet realized that "the structure of poetry is that of continuous parallelism, ranging from the technical so-called parallelisms of Hebrew poetry and the antiphons of Church music up to the intricacy of Greek, or Italian, or English verse."

Second, the correspondence between the two odd stanzas is balanced, as we have indicated, by an equally syntactic parallelism which unites the two even stanzas.

Finally, the similarity of the two odd stanzas, far from being limited to a "purely syntactic similarity," supports and reinforces a double semantic contrast. On the spatial plane this contrast links the end of the penultimate line of the two odd stanzas: the *maison* which circumscribes the cats is transformed into a spacious desert, *fond des solitudes,* and at the close of the two adjacent lines of the same odd stanzas, two groups of parallel words oppose each other (*dans leur mûre saison - dans un rêve sans fin*), here on the temporal scale—one evoking the days which have been counted and the other, eternity. Restriction yields to expansion.

The same critic denies the features common to the external stanzas, I and IV, which contrast with those uniting the two internal stanzas, II and III. Nevertheless, the analysis of the sonnet *"Les Chats,"* obtained through the concerted efforts of two explorers, demonstrates a multifaceted difference between the external and internal stanzas with respect to the repertory of grammatical categories, the syntactic patterning, and the semantic impact of these stanzas. In particular, we noted a palpable difference between these two types of stanzas in the structure of the clauses endowed with a transitive verb. In the external stanzas, these clauses include a double subject, and the choice of the animate or the inanimate class coincides for the subject and direct object, whereas in the internal stanzas the subject and direct object belong to two opposite classes. Infinitives occur only in the internal stanzas and perform parallel functions. A wealth of adjectives (9 + 5 as opposed to 1 + 2), combined with the presence of two adverbial adjectives, the only ones in the sonnet, which also exercise parallel syntactic functions, distinguish the external from the internal stanzas.

The critic revolted above all against our observation on the salient parallelism between the last line of the first stanza and the first line of the last stanza: the second predicate of the sonnet and the next-to-last one are the only ones which include copulas and predicative adjectives, and in both cases an internal rhyme helps to

emphasize the adjective followed by the caesura (*Qui comme* EUX *sont fril*EUX and *Leurs* REINS *féconds sont p*LEINS). This critic's reprimand is one of the numerous illustrations of his ignorance of the science of language and poetry: "*pleins* cannot be severed [?] from *d'étincelles (magiques); pleins* is enclitic [??], which practically [?] cancels out [?] the rhyme." Now "enclitic" designates an atonic word leaning upon the previous word, which carries the stress; Riffaterre (207) confuses the term "enclitic" with "proclitic," which designates an atonic word leaning upon the following accented word. Yet the word *pleins* is neither enclitic nor proclitic, and although it belongs to the same breath group as the two words that follow it, with the phrasal stress on the last of them, nevertheless, the complex *sont pleins* forms within this group a speech measure of its own, with a stress on the second word *pleins.* The caesura separates these two measures and the syllable preceding the caesura obviously carries the metric stress. As a result, the internal rhyme, based upon an accentuation which is both metric and syntagmatic, can even be characterized as salient, the moreso in that it is supported by the strictly iambic rhythm of the entire hemistich (*Leurs reins/féconds/sont pleins*), while the anapest enhances the parallel rhyme (*Qui comme eux*[*sont frileux*). One notices, moreover, that Baudelaire separates the two subdivisions of a single breath group not only by the caesura but also at the limit of the lines (*l'étreinte// De l'irrésistible Dégoût; il rompit un morceau// Du rocher*).

What remains totally incomprehensible to the critic or, to use his own nomenclature, to "literary scholars of the humanist stripe" when they approach problems of parallelism, is the fact that the search for invariance, far from excluding variations, implies to the contrary their effectual presence. The intuition of the young Hopkins catches here the poetic essence of all parallelism: "In art we strive to realize not only unity, permanence of law, likeness, but also, with it, difference, variety, contrast: it is rhyme we like, not echo and not unison but harmony" ("The Origin of our Moral Ideas").

"Parallelisms at a distance" arouse the suspicion of polemicists who are inclined to believe that the correspondence between the beginning and the end of a poem "cannot possibly be perceived by the reader" (Riffaterre, p. 207), and yet poetic art comprises many compositions of the rondo type, which are based on a regular link between the end and the beginning of the piece. Far from being a *Markovian chain,* i.e. a series of occurrences whose probability depends on their immediate proximity, the text of a poem resolutely opposes the efforts of the critic to "proceed in a single direction" by "following exactly the normal reading process" and "to perceive the poem, as its linguistic shape dictates, along the sentence, starting at the beginning" without using "the end to comment on the start" (Riffaterre, p. 215). These attempts contradict Baudelaire's spontaneous inclination for the retrospective principle in poetic composition as taught by Edgar A. Poe, which corresponds to those devices known in the science of language by the names of regressive assimilation and regressive dissimilation. In fact, the linguistic configuration requires us to have recourse to the end of the sentence in order to insure its simultaneous synthesis which alone can make the perception and understanding of the whole possible. We may recall the necessity of an analogous attitude in regard to a musical text.

In a sonnet, for instance, the strongest cohesion often exists in the opposition of the odd to the even stanzas, and of the external to the internal ones. This can be explained in part by the fact that the relation of the pair of odd stanzas to the pair of even ones (or that between the pairs of external and internal stanzas) is symmetrical (seven lines against seven), while the pair of the two quatrains opposes eight lines to the six of the two tercets.

The fallacy of simplism manifested by our judges is naturally alien to the great nineteenth-century masters of the sonnet, in their creation and conception of this form, at once severe and fluid. Without trying to ascertain whether constructive devices and terms might seem premature or ephemeral, Hopkins at the age of twenty was bold enough to approach the most intricate problems, such as the *structure of the verse* and the *principle of parallelism* as the basis of all the *structural properties* of verbal art. In the "Platonic Dialogue" of this extraordinary student, one of the

participants asks the question, "What is structural unity?", and according to the answer that follows, "a sonnet is an instance." Hopkins envisages an investigation of the system of *parallelisms* that constitute a poem and the *subordination* which unites one of them to another.

Given the unequal number of lines in the four stanzas of the sonnet, one often notes a tendency to oppose the seventh and eighth lines, that is, the two central lines of the poem, to its initial and final six-line sequences by means of correspondences and contrasts. In Hopkins' terms, this symmetrical and clear-cut trichotomy in the arrangement of the stanzas can be defined as a "counterpoint," a widespread device in the composition of a poem. Although the analysis of *Les Chats*" leads us to note a strict correspondence between this tripartite division and the semantic profile of the poem, our opponent remains gratuitously opposed. However, a single example suffices to establish proof of an initial "sestet" that dismembers the second quatrain. It may be recalled that the conjunction *et* appears six times in the sonnet: it takes a middle position in five lines of the initial "sestet" with no occurrence in the second line from the beginning of the poem; conversely, in the final sestet the same conjunction opens the second line from the end of the poem, but finds no access to the other five lines. In all the first six lines the caesura separates two juxtaposed syntactic terms, whereas in the lines that follow, the caesura signals a relation of subordination, and particularly in the two lines of the "central distich" we observe a reversal of syntactic hierarchy between the members of the two lines, each endowed with three substantives, two nominal and one pronominal: $_7$*Érebe, coursiers* and *les;* $_8$*servage, fierté* and *ils.* The difference in syntactic constructions between the three sections of the sonnet diversifies the prosodic modulations of their lines and delineates the semantic triptych. The naive belief of the critic that the writer does not have at his disposal the play of intonation, naturally contradicts once again the rich and reliable linguistic experience.

Rhyme, which Hopkins rightfully values as the epitome of the system of parallelisms in poetry, implies an appreciable relation either of equivalence or of contrast between sound and meaning—lexical as well as grammatical. In rhyme, this system of agreement (*likeness tempered with difference*) becomes particularly noticeable. The problem of the varying degrees of grammatical equivalence between rhyming words stand out clearly in Baudelaire's poetry. Thus, in *"Les Chats"*.the rhymes of the first ten lines confront either a pair of substantives or adjectives of the same gender and number, or in these rhymes a substantive is contraposed to an adjective of the same number, yet in all ten lines the syntactic function of the two rhyming words always remains different. On the other hand, the two alternate rhymes at the end of the sonnet contrast with each other: one is grammatical in all respects (*étincelles magiques—prunelles mystiques*), while the other joins two homonyms which are divergent in their morphological and syntactic status (*sans fin—sable fin*). [Cf. an analogous contrast between the two alternate rhymes in the tercets of the sonnet placed at the beginning of the *Nouvelles Fleurs du mal* (1866): *se laisser charmer—apprendre à m'aimer,* and *les gouffres—Âme curieuse qui souffres.*] All the rhymes of another sonnet in the same cycle, "Le Rebelle," confront masculine with feminine and substantives with verbs; the grammatical contrast culminates in the final rhyme which unites the tercets: *aux durables appas—Je ne veux pas* (a substantive coupled with an accessory word).

A poet, and Baudelaire in particular, tends to make grammatical oppositions more effective by attaching the categorial opposites to the two conventional rhyming patterns. Although on several occasions this device has been called in question by critics, a simple glance at the distribution of rhymes in the sonnets of *Les Fleurs du mal* is sufficient to allow one to perceive the undeniable reality of this principle. Similarly, in *"Les Chats"* the eight lines with feminine rhymes terminate in plural forms, in contrast to the six lines with masculine rhymes, which all terminate in singular form. The critic, waging a campaign at all costs against the grammar of poetry, believes to have discovered the secret of these plural, feminine rhymes: "their *s*-endings make the rhyme 'richer' for the eye by increasing the number of its repeated components" (Riffaterre, p. 211). The reader is urged to admit that in adding the letter

s to the mute e, Baudelaire reinforces the individuality of the feminine rhymes which is required by the metrical convention.

However, it is not the pairing of the plural with the so-called feminine rhymes which is significant in *Les Fleurs du mal* but simply the emphasis on the opposition of single and plural number by means of the obligatory alternation of feminine and masculine rhymes without regard for which type of rhyme attracts one of these numbers. Thus the sonnet "*À une dame créole*," which according to Champfleury's testimony is chronologically close to "*Les Chats*" and appears separated from it by one single poem in the first edition of *Les Fleurs du mal*, concludes all masculine lines with plural forms and all feminine lines, except the rhyme of the final tercet, with singular forms. Moreover, the tercets of this sonnet, which form the semantic antithesis of its quatrains (*Au pays parfumé que le soleil caresse—Si vous alliez, Madame, au vrai pays de gloire*), are the only ones that rhyme a substantive with an adjective (*manoirs—noirs*), the feminine gender with the masculine (*retraites—poètes*); the latter plural (*poètes*), the sole example of masculine gender in the feminine rhymes of the sonnet, is the only terminal word in the fourteen lines of this poem without an /r/ adjacent to the accentuated vowel of the rhyme (caResse—*empourpRés*—*paResse* — *ignoRés* — enchanteResse — *maniéRés* — *chasseResse assuRés* — *gloiRe* — *LoiRe* —*retRaites*—*poètes*[!]—*noiRs*). The semantic relation between the next-to-last line, which opposes the *poètes* with their *mille sonnets* to the *noirs* of the fragrant land, is the real feat of the sonnet.—Let us also mention "*Le mort joyeux*", where all the feminine rhymes are linked to the singular and where the lines with masculine rhymes terminate in plural forms, with the exception of a single line that recalls the oxymoron in the title of the sonnet and itself forms an oxymoron at the beginning of the same tercet (III$_1$*O vers! . . . sans yeux,* $_2$*Voyez venir à vous un mort libre et joyeux*). In addition, this final adjective contrasts with the funereal vocabulary of all the rhyming words of the poem.

Our challengers accuse us of having been seduced in the analysis of rhymes by "rash analogies" and of having "brought under the one label" (Riffaterre, p. 211) of the plural *pluralia tantum* such as *ténèbres* and "emphatic plurals" such as *solitudes*. However, as soon as one rejects the mechanistic view which confines the plural to a strictly numerical meaning, one immediately observes the augmentative value of this category, which is patently *marked* in contradistinction to the singular, whether it be a matter of heightened number or of imposing size. This type of emphasis strikes us as soon as we contrast *solitudes* to *désert* or, following the critic's own suggestion, the "top of the ladder of expressivity," *ténèbres*, to the "bottom rung," *obscurité* (Riffaterre, p. 224). The general value peculiar to the plural is clearly maintained in all these specimens enhanced by Baudelaire's rhymes. The idea of a semantic distinction between compulsory and optional grammatical elements is simply a deeply rooted and widespread prejudice that should be put into question. "*Une expression mystérieuse de la jouissance de la multiplication du nombre*" captivates Baudelaire and on the spot, the the subsequent aphorism of his "*Fusées*," he replies in advance to our opponent: "Everything is number. Number is everything."

Critics are inclined to doubt whether an ordinary reader sensitive to verbal distinctions detects the science of language. Speakers employ a complex system of grammatical relations inherent to their language even though they are not capable of fully abstracting and defining them; this task remains a task in the field of linguistic analysis. Like listeners to music, the reader of a sonnet delights in its stanzas, yet even if he experiences and feels the concordances of the two quatrains or of the tercets, no reader without special training would be in a position to divine all the latent factors of this harmony, for example, the surprising rhythmic correspondence between the final lines (one feminine and one masculine) of the quatrains or between the final lines (one masculine and one feminine) of the tercets: I$_4$*Qui comme eux/ sont frileux// et comme eux/ sédentaires* = II$_4$*S'ils pouvaient/ au servage// incliner/ leur fierté* = ◡ ◡ — //◡ ◡ — /◡ ◡ — and on the other hand, III$_3$*Qui semblent/ s'endormir// dans un rêve sans fin* = IV$_3$*Étoilent/ vaguement// leurs prunelles/mystiques* = ◡ — ◡ / ◡ ◡ — //◡ ◡ — ◡ /◡ — .

The "literary scholar of humanist stripe" who refuses linguists the right to submit "*Les Chats*" to a structural analysis tries to replace this immanent method (for which, according to Hopkins, "the verses stand or fall by their simple selves") with a balance-sheet drawn from mass reactions to the stimulus. Who are these "average readers" tentatively disguised as "superreaders" or "archireaders" (according to the neologism constructed by using the model of our "archiphoneme") and recruited by the inquirer for his survey? They are chiefly, he answers, translators of the sonnet and "as many critics as I could find," as well as "students of mine and other souls whom fate has thrown my way" (Riffaterre, p. 215). The interval of twelve or thirteen decades between the present inquiry and the first readers of the newborn sonnet does not shake the blind faith of the poll-taker in the maximum precision of his enterprise. Nevertheless, Théophile Gautier, who finds himself strangely included in the number of average readers but who, it should be noted, expresses a profound opposition to the attempt to envisage the poem as readers' response (cf. Riffaterre, p. 213), claims that Baudelaire possesses "the gift of correspondence" and that "he knows how to discover by secret intuition relations which remain hidden to others, and hence how to bring together, by unforseen analogies that only the seer can grasp, the most distant objects and those apparently most opposed." Can we elevate the participants in the poll, who were chosen at random, to the dignity of "seers"? Or should we declare Baudelaire's gift, his "secret intuition of relations hidden to others" a fact, to use the critic's formulation "inaccessible to the normal reader" and therefore unable to "establish contact between poetry and reader" (Riffaterre, p. 213)? Or is it perhaps necessary to refuse Gautier entry into the poll-taker's "net," according to the expression used in the passage quoted?

Riffaterre (241ff.) affirms that a description of *Les Fleurs du mal* based on his method "should be an improvement." Here then are a few sketches of the "analysis" of our sonnet based upon the survey of the informants. Let us recall that, in the words of the apt summary we received from Émile Benveniste and quoted in our paper,

> *. . . between the 'ardent lovers'* (amoureux fervents) *and the 'austere scholars'* (savants austères), *'mature season'* (mûre saison) *functions as a mediating term: for it is in their mature age that they join together to be equally identified to the cat. For the fact that they remain 'ardent lovers' even in their 'mature season' already indicates that they are outside the realm of ordinary life, just as the 'austere scholars' are by profession: the initial setting of the sonnet is that of life outside the world (nevertheless, underground life is rejected), and this setting develops, transferred to the cats, from shivery seclusion toward the great solitudes where science and voluptuousness are an endless dream.*

The poll-taker's intransigent reprimand announces to us that "the scholar stricken in his scholarness, despoiled of his wisdom, the ruined scholar is the scholar in love" (Riffaterre, p. 217). When at this point "we get the mediocrity of *frileux* and *sédentaires*" (220) and the critic "feels disappointed and does not know whether one should laugh or become angry," the reader is taught that "*frileux* is fussy and oldmaidish" and that "scholars in the context and on the level of *amoureux* are in danger of losing their dignity: their austere mien no longer impresses us, now that we see them as chilly homebodies" (Riffaterre, 220ff.).

The poll-taker goes as far as to find "depreciatory or condescending connotations" in the subject *amoureux* at the beginning of the sonnet (221). He endeavors to ferret out "a touch of parody" in *l'orgueil de la maison* and is prone to compare the poet to "La Fontaine's fox [who cuts] his blandishments to the measure of the crow" (209). The evocation of Erebus in the crucial moment of the sonnet once again induces the interviewer, or his informants, to identify Baudelaire with "La Fontaine calling a gardener a priest of Flora and Pomona" (224). As Riffaterre's retort to our examination of these two central lines of the poem tries to persuade the reader, all we actually have in the poet's text "is that cats and darkness are closely associated," and the

critic's attempt to translate the distich into "common parlance" reads as follows: "They sure love the dark. Gee!—they could be the black horses of Hell, except that, etc." (Riffaterre, p. 225). Reading such denouncements one realizes how right was Théophile Gautier, co-opted into the team of informants (!), when in his defense of Baudelaire he warned us against "la répugnance des esprits diurnes et pratiques, pour qui les mystères de l'Erèbe n'ont aucun attrait." The platitudes of the *comics* which the present poll drew from the sonnet were condemned in advance by Gautier as *dessins d'une trivialité bourgeoise* which are foreign to and unacceptable for Baudelaire, who himself *n'est jamais commun.*

According to the program of the critic's questionnaire, "each point of the text that holds up the superreader is tentatively considered a component of the poetic structure." Now, it is necessary to admit that the "average readers" who fell into the hands of the poll-taker proved themselves mediocre judges, and one cannot help but agree with Baudelaire's indignant question in his letter of Feb. 18, 1860 to the critic Armand Fraisse:

> *Who is then the imbecile who deals so frivolously with the Sonnet and who does not see its Pythagorean beauty? It is by virtue of the constraining form that the idea springs forth more intensely. . . . There is the beauty of a well-worked metal or mineral. Have you noticed that a fragment of the sky perceived through an air-hole gives a more profound idea of infinity than a wide panorama seen from a mountain top?*

According to Baudelaire's notes, what the sonnet needs is a design, and it is the construction, the network, that proves to be the primary guarantee of the mysterious life predestined to a work of the mind.

In our joint essay on *"Les Chats"* Lévi-Strauss and I pointed out that the theme of oscillation between male and female underlies this sonnet. The epicene, which designates indifferently virile or female creatures, once again creates a divergence of opinion between those "superreaders" who refuse to admit the womanhood of the sonnet's phantoms on the one hand, and Théophile Gautier on the other, whose commentary to the poem (303ff.) calls to mind "tender, delicate, *feminine* [Gautier's italics] caresses." His references to the cats' femininity is surrounded by eloquent allusions to the sonnet's imagery, such as the favorite *attitude* of this *genius loci,* described by Gautier as *la pose allongée des sphinx,* the predilection for *le silence* and for *les ténèbres* pervious to the feline *prunelles sablées d'or* with their *pénétration magique* and to those *étincelles* which flash from their back.

The critics who consider the sonnet's cats as "toms" and to whom the idea of ambiguity seems to surpass the poet's imagery, stumble over Benveniste's note (see above) with his keen observation on the oxymoron *reins féconds* in which the noun alludes to the power of the male and the adjective to the gift of the female; the combination of words *puissant et doux* makes a pair with this final oxymoron. Riffaterre (238), who denies the androgynous nature of the sphinx as the alter ego of the cats in the sonnet and claims that the romantics have "virtually abandoned the Greek female-bosomed monster," forgets that the image *d'un Oedipe obsédé par d'innombrables Sphinx,* elicited by Baudelaire, attaches them firmly to the Greek myth and that, praising the *grand peintre* Ingres for his *oeuvres d'une profonde volupté,* the poet particularly admires the artist's famous picture of Oedipus explaining the enigma and centers upon the image of the Sphinx and upon the piercing gaze of the king fixing the splendid breasts of the monster. Following this tendency at any price to virilize the Sphinxes of the sonnet, another critic, Léon Cellier (p. 215) goes as far as to declare that their [the Sphinxes'] position evokes the image "of a man making love."

"L'Horloge," Baudelaire's prose poem, is summoned up by the critic to eradicate the "fallacious analogies" between *"Les Chats"* and femininity. In the first version, which appeared in 1857, this poem added to the twice alliterated initial sentence—*Les Chinois voient l'heure dans l'oeil des chats*—the words *moi aussi,* eliminated in the variant of 1861. The central third paragraph of the poem returned to the same pronoun

and began with the words—*Pour moi, quand je prends dans mes bras mon bon chat, mon cher chat, qui est à la fois l'honneur de sa race, l'orgueil de mon coeur*—and it is only the third version (1862) of the poem which finally substitutes the following eloquent text for this passage: *Pour moi, si je me penche vers la belle Féline, la si bien nommée, qui est à la fois l'honneur de son sexe, l'orgueil de mon coeur.* In these lines it is easy to recognize an echo of the sonnet where "the ardent lovers . . . *aiment les chats* . . . the pride of the house." The relation of substitution between "my good cat, my dear cat, the honor of its race" and the "lovely Feline, so appropriately named, the honor of her sex" exposes the affinity of the two images and at the same time concretizes the abrupt and revealing meditations of the poet on the "voluptuous pleasures which are even independent of sex . . . and of the animal genus."

The critic attributes to the author of *"L'Horloge"* the intention of distancing himself from his earlier sonnet and wants to assure us that in this prose poem "the mystic élan is negated, as it were, by the 'realistic,' prosaic style" (Riffaterre, p. 237). A fanciful example of this imaginary "negation" culminates this work: *Au fond de ses yeux adorables* (those of the *bon chat* in 1857 and the *belle Féline* in 1862) *je vois toujours l'heure distinctement, toujours la même, une heure vaste, solonnelle, grande comme l'espace;* in short, there appear the same spatiotemporal expansions as those demonstrated by the tercets of the sonnet.

The linguist attempts to catch sight of *the inscape* of poetry, *the underthought* of poems in agreement with the epilogue of this *madrigal emphatique,* as Baudelaire christens it: "And if some tiresome intruder should come to disturb me . . . if some Demon out of time, should come asking me: 'What are you looking at so carefully? What are you looking for in that creature's eyes? Do you see the hour of the day in them, idle and prodigal mortal?' I should answer without hesitating: 'Yes, I see the hour; it is Eternity!'"

My critical survey of the objections raised by our opponents has been concentrated on the discussion around Claude Lévi-Strauss' and my paper of 1962, "'Les Chats' de Charles Baudelaire," because this study was the first of my attempts printed in a Western language to examine the grammar of poetry on a concrete example, and the first published attempt to apply this task to Western poetry. It was, moreover, the first case of a joint, simultaneous treatment of such a topic by two explorers, each of different linguistic background and diverse technical training.

In reply to our essay Georges Mounin endowed the Acts of the Baudelairean Colloquium held in Nice, May 1967, with six pages of flagrant errors. In defiance of Lévi-Strauss' insistence in his preface to our united efforts to reveal the mutual complementarity of the problems treated, Mounin pretends with self-assurance to have discovered *"une coupure nette* at any moment when Jakobson yields his pen to Lévi-Strauss." As a matter of fact, almost each sentence of the paper was composed literally at the same time and at the same desk in mutual "cogitations," as Lévi-Strauss called them, and neither of us would be able to separate one's own contribution from the other's. It was actually Lévi-Strauss who first brought to my attention some impressive grammatical correlations underlying the sonnet, and I have preserved a number of his notes bringing to discussion his pointed findings on the poet's phonetic and grammatical equivalences and oppositions. On the other hand, my attention was particularly attracted by previously disregarded constituents of the poem's mythic plot.

With an equal easiness Georges Mounin contradicts the events when he declares that Jakobson operated with devices because "le mot structure n'était pas encore apparu dans le ciel des idées" (p. 160), whereas in fact both terms *priëmy* and *struktura* appear for the first time in one and the same place, the second paragraph of my earliest publication (see *"Novejshaja russkaja poèzija,"* written in 1919).

Georges Mounin's disdain for the facts forces him to deny the affinity of *r* and *l,* totally proved by their mutual substitution in children's language and in aphasia, as well as by the interdialectal and interlingual identification of the various phonetic shapes of the liquids in the native's perception. Likewise, the emotive difference

between the phonemes /r/ and /l/ as abrupt and smooth opposites is sufficiently established on and reconfirmed by the investigators of "sound symbolism."

All the eight nouns at the end of lines are feminine. The critic's recognition of this symmetry is accompanied by a rhetorical question: *"Mais pourquoi ne considérer qu'eux seuls?"* However, symmetrical compositional rules go much further in spite of the critic's silence. The final nouns are distributed symmetrically between the two seven-line long halves of the sonnet, four in each half. The six final adjectives are again symmetrically distributed: three in each half of the poem. Only nouns and adjectives are used for rhymes. The only rhyme bridging both halves of the poem, the fifth and eighth lines, couples two substantives. The other three rhymes of each half of the poem consist of one nominal rhyme, one adjectival rhyme, and one rhyme confronting a noun with an adjective. The hybrid rhymes, the second-to-last lines of each half of the poem, finish with a masculine adjective which rhymes with a feminine noun ($_6$*ténèbres,* $_7$*funèbres;* $_{11}$*sans fin,* $_{13}$*sable fin*). The purely nominal rhyme of each half couples the latter's second line with the third line. The two extreme rhymes of the sonnet, the initial and the final one, are the only rhymes of adjectival pairs; these rhymes open and close the poem ($_1$*austères,* $_{14}$*mystiques*).

One can but agree with the ironical retort which Mounin's miscomprehension of the ties between the composition of the poem, the classification of rhymes, and the selection of grammatical categories met in the precise "Allocution" by Georges Pompidou at the same Baudelairean Colloquium (p. 215).

I have quoted Mounin as a rather surprising example of a critic completely lacking a sense of verbal art and of the poetic significance of its linguistic medium. If our answer to the discussants of our *"Chats"* has been centered on Riffaterre's rejoinder, it is because his lengthy effort to dismantle the linguistic conception of poetics covers, sometimes in a touchingly simplifying manner, most of the arguments brought together by the other judges. The characteristic features, shared by the archijudge Riffaterre with the "average judges," have been pointed out by the respondents to Riffaterre's reasoning. Thus, Boon (p. 51) noticed that "many of his [Riffaterre's] criticisms come from certain mistaken suppositions about the authors' goals" in their essay on the feline sonnet. Christine Brooke-Rose (p. 4-5) wisely asks why one should privilege the "superreader": "The law of perceptibility taken to its logical conclusion would mean that no critic would be allowed to discover hitherto unnoticed features on the grounds that they had hitherto been unnoticed." A. Fongaro (p. 181ff.) underscores the arbitrariness of Riffaterre's own interpretative attitudes toward Baudelaire's text (cf. also Hardy, p. 93ff.). Wolff (p. 26-27) blames Riffaterre for a merely illusory objectivism: "the analytic apparatus of the fictitious archireader opens no way to a truly reliable treatment."

Far from any desire to minimize the endeavors of our opponents, I have aimed solely to pursue and defend a systematic inquiry into the poetic problems of grammar and the grammatical problems of poetry.

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