Jakobson and Sound Symbolism in Russian Poetry

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Roman Jakobson's work with sound symbolism remains authoritative in the study of iconicity within language. This article applies Jakobsonian criticism to the works of five Russian poets, whose poems have been identified by other scholars of linguistics as containing some level of linguistic iconicity. Phoneme- and word-level iconicity is explored by employing Jakobsonian analysis with the following works, resulting in an expanded examination of and discussion on the poetic texture evident in these poems.

1. Introduction

Roman Jakobson studied a vast array of subjects in a variety of languages during his long and illustrious career. However, one of the more intriguing has been the amalgamation of semiotics (i.e., signs and signification) within language and how that relates to literature, and in specific, to poetry. Jakobson sees these as all intrinsically linked; indeed, he views linguistics as the science of language (and of languages), and for that reason it is necessary to study it with relation to semiotics by means of comparing diverse systems of signs (*Selected Writings* Vol. VII 198). Yet poetics also fits into this framework perfectly, because "[p]oetics deals with problems of verbal structure…[and s]ince linguistics is the global science of verbal structure, poetics may be regarded as an integral part of linguistics" (*Language in Literature* 63). With regards to sound symbolism and its place in poetry, Jakobson justifies it thusly, "Poetry is not the only area where sound symbolism makes itself felt, but it is a province where the internal nexus between sound and meaning changes from latent into patent and manifests itself most palpably and intensely" (88). The following works by Velimir Khlebnikov, Juri Ivask, Samuil Marshak, Konstantin Simonov, and Aleksandr Pushkin all exhibit some degree of iconicity, whether it be at the phoneme/sound- or word-level, and have all been previously examined by prominent scholars (who are further identified and discussed in the body of this paper), for their unique linguistic composition. By applying Jakobson's poetic analysis and criticism to these works, one can begin to see the role that the phonetic texture plays in regards to iconicity in poetry. Therefore, it is hoped that by approaching each of the following poems in a manner that takes into account Jakobson's works and others' contributions on sound symbolism in poetry, new characteristics of these poems will be identified that are pertinent to both linguistics- and literature-oriented audiences.

2. Khlebnikov

Roman Jakobson's relationship with Velimir Khlebnikov and his poetry extended beyond just the analysis of his poems. Indeed, Jakobson enjoyed a personal correspondence with Khlebnikov in his youth under the

pen name Aljagrov, as "it was in 1914-15 that the seventeen-year-old R. Aljagrov showed his verbal experiments to a few men of the Russian literary and artistic avant-garde such as Velimir [Kh]lebnikov… and enjoyed their approval" (Jakobson, Vol. VII 357; *Verbal Art* vii). Aljagrov, like Khlebnikov, experimented with attempts at "supraconscious poetry [(заумная поэзия)] built of invented words" (*Selected Writings* Vol. VII 357). However, he agreed with Kručenyx, another avant-garde luminary, that "supraconscious language is a powerful constituent of verbal art, but like mustard it cannot be the sole item of a dish or of a diet" (357). While Khlebnikov also experimented with "заумная поэзия," Jakobson devotes attention beyond that to the many layers of his neologisms. Jakobson finds a notable example in Khlebnikov's poem **"Кузнечик" (**"Grasshopper"**)**[1] wherein the initial neologism, the gerund "крылышкуя", anagrammatically conceals different subjects integral to the subject of the poem:

> according to [Kh]lebnikov, the word *uškuj* (pirate ship, metonymically pirate) sits in the poem 'as if in the Trojan horse': *KRYLyŠKUJA* 'winging' *sKRYL uŠKUJA derevjannyj kon'* (the wooden horse concealed the pirate). The title hero *KUzNečIK*, in turn, is paronomastically associated with *ušKUjNIK* (pirate), and the dialectal designation of the grasshopper, *konëk* (little horse), must have supported [Kh]lebnikov's analogy with the Trojan horse (*Language in Literature* 252-3).

This analysis of Khlebnikov's poetry in an expository and discerning manner, perhaps especially to fill in for Khlebnikov, as "[t]he poet's metalanguage [lagged] far behind his poetic language," helps demonstrate Jakobson's interest in the use of language in literature (253).

Jakobson directly addresses the poem "Заклятие смехом" ("Incantation by laughter") in regards to its relationship between sound and meaning. As he says in his article *Новейшая Русская Поезия*, "Механическая ассоциация по смежности между звуком и значением тем быстрее осуществляется, чем привычней. " [2] (*Selected Writings* Vol. V 330). He continues, "[и]гра суффиксами издавна ведома поэзии, но лишь в новой поэзии, в частности у Хлебникова, становится осознанным, узаконенным приемом" [3] (330). Khlebnikov certainly plays with suffixes and other morphological entities in the playful poem "Заклятие смехом":

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[1] "Кузнечик"
Крылышкуя золотописьмом
Тончайших жил,
Кузнечик в кузов пуза уложил
Прибрежных много трав и вер.
«Пинь, пинь, пинь!» — тарарахнул зинзивер.
О, лебедиво!
О, озари! (Khlebnikov)

[2] "Mechanical association of the contiguity between sound and meaning materializes more quickly than usual. " (Author translation)

[3] "play with suffixes has long been part of the knowledge of poetry, but it is especially in new poetry, in part with Khlebnikov, that it is becoming a conscious, conventionalized device." (Author translation)

О, рассмейтесь, смехачи!

О, засмейтесь, смехачи!

Что смеются смехами, что смеянствуют смеяльно,

О, засмейтесь усмеяльно!

О, рассмешищ надсмеяльных - смех усмейных смехачей!

О, иссмейся рассмеяльно, смех надсмейных смеячей!

Смейево, смейево!

Усмей, осмей, смешики, смешики!

Смеюнчики, смеюнчики.

О, рассмейтесь, смехачи!

О, засмейтесь, смехачи![4]

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[4] "Conjuration by Laughter"
Oh, laugh forth,
laugh laughadors!
Oh, laugh on,
laugh laughadors!
You who laugh in laughs,
laugh-laugh, you who
laughorize so laughly.
Laugh forth, laugh laugh
belaughly!
Oh, of laughdom,
overlaughly, laugh of
laughish laughadors!
Oh, forth laugh downright
laughly, laugh of super-
laughadors!
Laughery! Laughery!
Belaugh, uplaugh, laughikins, laughikins.
Laughutelets, laughutelets!
Oh, laugh forth, laugh
laughadors!
Oh, laugh on, laugh
laughadors!
(Trans. by Alexander Kaun in Nilsson 143)

"Incantation by Laughter"
O you laughniks, laugh it out!
O you laughniks, laugh it forth!
You who laugh it up and down.
Laugh along so laughily.
Laugh it off belaughingly!
Laughters of the laughing laughniks, overlaugh the laughathons!
Laughiness of the laughish laughers, counterlaugh the Laughdon's laughs!
Laughio! Laughio!
Dislaugh, relaugh, laughlets, laughlets.
Laughulets, laughulets.

This poem includes a substantial number of neologisms, all based on the root "смех-", meaning "laughter." The "play with suffixes" that Jakobson mentions manifests itself most prominently with respect to the derived nouns "смехачи", "смешики", "смеюнчики " "смейево", as well as the adjectives "усмейных", "надсмейных" and the adverbs "усмеяльно", "смеяльно" and "рассмеяльно". The poem also simultaenously plays with prefixes, resulting in all completely new coinages, with the exception of "засмейтесь", "смех-", and the non-content words "что" and "о". However, precisely due to the fact that there are so many neologisms centered around the root "смех-", prominent attention is given to the sounds that compose the root. This results in an arguably increased amount of these phonemes in the textual fabric of the poem. Play with other prefixes and suffixes such as "рас-", "-шик", and "-ах", as well as the genitive plural adjectival ending of "-ых", all further bolster the feel of the soft sibilance and the other sounds that compose the root.

However, the question arises as to whether or not the prevalence of these sounds is significant. As Linda Waugh asserts in *Against Arbitrariness: Imitation and Motivation Revived, with Consequences for Textual Meaning*, "[word-symbolic associations] are actualized only if the sounds are appropriate to the meaning" (74). One could argue that the predominance of fricatives and affricates, as well as the velar "/h/" mirrors speech sounds, particularly with regards to laughter. Indeed, a nearly-universal way of expressing amusement is through sounds analogous to "haha" or "heehee". Nils Ake Nilsson, in a paper on "Заклятие смехом" from "Velimir Chlebnikov: A Stockholm Symposium," supports this claim:

> Of the consonants /s/ is for obvious reasons the most frequent. It is supported by other fricatives and affricates… Worth noting on the other hand is the fact that /r/—a phoneme which, usually combined with other consonants, plays an important expressive role in Russian poetry—occurs just a few times and never in a marked position. The palatalized /m/ and /j/ in the frequent stems ‘sm’ex’ and ‘smej’ contribute rather to a general impression of a soft "orchestration" (137).

Jakobson supports Nilsson's views, by reminding us that "[a]ny analysis of poetic sound texture must consistently take into account the phonological structure of the given language and, beside the overall code, the hierarchy of phonological distinctions in the given poetic convention as well" (Language in Literature 88-9). Nilsson's comparison of the role of "/r/" in Russian poetry as a whole to the deemphasis of the phoneme in this poem by Khlebnikov is underscored by Jakobson's point that context within the language and within the poetic tradition itself is indeed important. Furthermore, in *The Sound Shape of Language*, Jakobson and Waugh cite the "unambiguous tendency to feel that the back vowels are 'darker' and the front

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O you laughniks, laugh it out!
O you laughniks, laugh it forth!
(Trans. by Vladimir Markov in Nilsson 143-4)

vowels are 'lighter"' (this was supported partially through their findings that "diverse kinds of supporters" assigned darker colors to back vowels and light colors to front vowels when asked to associate colors with sounds) (192). The amount of front, arguably "light" vowels further contribute to a cheerful, playful mood (see footnote for a chart of vocalic place of articulation)[5]. Nilsson corroborates further:

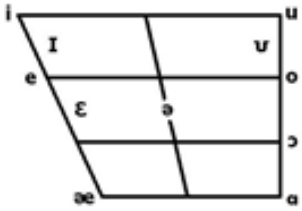
> The dominant vowel is, of course, /e/ --a count of just the stressed vowels will give 20 /e/ as against 6 /a/, 4 /i/ and 1 /u/. The first remarkable feature of the phonetic structure is thus the almost total dominance of front vowels, which creates an impression of homogeneity but also of lightness and openness (as a contrast to the absent “dark” and “closed” vowels) (137).

The consensus between Nilsson and Jakobson and Waugh in this circumstance helps support Jakobson regarding the universality of the light ~ dark binary, when he states "it should be remembered that such contrasts as light ~ dark…belong to the 'elementary structures required by perceptual differentiation'…and it is no wonder that they build constant (or near-constant) and universal linkages to the elementary features underlying the languages of the world" (*The Sound Shape of Language* 191). Therefore, one can argue that the emphasis on pleasant consonantal sounds, in addition to the prevalence of front, "light" vowels, support the amusing mood of Khlebnikov's poem.

3. Ivask

Although Khlebnikov's use of "light" front vowels to evoke a playful mood may or may not have been intentional (see the "Discussion" section regarding intent), Juri Ivask almost certainly purposefully utilizes vocalic variation to elicit an effect in his poem "Гласные", appropriately entitled "Vowels":

Пели, пели, пели,
Пили, пили, пили,
Поле, поле, поле,



[5] Vocalic place of articulation—the left of the chart represents the front of the mouth. (Kosur)

Пули, пули, пули,
Пали, пали, пали. (Ivask)

Jakobson and Waugh devote a section to the French phonetician Grammont in *The Sound Shape of Language*, particularly with regards to his concern for the "evocative value of vowels" (184). More specifically, they state that the

> peculiar 'onomatopoeic apophony'…, reduplication with a vocalic change in the repeated constituents, attracted [his] attention…[and h]e described for example the 'clear vowels' as particularly able – in contradistinction to the heaviness of the grave vowels – to express 'fineness, slightness, mildness, softness and the correlated ideas (184-5).

This poem adheres to the definition of "apophony" as "reduplication with a vocalic change in the repeated constituents," for the environment in which the stressed vowels appear is practically identical: all lines except the third end with "-ли", and while the third line ends in "-ле", post-tonic pronunciation in Russian dictates that both "-ли" and "-ле" are reduced to the same phonetic value. The first two lines also feature /p'/, as contrasted with /p/ in the following lines. However, it could be argued that if the "п" (/p/) were to remain uniformly palatalized or unpalatalized throughout the entire poem, the resulting words would be nonsensical: "пэли" and "пёле" or "пюли" and "пяли" are neither real words, nor based off a meaningful root, as the words in Khlebnikov's poem were.

The title of the poem itself further emphasizes the importance of the vowels, and it would be logical to assume that the vowels to be highlighted are the stressed ones, which are all in the initial syllable. The remaining unstressed vowels provide the grammatical information: indicating verbal plural past tense in lines one, two and five, nominative in line three, and nominative (or accusative) plural in line 4. An author translation has been rendered below:

(They) were singing, (they) were singing, (they) were singing,
(They) were drinking, (they) were drinking, (they) were drinking,
The field, the field, the field,
The bullets, the bullets, the bullets,
(They) were falling, (they) were falling, (they) were falling.

Of course, the subject in the first, second and fifth lines need not be in the third person—it just might as easily be in the first or second person, but the lack of a personal pronoun renders it opaque and leaves the choice in interpretation up to the individual reader. When considering the text of the poem, one could

conclude that the mood is rather chilling, but the poem continues to display interesting phonological qualities that possibly align with the tone. In Linda Waugh's aforementioned article, she cites the "nearly universal correlation between the inherently higher-pitched front vowels (like English [i], [ɪ], [e], [ɛ]) and smallness and brightness (vs. the lower-pitched back vowels like [u], [ɑ], [o], [ɔ], commonly associated with bigness and darkness)" (74). This is obviously similar to their earlier-cited assertion that front vowels are associated with light, and back vowels with dark (191). This also aligns with Gombrich, another principal scholar of semiotics, and his comparative view of vocalic quality, quoted in Jakobson and Waugh: "When we say that *i* is brighter than *u*, we find a surprising degree of general consent. If we are more careful still and say the step from *u* to *i* is more like an upward step than a downward step, I think the majority will agree" (193). And indeed, one could argue that the place of articulation for "/u/" in Russian is lower than the place of articulation for "/i/", in addition to also having a lower pitch. (Please see Appendix 1.3 for chart of vocalic place of articulation.)

Considering this, we can see that the poem features an apophony, wherein the vowels themselves move from high-front to low-back, with words that match the context of the respective vowel quality. The first two lines with front vowels possess a tone of gaiety appropriate to an environment replete with singing and dancing. The middle vowel, "/o/", provides a neutral feeling, as well as a neutral setting for the merry-making. However, the last two lines introduce a somber and slightly ominous tone to the brief poem, utilizing the back vowels /u/ and /ɑ/. The course charted by the movement of the vowels possibly mimics the movement of the subjects in the poem, from singing and drinking (and therefore from an assumedly upright position) to falling (and probably dying) from the bullets. While the place of articulation does not move in a perfect arc, it could be argued that the move from the rounded "/u/" to the unrounded "/ɑ/" is most significant in the last parts of the poem, due to the multiplicity of associations with that sound in context (for example, a death sigh could be expressed as "ah," due to the relaxation of the vocal cords). This leads to an important point: while these arguments can be made regarding the significance of these words/vowels with relation to the meaning of the poem, this does not in itself indicate that the singular word "пили" is inherently happy in all contexts, nor that the word "пали" is likewise negative. As Linda Waugh asserts, "it should be added that sound symbolism is not effective everywhere… If the sounds do not fit, the relation between sound and meaning is more neutral, and the lack of motivation or even, in some cases, the incongruity is not noticed" (74). While the sounds do indeed fit here in this case, it is a caveat to bear in mind that sound symbolism can be dependent on context, as here. Waugh addresses this further with regards to iconicity: "…the continua we have been discussing are the result of the dynamic interplay of two powerful but opposite forces in the language—one toward iconicity and the other toward noniconicity. The iconic force leads to a direct and intimate tie between form and meaning" (84). This, along with Jakobson's earlier-mentioned dictum to take into account the structure of the language itself

prior to analyzing the sound texture of a poem argues towards keeping context in mind. Indeed, while much research has been done regarding the moods associated with certain vowels, those cannot be expanded across the board to apply to words as well. The happiness associated with the first two lines of the poem "Гласные" stems from the context as much as the sound texture.

4. Marshak

Jakobson's work also addresses the question of sound meaning and/or sound symbolism in children's speech, including rhyme and poetry, a perspective that can likewise be applied to the Russian nursery rhyme "Шалтай–Болтай" by Samuil Marshak. This nursery rhyme is the Russian translation of the English rhyme "Humpty-Dumpty," in itself an intriguing equivalent, as both names feature reduplication of nonsense words, something that appeals to children. Indeed, according to Jakobson and Waugh, the child language specialist Kornej Čukovskij took note that young children "constantly chain a set of rhyming nonsense vocables together, like the two-year-old girl observed daily by Čukovskij…. -

Kunda, munda, karamunda,
Dunda, bunda, paramun –" (220).

As Mary Sanches and Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett state in their study *Children's Traditional Speech Play and Child Language*, "That children enjoy playing with sound for its own sake has long been recognized as a prominent feature of child speech" (qtd. in Jakobson and Waugh 221). Moreover, Jakobson and Waugh cite that the "connection between reduplication and nursery vocabulary furthers the often childish style and playful character of this construction. Yet there is a clear-cut difference between total or partial repetition of existing words and the repetition of syllables which do not exist in the lexicon outside of such binomials" (199). This becomes clear when considering the difference between Khlebnikov's poem and the very title of "Шалтай–Болтай". Khlebnikov composed a poem almost entirely of neologisms, but the formation of those novel words was based on the Russian morphological system, and the use of conventionalized prefixes and suffixes allows the reader to garner meaning from the words. A coined word like "рассмейтесь" can be unpacked from one's prior knowledge of the prefix "рас" ("out in all directions"), the root "смей-" ("laugh") and the grammatical ending "–тесь" (second person plural with a reflexive particle), and interpreted as the command to "laugh forth." However, when this is compared to the Russian "Шалтай–Болтай" (or even the English "Humpty-Dumpty"), a stark contrast emerges. The repetition in the name "Шалтай–Болтай", which is composed of nonsense syllables, thus exhibits the common characteristic of reduplication in children's speech and in nursery rhymes. As Jakobson and Waugh assert, "[a] large number of units used only in reduplication are either onomatopoeic imitations of natural and

instrumental sounds or metonymic designations for the originators or activities concomitant with these sounds" (199). These names could possibly be the latter. One could make a conjecture on the constituent phonemes that compose the names "Шалтай–Болтай" and "Humpty-Dumpty": both feature initial back vowels, and have a [- stop] as the word-initial sound in the first part of the name, followed by a [+ stop] as the word-initial part of the second name. They also both exhibit a "-тай"/"-ty" ending, although Waugh mentions in *Against Arbitrariness* that the suffix "/-i/" is common as a diminutive in English (74). However, beyond the mere names of the characters, an interesting phenomenon emerges in both the Russian and English versions of the nursery rhyme, beyond mere reduplication. Consider the following poems:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the King's horses, And all the King's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again!
And the Russian version (with an accompanying author translation in the footnote below)[6]

Шалтай–Болтай
Сидел на стене
Шалтай–Болтай
Свалился во сне.

Вся королевская
конница
Вся королевская рать
Не может

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[6] "Shaltaj-Boltaj"
Shaltaj-Boltaj
Sat on a wall
Shaltaj-Boltaj
Fell off in a dream.

All the King’s horses
All the King’s men
Can’t
Shaltaj-
Can’t Boltaj-
Shaltaj-Boltaj
Boltaj-Shaltaj
Shaltaj-Boltaj repair! (Author translation)

Шалтая
Не может Болтая,
Шалтая–Болтая
Болтая–Шалтая,
Шалтая–Болтая собрать! (Marshak 741)

In the English version, the character is introduced with the name "Humpty Dumpty", but after he falls off of the wall and cannot be repaired, he is merely referred to as "Humpty." While one could argue that this occurs in order to meet the meter requirements of the last line, a look at the Russian version addresses the possibility of iconicity with the character's name. Indeed, although he is initially introduced as " Шалтай–Болтай," after he falls off of the wall, his name is deconstructed, fragmented, and reconstructed three times (once incorrectly). This playing with the constituent parts of the character's name exhibits a quality of iconicity at the word/name level. In addition, it could be argued that the word-initial phonemes in the first stanza contribute to the atmosphere of Шалтай–Болтай sitting peaceably on a wall: these phonemes in lines two and four are "/s'/" "/n/" "/s/" (or even "/s'/" due to regressive assimilation) and "/s/" "/v/" "/s/" (or, again, "/s'/"). The symmetry of the /s/ phonemes on either side of the middle phoneme provide further support for the environment of the first verse, while the stress pattern augments the uniformity: "сиДЕЛ на стеНЕ" and "сваЛИЛся во СНЕ." In any case, whether or not one chooses to look at the composition of the name itself or the treatment of the name in the context of the rhyme, a level of symbolism and iconicity undoubtedly exists.

5. Simonov

Jakobson's views on sound symbolism can be applied very well to the moving poem "Жди Меня" ("Wait for me"), a World War II-era poem by Konstantin Simonov, which has already been the focus of other scholars of the Russian language (Appendix 1.1). Simonov's poem is a touching entreaty for the speaker's loved one to wait for him to return from the front lines, long past when all others have given up hope. In the 36-line poem, the speaker repeats the singular imperative command "жди" ("Wait") eleven times, and the verb can be found in other forms six other times throughout the poem, including in the form of a verbal adjective ("ждавшим"). The noun "ожидание" ("expectation") also appears. The same sounds appear in multifarious places elsewhere in the poem, such as in the phrase "ЖОЛтые доЖДИ", where the end stress in the plural form of "rain" exactly echoes the imperative elsewhere in the poem. As Lee Croft argues in an article published in *The Slavic and Eastern European Journal*, "[T]he dominant sounds of the poem, 'ž,' 'i,' and the dentals 'd' and 't,' subtly call out to the reader the main theme of the poem, that the hero wants 'to live,' *žit'*, even though the word *žit'* itself is never mentioned in the poem as such" (515). The verb

"выжил" ("survived", masculine singular past tense) appears towards the end, which contains a form of the verb "жить", but it is not semantically the same verb.

A quantitative analysis of this poem, performed by the author and utilizing textual concordance and comparing the relative frequencies to the frequencies of each grapheme in the corpus list, did not fully support Croft's claims: the research found that the graphemes <ж> and <д> both increased significantly, when compared to their relative frequencies within the corpus list and within the poem: an increase from .95% to 4.44% and from 2.97% to 6.93%, respectively. Yet the frequency of <т> decreased, from 9.01% to 8.17%, which would seem to contradict Croft's argument regarding the underlying message in the poem, that the subject wants to live. However, while the graphemes of consonants can be more reliably connected to phonemes than can the graphemes of vowels, there is still large room for error: word-final /zh/ and /d/ devoice to /sh/ and /t/, while on the other hand it is possible for /sh/ and /t/ to become voiced if followed by a voiced consonant. While it is relatively simple to check a limited body of work like a poem to ensure that such phonological phenomena do not exist, the corpus list itself could have innumerable entries with such occurrences, which leads to skewed data. Moreover, as Jakobson reminds us in *Language in Literature*, "[h]owever effective is the emphasis on repetition in poetry, the sound texture is still far from being confined to numerical contrivances, and a phoneme that appears only once, but in a key word, in a pertinent position, against a contrastive background, may acquire striking significance" (88). This perspective supports Lee Croft's assertion as to the prominence of the "t" in the poem, even if a graphemic concordance does not support it. Furthermore, when looking at the instances of "/t/" in context within the poem, a large number of "/t'/"s manifest themselves, in the form of infinitives, soft-stem nouns ("грусть"), adverbs ("наизусть"), and particles ("пусть"). The predominance of "/t'/" connects more directly to the infinitive ending of Croft's "жить" than does the hard variant, "/t/". Once could even argue that the oft-repeated "жди" is an anagram for "жить", called forth partially from the metathesis of "жди" in the related noun "о*жид*ание", whose word-final "<д>" is then de-voiced to a "/t/" (that is, жди → жид → жит). In other words, while numerical values may assist in illuminating some instances of sound symbolism, they will not work in every circumstance to elucidate the phonetic texture of a poem, as can be seen in this instance.

6. Pushkin

Aleksandr Pushkin stands in the pantheon of great Russian poets, and so it is no surprise that Roman Jakobson devotes much attention to his works. Jakobson analyzes many of Pushkin's poems, both his shorter and epic poems, but does not mention the curious poem "К ***", which manifests itself as an intriguing combination of grammaticality and figurative language with an interesting sound texture. Jakobson does address the curious and notable nature of Pushkin's famous poem "Я вас любил", which he

terms as "a striking example of imageless poetry" (*Language in Literature* 129)[7]. Indeed, the vocabulary within the poem "does not include a single live trope, the one seeming exception, *ljubov' ugasla* (love has died out), being merely a dead lexicalized metaphor" (129). Instead, the poem is replete with grammatical forms. As Jakobson observes, "[i]t contains fourty-seven words, including a total of twenty-nine inflectional forms. Of the latter, fourteen or almost half, are pronouns, ten are verbs, and only five are nouns—moreover, nouns of an abstract, speculative character. In the entire work there is not a single adjective," with a high number of adverbs, and all three "dramatis personae" are designated by pronouns: "я" in the nominative, and "вы" and "другой" in inflected forms (129). Jakobson observes in an earlier section that "in Puškin a striking actualization of grammatical oppositions, especially in verbal and pronominal forms, is connected with a keen regard for meaning. Often contrasts, affinities, and contiguities…acquire a directly leading role in the composition of particular poems" (121).

The role of pronouns interacts in yet another notable manner in Pushkin's poem "K***" ("To ***"), which is a poem addressed to an unnamed lady, although many scholars conjecture that it is Anna Petrovna Kern, one of Pushkin's known romantic affairs (original and translation can be found in Appendix 1.2). Although both this poem and "*Я* вас любил" recollect a previous lover, this poem speaks to her using the familiar pronoun "ты" throughout, thus making the earlier poem all the more significant in its usage of the formal/polite "вы". "К ***" also makes abundant usage of figures of speech, which "*Я* вас любил" conspicuously lacks. Consider the first verse: "*Я* помню чудное мгновенье:/ Передо мной явилась ты,/ Как мимолётное виденье,/ Как гений чистой красоты." ("I recollect a wondrous moment:/ Before me you appeared,/ Like a fleeting vision/ Like a genius of pure beauty"). These two similes alone, when compared to the candid simplicity of poetic language in "*Я* вас любил", appear pretentious and inflated.

In addition to the preponderance of flowery poetic language in "К ***", the particular combination of vowels and consonantal clusters contribute to an unexpected and arguably discordant sound texture. The first line includes the rather unpleasant and difficult-to-pronounce (at least for a non-native speaker) consonant cluster "мгн-", in the word "мгновенье". The placement of a velar in between two nasals, where the "g" is by necessity vocalic, creates an uncomfortable feeling. The first two lines also feature a large number of back vowels, "*Я* п*о*мню чудн*о*е мгн*о*венье:/ Перед*о* мн*о*й *я*вил*а*сь ты,…" Considering earlier

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[7] "Я вас любил"
Я вас любил: любовь ещё, быть может
В душе моей угасла не совсем;
Но пусть она вас больше не тревожит;
Я не хочу печалить вас ничем.
Я вас любил безмолвно, безнадежно,
То робостью, то ревностью томим;
Я вас любил так искренно, так нежно,
Как дай вам Бог любимой быть другим. (Pushkin)

discussions that back vowels are generally associated with darkness (as opposed to lightness), the reader might wonder whether or not Pushkin intended this association. This focus placed on back vowels is found throughout the poem: out of the 204 pronounced vowels in the poem, the distribution of front and back vowels is almost perfectly half and half: 97 are front vowels and 85 are back vowels (22 are mid vowels). This is significant, especially when considering the allophones of a phoneme like /я/, whose place of articulation gets fronted when pre- or post-tonic (as in the difference between "Я" and "*я*ВИЛась" or " томЛЕНЬ*я*х ". The back vowels also tend to be clustered together, creating a noticeable acoustic environment. This phenomenon occurs at least once in each verse: " З*в*у*ч*ал мне *долг*о г*ол*ос нежный" (2nd verse), "И *я* з*а*был тв*о*й г*ол*ос нежный" (3rd verse), " Без б*о*жеств*а*, без вд*о*хн*о*вень*я*," (4th verse), " Д*у*ше н*ас*т*ало* пр*об*у*ж*денье:" (5th verse), and " И сердце бь*ё*тся в *уп*о*е*нье " (6th verse). One of the most notable clusters is the combination of a verb with non-front vowels in addition to a word with two back vowels: this happens twice, with the verb "звучал" and the addition of the adverb "долго," and the repetition of a similar phrase in the next verse, with the verb "забыл" (back vowel and mid vowel), and "твой голос". The clustering of back vowels in such a manner draws attention to the place of articulation and brings into question the poet's intent with the mood and tone of the poem: comparing such flowery language to the simplicity and heartfelt sincerity of a brief and pithy poem like "Я вас любил" to "К ***" gives the reader an impression of insincerity, especially when looking at the surface message as contrasted with the sound texture of the poem.

7. Discussion

Any discussion of various literary and sound symbolic tropes leads to the inevitable question as to whether or not the poet or author intends such features. As Jakobson states in his article *Subliminal Verbal Patterning in Poetry*,

> Whenever and wherever I discuss the phonological and grammatical texture of poetry, and whatever the language and epoch of the poems examined, one question constantly arises by the readers or listeners: Are the designs disclosed by linguistic analysis deliberately and rationally planned in the creative work of the poet and is he really aware of them? (*SW V* 136).

Jakobson continues that the rules of chance governing the inclusion of differing types of phonological and grammatical classes cannot all be by accident, and that any "significant poetic composition, whether it is an improvisation or the fruit of long and painstaking labor, implies a goal-oriented choice of verbal material" (136). Indeed, such poems as "Гласные" by Juri Ivask, as discussed earlier, through its very title implies an awareness of and sensitivity to the manner in which the changing place of articulation can affect the mood of a composition. Within the poem "Шалтай–Болтай" exists the possibility of a similar

awareness, with the conscious and purposeful deconstruction of the character's name into its constituent parts.

However, when addressing the phonemic choices of poets in poems such as "Заклятие смехом", "Жди Меня", or "К ***," there is room for argument; in discussing how an author interacts with the phonemic, morphological and syntactical framework, Jakobson states "What the pivots of this network are may and quite frequently does remain outside of his awareness, but even without being able to single out the pertinent expedients, the poet…nevertheless spontaneously apprehend[s] the artistic advantage of a context endowed with those components," especially over a similar context lacking those selfsame components (136). Jakobson again cites Khlebnikov's anagrammatical poem "Кузнечик" as an instance in which the author did not knowingly include certain phonological elements, which he only discovered years later: Khlebnikov "suddenly realized that throughout its first, crucial sentence—*ot točki do točki* 'between two full stops'—each of the sounds, *k*, *r*, *l*, and *u* occurs five times 'without any wish of the one who wrote this nonsense'" (137). Khlebnikov thereby "joined all those poets who acknowledged that a complex verbal design may be inherent in their work irrespective of their apprehension and volition" (137). This leads one to question Saussure's insistence that in verbal code, the "'bond uniting the signans with the signatum is arbitrary'", something that Jakobson queries with fervor (*Language and Literature* 416). To provide a different point of view as to how the linguistic pattern can indeed be iconic, Jakobson puts forth Peirce's works, and refers to images and diagrams as the two distinct subclasses of icons. Jakobson cites Peirce's definition of a diagram as "'a *representamen* which is predominantly an icon of relation and is aided to be so by conventions'" (418). Jakobson extends the principles and characteristics of diagrams to language: "Not only the combination of words into syntactic groups but also the combination of morphemes into words exhibits a clear-cut diagrammatic character. Both in syntax and morphology any relation of parts and wholes agrees with Peirce's definition of diagrams and their iconic nature" (420). This is realized in a number of ways with language, phonologic (as has been previously identified), as well as morphologic. Certainly, in different Indo-European languages, both surviving and extinct, the positive, comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives exhibit a gradual increase in the number of phonemes (and, in some cases, syllables; Jakobson uses the examples "high-higher-highest" and "altus-altior-altissimus" in English and Latin to demonstrate that "the signantia reflect the gradation gamut of the signata" (421). Russian and Serbo-Croatian both exhibit similar tendencies: "красивый–красивее–самый красивый" and "lep-lepši-najlepši" for "pretty-prettier-prettiest." Indeed, from the multifarious arguments that Jakobson espouses regarding the existence of symbolism in language, both in a phonological and morphological aspect, and with Linda Waugh's accompanying works supporting the move away from complete arbitrariness, one can begin to see how a poet or author may unintentionally (or at least unconsciously) utilize different forms of linguistic symbolism in his or her works.

8. Conclusion

Each of the above poems features some aspect of sound symbolism or linguistic iconicity, which can be explored in various ways. Khlebnikov and his Futuristic poetry of the Zaum influence provides some of the most purposeful outright exploitation of sound symbolism with many neologisms, but poems such as "Гласные" by Ivask also make intentional use of sound to shape the phonetic texture of a poem. The children's nursery rhyme Humpty-Dumpty/ШШалтай–Болтай, in both English and Russian, likewise plays with both sound and iconicity. Konstantin Simonov's poem "Жди меня", while it was not best suited to a graphemic concordance, does exhibit important latent messages through its sound, and Pushkin's works may be looked at from the perspective of grammar and phonetics as symbols in poetry. Jakobson, with Waugh and others, promotes the understanding of the interaction of sound, grammar, and language as a whole in literature, and how it fits within a semiotic system. His perspective regarding the existence and preponderance of sound symbolism and linguistic iconicity (especially with regards to Russian poetry) adds rich layers of understanding to poems already abundant in meaning. Indeed, as he states in *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, "a great poem can never be exhausted through any examination. The most varied equivalencies may be discovered there, while others remain undetected in spite of all effort and good will [*sic*] to be accurate and exhaust all possibilities. Yet, we always perceive more and more" (74). Certainly, it is my hope that by examinig the following poems through the lens of Jakobson and his approach to the semiotics of sound, still "more and more" can be perceived from these poems.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1.1

"Жди меня"

Жди меня, и я вернусь.
Только очень жди,
Жди, когда наводят грусть
Желтые дожди,
Жди, когда снега метут,
Жди, когда жара,
Жди, когда других не ждут,
Позабыв вчера.
Жди, когда из дальних мест
Писем не придет,
Жди, когда уж надоест
Всем, кто вместе ждет.

Жди меня, и я вернусь,
Не желай добра
Всем, кто знает наизусть,
Что забыть пора.
Пусть поверят сын и мать
В то, что нет меня,
Пусть друзья устанут ждать,
Сядут у огня,
Выпьют горькое вино
На помин души...
Жди. И с ними заодно
Выпить не спеши.

Жди меня, и я вернусь,
Всем смертям назло.
Кто не ждал меня, тот пусть
Скажет: - Повезло.

Не понять, не ждавшим им,
Как среди огня
Ожиданием своим
Ты спасла меня.
Как я выжил, будем знать
Только мы с тобой,-
Просто ты умела ждать,
Как никто другой. (Simonov)

"Wait For Me"
Wait for me and I'll return,
Only really wait.
Wait when yellow rains
Bring grief.
Wait when snows sweep,
Wait when there's a heat.
Wait when for others they don't wait,
Having forgotten yesterday.
Wait when from far-off places
Letters won't arrive.
Wait when it will already bother
Others who together wait.

Wait for me and I'll return
Don't wish well
To all who know by heart
That it's time to forget.
Let my son and mother believe
In this, that I am no more.
Let others tire of waiting,
Sitting by the fire,
They will drink bitter wine
In memory of my soul…

Wait—and with them as one
Don’t hurry to drink.

Wait for me and I’ll return
In spite of all the deaths.
Whoever didn’t wait for me, let him
Say: “He was lucky!”
Those who didn’t wait won’t understand
How amidst the fire
By your expectation
You saved me.
How I survived we will know
Only you and I.
It’s simply that you knew how to wait
Like no one else. (Croft "RUS 211" 139)

Appendix 1.2

"К ***"
Я помню чудное мгновенье:
Передо мной явилась ты,
Как мимолётное виденье,
Как гений чистой красоты.

В томленьях грусти безнадежной,
В тревогах шумной суеты,
Звучал мне долго голос нежный,
И снились милые черты.

Шли годы. Бурь порыв мятежный
Рассеял прежние мечты,
И я забыл твой голос нежный,
Твои небесные черты.

В глуши, во мраке заточенья
Тянулись тихо дни мои
Без божества, без вдохновенья,
Без слёз, без жизни, без любви.

Душе настало пробужденье:
И вот опять явилась ты,
Как мимолётное виденье
Как гений чистой красоты.

И сердце бьётся в упоенье,
И для него воскресли вновь
И божество, и вдохновенье,
И жизнь, и слёзы, и любовь. (Pushkin)

"To ***"

I recollect a wondrous moment:
Before me you appeared,
Like a fleeting apparition,
Like a genius of pure beauty.

In the oppression of hopeless grief
In the concerns of noisy bustling,
Long I could hear (your) tender voice,
And dreamed of (your) dear features.

Years passed. The turbulent gusts of storms
Dispelled former dreams,
And I forgot your tender voice,
Your heavenly features.

In the numbness, the gloom of confinement
Quietly my days dragged on,

Without godhead, without inspiration,
Without tears, without life, without love.

Awakening set in for my soul:
And here again you appeared,
Like a fleeting vision,
Like the genius of pure beauty.

And (my) heart beats in rapture,
And there are reborn for it afresh
Godhead, and inspiration,
and life, and tears, and love. (Trans. by Walter Arndt in Croft "RUS 211" 3

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