On Poetic Function: Jakobson's Revised 'Prague' Thesis

R. A Goodrich

This paper is principally concerned with the seminal notion of poetic function as propounded by Roman Jakobson in his much cited article, 'Linguistics and Poetics',[1] the continuing potency of which is revealed by its foundational status for the burgeoning disciplines of communications, cultural and media studies. The concept of poetic function was first formulated by the 'formalist' programmes of the Moscow group of the 'twenties, resurfacing in the 'structuralist' debates of the Prague Circle during the 'thirties, and more recently amidst the Paris group of literary theorists in their 'semiotic' and 'post-structuralist' guises.[2] In what follows, I shall review Jakobson's line of argument before questioning his fourfold characterisation of poetic function more closely. Whilst his many critics have been content to highlight a number of methodological inadequacies, usually upon empirical grounds,[3] I shall contend that Jakobson's weaknesses are more fundamentally conceptual in nature.[4]

Jakobson believes that, in differentiating 'verbal art in relation to other arts and ... other kinds of verbal behavior', the study of poetics principally deals with 'problems of verbal structure' in the same way that an 'analysis of painting is concerned with pictorial structure'. At the same time, though by no means obviously connected with the foregoing, Jakobson also considers that poetics poses the question, 'What makes a verbal message a work of art?' (p.350). From the beginning of his paper, therefore, there seems to exist a tension between poetics as a linguistic enterprise and poetics as an aesthetic enquiry.

Anticipating several possible objections from linguistic and literary quarters, Jakobson firstly concedes that many of the 'devices' probed by poetics, such as plot and metaphor, are 'not confined to verbal art' since they may equally appear in music or dance, cinema or sculpture (p.350). Poetic devices—also interchangeably called 'poetic features'—do not exclusively belong to language in general because 'language shares many properties with ... other systems of signs' (a point possibly, though problematically, alluding to the system of pictorial signs figuring in silent cinema). Furthermore, 'the question of relations
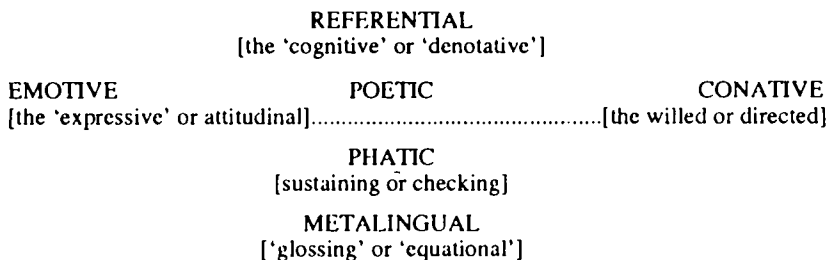
between the word and the world' does not solely affect the verbal arts (p.351). All kinds of discourse are so affected since all kinds of discourse raise the problem of 'what of this universe is verbalized by a given discourse and how is it verbalized' (although, for Jakobson, the truth or falsity of discourse, in so far as 'extralinguistic entities' are involved, 'exceed[s] the bounds of poetics and of linguistics in general' [p.351]). In the third place, the attempt to separate poetics from linguistics simply on the grounds that, of the two, poetics alone invites evaluation is erroneous. It may be true that poetics typically deals with 'the "noncasual", purposeful character of poetic language', but 'any verbal behavior is goal-directed' (p.351). Indeed, for Jakobson, investigations into language, whether literary or non-literary, are matters of 'objective scholarly analysis', not to be 'supplanted by [the] normative', though neither 'objective' nor 'normative' is here sufficiently distinguished in a way that clearly demonstrates how one excludes the other. Poetics will only supposedly separate itself from linguistics when linguistics is 'illicitly restricted' to analysing nothing beyond the individual sentence and nothing outside issues of grammar or syntax. Yet, when freed from such restrictions, Jakobson contends that 'for any speech community, for any speaker, there exists a unity of language [where] each language encompasses several concurrent patterns which are each characterized by a different function' (p.352).

In effect, Jakobson clearly believes his references to a purposeful, goal-directed system of language licenses the search for its functional components. All functions of language, we are therefore urged, ought to be examined in order to pinpoint the poetic function. Expanding upon the earlier insights of Karl Bähler, Jan Mukarovsky and other contributors to the Prague Circle, Jakobson then identifies six 'constitutive factors in any speech event, in any act of verbal communication' (p.353). We shall bracket the principal features Jakobson associates with these factors as follows:

<div align="center">

CONTEXT
[a 'verbal' or verbalizable 'referent']

</div>

ADDRESSER	MESSAGE	ADDRESSEE
['encoder']...['decoder']		

<div align="center">

CONTACT
['a physical channel and psychological connection']

CODE
['fully, or at least partially, common']

</div>

Each of these six factors 'inalienably involved in verbal communication'

in turn 'determines a different function of language' (p.353). The corresponding functions may be charted as follows:

<div align="center">

REFERENTIAL
[the 'cognitive' or 'denotative']

</div>

EMOTIVE	POETIC	CONATIVE
[the 'expressive' or attitudinal]..[the willed or directed]

<div align="center">

PHATIC
[sustaining or checking]

METALINGUAL
['glossing' or 'equational']

</div>

From Jakobson's perspective, no given speech act should be construed as a stable entity that fulfills only one, isolated function and operates only along one axis from addresser to addressee. Nor could a speech act communicate if any one factor determining the above functions were to be removed or rendered ineffective. Rather, it shifts through 'a different hierarchical order of functions'; the nature of its 'verbal structure ... depend[ing] primarily on the predominant function' amongst the six functions of the communicative event (p.353). (Imagine three opposing pairs of hands alternately tugging, stretching, releasing, and pulling a fishing net with different strength. The alternating configurations of the net as each hand in its turn exerts the greatest force offers a useful visual analogy.)

None of the functions in the above schematic chart is without its problems, nor is the chart itself entirely adequate.[5] For example, can Jakobson's model of communication accommodate monologue as easily as it does dialogue? More particularly, what becomes of the role of the addressee in cases of internalised soliloquy or of accidental or unintended communications? Again, is it only the message that has a context or should contexts, however distinguished, also be assigned to the addresser and the addressee? How, if at all, does the referential function aligned with the contextual factor help discriminate between truth and falsehoood in an act of communication? Do the emotive and conative functions of (respectively) addresser and addressee bear upon their intentions and inferences, or are these matters irrelevant to encoders and decoders of messages, irrespective of the kind of message involved? In so far as the emotive deals with the expressive, is there an intentional ambiguity here between, firstly, expressing the addresser's own feelings, secondly, giving vent to feelings not necessarily the addresser's or the addressee's, and, thirdly, arousing the addressee's feelings? Or again, what impact do spatial and temporal distance have

upon Jakobson's communicative scheme? In the case of immediate communication, whether spoken or electronic, if what is transmitted is open to such modifications as interruption and improvisation, do the same modifications apply to distanced communication typical of writing?

Be that as it may, it is the sixth function—the poetic—that awaits our closer scrutiny. The poetic function, firstly, focuses 'on the message for its own sake' and, secondly, 'is not the sole function of verbal art but only its dominant, determining function, whereas in all other verbal activities it acts as a subsidiary, accessory constituent' (p.356). Even within different poetic genres—epic, lyric, and exhortation to mention but three—different genres 'imply a differently ranked participation of the other verbal functions along with the dominant poetic function' (p.357). For example, argues Jakobson somewhat selectively, epic, focused upon the third person (the 'he' or 'she'), involves the referential function; lyric, focused upon the first person (the 'I'), involves the emotive; supplication, focused upon the second person (the 'you'), involves the conative.

The dominance of the poetic function over other functions, such as the referential, does not in that case 'obliterate the reference but makes it ambiguous' (p.371). Indeed, by 'promoting the palpability of signs', the poetic function when dominant 'deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects' (p.356) and this applies as much to graduated utterances ('veni, vidi, vici') as to an entire verse play. In other words, for Jakobson, we face a 'double-sensed message' with 'a split addresser', 'a split addressee', and 'a split reference' whose ambiguity has become 'an intrinsic, inalienable character of any self-focused message' (pp.371, 370). Apart from addresser and addressee, for instance, there may well exist in a given text the 'I' of the fictitious narrator and the 'you' of his audience as exemplified by *A Heart of Darkness*. Expressed in different terms, Jakobson contends that the poetic 'is not a supplementation of discourse with rhetorical adornment but a total re-evaluation of the discourse and of all its components whatsoever' (p.377). Even the opening of European fairy tales moves him to declare: 'This capacity for reiteration whether immediate or delayed, this reification of a poetic message and its constituents, this conversion of a message into an enduring thing, indeed all this represents an inherent and effective property of poetry' (p.371).

Finally, a further 'indispensable' and 'inherent' feature of the poetic function centres upon the 'two basic modes of arrangement used in verbal behavior, selection and combination' (p.358). Selection, we are told, 'is produced on the base of equivalence, similarity and

dissimilarity, synonymity and antonymity, while the combination, the build up of the sequence, is based on contiguity' (p.358). Jakobson immediately exemplifies the two modes with the following hypothetical case:

> If 'child' is the topic of the message, the speaker selects one among the extant, more or less similar, nouns like child, kid, youngster, tot, all of them equivalent in a certain respect, and then, to comment on this topic, he may select one of the semantically cognate verbs—sleeps, dozes, nods, naps. Both chosen words combine in the speech chain (p.358).

In short, the poetic function 'projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination', but not vice versa. Equivalences or similarities that exist within the code of language at the level of phonology (sounds), morphology (words), or syntax (utterances) are therefore said to be 'promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence' (p.358). In the plainer terms of H. G. Widdowson, the poetic function exploits 'the resources of the code' to 'combine what is kept separate ... and separate what is combined',[6] as exemplified in e. e. cummings's 'anyone lived in a pretty how town'. The projective principle subsequently leads Jakobson to claim that, when similarities or equivalences from the associative and selective axis of the language code are 'superimposed on contiguity' or the sequential, combinatory axis, poetry fulfils 'its thoroughgoing symbolic, multiplex, polysemantic essence' (p.370). Under the dominance of the poetic function, the message becomes a 'hall of mirrors', with every linguistic element 'reflecting its relationship to other[s] ... in the message'.[7] The first stanza of the cummings poem brings obvious similarities and differences to the fore in its switching or transformation of word-classes—'his didn't ... his did' and so forth—as well as in, say, the intensification of its assonantal patterns: 'anyone ... many'; 'how ... town ... down'.

Jakobson, moreover, asserts that the poetic function operates uniquely; that no other function appropriates its task. He is prepared to concede that the metalingual function 'also makes a sequential use of equivalent units when combining synonymic expressions into an equational sentence'—'"Mare" is "the female of the horse"', for example—but the poetic and the metalingual functions are diametrically opposed because 'in metalanguage the sequence is used to build an equation, whereas in poetry the equation is used to build a sequence' (p.358).

Leaving aside Jakobson's detailed remarks about European poetic practice, we have so far found his conception of poetic function to consist of at least four supposedly essential or necessary features:

> (i) it is oriented to the message 'for its own sake' at the expense of other factors (including that of context since its referential function focuses upon the propositional content, not the wording, of the message);

> (ii) it is the dominant, determining function of the verbal arts, but remains hierarchically subordinated in all other forms of verbal behaviour;

> (iii) it makes ambiguous other communicative factors, but not vice versa;

> (iv) it embodies the projective principle, thereby transforming the basic selective and combinatorial axes (or arrangements of similarity and contiguity) within verbal behaviour at large; a transformation that is not constitutive of any other form of verbal behaviour.

Let us now critically examine this fourfold conception by investigating the above features in turn.

First of all, if the orientation to the message for its own sake is capable of being shared by addresser and addressee alike, this suggests that the poetic function operates not only in the expression but also in the reception and interpretation of any verbal message. Yet Jakobson's narrower construal of the poetic function limits its scope to the message itself. Since no other communicative factor contributes to it, moreover, the poetic function is at best only a necessary condition that might enable us to identify the verbal arts. The particular phonological, lexical, and syntactic arrangements Jakobson attributes to the poetic function are of no further help here, since they can pertain by definition to all manifestations of verbal behaviour, from jokes and drills to insults and declarations. To suggest otherwise is to contradict Jakobson's initial asertion that, except in the verbal arts, the poetic function 'acts as a subsidiary, accessory constituent' of all 'verbal activities' (p.356). Just as a joke might contain the linguistic manifestations of the poetic function without ever being taken for an art form, so, too, a poem—a limerick, say—might contain patterns of rhythm and rhyme which of themselves do not justify either its being taken for or its not being taken for an art form. If, on the other hand, part of what enables us to identify the verbal arts properly lies in the roles played by the addresser and the addressee, then Jakobson's multifactorial scheme fails to take sufficient account of authorial intentions and auditorial reception and interpretation, notwithstanding his claims that both need to share the

code of any communicable message.

Turning to the second feature, one question comes immediately to mind: why should only one function be regarded as dominant or supreme? To talk of functions (outside mathematics), as Dorothy Emmet contends,[8] is often to presume that social acts of communication comprise a unitary system which is analysable in terms of metonymous (part-whole) relationships. This, in turn, predisposes Jakobson amongst others to think of communicative functions operating hierarchically. So, from a logical point of view, Jakobson's conception of functional dominance appears to presuppose and to be presupposed by that of functional hierarchy (in much the same way as the notions of metrical rules and violations, or norms and deviations, are implicitly found to be mutually presupposing even by those 'unable to abstract its rules' [p.364]). But, from an empirical point of view,[9] it not only seems doubtful that a function need be restricted to one factor, but it also seems questionable that a message could never be characterised by a balance, antagonistic or co-operative, of two or more functions. From either point of view, the prior commitment to construing functions exclusively in terms of superordinate and subordinate operations prevents Jakobson from conceptualising other alternatives.

Next, regarding its third feature, Jakobson claims that the dominant poetic function within the verbal arts allegedly makes addresser, addressee, and context ambiguous, and, by doing so, intensifies the division between the linguistic sign and the object to which that sign refers. Perhaps nowhere is this more succinctly illustrated than in the closing lines from Wilfred Owen's 'Strange Meeting':

> I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
> I knew you in this dark; for you so frowned
> Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
> I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
> Let us sleep now ...

Of course, postulating this very division between sign and referent lends credence to the claim accompanying the first feature, namely, that we can easily attend to the message for its own sake independently of any references and of any practical consequences of the message. However, to assert that ambiguity is an intrinsic or essential feature of the poetic function is to confront the proverbial two-edged sword. On the one hand, an initially ambiguous spoken utterance such as 'Epsilon had the book stolen'[10]—that is, Epsilon arranged for the book to be stolen; Epsilon was in possession of a stolen book; Epsilon possessed

a book entitled 'stolen'—may well be disambiguated by the circumstances under which the utterance was made. On the other hand, listeners may, on hearing the utterance, only interpret one of its meanings or, alternatively, the speaker him- or herself may have only intended one of its meanings. If ambiguity is sought within the wording alone, then we may need to reckon with the code enabling it to be regarded as ambiguous. If ambiguity is sought within the circumstances, then we now seem to need to turn to the context or contexts operating upon addresser and addressee alike. But if either state of affairs prevails, ambiguity cannot be exclusively traced to the message alone: other factors within Jakobson's scheme would appear to have a crucial, explanatory role to play.

At this juncture, supporters of Jakobson might wish to counter by appealing to the fourth feature mentioned above. In other words, they might protest that the example of 'Epsilon had the book stolen' can scarcely be counted as an instance of verbal art. Here, we are entitled to ask for the grounds of their protest. Nothing is to be gained when listing examples becomes little more than an exchange of opinion about what makes the opening of, say, *Moby-Dick* ('Call me Ishmael') predominantly poetic rather than phatic or of *The Go-Between* ('The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there') predominantly poetic rather than referential. The disputed utterance, 'Epsilon had the book stolen', on Jakobson's avowed criteria, is replete with patterns said to be typical of the poetic function. For example, it contains alliterative, assonantal, and grammatical repetitions (the /l/ and /s/ sounds, the repeated gradations of the /o/ and /e/ sounds, and the completed aspect in /had/ and /stolen/ respectively). Its contiguous development, too, may have been selected from an indefinite number of equivalent similarities and dissimilarities ('Upsilon', 'that person', 'the man in the trench coat', and so forth instead of 'Epsilon', for example; 'owned', 'possessed', 'gripped', and so forth instead of 'had'). Jakobson's supporters may wish to interject here that this ambiguous utterance could hardly be regarded as an artistic text; even the shortest of poetic forms, the haiku, has its seventeen syllables distributed across three lines. But the conventional dimensions and arrangements of the haiku are less germane to a defence of Jakobson than is the concealed notion of text. If the conception of text is meant to illuminate the dominant focus upon message attributed to the verbal arts, then we are owed an independent explanation of text. None is forthcoming in Jakobson's paper. Indeed, the suspicion remains that artistic texts, as has often been argued, are not 'possessed of intrinsic

linguistic properties which distinguish [them] from all other kinds of discourse'.[11]

The conceptual difficulties with the fourth feature of the poetic function do not end there.[12] The transformative powers, here said to be constitutive of the poetic function by virtue of its projective principle, supposedly operate upon the axes of selection and combination. These axes, in turn, are presumed to be characteristic of language as a whole rather than categories of Jakobson's underlying linguistic theory itself. Now, as previously indicated, combination is based upon contiguity and selection upon similarity. A cursory glance at Jakobson's examples in 'Linguistics and Poetics' suggests that contiguity is especially applied to sounds, words, and phrases, although it is also the phatic requirement of his communicative scheme that contiguity, whether physical or psychological, exists between addressee and addresser. Whilst it is usually the case that close spatio-temporal proximity characterises much of our verbal behaviour, a communicative act— even a single utterance—could well take generations to complete. It is certainly not inconceivable that a family bible could have the 'Paternoster' gradually inscribed by different hands at different times, say, 'Faeder üre' (Anglo-Saxon circa A.D. 996), followed by 'which art in heaven' (Renaissance English circa 1596), then by 'dein Name werde geheilgt' (Modern German circa 1996), and so on. On the one hand, the appeal to contiguity seems extremely elastic in that it can embrace all kinds of proximities within and beyond actual utterances. On the other hand, the appeal to combination seems rather trivial in that linguistic elements are obviously combined in making utterances just as we can observe automotive elements being combined in the manufacture of lorries or architectural elements being combined in the construction of apartments.

Nor is it necessarily the case that selection presupposes the addresser's capacity to select 'semantically cognate' items; items 'more or less similar' or 'equivalent in a certain respect' whether synonymous or antonymous (p.358). To adapt Jakobson's own example, it might on occasion be true that there are explicable reasons when talking about a child for selecting the term 'child' in preference to 'kid', youngster', or 'tot'. Avoiding the familiar or colloquial, avoiding the suggestion of being particularly active or lively, or avoiding the connotation of being small may all be pertinent to the circumstances and the purposes of an utterance. Yet, the addresser could still speak about the child in question even if he or she had never heard of the other members of the above set of expressions. It is not a prerequisite

of the capacity to use language that we must be possessed of a set of semantically cognate terms from which subjects and predicates or topics and comments are constructed. That is to say, the purported connexion between the concepts of selection and similarity is hardly a necessary or universal one. Nor is the application of the concept of similarity or degrees of similarity to what addressers and addressees consider semantically cognate immune from the above-mentioned problems afflicting ambiguity.

Finally, there are prevalent forms of verbal behaviour which do not appear to be reducible to the axes of selection and combination or relations of similarity and contiguity. The syllogistic components of our ordinary attempts at deductive reasoning—even those as elementary as affirming the antecedent or denying the consequent under certain conditions—do not seem to be coherently related on the basis of similarity or of contiguity. Consider, for example, the following 'brains trust' exchange at the point of finally eliminating rival possibilities with the encouragement of the compere:

Epsilon: Either that prize-winning novel is *Waterland* or *Possession* or *The English Patient*.

Omikron: Correct.

Epsilon: But, if it won the Booker Prize in 1992, then it is neither *Waterland* nor *Possession*.

Omikron: So, what follows?

Epsilon: Therefore, it is *The English Patient*!

The reasoning within this exchange appears to be totally unconnected with what, if any, contiguous or similar relationship holds between any of the constituent propositions involved. Similarly, when scientists and historians employ inductive arguments aimed at establishing the probability of causal connexions between disparate phenomena or occurrences, the causal relations proposed need not involve similarity or contiguity—unless, like David Hume, we 'consider the relation of *contiguity* as essential to that of causation'.[13] Perhaps the confusion bedevilling Jakobson's fourth, transformative feature of poetic function centres upon a misjudgement not only of the character but also of the role of language in relation to the verbal arts. To re-express this point analogously, many of the physical sciences employ mathematics, but, in so doing, they are not a mere extension of mathematics nor can all their concepts be solely defined in mathematical terms.

What, in conclusion, exacerbates the conceptual weaknesses found in

Jakobson? When launching this examination, I noted an initial tension in Jakobson's conception of poetics between its linguistic and its aesthetic dimensions; a tension somewhat deflected by his concerns about the tendency for the critically 'subjective, censorious verdict' to replace the objective 'description of the intrinsic values of a literary work' (pp.352, 351). Even more obvious is the exclusive attention given to the linguistic thereafter, despite some Kantian undertones in the first and third features of Jakobson's fourfold definition of poetic function (namely, that it is oriented to the message 'for its own sake' at the expense of other factors and that it makes these subordinated factors ambiguous if not quite indeterminate). Indeed, by the end of the first third of 'Linguistics and Poetics', the linguistic dimension reigns supreme:

> To sum up, the analysis of verse is entirely within the competence of poetics, and the latter may be defined as that part of linguistics which treats the poetic function in its relationship to the other functions of language. Poetics in the wider sense of the word deals with the poetic function not only in poetry, where this function is superimposed upon the other functions of language, but also outside of poetry, when some other function is superimposed upon the poetic function (p.359).

There is, moreover, another difficulty with Jakobson's argument that the pre-eminence of the poetic function is an inherent or indispensable property of the verbal arts and more particularly of poetry. He appears to have confused constitutive and evidential matters. Even if the projective principle embodied by the poetic function were not able to be remedied, it may nevertheless be the case that the apparent dominance of the poetic function invariably counts as evidence of a piece being poetry. This putative state of affairs does not, however, entail the further conclusion that the poetic function as such necessarily makes the given piece poetry.

Finally, whilst it might be true that Jakobson never explicitly talks in terms of his fourfold characterisation of the poetic function comprising the jointly sufficient conditions of the function, he nonetheless treats each of the four as individually necessary. Yet the quest for the essence of aesthetic and cultural concepts is being repeatedly questioned[14] and if it proves dubious, then Jakobson's unwittingly constricted revision of the Prague Circle's linguistic *and* socio-aesthetic understanding of the poetic function confronts significant opposition. Certainly it seems to me that there are a number of conditions relevant to the poetic function—including evaluative ones largely ignored by Jakobson— none of which is strictly necessary in the sense that its absence

automatically precludes us from classifying as artistic or poetic the work under examination. Poetry and our other cognate verbal arts are, in sum, open-ended concepts whose criteria function as clusters of concomitant features.

Notes

1   All subsequent references in the text are to the original publication, namely, R. O. Jakobson, 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics' in *Style in Language*, ed. T. A. Sebeok, Cambridge, Mass., 1960, pp.350–377. Italics and other typographical devices are not reproduced here.

2   For a series of succinct summaries by Peter Steiner and others on European structuralism and related items this century, see *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan, Princeton, 1993, pp.1135–1143, 1215–1224.

3   See Michael Riffaterre, 'Describing poetic structures: Two approaches to Baudelaire's "Les Chats"' [1966] in *Structuralism*, ed. Jacques Ehrmann, Garden City, 1970, pp.188–230; the original inspiration for such widely disseminated attacks within literary and linguistic circles as Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*, London, 1975, pp.55–74 and Paul Werth, "Roman Jakobson's verbal analysis of poetry', *Journal of Linguistics*, 12.1 (March 1976): 21–73.

4   There is no room here to examine the idealist assumptions said to inform much of Jakobson's thinking; see the brief summary by Elmar Holenstein, 'Jakobson's Philosophical Background' in *Language, Poetry and Poetics: The Generation of the 1890s: Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, Majakovskij*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska *et al.*, Berlin, 1987, pp.15–31.

5   Recent literary criticisms of Jakobson's scheme from 'reader-response' and 'post-structuralist' perspectives include Derek Attridge, 'Closing statement: linguistics and poetics in retrospect' in *The linguistics of writing: Arguments between language and literature*, ed. Nigel Fabb *et al.*, Manchester, 1987, pp.15–32, and Marie Maclean, 'Noise and Poetics: Jakobson Postmodernized', Centre for General and Comparative Literature, Monash University, August 1991.

6   H. G. Widdowson, *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*, London, 1975, p.57.

7   T. J. Taylor, *Linguistic Theory and Structural Stylistics*, Oxford, 1981, p.57.

8   D. M. Emmet, *Function, Purpose and Powers: Some Concepts in the Study of Individuals and Societies*, London, 1958, pp.45–6, 76–7.

9   This now standard objection was first articulated within ethnolinguistic circles by D. H. Hymes, 'The Ethnography of Speaking' [1962] in

Readings in the Sociology of Language, ed. J. A. Fishman, The Hague, 1968, especially pp.120–2.

10 To adapt a well known example from A. N. Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, Cambridge, Mass., 1965, pp.21–22.

11 See M. L. Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, Bloomington, 1977, pp.xii; 3–37. Compare the Jakobsonian attempt to distinguish literary text from literary discourse in Widdowson, *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*, pp.27–46. On the problems of adopting a conventionalist defence of Jakobson, see Paul Kiparsky, 'On theory and interpretation' in *The linguistics of writing: Arguments between language and literature*, ed. Nigel Fabb *et al.*, Manchester, 1987, pp.185–198.

12 This and the next two paragraphs attempt to expand upon counter-arguments against the nexus Jakobson sees between selection and similarity, combination and contiguity, first outlined by Hugh Bredin, 'Roman Jakobson on Metaphor and Metonymy', *Philosophy and Literature* 8.1 (1984): 89–103.

13 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* [1739/1740], ed. E.C. Mossner, Harmondsworth, 1969, bk. 1, part 3, sec. 2, p.123.

14 A theme briefly reviewed by the present writer, 'The Spectator-Participant Distinction: An Impasse for Educational Literary Theory?', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 29.1 (Spring 1995): 57–58. *A propos* note 4 above, the idealist tradition upholds a controversial distinction between ideas and concepts whereby poetry and the arts, like freedom and truth, are acclaimed as ideas which, unlike concepts, are apparently not amenable to further description or analysis: see T. J. Diffey, 'The Idea of Art' [1977] in *The Republic of Art and Other Essays*, New York, 1991, pp.71–80.