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Herausgegeben von Hans Altmann, Herbert E. Brekle, Hans Jürgen Heringer,
Christian Rohrer, Heinz Vater und Otmar Werner

Jean Boase-Beier

Poetic Compounds

The Principles of Poetic Language
in Modern English Poetry

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PREFACE

This study is the English version of my German dissertation *Poetische Komposita: Eine Untersuchung zu den Prinzipien der poetischen Sprache am Beispiel der modernen englischen Dichtung*, (1986. Nürnberg: Regensburger Microfiche Materialien 015). Apart from one or two passages it is a fairly close translation of the German version.

It would have been an impossible task to record, at the appropriate points in the text, everyone who has influenced my thinking; I thus wish to thank the following friends and colleagues here, as well as all others who have in any way played a part in the writing of this study, whether by offering advice and criticism, taking part in discussions, or giving information and assistance of various kinds: Brigitte Asbach-Schnitker, Eitel Fischer, Alan Forman, Tony Kemp, Craig Mabrey, Stephan Niederwieser, Peter Staudacher and especially Dieter Beier and Jindřich Toman.

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0 INTRODUCTION

0.1. Goals

The attempt to give a coherent account of literary style, or of a particular area of literary style, consists in large part in an attempt to explain our intuitions about the nature of poetry, especially about the language of poetry. It is an undertaking which has attracted not only researchers in the field of literary studies but linguists as renowned as Roman Jakobson, Manfred Bierwisch, Paul Kiparsky, Samuel Jay Keyser and Morris Halle, to mention but a few. In recent times there has been an abundance of structuralist and structuralist-influenced accounts of poetic style as well as a growing number of studies carried out within the framework of generative grammar.¹ Varied as are the theoretical orientations and the aims of these researchers, they have all been motivated by a sense of the insufficiency of purely descriptive taxonomical studies of the language of poetry, by a sense of the need for an articulated theory which would account scientifically for the phenomenon of the language of literature. One of their basic assumptions has been that there are certain phenomena intuitively felt to be "poetic" and that these phenomena cannot be satisfactorily accounted for without recourse to the grammar of standard language, but that, on the other hand, the grammar alone will not suffice to explain them. The theory presented here is also based upon this assumption. It is an attempt to provide an account of one particular area of language in one particular area of literature, namely of compounding in contemporary English poetry, in a systematic way on the basis of a theoretical approach to word-formation and grammar in the generative framework.

Word-studies, both of individual authors and works, and of poetic style in general have been considered by many modern scholars of poetic language to form an essential part of literary criticism; the studies by Barfield (1928), Groom (1937, 1955), Yule (1944), Miles (1946, 1960), Voittl (1969) are cases in point. The importance of examining the words of poetical works lies partly in the fact that the innovatory character of words is, at least intuitively speaking, immediately obvious. Thus a

1 Most of the modern theoretical approaches are represented in anthologies such as Fowler (1966), Chatman & Levin (1967), Freeman (1970, 1981a), Chatman (1971) and Ching et al. (1980).

researcher concerned with poetic language as characterized by deviation from the norm will find ample and unambiguous example material in the new words a poet uses.

The present study is, however, not concerned with the use of that type of word usually marked "poetic" in the dictionary. Deviation in this respect is merely a question of lexical choice, with its attendant considerations of connotation, and so on.² Word-formation, however, is an area of the language characterised in part by similar phenomena to those found in the syntax. It thus provides a rich area of study for poetic deviation as this can exist at several levels, because the products of word-formation are the output of principles interacting at several levels. Our study has been limited to the area of compounding because, in a discussion of acceptability and unacceptability, of deviation and norm, it makes sense to limit the area of study to one which can be precisely defined and accounted for in grammatical terms. In this way it is possible to define in exactly which way a deviant form transgresses the rules of standard language, or would do if it occurred there, and to provide an equally principled explanation to account for this transgression. Modern poetry has been chosen as the area of study because one clearly has the strongest intuitions about acceptability in contemporary language.

As a linguistic stylistic examination of compounding in contemporary English poetry, this study will try to say why certain compound types, which the native speaker would intuitively regard as unacceptable, nevertheless occur frequently in poems. Our first aim, then, is to show that poetic deviation in compounds does not occur haphazardly, but is governed by a set of principles. Our second aim is to show that all of the principles we need to describe poetic compounds are applicable to poetic structures in general. There is much evidence for this, as we hope to show. We are assuming that the language of any segment of literature will have to be accounted for by rules of various types. There will be principles specific to a certain language, age, poetic style or even a specific poet. But these will interact with more general poetic principles. It is the latter type of principles, or rather, principles which seem likely to have such status, which will be our main concern here. Our third aim, then, is an extension of our first and second; namely, to say something of a general nature about the relation of poetic language to standard language. Thus the area of compounding in contemporary English poetry is to be seen as an illustration of a general theory of poetic language which is assumed to have wider implications, not only for the whole range of linguistic phenomena in contemporary English poetry but in fact, in certain aspects at least, for the whole range of linguistic phenomena in

2 For a discussion of this question in connection with eighteenth century poetic diction, see Goller (1964).

poetic language in general.³

It remains to say a word about the data used as examples for the theory of poetic language put forward in this study. Poets have been selected on a theory-determined basis. That is, we have chosen to examine those poets whose works show a strong tendency to use innovation in general and in particular in the area of word-formation. There are many modern poets whose works do not manifest this tendency very strongly (though rather less, perhaps, than those whose works do). But, if the poetic principles we describe here are general in nature, we should expect to find that they are effective in other areas of the language in the work of those poets who do not use deviant word-formations, as they are, of course, in the work of those who do.

0.2. An Outline of the Study

In Chapter 1 we deal with the relation of poetic language to standard language, whereby we attempt to say what poetic language is and why it is justifiable to regard it as different from standard language. In connection with this question we briefly discuss (in 1.1) the role of poetic language studies in literary criticism and in linguistics. In 1.2, the question of poetic style as deviation is discussed, and we define what we mean by the term "deviation". In 1.3, we attempt to show how the speaker's intuition about the nature of poetic language can best be represented in relation to a model of the grammar. Poetic language is seen as the result of an interaction of certain poetic principles with the grammar of standard language.

In Chapter 2 we address the question of teleological explanations of poetic language; it is argued that the poetic principles whose interaction with the grammar accounts for poetic innovation are not functionally motivated.

Chapter 3 is a fairly brief presentation of the model of word-formation upon which the present study is based. It shares a number of features with contemporary studies on word-syntax such as Lieber (1980, 1983), Selkirk (1982), Toman (1983), Boase-Beier and Toman (in print). The position of word-formation within the grammar (3.1) and the concept of the possible compound (3.2) are discussed in addition to various principles of the grammar (3.3). In 3.4, the sixteen compound-types arising from the combination of the four major categories (N,V,A,P) are examined in turn. By determining how certain types of compounds are formed and why

3 But note that in individual cases there may be differences from language to language in compound-forms generated by the grammar. Thus, for example, a form only possible in poetry in English might be a standard language form in some other language.

other types do not occur, it is hoped to provide a basis for the discussion of poetic compounds in Chapter 4. A thorough reading of Chapter 3 is thus a prerequisite to a full understanding of Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 contains the central thesis of the study. Various types of compound are presented which, though unacceptable in standard language, appear to be productive in the poems under discussion. On the basis of the model put forward in Chapter 3, the exact nature of their deviation is determined. Those principles which seem to be at work both here and in other areas of poetic language are discussed in turn and it is shown that their interaction with the grammar of standard language accounts for the poetic forms in question. The exact nature of this interaction is examined and it is shown, furthermore, that the principles which are responsible for poetic compounds are general in nature, i.e., they are not specific to compound-formation nor, even, to word-formation.

Chapter 5 contains some remarks summarising the conclusions of the study and mentioning several points which could form the subject of further research.

0.3. Data

As illustration for this study of poetic compounds the works of several modern English poets have been used.⁴ The selection of poets and works is theory-orientated; poets were chosen whose work shows a strong tendency to innovation, especially in the area of word-formation.

A selection of the compounds discussed, in the contexts in which they occur in the poems, is appended to this work. An effort has been made to include particularly those cases in which the context of a compound is of special relevance to its interpretation, and to give the minimum context required for their understanding. The Appendix thus forms an integral part of the study. It should be stressed, however, that the Appendix contains only minimum contexts; a full understanding of a poetic compound clearly always requires, among other things, a reading of the whole poem in which it occurs.

All examples of compounds which appear in context in the Appendix are marked with "+" when they appear as numbered examples in the text.

4 We have also included one or two poets who, though originally from another country, live or have lived in England and are in general considered to be "English poets".

Examples are given in uninflected form in the text; the lexical categories of compound-elements are given in square brackets after each compound. For all examples taken from the poems under consideration, the source is also given after the compound, in round brackets. Thus examples for which no source is given are identifiable as being of our own construction. The details of the source of examples serve two purposes: besides enabling the example to be found in the original work they serve to identify the examples in the Appendix. For this reason, the texts in the Appendix are arranged according to their sources, numerically and alphabetically.

The following list gives the abbreviations used throughout the work to indicate sources. Full details of the poetic works are to be found in the Bibliography.

A	Peter Redgrove	1977	From every Chink of the Ark
AB	Peter Redgrove	1981	The Apple-Broadcast
ATH	Keith Sagar (ed.)	1983	The Achievement of Ted Hughes
BP	Edward Lucie-Smith (ed.)	1970	British Poetry since 1945
BS	David Wevill	1964	Birth of a Shark
CL	David Holbrook	1978	Chance of a Lifetime
CW	Peter Redgrove	1961	The Nature of Cold Weather
DH	Kevin Crossley-Holland	1976	The Dream-House
DV	Alan Ross	1980	Death Valley
FM	Anne Stevenson	1985	The Fiction Makers
Fo	Robert Conquest	1979	Forays
Fu	John Holloway	1960	The Fugue
FW	Seamus Heaney	1979	Field Work
GH	Carol Rumens	1982	Scenes from the Gingerbread House
HL	Douglas Dunn	1972	The Happier Life
HR	Ted Hughes	1957	The Hawk in the Rain
I	David Holbrook	1960	Imaginations
IF	David Wevill	1966	A Christ of the Ice-Floes
JA	Charles Causley	1961	Johnny Alleluia
KP	Douglas Dunn	1981	St.Kilda's Parliament
L	Ted Hughes	1960	Lupercal
LH	Norman Nicholson	1972	A Local Habitation
M	John Holloway	1956	The Minute
MB	Ted Hughes	1978	Moon-Bells
MH	Geoffrey Hill	1971	Mercian Hymns
MT	Ted Hughes	1979	Moortown
NM	Terence Tiller	1968	Notes for a Myth
NP	A.Alvarez (ed.)	1966	The New Poetry
NP8	John Fuller (ed.)	1982	New Poetry 8
PW	Alastair Reid	1959	Passwords
R	Ted Hughes	1983	River
RE	Ted Hughes	1979b	Remains of Elmet
RG	Kevin Crossley-Holland	1972	The Rain-Giver
S	Peter Dale	1968	Storms
SG	Peter Scupham	1972	The Snowing Globe
SM	Terence Tiller	1979	That Singing Mesh

SP	Peter Scupham	1980	Summer Palaces
SS	Ted Hughes	1975	Season Songs
StW	Norman Nicholson	1981	Sea to the West
SW	Carol Rumens	1983	Star Whisper
TO	Kevin Crossley- Holland	1983	Time's Oriel
TSP	Charles Tomlinson	1978	Selected Poems 1951-1974
UM	Carol Rumens	1981	Unplayed Music
UW	Charles Causley	1968	Underneath the Water
W	Ted Hughes	1967	Wodwo
WM	Peter Redgrove	1963	At the White Monument
WNP	Peter Redgrove	1979	The Weddings at Nether Powers
WP	Peter Redgrove	1968	Work in Progress
WQ	Peter Scupham	1983	Winter Quarters
WW	John Holloway	1965	Wood and Windfall

1 POETIC LANGUAGE

1.1. The Concept of Poetic Language in Linguistics and Literary Studies

In the opinion of many scholars concerned with the theory of literature, studies of literary language in Europe represent a fairly recent development in literary studies, a development which began after the First World War.¹ Certainly there were, as such scholars have almost invariably pointed out, various earlier references to the language of literature, but it was only with the advent of two important new critical methods that literary language gained the importance it has today for the study of literature.² The first of the two trends in question is the method of close reading of the text, the study of "the words on the page" as practised by critics such as I.A.Richards, F.R.Leavis and W.Empson in the 1920s and 1930s, methods in part similar to those used a little later by the American proponents of New Criticism.³ The second is the Continental stylistics of scholars like Leo Spitzer, who emphasised the importance of the language of literature from a philological point of view.⁴

This development in the importance ascribed to the language of literature paralleled to a certain extent the development in linguistics towards structuralism and away from a historical

1 See, for example, Page (1984).

2 In 1957 the critic R.A. Sayce remarked that "the linguistic study of works of literature has become the central procedure of contemporary criticism" (Sayce (1957: 119)).

3 Both English and American critics of the period between about 1920 and 1960 who were convinced of the importance of the language of literature have been called "New Critics", though their approaches to poetry and criticism have in fact often varied quite substantially. For discussion of the methods of New Criticism see, for example, Krieger (1956), Foster (1962), Lee (1966). For examples of the work of the British critics mentioned here see Richards (1924 [1967]), Empson (1930 [1965]) and Leavis (1968).

4 For a discussion of the essential differences in the Continental and Anglo-American methods see Lodge (1984: 52-56). For an example of Spitzer's work see Spitzer (1948 [1962]).

approach.⁵ The literary studies of Richards, Leavis and others were in a similar anti-historical trend. While these latter critics were not linguists, they had a deep understanding of language and an acute awareness of its importance for the study of literature. And the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1916) and his followers in France had an enormous influence, which of course is still in force today, upon both linguistics and literary studies. The linguists of the Prague Circle, founded in 1926 and strongly influenced by Russian Formalism (especially through Roman Jakobson), followed a structuralist approach in both areas. In England, the influence of structuralism upon literary theory was on the whole not felt until after the Second World War, where it was exerted by the work of Roman Jakobson, by translations from the works of other Prague Linguists - especially noteworthy is Garvin's collection of 1964 - , by translations of the work of the Russian Formalists (such as those in Lemon & Reis (1965)), and also by the French scholar Roland Barthes, whose main works on literature began to be published in the 1950s and 1960s. Important post-structuralist critics such as Jacques Derrida in France, J.Hillis Miller in America and D.Lodge and J.Culler in England, have continued to apply the methods of structuralism (or, in a broader sense, of semiology, the theory of signs as proposed by Saussure and others) to the study of literature in general and of literary language in particular.⁶

But at about the same time as structuralist models began to gain importance for the study of literature, the new development in generative linguistic theory which began with Noam Chomsky's Syntactic Structures in 1957 had a further and indeed a very strong influence upon the study of literary language. The theory of generative grammar permitted a development of literary language studies or "linguistic stylistics",⁷ as this area of study is often called, in the direction of models of literary competence.⁸ Explanations could be offered for intuitions about literary language, and the question of what is possible in literary language as opposed to what is there in a particular

5 For a discussion of the parallel development of linguistics and literary studies see Watson (1969: 141-155).

6 For examples of the work of structuralist and structuralist-influenced scholars referred to in this paragraph see Saussure (1916), Jakobson (1960, 1971), Barthes (1964), Derrida (1967), Miller (1970), Culler (1975), Lodge (1984). See also Eagleton (1983).

7 See, for example, Freeman (1970: 4).

8 See Levin (1964), Bierwisch (1965), Abraham & Braunmüller (1973). Note, however, that the use of the term "literary competence" varies. For Bierwisch, if we understand him correctly, it refers to the possession of the grammar of standard language plus a sort of "recognition grammar" for poetic structures. For Levin, on the other hand, it is a direct correlate of linguistic competence. See Coppay (1977) for a criticism of Levin's view. We do not regard as valid

passage by a particular author took on central importance, though this latter type of undertaking has not lost any of its value for the critic and for the stylistician concerned with poetic performance.

An important group of theoretical issues has arisen with the increase in studies of literary language, and particularly in connection with those which make use of the theories of modern generative grammar. These can be expressed as follows: What is the importance for literature of its language?, what is the importance of linguistics for the study of literature and especially for the study of literary language?, what is the difference between the critic's task and the linguist's task in studying literary language? The answers to these questions, which are obviously closely related to one another, vary enormously. At one extreme are statements such as that made by H. Whitehall, that "no criticism can go beyond its linguistics" (Whitehall (1951: 713)).⁹ At the other is the position of certain literary scholars who regard linguistics as unimportant or even, it seems, harmful for the study of literature. This view seems to have arisen among literary critics from a fear of having their area of study encroached upon by "newcomers", i.e. linguists, and a rather understandable impatience with the arrogance of the linguist who is, after all, "simply under-educated in the reading of poetry" (Vendler, 1966: 460). The position occupied by most stylisticians lies somewhere between these extremes, i.e. they believe that linguistics has something to offer the study of literature, indeed, it may be an essential part of the study of literature,¹⁰ but it cannot say all that there is to be said about literature, nor even, as pure linguistics, about literary language. The position we shall be taking here has much in common with this view though it deviates from it in that we shall maintain that linguistics is not an essential part of the study of literature, but only an essential part of the study of stylistics; literary studies may or may not include stylistics - it depends upon its aims. That is, we take the view that the critic and the linguistic stylistician are concerned with different areas of study. This is a suggestion which recalls, perhaps, a statement made by I.A. Richards to the effect that a full critical statement about a literary work involves a part which is critical in the strict sense, i.e. including a value judgement, and a technical part, dealing with "the ways and means by which experiences arise".¹¹ However, our view goes beyond this: the

Coppay's argument that if poetic competence were parallel to linguistic competence, then everyone who could read a poem would be a poet. In fact, everyone who has poetic competence is a poet. The reader, or critic, may construct a model of poetic competence which enables him to read a poem. There is no conflict here, and thus no reason to reject Levin's view.

9 See also Freeman (1970: 3).

10 Compare Freeman's assertion that "a good critic is perforce a good linguist" (Freeman (1970: 3)).

11 I.A. Richards (1924 [1967: 15]).

technical part of a critic's statement is not the same as the statement a linguistic stylistician would make. The area of study usually called stylistics or linguistic stylistics is a clearly defined domain which, far from simply representing common ground of linguistics and literary studies, represents an area which is not the main concern of either. In this we follow William Hendricks (1974), who calls this field "stylolinguistics" (p.9) to emphasise its nature as a "hyphen discipline" (p.8).¹² Stylolinguistics, then, or stylistics, as we shall prefer to call it, is not simply an overlap of linguistics and literary studies, nor is it an application of linguistics to literature; it is a study of the area of their interrelationships.¹³ It is, as a pure discipline, not under any obligation to say anything useful for linguistics or literary criticism, though, of course, it will automatically do so. The linguist need not be concerned with the language of literature and, if he is, he is not and should not be concerned with all its aspects. The literary critic must of course be concerned with the language of literature, but not necessarily in a linguistic sense - he does not have to be a linguist if he is concerned with the language in its purely literary aspect. In other words, "poetic language" should not be identified with poetry; a complete study of poetry can and must go beyond a study of its language.¹⁴ It is the stylistician, then, who will be concerned with literary language as an area for the interaction of literary studies and linguistics. This is an area of study which, like any other discipline, will have its empirical studies and its theoretical considerations. The former will largely consist in studies of the language of individual authors, or of "poetic language" *per se* in a descriptive sense. The latter, by virtue of dealing with theories, will tend not to be restricted to a specific author, but to make general statements. "The study of literature, as opposed to the perusal and discussion of individual works, would become an attempt to understand the conventions which make literature possible" (Culler 1975: viii) - this, a statement of the expectations one might justifiably have of structuralist poetical theory, is also our expectation of the type of theory of poetic language put forward here.

The present work, then, is to be seen as a contribution to the theory of literary language though the theory is, we hope, sufficiently supported by empirical evidence. It should by now have become clear that we are by no means presuming here to take on the critic's task and offer full interpretations of poems or

 12 Compare also the comment by O. Thomas that "the study of style is [...] a hyphenated discipline, [...] stylistics is dependent upon linguistic theory" (Thomas (1976: 203)).

13 The term "stylistics" is frequently used to refer to the study of all types of style, as opposed to only literary style. We are using it here in the latter, more limited sense.

14 "A poem is an object fashioned out of the language, rhythms, beliefs, and obsessions of a poet and a society" (Octavio Paz (1974: v)).

even of aspects of poems but that we are concerned with the nature of poetic language and its relation to the grammar of standard language.

1.2. Poetic Deviation

Having, it is to be hoped, established fairly clearly what we are taking to be the relations of both linguistics and literary studies to the question of literary language, we now turn to the question as to what, in fact, literary language is. The answer is by no means self-evident or, at least, is not always considered to be so.

Though most studies of the language poets and novelists use have worked on the assumption - tacitly made or explicitly stated - that there is such a phenomenon as the language of literature, this is not always the case. The views of researchers vary from a categorical denial of any essential difference between standard and literary language¹⁵ to a view of literary language as an entirely separate language.¹⁶ Both these views have long traditions in the study of literature. To take just two well-known examples from earlier pronouncements on English literature, one might quote Wordsworth, who said that the language of poetry is "a selection of the language really spoken by men", and, for the opposing view, Gray, who said "the language of the age is never the language of poetry; except among the French".¹⁷ Obviously these views reflect in part the beliefs, the taste and the literary theory of their respective ages. The former, in so far as it represented avoidance of intentional poetic devices might be called the typical view of the romantic poets, which was in part a reaction to what were considered the excesses represented by the poetry of their predecessors, (of whom Gray is an example). The origins of these opposing views are often considered to lie in an opposition between the neo-Platonic and the Aristotelian traditions. The romantic poets are seen as followers of the neo-Platonic tradition because they held the view - to simplify matters greatly - that ordinary and poetic

15 See, for example, McLain (1976: 244).

16 See, for example, Thorne (1965).

17 See Wordsworth's "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads* ((1805); here Wordsworth & Coleridge (1976: 29)); and Gray's letter to West of 8th April 1742 (here Gray (1971: 192); the latter is quoted in Bateson (1973: 54)). See also Göller (1964: 25). But note that Wordsworth's view was perhaps not as clear cut as later critics - including Coleridge, in the *Biographia Literaria* (1817; here Coleridge (1954: vol.II)) - have thought it to be. Wordsworth in fact says that poetic language should be "a selection of the language of men" (1976: 29; emphasis added) and observes that a properly selected subject will lead to language "necessarily [...] dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures" (1976: 30). This fact is also noted by Wimsatt & Brooks (1957: 347).

language cannot be separated. According to the Aristotelian tradition, they can and must be distinguished.¹⁸

How are we to view these conflicting opinions? Are we to suppose that any pronouncement on literary language can only be relevant to the age in which it is uttered? Partly, yes. But it also seems possible to make statements about literary language which are independent of a particular age and cultural area. Primarily, this is possible because the statements of theorists and even (or especially) of poets themselves about the language of poetry are often seen, upon examination of the work in question, not to be borne out by empirical evidence. As an illustration of this type of discrepancy, compare Coleridge's arguments against Wordsworth's assertion that he used the language of "men in low and rustic life" (Coleridge (1954: II, 41)). Coleridge maintains that Wordsworth could not avoid using poetic language, and adds:

I reflect with delight, how little a mere theory, though of his own workmanship, interferes with the processes of genuine imagination in a man of true poetic genius.
(Coleridge (1954: II, 41))

In fact this observation does not only apply to Wordsworth; it is also true of later poets who have made similar claims. In the *Introduction* to his *New Lines II*, which appeared in 1963 (a sequel to the 1956 *New Lines*, which was felt to have established the existence of a group of poets known as "The Movement"), Robert Conquest says that:

Though it would be false to state that no genuine poetic effect can ever be achieved by the disruption of grammar, sense, and so on, yet this is nowadays, as always, so rare that I have thought it scarcely worth achieving a forced catholicity by representing it here.
(Conquest (1963:xxviii))

Conquest several times in his *Introduction* invokes Wordsworth, and proclaims that the poets in his collection also use "the language of men" (p.xxviii).

However, a study of the poems in *New Lines II* reveals that many of the most deceptively simple poems use rhymed lines, and that there is a wealth of metaphor of various types:

(1-1) *slashed clouds leak gold* (p.41)

iced with a vanilla of dead white stone (p.95)

18 For a useful discussion of these traditions see Hawkes (1972).

a daisy gleams as coldly as a star (p.134)

of alliteration:

(1-2) *protracted paradox of printing hands* (p.89)

a slow and stopping curve southwards (p.19)

a seep silent all summer (p.55)

and of "poetic" uses of words:

(1-3) *the fluting owl glides velvet* (p.42)

under the night-green boughs (p.111)

glossy-with-graining pulpit (p.92)

These facts suggest that a description of the language of these poets as "the language of men", if by this is meant the standard language, is highly inaccurate.

As a further instance of the poet's misconceptions about his own work, consider A.Robbe-Grillet's statement that "a metaphor is nearly always useless, adding nothing to the description" (1965: 368) and compare it with the following statement by a critic:

[...] however much Robbe-Grillet may protest against the use of humanistically oriented symbols and metaphors, he cannot himself avoid using them.

(Hagopian (1968: 49))

These examples illustrate not only the unreliability of poets' judgements about the poetic, but also the fact that poems in fact cannot be written without using poetic language. The most reasonable view of the conflict discussed above seems thus to be that the romantic view must at least, to have any validity, be expressed in a less extreme form. It is then possible to reconcile it with the opposing view, by observing that literary language, in any age, is the language of men in the sense that it uses the grammar and lexis of standard language, but that it is different from standard language in that it also uses devices not used in the latter. Just what these devices are and how they come into being will be made precise in the following pages. For the moment it is sufficient to say that we regard as justified the assumption that there is such a thing as "literary language" which is composed of a combination of standard language and what

we shall in the following call "poetic language".¹⁹ We shall view both poetic language and standard language as systems of principles. By "poetic language" we mean the special language commonly used in poems, novels and plays, but not that commonly used in ordinary conversation, advertisements, journalism or scientific works.²⁰ All these latter domains, which, like poetic language, can be characterised by sets of principles,²¹ will use poetic language at times, by consciously borrowing. There will also be cases in which poetic language and, say, the special language used in journalism exhibit the same phenomena, because they will share some of the same principles. But there will be many areas in which they do not overlap. Poetic language is the result of an interaction of poetic principles with standard language principles. This interaction may, but need not, take place. All standard language forms can thus appear in poems but poetic language forms only appear in standard language under special circumstances. That is, there is a tendency to avoid what are regarded as "poetic" forms in standard language to the extent that, should they arise unforeseen, they are usually corrected. A similar point to this is made by Shapiro & Beum (1965: 93) in connection with the use of a particular poetic device in prose:

[...] notice that we even take pains to avoid alliteration in prose, where it seems appropriate only for a humorous or an eccentric effect.²²

It should be noted that the distinction we have made is not so much that between prose and poetry as between literary and non-literary types of language.²³

19 This is a term made famous by the Prague School linguists, notably Mukařovský; our use of it varies though somewhat from his, as will become clear. (See Mukařovský (1932 [1964]).)

20 But note that different literary genres have their own principles which interact with the more general poetic principles we shall be concerned with here. For example, rhyme will appear frequently in literary prose as alliteration, but less often as full rhyme and clearly cannot appear in any patterns of recurrence depending upon an arrangement in lines. That many types of rhyme do not, however, depend upon the poetic line will be seen in the discussion of rhyme in Chapter 4.

21 For a discussion of the characteristics of these various areas of language, see, for example, Gülich & Raible (1975) and Fleischer & Michel (1979); and further Sandig (1971) for the language of journalism, Spitzer (1949) and Römer (1968) for the language of advertising and Gläser (1975) for the language of scientific works.

22 Compare the statement by Mukařovský (1932 [1964: 19]) that "The standard language [...] avoids foregrounding [...]"; "foregrounding" is the technique of drawing attention to a linguistic form. See the discussion in Chapter 4.

23 The distinction between prose and poetry is, however, one which has interested many critics and which, however unclear