



Roman Jakobson

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Roman Jakobson

'Prof. Roman Jakobson' (supplementary obituary), *The Times*, 31 July 1982, 10g-h



IN YOUR OBITUARY of Roman Jakobson (July 22) you rightly describe him as a towering figure in the field of linguistics, on which he had a transforming effect. He was, in addition, a gifted and original member of the celebrated, so-called formalist, group of Russian critics and literary historians which flourished in the immediate post-Revolutionary period (later officially condemned and suppressed), but at the same time, despite his deep antipathy to all forms of ideologically based criticism, he remained an admired friend of the revolutionary tribune Vladimir Mayakovsky

Jakobson was a man of great charm and culture, exhilarating intellectual vitality and passionate temperament, both in his life and his work, which made him and his conversation irresistibly attractive. He held exceedingly decided views, both about persons and

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about [10h] topics, but especially about early Slavonic literature, on which he was the leading world expert.

He was a very formidable controversialist; at least two famous French professors, who in his view propagated dangerous fallacies, were blown out of the water by his carefully aimed broadsides. But to colleagues whom he found congenial – Rene Wellek, I. A. Richards, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Victor Erlich, Maurice Bowra, Dimitri Obolensky – he was a delightful and affectionate friend.

He last visited England in 1980, accompanied by his devoted wife Krystyna, herself a noted Slavist, to receive an honorary doctorate from Oxford University. He was a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy.

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