To carry out a sensible, consistent, systematic division of Roman Jakobson's scholarly heritage is no easy task: his writings cover such broad fields of knowledge that certain overlappings are inevitable and some studies only partly conform to the general heading under which they have been placed. The material for this sixth volume was so vast that it filled two large books (the Selected Writings, originally planned by the author in seven volumes, will be expanded to—probably—ten, in effect transforming the edition into his Collected Works). The content of volume VI is quite variegated, ranging from general articles about comparative Slavic literature to a study of "The Term Canaan in Medieval Hebrew." They originated over a sixty-year period, from 1922 to 1982. Yet, despite the variety of themes and of the dates of composition, this double volume displays a striking unity in its general tendency and overall thematic line. A majority of the forty-five writings collected here focus on Czech history, culture, and literature. They show Jakobson's deep interest in and love of the Czech people and constitute a worthy offering of thanks to the nation which gave him refuge and the opportunity to build his career as a scholar. Most of the studies (twenty-one) are in English; thirteen in Russian, eight in Czech, and one each in Polish and French (a few have been translated from Czech into English for this edition).

In his fourteen-page preface Stephen Rudy not only gives a comprehensive survey of the contents of this two-part volume, but asserts Jakobson's importance for international scholarship in a variety of fields. Rudy states that Constantine-Cyril and Komensky are the two figures who made a constant and indelible impression on Jakobson's thought. This is true of Cyril, but to a much smaller degree of Comenius (whose first name Rudy for unknown reasons gives in the German form, Johann). The two brief texts in Czech devoted to him (a public address of 1942 and a short paper at a Comenius conference in 1957) are not sufficient to demonstrate his "constant presence" in Jakobson's thoughts and work. The holy Vojtech, Václav and Prokop, figures like Kosmas, Hus, and, of course, Methodius are much more prominent in Jakobson's writing. Also, Komensky is not a Medieval writer, but is in many (though not all) respects for removed from the Middle Ages; the fact that Jakobson mainly deals with Komensky's views of Cyrilus and Methodius and the Hussite Church, however, can serve as a justification for the inclusion of these pieces under the heading "Medieval Studies."

Part One starts with one of Jakobson's longer and best known studies, "The Kernel of Comparative Slavic Literature" (which appeared in the first issue of Harvard Slavic Studies in 1953), followed by "Slavism as a Topic of Comparative Studies," published the next year in The Review of Politics. His main thesis is that the language, the linguistic material, influences and shapes the poetry (the poetic form) of a nation. He demonstrates this with examples from Slavic poetry. "The Kernel" is a passionate effusion, not a dry treatise. In his Slavic enthusiasm, the author tends occasionally to stretch his point. He claims that the Slavic languages are incomparably richer in forms than the Germanic and Romance languages, which in some respects is true (in the variety of suffixes, for example, the
"abundance of derivatives from a single root" (p. 11), but not in every respect. Russian has, for example, sixteen verbal prefixes for the root -sad- (vzadit', vysadit', and so on)—German twenty-three for the equivalent -setz- (an-, aufsetzen, and so on).

His pronouncement on page 8 that "we observe in Slavic rhymed verse either a capitulation to grammatical rhyme or resistance to it: indifference toward the grammatical aspect of the rhyme is excluded" is simply incorrect. Well into the nineteenth, and sometimes the twentieth century innumerable Slavic poets used grammatical rhyme here and there, unselectively, indifferently, sometimes unconsciously, neither "capitulating" to it, nor resisting it. Jakobson comes to a similar sweeping conclusion when stating that Slavic poetry does not admit assonance rhymes with a voiced and an unvoiced consonant. He considered this an important distinctive feature of Slavic poetry (the discovery of which he attributes to K. Nitsch, although Nitsch only repeated what had been established earlier for Polish folk poetry by J. Karlowicz)—so much so that he repeats it at least on three occasions (in this volume on p. 461 in the essay "Old Czech Verse"), apparently without extensively checking the material. In actual fact, the rhyme of a voiced and an unvoiced consonant is, if not frequent, far from uncommon in all Slavic folk as well as written poetry: cf. slobod': raboty in Molenie Danila Zatocnika, lukad'uga in an old Dalmatian folk song, and Povede:diete in a Czech legend, quoted by Jakobson himself (on p. 461), although he contends that this is "truly an absolute exception." (I have discussed this point in more detail in my The Realm of Rime [1974], pp. 202 ff.).

These two essays on comparative Slavic literature are of a general, programmatic nature; the author does not strive after strict scholarly objectivity. He elaborates on all the inter-Slavic contacts and movements, but does not say a word about the no less numerous cases of inter-Slavic frictions, conflicts, and long lasting hatred. He seems to play down the rift brought about by the Great Schism in Medieval Christianity and to ignore the deep religious and political barriers that have separated the Slavs throughout modern history. Yet some of his concluding remarks, where he acknowledges a "centripetal and centrifugal aspect" (p. 85), are valid.

The next essay, "Iz iazykovedcheskikh razdumii nad obshchimi osobennostiami poezii slavianskikh narodov" (written in 1973), elaborates on one of the main theses of the preceding two: the "abundance, viability and inner richness of word-forming clusters and flectional paradigms" characteristic of the Slavic tongues (p. 88), for which numerous examples are adduced. Then follow studies of a more historical-philological nature on the early Slavic (particularly the Moravian, Czecho-Slovak) religion and literary culture. In "The Beginnings of National Self-Determination in Europe" (typically published in The Review of Politics in 1945), Jakobson deals, of course, not so much with general European, but with Slavic self-determination and argues that "the Slavic case is so peculiar and so different from the usual occidental pattern of cultural history that it really merits a special, unprejudiced examination" (p. 116). It is "the sacramental character of national language and, hence, of the national idea" that "jas remained from century to century an unyielding ground for the ideology of Czechs and most of the Slavic peoples" (p. 128).

In "The Czech Part in Church Slavonic Culture" (1939) Jakobson lists, and elaborates on, "the eloquent facts which today gradually reveal, on the one hand, the individuality and powerful expanse of Czech Gothic culture, and on the other,