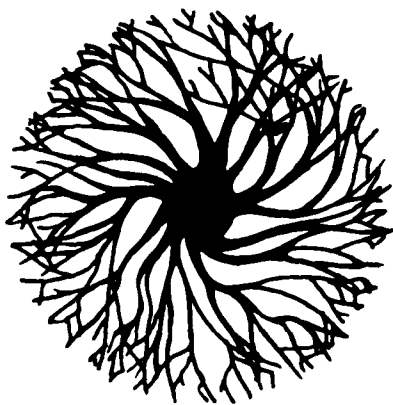


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WORKING PAPERS OF THE MINNESOTA CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDIES IN LANGUAGE, STYLE, & LITERARY THEORY

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VOLUME 2 NUMBER 1 SPRING 1974

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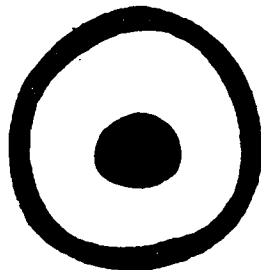
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Publication of Centrum is made possible by a grant from the Graduate School, and by editorial assistance furnished by the Department of English. The typescript was prepared by Cathie Mason.

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PREFATORY NOTES

Periodicals librarians should be warned that the date on the cover of this issue is metaphorical, "as if." But the volume and issue numbers are accurate.

Half of this issue is devoted to a portion of the forum, Current Issues in Literary Theory, held 1 November 1974 at the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Midwest Modern Language Association. Julie Carson organized the forum; the papers discussed were "Effective Stylistics," by Eugene P. Kintgen; "Literature and Psychoanalysis in the Present State of Research in France," by Michel Pierssens; "The Interface Between Linguistics and Literature: The London-School Paradigm," by John Taylor; and "Intentions, Context, and Poetry," by Robert L. Brown. The first and last of these are published here.

At the forum all four participants presented oral summaries of their arguments (copies of their papers had been supplied to MMLA members before the meeting); they then entertained questions from each other and from the audience. Professor Carson tape-recorded the question period; a partial transcript is printed here immediately following Professor Brown's paper. The transcript is virtually verbatim, though false starts of sentences and some other redundancies have been omitted. The prefix Q identifies questions from the floor. Thanks are due to Pati Collins for having prepared the first draft of the transcript.

We are grateful to Gerald L. Bruns, Executive Secretary of the MMLA, for permission to publish this portion of the proceedings.

A similar forum, devoted to the topic Literary Speech Acts, will be held at the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the MMLA, scheduled for Chicago, 6-8 November, 1975. Persons who wish to present a paper for discussion should correspond with the chairman of the forum: Michael Hancher, 207 Main Engineering Building, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

A bibliography of speech-act theory, compiled by Marcia Eaton, is scheduled to appear in the next issue of Centrum (2:2). Other contributions will include "On Literature and the Bible," by James C. Norhnberg, and "New Methods and Theory of Fiction from France" (a review of Gerard Genette's Figures III) by Harold F. Mosher.

The pictures of Azilian pebbles used to decorate this issue are taken from the sources cited in the editorial.

ROLAND A. CHAMPAGNE

The Resurrection of THOTH, the God of Writing:

Jacques Derrida's Arguments

for the machine à écrire



Any attempt to present the "thought" of Jacques Derrida must fail through over-simplification. But it is natural to try to account for the literary, linguistic, and philosophical influence of a man whose works have been translated at least in Japan, Chile, Denmark, Italy, and the United States since 1967.¹ That year, at the age of thirty-seven, the Algerian-born philosopher of the École normale supérieure published three books: La Voix et le phénomène (a development of his previous study of Husserl's theory of signs, which had been prefaced to the latter's L'Origine de la géométrie in 1962), L'Écriture et la différence (a collection of essays questioning the efficacy of "structuralist" views of epistemology), and De la grammatologie (a theoretical postulate of Western "logocentrism" based on his readings of Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss). The impact of these works, specifically the latter one, is still being felt today, especially in the ideology of the "Tel Quel group" around Philippe Sollers in France. In 1968, Jacques Derrida participated in the Tel Quel literary manifesto, Théorie d'ensemble, with his study "La Différance."

[Centrum, 2:1 (Spring 1974), 5-13.]

Three more books appeared with Derrida's signature in 1972: La Dissémination (studies of Sollers, Mallarmé, and Plato), Marges de la philosophie (discussions of rhetoric involving Husserl, Hegel, Heidegger, Austin, Benveniste, Valéry, et al.), and Positions (an interview wherein he attempts to bring his scattered terms together).² Recently (1973), he has introduced an edition of Condillac's Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines with a study titled "L'archéologie du frivole," a play on Michel Foucault's L'archéologie du savoir. These are the major sources for Derrida's arguments against Western metaphysics. Whole issues of at least two French reviews (L'Arc No. 54, July 1973; and Les Lettres Francaises, 29 March 1972) have contained praises of his work. Lucette Finas and Roger Laporte have exposed the implications of Derrida's thought for feminism and Semitism in Écartés (Fayette, 1973). And Roland Barthes has told us how important Derrida's thought was to his own development: "Derrida was one of those who helped me to understand what were the stakes (philosophical, ideological) of my own work: he has upset structure, he has opened up the sign; for us, he is the one who has broken the links of the chain."³

However, Jacques Derrida's works are very obscure. His hermetic vocabulary is a major obstacle: he often uses neologisms which are polyvalent, changing meanings in different contexts. Their "definitions" are not easily obtained from his writings.

In order to facilitate an approach to his arguments, I shall try to draft a lexicon of Derrida's basic terms despite his own reluctance to specify such lexemes as atoms of his system. Derrida even refers to some of his terms as "undecipherable" ("indécidables"). Let us then understand with Derrida that his terms are not precisely honed atoms of meaning but rather "points of economic condensation,"⁴ which we will later develop in discursive fashion.

Derrida's Points of Economic Condensation

<i>archi-écriture</i>	--	<i>writing as presence, without spoken language or meaning as a model;</i>
<i>déclenchement</i>	--	<i>the unlocking of the Western components of <u>logos</u> - e.g. signifier/signified, spoken/written;</i>
<i>déconstruction</i>	--	<i>Derrida's own work of violently upsetting the balance of the <u>logos</u>;</i>

<i>différance</i>	--	<i>the intransitive work of writing to assert its presence;</i>
<i>différence</i>	--	<i>the disjunction of time and place between the elements of referent/signifier/signified;</i>
<i>dissémination</i>	--	<i>the dispersion of meanings through writing;</i>
<i>écriture</i>	--	<i>writing within Western <u>logos</u>, as a perpetuation of difference;</i>
<i>gramme, trace</i>	--	<i>the authentic mark of writing which creates its own activity by effacing any other "models";</i>
<i>grammatologie</i>	--	<i>the science of writing (which is to explain the myth of the origins of writing);</i>
<i>hymen</i>	--	<i>the absence of reconciliation between spoken and written;</i>
<i>jeu</i>	--	<i>the playfulness of writing in arbitrarily conditioning signifiers;</i>
<i>logocentrisme</i>	--	<i>the Western obsession with the <u>logos</u> as a holistic argument of linguistic origins;</i>
<i>logos</i>	--	<i>the word originating in a spoken model, merely imitated by writing, extended to reasoning, life, wealth, and the father-concept;</i>
<i>marque, marge, marche</i>	--	<i>the limits of space introduced by writing;</i>
<i>pharmakon</i>	--	<i>that which is remedy and poison at once;</i>
<i>phonocentrisme</i>	--	<i>Western view of a phonetic unit as the vocal origin for language;</i>
<i>polysémie</i>	--	<i>the accumulation of meanings within an individual <u>logos</u>;</i>
<i>supplément</i>	--	<i>a substitute which can never sufficiently replace the authentic model, e.g. Rousseau considered writing as a "supplement" for the word.</i>

These many terms are inter-connected in a subtle network that argues for a revitalization of writing as a creative activity, independent of any other models. I have sub-titled this study "la machine à écrire" because Derrida presents arguments for a new understanding of the mechanics of writing, the most literal sense of "la machine à écrire." His re-creation of the mechanics of writing involves the substitution of the myth of Thoth--the Egyptian god of writing, numbers, and death--for the Western myth of "logocentrism." In contrast with the "logos"-

oriented mechanics of writing propagated thus far by Western culture, the myth of Thoth is a model for writing which has operated independently of the "logos" despite the cultural conditioning of its readers. Hence Derrida proposes new critical jargon with which he can discuss these inherent rules of writing apart from the "logos."

The complexity of his arguments may often be overwhelming; indeed, "Derrida's texts invite misreading."⁵ But we can learn a great deal about our own methods and ideas by carefully exploring and deciphering the density of the Derrida texts, for his writing provokes us beyond mere reading. Catherine Clément tells us: "all who read Derrida, whether they are in an academic milieu or not, are readers who write: readers who use Derrida's texts to write in their own turn, and not only to read them."⁶ Let us now explore the network of his texts to see in what manner he provokes his readers.

The initial impetus of Derrida's argument appears to be negative as he seeks to de-construct (cf. "dé-construction") Western "logocentrism." This "logocentrism" has been described by a disciple as "another name for metaphysics and its verbal property rights."⁷ Identified with Western civilization, the logos is an effort by Western man to establish his origins in the beginning of language. From Plato to Husserl, writing has become a secondary activity, able only to imitate the spoken word and reproduce "meaning." The logos comprises a descending hierarchy that subordinates "signifiant" to "signifié," and "écrit" to "parole." Western civilization has closed itself up in theories of correspondances between the elements of each hierarchy. Language is assumed to have recoverable meaning, thus providing molecular adhesion between the linguistic atoms of "signifié" and "signifiant." And the effort to recover human origins in language is "phonocentric" and treats all language as if it were merely a reflection of the vocal aspect. Plato and Hegel are the great propagators of such a theory. Even the Husserlian notion of "voice" betrays a closed view of logos: "The phenomenological voice would be that spiritual flesh which continues to speak and to be present to itself--to hear itself--in the absence of the world."⁸

It is a fair question whether Derrida is right to characterize all of Western civilization as "logocentric."⁹ But even if his arguments in fact engage only a part of Western civilization, his efforts to unlock ("déclencher") and de-construct may still be valuable.

It is the positive side of Derrida's argument for a revival of writing as an independent creativity which is most

appealing. This portrayal of the mechanistic workings of writing is especially intriguing as it approaches a theory of the unconscious manifested through writing. Elisabeth Roudinesco has presented the work of Derrida in these terms: "the thought of Derrida seeks to avoid the trap of origins by displacing its presence in a sort of future anterior, in a condition of time similar to that of the unconscious."¹⁰ Such a projection into a future anterior is achieved by anticipating the potential power of writing. Unlike the closed, self-sufficient logos, new writing ("archi-écriture") will implement a violence that disrupts the recovery of its "signifié" and thereby affirms its presence to man as unique and untranslatable.

Derrida resurrects the myth of Thoth--the ancient Egyptian god of writing, numbers, and death--as an example of the game of "écriture." According to that myth, the Egyptian sun-god Ra chose Thoth to replace him at night, as a moon-god, thereby making Thoth (the god of writing) an entity in and of himself, and a mere reflection of the sun. As the god of numbers, Thoth was capable of infinite realization. As the god of death, he was respected as the limit between life and non-life. Similarly, "archi-écriture," according to Derrida, will assert its presence as a self-sufficient entity capable of infinite realization. Unlike the logocentric "écriture," which asserts its dependency on its father-image of the spoken, recoverable meaning, "archi-écriture" is an orphaned son whose origin cannot be determined. And the god of writing, Thoth, becomes in Derrida's mythology "neither a king, not a valet, but a sort of joker, a dispersible signifier, a trump which gives the game some playfulness."¹¹

The Derrida commentary on Philippe Sollers' Nombres exemplifies the playfulness of this new sense of writing. "La dissémination" is not a critical commentary on the Sollers text but a development of many of the themes and images introduced by it. Without specifying the meaning for the hermetic text in discursive fashion, Derrida's essay generates signifier upon signifier in an attempt to displace logocentric writing. He uses the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Lévi-Strauss, and Condillac as examples of logocentric writing as a destroyer of presence (cf. "différence") by its modelling upon meaning and voices. Paul de Man has portrayed Derrida's reading of Rousseau as an assertion of "the priority of language over that of presence."¹² And indeed, Derrida analyzes the problem of language for all of his subjects. From this linguistic concern he then postulates the necessary conditions of presence and absence. Condillac insisted upon repressing writing and thereby reducing the disjunctions of time and

place in the written word. However, Derrida insists upon implementing a writing which is more present than voice or meaning. This writing displaces the disjunctions of time and place into the mutually exclusive qualities of presence and absence. The "trace" or "gramme" of writing is similar to an eraser which eradicates the properties of voice and meaning. The activity of linking presence and absence through writing is called "différance." The neologism "différance" (combining the noun "différence" with the present participle ending "-ant") is distinctive in that it designates a new identity for writing which cannot be distinguished when spoken. Derrida unites the play of tracing and effacing within this function of différance: "If we admit that différance is in itself other than absence or presence, if it traces, one should speak of a disappearance of the trace since it is a matter of forgetting the difference between being and becoming."¹³ This typically dense statement suggests that the playfulness of writing is a mechanical form of amnesia: it asserts its own presence by erasing its links to logocentrism. Writing is not a mere carbon-copy of the logos. Writing exists by virtue of its own mechanics, which merely plays with the mechanics of the Western logos. However, we are readers formed by Western culture, and the growing complexity of the network of Derrida's terms begins to pose a threat to his readers. We may become uncomfortable as he presents us with "an awareness of our impending obsolescence."¹⁴

Derrida does not seek to transcend the metaphysics of the triadic terms "signifier"/"signified"/"referent." He prefers to displace this closed system in favor of what he calls "dissémination." Playing upon the lexical and biological terms "seme" and "semen," he devises a host of related terms to elaborate a theory of literary dispersion. Derrida tells us at one point that "writing is a lost trace, a non-viable semen, all that is in the sperm which is dispensed without reservation, a force sidetracked outside the field of life."¹⁵ Différance is also a critical activity which participates in this dispersive play of writing. Christian Delacampagne has portrayed this sense of différance: "it is something like a task, but the task of thinking itself, of a type of thinking which, in order to clear a path through this illusion of presence which is being, follows the trace already left there, 'in stippled fashion,' by writing in its indigenous path-clearing."¹⁶ We as readers are also called into the new mechanics of writing; we are to trace the play of Derrida's own writing as Derrida has done with the texts of Lautréamont, Mallarmé, Bataille, Sollers, and others. Rather than accumulate the semantic polyvalence of texts (cf. "polysémie"), we are challenged to disseminate the

signifiers of a text and to continue tracing their development. In "L'archéologie du frivole," Derrida tells us that "frivolousness does not overtake the sign; it is the congenital opening play of the sign, its primal principle (the arché)."¹⁷ We are supposed to respond to the opening play of the sign; and, in continuing that game, to remember that Thoth, or writing, is a joker, a trump card. In effect, Derrida displaces logocentrism in favor of semiotics as the basis for the mechanics of writing. Fredric Jameson may have been right to suggest that Derrida merely substitutes one metaphysical system for another: ". . . Derrida's notion of trace [is] suspiciously like yet another ontological theory of the type it was initially designed to denounce."¹⁸

We seem to have come full circle, but not quite. The path is a spiral, rather: because we are now able to see our own obsession with the closed parameters of the sign, whether or not we subscribe to logocentrism. Derrida has alluded to the headless (Bataille's "acéphale"), mechanical play of writing: "to lose one's head . . . such is probably the effect of dissemination."¹⁹ In light of the dispersive tendencies of such unconscious writing, we are challenged to spend rather than to conserve our critical talents. Derrida invokes the image of lost virginity in his account of the need for our closed system of the sign to yield, as does the hymen to produce a fruitful union of reader and text. He also cites the botanical operation of dehiscence to exemplify this activity. The definition is taken from Littré: "an action by which the distinct parts of a closed organ are opened without being torn, along the suture of their union."²⁰ The blooming of plants takes place through this dehiscence. Similarly, the plural developments of a text must be borne forth by a reader who will naturally open up the budding dimensions of a text. Indeed, for Derrida, "a text is only a text if it hides from its initial confrontation, from its first visitor, the law of its composition and the rule of its game."²¹ Although Derrida has told us that "I am trying to remain at the limit of philosophical discourse,"²² his arguments now present us with provocations to go beyond that limit and explore the implications of his new mythology for our reading and writing of other texts. The resurrected body of Thoth is a call to arms for a rejuvenated textual criticism. Whether we agree with Jacques Derrida or not, he requires our response. His challenge has been well described by the late Jacques Ehrmann: "Without anticipating the results, we must therefore wager according to the odds"²³

NOTES

¹By no means a comprehensive list of Derrida's translators: Koe to Genshō, tr. Kakashi Nobuaki (Tokyo: Risōsha, 1970); Tiempo y presencia, Ousia y grammé, tr. Patricio Marchant (Santiago: Universitaria, 1971); La Voce e il fenomeno, tr. Gianfranco Dalmaso (Milan: Jaca, 1968); Della Grammatologia, tr. Gianfranco Dalmaso (Milan: Jaca, 1969); Speech and phenomena, tr. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1973).

²An English translation of part of this interview appeared in Diacritics, 2 (1972), 35-43. This English translation captures the density of Derrida's presentation as well as his reluctance to clarify his argument for his audience.

³Letter of Roland Barthes to Jean Ristat, Les Lettres Francaises (29 March 1972), p. 3.

⁴Derrida, Diacritics, 35.

⁵Richard Klein, "Prolegomenon to Derrida," Diacritics, 2 (1972), 32.

⁶Catherine Clément, "À L'écoute de Derrida," L'Arc, No. 54 (1973), 16.

⁷Philippe Sollers, "A Step on the Moon," The Times Literary Supplement, No. 3526 (25 Sept. 1969), 1085.

⁸Jacques Derrida, La Voix et le phénomène (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), p. 15.

⁹Jean Paris remarked in his course on "Generative Criticism" in Vichy, France (13 July 1973), that Western logocentrism could not be defended in view of the hieroglyphics of the Maya and Aztec Indians of the Americas. However, these tribes are not generally considered within the cultural development of Western civilization. It is difficult to specify their influence on other Western languages.

¹⁰Elisabeth Roudinesco, "À propos du 'concept' de l'écriture: Lecture de Jacques Derrida," La Nouvelle Critique, No. 39 bis (report of the Colloque Cluny II of April 1970), p. 226.

¹¹Jacques Derrida, "La Pharmacie de Platon," in his La Dissémination (Paris: Le Seuil, 1972), p. 105.

¹²Paul de Man, Blindness and Insight (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 119.

¹³Jacques Derrida, "La Différance," in Théorie d'ensemble, ed. Philippe Sollers et al. (Paris: Le Seuil, 1968), p. 63.

¹⁴Anon., "A Theory of Writing," The Times Literary Supplement, 15 February 1968, p. 153.

¹⁵Derrida, "La Pharmacie," p. 176.

¹⁶Christian Delacampagne, "La Lettres retrouvée: Un coup portée à la métaphysique," Le Monde (des livres), 14 June 1973, 22.

¹⁷Jacques Derrida, "L'archéologie du frivole," preface to Condillac's Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines (Paris: Galilée, 1973), p. 82.

¹⁸Fredric Jameson, The Prison-House of Language (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), p. 183.

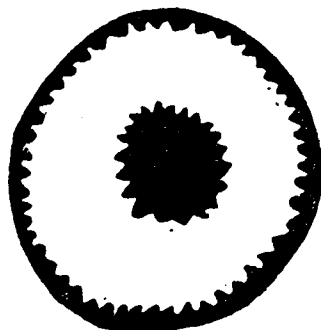
¹⁹Derrida, "La Pharmacie," p. 27.

²⁰Jacques Derrida, "La Double séance," Tel Quel, No. 41 (Spring 1970), p. 42, n. 20.

²¹Derrida, "La Pharmacie," p. 71.

²²Jacques Derrida, Positions (Paris: Minuit, 1972), p. 14.

²³Jacques Ehrmann, "Sur le jeu et l'origine, où il est surtout question de 'La dissémination' de Jacques Derrida," Sub-Stance, No. 7 (Fall 1973), p. 123.



ELIZABETH W. BRUSS

Models and Metaphors for Narrative Analysis

During the past decade, self-conscious attempts to establish a formal "science" of literature have aroused both excitement and dismay. Of all the research and theory connected to what has been loosely called the Structuralist movement, none has been more prominent or more promising than narrative analysis. Yet neither the analysts themselves nor their assailants have been particularly accurate in their claims about formal methods or the goals they are designed to achieve. Far too often it is those who are the most fierce in their arguments for rigor who have naive notions of what comprises rigor, appropriating technical procedures and terminology more for the sake of their appearance than for their operational or conceptual implications. In what follows, I hope to make the value and the necessary restrictions which should accompany the use of formal literary models a bit more clear. It is not my intention to dismiss the work of a decade, but rather to indicate that the practice of narrative analysis is both more and less than it claims to be--less precise but more inventive, less a theoretical model of narrative than a heuristic metaphor.

i.

We typically mean several things when we claim that a study of narrative is "formal." First we mean that it attempts to define the essential or logically necessary properties of narrative and to distinguish these from local or contingent features. Secondly, we mean that the methods used in the study are themselves formal, that our terminology is well-defined and consistent, with explicit conditions governing its application. The questions initiating the study and how these questions are related to the procedures we have chosen should also be clearly stated, or at least statable.

Once a technical vocabulary or methodology has become well established, however, it is easy to forget the purposes which shaped it and to assume that it is somehow inherently well-defined. While a procedure can be extended to a new context, it will not remain systematic if no steps are taken to assure that it is still being used systematically. This

is a caveat frequently ignored in narrative analysis. Various theories have been proposed which make use of elaborate meta-languages and mathematical models without explaining why these models are required. At times a meta-language may be no more than an innocuous notational variant of traditional criticism. But at other times models are imposed on narratives with little appreciation for the assumptions they introduce into the study.

The role of a model in analyzing and explaining any phenomenon is far more restricted than one is tempted to assume.¹ At best, the model can provide only an analogue, a reduced or simplified substitute for the real object of study, which we use because it is easier to manipulate than the original. Thus we can only construct a model after we have already identified those features in the original which we wish to examine more closely. If we wish to make predictions or base an argument on the results our model achieves, we must also know how the material used to construct the model affects the features we are studying, how close the resemblance between original and model actually is, and what differences we might need to take into account. In the case of theoretical and mathematical models, where the new medium is symbolic, the fact that we are still working only with an analogy may become obscured. One tends to ignore the invisible properties of a symbolic medium, or to assume that a formula which is ontologically neutral, which lacks reference, is also semantically neutral. Yet numbers and variables do carry certain semantic preconceptions; they are limited in the values they can be assigned and the operations they can perform. When a theorist fails to question the "fit" between his symbolic formula and the features it is intended to represent, serious distortion may result. One can overcome the restrictions of any medium, but to do so requires a sophisticated grasp of that medium. To use a symbolic medium properly, then, one should know a good deal about the categories and the operations that it embodies, and even more about their adequacy to reflect the more interesting features of narrative (or whatever else one is studying.) There should be a systematic relationship established between the domain of the problem and the domain of the model, a "mapping convention" which one knows and obeys, "rules for translating the terminology to the model is such a way as to conserve truth value" (Black [1962], p. 222). Even (or, perhaps, especially) when the model is symbolic rather than concrete, the theorist should be aware of what grounds he has for his analogy and what motivations allow him to translate his problem into a new medium.

A properly constructed formal model can be a significant theoretical aid. According to Black (1962):

The advantages . . . arising from the introduction of mathematical analysis into any domain of empirical investigation . . . are precision in formulating relations, ease of inference via mathematical calculation, and the intuitive grasp of the structures revealed . . . (p. 225).

As a useful "organizing device," a model can represent facts or hypotheses efficiently and allow one to comprehend complex relationships at a glance. Although it may assist in predicting the consequences of what we already know, it cannot legitimately add anything new to our knowledge of a subject. Yet precisely because it can be orderly, dazzling in its clarity and simplicity, such a model may become a dangerous piece of intellectual machinery.

The drastic simplifications demanded for success of the mathematical analysis entail a serious risk of confusing accuracy of the mathematics with strength of empirical verification in the original field. Especially important is to remember that the mathematical treatment furnishes no explanations. Mathematics can be expected to do no more than draw consequences from the original empirical assumptions. (Black [1962], p. 225)

Additional complications (and sources of confusion) can arise when a model which has been successfully applied to one problem is extended to another. This has typically been the case in narrative analysis which borrows extensively from formal linguistics. Linguistic models usually reach their new domain without significant adjustments--and with some uncertainty whether they are to function as models for narrative derived from linguistics, or as semiotic models applicable to both language and narrative. Moreover, these borrowed models are "twice-removed," since in their original application they were already simplified projections of only certain features of natural language, those which were "theoretically interesting," onto the variables and relations of the chosen meta-language.² While it is certainly possible to compare narrative and linguistic structure, there is no guarantee that an existing linguistic model will reflect precisely those properties which language shares with narrative. The design of the linguistic model, the categories it isolates and the patterns it predicts, reflect issues in a particular theory of language--issues such as the distribution of

phonemes and morphemes, for example, or intuitions about syntactic ambiguity. Thus the units and patterns which appear in the model have no logical necessity, no real existence, outside the problems of linguistic analysis and description which gave rise to them. There is no a priori reason to assume that these categories will be relevant or important to narrative analysis unless there is reason to believe that both the object of study and the purpose of study are substantially the same. Even then, there is no reason why linguistics should provide the only models; there is nothing "more formal" or more well-defined about linguistic terminology and procedures than those used in any other area of research and inquiry.

The popularity of linguistic models seems to be the result, in part, of historical accident. Most contemporary narrative analysis is indebted to the work of Vladimir Propp, who specially stated that his Morphology of the Folktale was comparable to a search for the "grammar" or "abstract substratum" of a language.³ Propp based his analogy on the fact that he had an extended corpus of individual tales apparently sharing a common sequential structure. His corpus was thus susceptible to the same taxonomic procedures which linguists used for isolating and cataloguing the phonological and morphological constituents of the speech chain.

It was natural that later analysts seeking a way to describe the workings of narrative in formal terms, without recourse to circular definitions or preconceived, notional categories, would take inspiration from Propp. But there have been errors in the work deriving from Propp which were absent in the original. There have been attempts, for example, to apply Propp's "functions" (the units comprising the sequence of the fairy-tale) directly to other narratives, without prior distributional analysis. But Propp's decision to relegate some features of narrative (such as the characteristics of the *dramatis personae*) to the periphery of his model was arrived at only because of the distributional regularities he observed in his own materials. Those who study other kinds of narrative which give more prominence to character, to epistemological and moral events, are forced to invent ad hoc translation rules for applying Propp's model or to supplement the model with auxiliary psychological and atmospheric functions.⁴ A more subtle problem occurs when Propp's analogy between linguistic and narrative analysis is adopted without his motivating framework. When the points of resemblance become vague, there is nothing to constrain the kind of linguistic model which can be appropriated for narrative analysis.

Levi-Strauss was one of the first to propose important refinements of Propp's system. Although he did not frame the analogy between narrative and language in the same way, he did provide his own motivation for a linguistic model. Like Propp, he conceived of his work as operating on an extended, indeed an unclosed, corpus, and also like Propp, he depended upon the omissions and permutations of an entire set of narratives to isolate structural units. But for Levi-Strauss, the object was not to discover and demonstrate the properties defining a family or class of narratives.

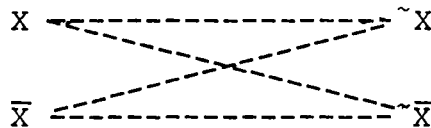
. . . what I am concerned to clarify is not so much what there is in myths (without, incidentally, being in man's consciousness) as the system of axioms and postulated defining the best possible code, capable of conferring a common significance on unconscious formulations which are the work of minds, societies, and civilizations chosen from among those most remote from each other, . . . each myth taken separately exists as the limited application of a pattern, which is gradually revealed by the relations of reciprocal intelligibility discerned between several myths. (Levi-Strauss [1969], pp. 12-13)

Levi-Strauss compares narrative to language because both are semiotic structures--an approach considerably different from Propp's formal and procedural comparison. Drawing on Saussure's famous distinction between langue and parole, Levi-Strauss treats the surface form of mythological narratives as ancillary to more basic semiotic patterns. Propp's linear sequence of obligatory and optional functions is therefore replaced by a model which reflects the "logical form" of narrative, the system of relations which sequence merely expresses.⁵

In Greimas' extension of the work of Levi-Strauss, the divorce between the surface structure of narrative and its underlying semiotic structure has become even more pronounced. Greimas, however, makes explicit the fact that he is interested in the semantic properties of narrative. Accepting the constituents which Levi-Strauss has proposed as "units of mythic meaning," Greimas offers a "basic axiological model" of narrative structure which makes use of Levi-Strauss' homologies and Jakobson's system of binary analysis in order to arrive at its distinctive semantic features (Greimas [1972]). According to Gerard Genot, this model is so powerfully concerned with semantic values that it is potentially indifferent to the distinction between narrative and other kinds of semiotic events.⁶

So one gets paradigms of inter-permutable semic values, and chains (or syntagms) of locally associated constants, all combining to pattern inside the text a number of successive configurations which constitutes the paranarrative dimension, in conformity with which every text is a narrative story, even if the specific forms of the category "story" are lacking in it or can be denied by the internal evidence of the text. (Genot [1973], p. 26)

A model with this broad a range is simply not delicate enough for the study of narrative as narrative, nor is it designed for this purpose. It is not only a matter of the reductive treatments which are produced when such a model is applied to individual narratives, although this is the most common complaint raised by traditional literary critics and by some narrative analysts as well.⁷ A more serious concern is the way a model prescribes certain ways of organizing our attention, constrains the questions which we will ask and the patterns we will find. For example, the "fundamental logical diagram" proposed by Greimas provides for four and only four semic distinctions--positive, contradictory, contrary, and contradictory of the contrary--making up the balance of opposing forces in a well-formed narrative.⁸



A set of "transactional rules" accompanies this basic axiom, translating the abstract configuration into the various entities, attributes, and actions of an actual narrative, shaping the changes and development which "mediate" the underlying oppositions. Although the model permits further complications of character and event, further cycles of plot and sub-plot, each addition must form a corresponding homological series of positive and contrary, contradictory and contradictory of the contrary. Both in the number and the nature of the variables it can accommodate, this model restricts what one can say about narrative. Only those aspects which are "logically opposed" will be treated. A related and deeper problem arises when the use of the model becomes circular and actually distorts the material it should reflect. Consider, for example, Genot's analysis of "Pinocchio."

. . . we can reconstruct a sequence (or totally ordered set) of logical formulas regularly transformed, to "translate" the first tricks of Pinocchio: (X·Y)

(Pinocchio·(Staying at) Home), $(X \sim Y)$ (Pinocchio·Escaping), $(X \cdot \bar{Y})$ (Pinocchio·Not-Repenting), $(X \sim (\sim Y))$ (Pinocchio·Returning), $(X \cdot Y)$ (Pinocchio·Repenting) . . .
(p. 40)

The "logic" of treating "(Staying at Home)" as the contrary of "(Not Repenting)" can only be the result of accepting Greimas' axioms without question; certainly these actions are not necessarily opposed on any other grounds. Nor does Genot suggest how he isolates these particular "tricks" or how we might test the values he has assigned to them. Rather, he simply accepts it as a given that "every text rests on a simple axiological structure" (p. 32), and ignores the theoretical context which originally made this a sensible or at least arguable claim. But without some theoretical justification, some hypothesis about the structure or function of "Pinocchio" which motivates this kind of analysis, Genot's "translation" seems totally arbitrary. The talk about "ordered sets" and "logical formulas" does nothing to increase the rigor of his analysis, since there is no apparent control on the operational definition of these terms.

No model is immune to circularity. The various narrative grammars, structural and transformational-generative, which have been formulated in the last decade presuppose as much as or more than the Greimas' model. In fact, the "elementary coupling" $(X \cdot Y)$ which Genot puts forward as the "minimum construction" of narrative structure assumes less about the necessary properties of narrative than about the linguistic categories--"nom propre," "kernal," "proposition"--which are commonly proposed.⁹ There are, to be sure, arguments about which syntactic theory is most appropriate for studying narratives, whether the categories of "case grammar" or "generative semantics" might not provide a richer analysis than the constituents in Chomsky's deep structure, but depressingly little discussion of the motives or the consequences of the grammatical analogy itself. There is something neat and familiar about a syntactic model, to be sure, and the old Proppian analysis gives it credence, despite the fact that current syntactic models are not framed in terms of the superficial formal properties of language which inspired Propp's own comparison. Implicitly, "agents" and "patients" seem to be better terms than "heroes" and "victims" because they promise the uniformity and interdefinability of a closed formal system. But the fact remains that the application of these terms becomes *ad hoc* or circular without some initial hypothesis about the relationship between the study of narrative and the study of syntax. In fact, there is much to argue

against the appropriateness of syntactic categories. For example, Hendricks reminds us (Hendricks, 1973, p. 88):

. . . narrative structure is itself non-linguistic; it is potentially realizable as cartoon, drawings, cinema, dance, etc. The concepts necessary for talking about narrative are different from those for talking about language--poetics does not reduce to linguistics.

It is difficult to describe procedures for locating a visual "verb," and the fact that narrative can take a visual as easily as a verbal form does suggest that verbal categories and relations are not isomorphic with narrative categories and relations. There are similar problems even when we limit ourselves to verbal narratives. The metalanguage for narrative analysis must be capable of a number of distinctions which are not required when the object of study is a single sentence. For example, if a model is to define narrative in global terms, it must be rich enough to provide a label for the entire repertoire of case roles an "actant" plays in each of the separate sentences making up the narrative. As Pavel puts it: "A text cannot, however, be just another type of sentence for it is itself composed of a number of interrelated sentences" (Pavel [1973], p. 16).

The two most prominent candidate models in current narrative research--the semic square adopted from the work of Greimas and Lévi-Strauss and the narrative grammars derived from various linguistic schools--certainly do not turn out to be proper models by Black's definition. There is no evidence that they reflect subject-matter concerns and concepts that existed prior to their adoption. Instead, ways of seeing narrative seem to follow from the use of a particular model; issues and analyses are created by the model. For all their formal pretensions, then, the real function of these models is metaphorical. Not that this makes them valueless or even "unscientific." Rightly understood, metaphors have great heuristic value, nor could any inquiry, scientific or humanistic, get on without them. As Black himself remarks:

Certainly there is some similarity between the use of a model and the use of a metaphor . . . 'A memorable metaphor has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other; the implications, suggestions, and supporting values entwined with the literal use of the metaphorical expression enable us to see a new subject matter

in a new way. . . . If the model were invoked after the work of abstract formulation had already been accomplished, it would be at best a convenience of exposition. But the memorable models of science are "speculative instruments" . . . Use of a particular model may amount to nothing more than a strained and artificial description of a domain sufficiently known otherwise. But it may also help us to notice what otherwise would be overlooked, to shift the relative emphasis attached to details--in short, to see new connections. (Black [1962], pp. 236-7)

What narrative-analysis needs is not the elimination of metaphors, but the responsible use of them. One might regret that "models" have been imposed on a field as broad and diverse as narrative, a field which has barely been observed or described. But it is not as though there were no rival ways of studying narrative, with their own preconceptions and metaphors. In some ways, narrative algebras and narrative grammars can actually be chastening. For example, Hendricks can use a syntactic metaphor to criticize some of the less explicit assumptions of traditional folkloristic studies.

Colby confuses structure and function, and introduces phylogenetic factors that are irrelevant to synchronic structural description; e.g., he states that "Cultural productions, including folk narrative, go through a selection which favors those that are the most effective cultural vehicles and psychic devices" . . . i.e., give the most learning and enjoyment (through catharsis, etc.) . . . any narrative, to qualify as communication, must possess internal organization; arbitrary principles that provide this need no other functional raison d'etre (Hendricks [1973], pp. 97-8)

Use of the categories of mathematics and linguistics can make one pay more attention to the structural function of some aspect of narrative form without resorting to untestable notions of cultural or aesthetic necessity. Taxonomies and formation rules need not and should not exhaust narrative analysis, but neither should one ignore semiotic constraints when explaining why a narrative is the way it is.

According to Black, a metaphor is useful only if it provides more than a "strained and artificial description" of something we already have other means for describing and understanding. Since there is no wholly adequate terminology, no competing theory of narrative which is comprehensive, appropriate "metaphorical models" are certainly in order. It

becomes, then, a question of how effective we can be in choosing or creating our metaphors, how zealous in exploring the assumptions implicit in a model and guarding against hidden circularity. Moreover, it is only by recognizing and clarifying our metaphors that we are able to make discoveries that take us beyond them. This is the process that Thomas Kuhn describes in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1973, p. 65):

. . . novelty ordinarily emerges only for the man who, knowing with precision what he should expect, is able to recognize that something has gone wrong. Anomaly appears only against the background provided by the paradigm.

ii.

Let us apply the foregoing considerations to a hypothetical process of selecting an appropriate metaphorical model for narrative analysis from among available linguistic models. This is more complicated than it might at first appear, since appropriateness is relative to the ends a model must serve and a model partially determines its own ends. Take, for example, Pavel's claim that ". . . before undertaking the application of a formal system to narratology, we must be sure that the formal notions introduced do NOT conflict with the existing ontological or aesthetic intuitions of the speaker/listener in a culturally-defined context" (1973, p. 10). This has a prima facie plausibility, yet his appeal to "existing ontological or aesthetic intuitions" already shows the influence of Chomsky and the framework surrounding the generative transformational model. Thus, in borrowing a model, we also borrow what Kuhn has called "a criterion for choosing problems" (1973, p. 37). While deciding what a model may have to offer us, then, we must consider not only the observational and analytic consequences it will entail but also the nature of the theoretical motives it presupposes.

For the purposes of this brief experiment we can divide extant linguistic models into syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic, and see what the consequences of each as an approach to narrative analysis might be. First, the syntactic model. To accept an analogy between narrative and syntax implies an interest in abstracting a finite number of structural alternatives from a larger or perhaps infinite set of realized narratives, as well as to distinguish this closed set of syntactic patterns from an open set of semantic values which can vary from tale to tale. The analogy to syntax further

implies that we think of narrative as subject to global preconditions, as a chain of events unfolding within pre-ordained limits rather than as an open-ended series of developments. Propp was certainly quite aware of the consequences of his own grammatical analogy (1968, pp. 21-22):

The sequence of events has its own laws. The short story too has similar laws, as do organic formations. Theft cannot take place before the door is forced Freedom within this sequence is restricted by very narrow limits which can be exactly formulated.

Another consequence of using a grammatical model for narrative--in fact, of using any semiotic model--is that the structures one describes must be neutral with regard to differences in production and reception. In folklore and myth, distinctions between author and audience are usually disregarded; any member of the community is assumed to be capable of reciting the narratives in question and differences between individual versions are not of primary theoretical importance. But difficulties arise when one is faced with literary narratives. Traditional literary theory distinguishes sharply between the contributions an author and a reader make, and this is an important and reasonable distinction within the framework of aesthetic appreciation.¹⁰ But this is exactly why a semiotic metaphor can be so stimulating, since it provides a new framework and a new set of issues which traditional criticism ignores. The questions of what an author and a reader must share, and of how an "ordinary" audience can comprehend the narrative structures of a Faulkner or a Melville, are not at all trivial. Using semiotic models makes it possible to ask how radical innovations in narrative technique come to be understood, and to frame hypotheses about which innovations are more likely to be accepted.

The categories of a narrative syntax can vary, depending on the range of materials covered and the motives of the investigation. Propp's functions are sufficient for his limited, typologically uniform corpus, while more abstract structures are in order when there is a larger and more diverse group of narratives to be analyzed. Those adopting a version of Chomsky's generative-transformational model take upon themselves the task of describing "narrative competence," since it is this goal alone which makes such a powerful apparatus necessary.¹¹ Yet the metaphorical value of highly abstract models, and particularly transformational grammars, is great even when an analyst does not intend to provide a description of all possible narratives or account for "narrative acquisition." Such models revise our ideas about

the structural properties of narrative and help us to distinguish between superficial contiguities of character and event and the elements and relationships they represent. They make it possible to move beyond such familiar structural displacements as the "flashback," the "digression," and entrance in media res, to speculate on how truly discontinuous and heterogenous the elements comprising narrative structure are.

Contrary to what one might think, the unit of analysis, even on the verbal level, is by no means the "word," not the concrete verbal line, but something which could be named, with a slight adjustment of its original sense, [for Levi-Strauss] a "paquet." This verbal aggregate is constituted differently in different languages, epochs, situations; it changes diachronically . . . it may be defined as a sum of lexical and grammatical elements which globally conveys (and hence was "capable of" accepting) the required semes at a given point of the textual construct. (Genot [1973], p. 54)

When we treat narrative structure as abstract "rules" rather than concrete forms, the whole question of the grounds for abstracting, and of the relativity of the structures that we find to the grounds we accept, opens up to us. It becomes possible to ask why we choose one structural description rather than another, and to investigate how readers and periods differ in the narrative structures they perceive.

The metaphors of "deep" and "surface structure" and the entire transformational apparatus vastly extend the comparative possibilities of narrative analysis, enabling us to see "narrative synonymy" despite wide discrepancies of form.

. . . certain common characteristics create groups of works otherwise individually unique--appearing as a "family of objects" to both the authors and reader/listeners of these works. Even in cultures where a literary work is considered to be a highly original and unique product, it is easily perceived that every work belongs to one LITERARY GENRE or another On another level it is often the case that an author's particular "trademark" is easily recognizable, not only in matters of textual stylistics, but also in his organization of narrative material (Pavel [1973], pp. 12-13)

While forcing us to see structural uniformity, a narrative grammar also allows us to locate more precisely the peculiarities and divergences of individual texts. Propp himself

(1972) went on to show how earlier and later versions of a folktale differ in the amount and kind of "motivation" they provide for the functions. By dividing narrative structure from "texture," we can discuss the degree of "saturation" or "tension" of a particular narrative in some principled way.¹² Other relationships can also be made more precise--the overlap between narrative and generic categories, for example. In the traditional use of the terms "genre" and "narrative," there is no way to distinguish or compare these phenomena. New metaphors can press us to make a more consistent critical vocabulary or, on the other hand, to explain why we cannot impose consistency. The implications of a narrative grammar are thus very broad, involving our deepest assumptions about the purposes and methods of literary theory, the differences between it and ethnography, even extending to the differences between humanistic and scientific inquiry as a whole.

The difficulties encountered in creating narrative grammars, difficulties not only in defining basic structural relations but in stating how they are related to surface form, illustrate the complexity of the "surface structure" of narrative. Shklovsky's discussion of the role of "plot" in narrative is instructive in this regard:

In an ordinary novel digressions are cut off by a return to the main story. If there are two, or only a few, story lines in the novel, their fragments alternate with one another--as in Don Quixote Homer never shows two simultaneous actions. If by force of circumstances they ever had to be simultaneous, they were reported as happening in sequence Sterne allowed actions to occur simultaneously, and he even parodied the development of the story line and the intrusions of new material into it The idea of plot is too often confused with the description of events--with what I propose provisionally to call the story. The story is, in fact, only material for plot formation. (Shklovsky [1965], pp. 33, 57)

Most analysts agree with Shklovsky that one can abstract a pattern or "plot" from a text that is identical neither with its underlying narrative dependencies and relationships (Propp's "story"); nor with the actual verbal or pictorial substance in which the story and plot are together realized. Thus there is a third element which narrative grammars must take into account, in addition to the deep and surface structures which linguistic grammars are designed to handle. Relationships between "plotting" devices and focalizing devices within individual sentences fall outside the scope of extant linguistic models. Yet, narrative syntax must show how "plotting" is

related to sentence focus, as well as to focussing devices beyond the individual sentence--e.g., paragraphing, chapter division, dialogue exchange.¹³ It seems obvious that the surface structure of individual sentences, reflecting what M.A.K. Halliday has called the "informational" and "thematic" functions of language, does play some role in plotting, although it is doubtful that plotting is wholly confined to sentence patterns or that the surface structure of sentences has no other function than foregrounding elements of the plot.¹⁴ Attempts to create text-grammars, capable of subsuming relations between sentences, have not resolved the confusion of levels of analysis nor brought us much closer to understanding what the "macro-structure" of a text is.

First of all we establish the so-called THEMATIC NETS. This is done by building an ordered string from the reference-indices (the generalizers included) occurring in the text on the basis of some criteria and declaring each reference-index the "label" of a net. (One of the ordering principles can be, for example, the frequency of occurrence) (Petöfi [1973], p. 71)

Petöfi's reliance on cross-indexing and frequency counts is certainly one way of describing the organization of a text, but it has no apparent theoretical motivation. We obviously need some more principled way of discussing how readers and writers, audiences and performers, are able to locate stories and plots in whatever medium they appear. But if the principles are not supplied by a syntactic model, if we need to refer to conventions and strategies of interpretation in order to explain our ability to see narrative structure, then we must invoke semantic and pragmatic considerations.

Perhaps, after all, narrative is not a syntactic structure. The analogy between syntactic sequences and narrative sequences may be misleading. We have already seen that the syntagm or plot of narrative is often a distorted manifestation of underlying sequential relations which we must reconstruct in order to reach the story. Then too, linear order is accidental to linguistic structure: syntactic relations may be expressed through inflections as well. But it is difficult to find a wholly satisfying substitute for sequence as an expression of narrative relations. Consider Greimas' attempt to translate narrative sequence into other terms.

. . . la dimension temporelle . . . est dichotomisée en un avant et un après. A cet avant vs. après discursif correspond un "renversement" de la situation: qui, sur le plan de la structure implicite, n'est rien d'autre qu'une inversion des signes du contenu. (Genot [1973], p. 24)

The correspondence between "before" and "after" and an ostensibly more abstract opposition between "given situation" and "reversal" is far from exact. It is easy to imagine "reversals" which are not sequentially related or sequences which do not involve reversals. In what way, for example, are "cause" and "effect" exponents of reversal? Other familiar sequences: questions and replies, January and February, to name but two--similarly involve a progression without reversal.¹⁵ It may be that well-formed narratives correlate a sequence of situation with some reversal of values, but this constraint presupposes rather than defines the temporal dimension of narrative. A definition of this dimension is, therefore, crucial to narrative analysis--even for Propp, who takes it for granted that "theft cannot take place before the door is forced." But the ordering principle here is obviously semantic rather than syntactic.

We can begin to construct a semantic model of narrative around some ad hoc "intuitions" about temporal succession, then see how these notions are related to narrative structure. According to Husserl, the phenomenology of time involves the fact that "temporal order is a two-dimensional infinite series" and that "temporal relations are assymetrical" (Passmore, [1966], p. 194). The same structural principle seems to be at work in Doložel's notion that narrative "text is a function of time, and its sequential 'growth' by symmetry, parallelism, gradation, contrast, 'coupling,' etc." (Doložel, [1971], pp. 95-6). Similarly in Labov's concept of narrative as "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred" (Labov [1971], p. 359). Without fully accepting either of these arguments, one can still recognize some shared premises about narrative as a two-dimensional, potentially infinite, asymmetric--and, to add to Husserl's description--transitive relational series. Moreover, both Labov and Doložel hold that the narrative series is iconic, whether it mimics "growth" or a "sequence of events."

The semantic structure of narrative becomes clearer when we compare it to other sequential structures which are not temporally ordered. Take the phenomenon of listing, for example. Here the series may indeed be infinite, but need not be two-dimensional or asymmetric. Some or all of the items on a list may be related along a third dimension and the sequence of items may be only accidental. Even when there is an ordinal logic behind the list--rank, number, alphabet, etc.--the order rarely has any great iconic value.

A logically ordered list can, like narrative, be distorted for the purpose of focussing on particular elements. Yet, despite some similarities, we can normally distinguish between a list based on "chronological order" and a narrative. Narrative involves more than seeing items in a series as co-referential, since a man may write down the sequence of his activities during the day and still produce only a list. What we need in order to explain our distinction between listing and narrating is some way of accounting for the intuitions of "growth" and "change" which seem to be integral to narrative. One possibility is to introduce an additional notion of "continuity" or "causality," Each member of our prenarrative series is somehow "affected" by preceding members--that is part of what Aristotle meant by his well known remark that a story must have a beginning, middle, and end:

A beginning is what does not of necessity come after something else, but after which something else naturally is or happens: an end on the contrary is that which necessarily or for the most part is or happens after something else, but which has nothing after it; a middle is that which comes after something and has something after itself . . . It is necessary for the recognition and peripety to result from the very construction of the plot, so that of necessity or according to probability they follow what has gone before. There is a great difference between propter hoc and post hoc. (Gilbert (1962), pp. 79-83)¹⁶

Since the perception of relations as "necessary" or "probable" varies according to period or culture, one cannot define narrative causality in terms of the attributes of individual items participating in the series. Indeed, as Dell Hymes pointed out in a lecture some years ago, very unlikely combinations can be "seen as" a narrative series under the proper conditions.¹⁷ The following two sentences have no formal connection, and they were originally separate headlines, but one could take them as narrative nonetheless:

Snow hits Pioneer Valley. Henry Kissinger leaves for the Middle East.

What we need in order to capture relational properties of narrative is something similar to the modified predicate-calculus model which has recently been used to reflect the logic of natural languages. The notion of a "logical operator," binding together widely dispersed and disparate variables into an ordered or implicational relation, has obvious relevance for the study of narrative semantics. One might also

choose a modal logic, which would make it possible to distinguish between "necessary" and "possible" narrative relations, and thus to catalogue optional and obligatory elements and to measure the relative "contingency" of narratives by different authors.

But the most important feature of any semantic model we construct will be the way it characterizes the narrative operator. A "deep verb" such as <CAUSE> is tempting, except for the fact that no particular item or sum of items is a necessary and sufficient cause of what follows it in the narrative chain. For Oedipus to meet a man at the crossroads does not in itself cause him to kill that man, despite the fact that the killing could not take place without such a meeting. The meeting simply makes a set of incidents, including murder, possible. We might therefore say that any prior item (a) of a narrative series implies a disjunctive set ($b_1 b_2 b_3 \dots b_n$) among which the item which chronologically follows it in the narrative is necessarily found. Alternatively, one could say that (b) presupposes, as well as chronologically follows, (a)--that Oedipus killing presupposes his encounter. If it is not the case that an encounter took place, either the killing or its negation--the failure or refusal to kill--would be logically impossible. The event would be "void" of narrative implications and interpreted instead as psychological or stylistic distortion--a fact about narrative logic which Robbe-Grillet makes great use of in The Voyeur. Working backward in a narrative series, stating what each occurrence or its negation minimally presupposes, is thus a useful procedure for discovering its "kernals" or minimal semantic units.¹⁸ It seems to be this kind of presuppositional reasoning, along with a sense of chronology, which allows us to reconstruct the story from the plot.

The "narrative operator" must also be designed to assure that co-referential variables are "relevant" to one another. Narrative continuity means more than the simple "identity" of terms, such that each reoccurrence of "John" is typically the same "John"; identity must also be part of an on-going process. It is this complex condition on narrative variables which is reflected in our judgments that a character "grows" or a situation "changes" during the tale. In any text, there is an opportunity to transcend the discrete semantic values ascribed within individual sentences, to qualify meanings and realign the implications of individual terms. Semantic qualification takes a developmental form in narrative, with the value of later formulations derived from earlier attributions even as these later formulations necessarily replace what has preceded them.

A semantic model encounters the same problems of scope and delicacy, and has the same potential power, as a syntactic model, but it allows us even more freedom in the kinds of comparisons we can make. Using such a model, we can investigate how narrative structure is related to any other causal/chronological series. This means that we can speculate about the iconic values of narrative in a far more precise way by seeing how and to what degree it resembles the semiotic organization of calendars, magic, history, and science--whatever a given culture or period treats as its most important indicies of temporal and causal relationship. A semantic model is also useful for representing differences in the organization of a broad range of discourse types, comparing lists and narratives, as above, or narratives and dialectical structures such as essays, dialogues, or sermons.

The worth of these comparisons depends on whether or not we have correctly characterized the semantic primes of narrative structure. How in fact do we determine this? A model should be so constructed that it entails any narrative and only narratives when appropriate values are substituted for the variables and constants it contains. Logical models are often defined in terms of truth functions, but it is hard to see how a narrative model could be tested in this way. Extensional definitions are also possible, but not when the extension is potentially infinite, as is the case with narrative. Finally, logical models can be defined wholly in terms of a set of axioms. The last alternative may be the only resort for narrative models, but this means we must establish criteria for the axioms we use or risk tautology. The practice in linguistic semantics has been to rely on some intuitive capacity to recognize synonymy and entailment--not without arguments between those who claim the universality of their intuitions, however. If we ultimately depend on intuitions for narrative semantics as well, we confront the fact that there are many kinds of intuitions and many possible sources for them. One could choose those narrative intuitions which are most widely shared; alternatively, one could give preference to the most cultivated and experienced readers or listeners. Moreover, the problem goes beyond who shall be the source for the intuition that this is a narrative while that is not: a text may not always be called a narrative, even when the source remains unchanged. I, for example, might easily describe the same text as either a "narrative" or an "excuse." The context in which I make my judgment will greatly influence how I describe it, whether I pay attention to its structural or its pragmatic aspects.

Thus we are forced to respect context, even if we have no interest in the illocutionary nature of narrative. But how

do we go about choosing the proper context for making or eliciting intuitions about narrative? According to the ethnomethodologist Roy Turner, the only intuitions we should consider are those which "characterize the occasion as that occasion was organized, announced, and made available to participants" (Turner [1970], p. 178). Yet this would reduce all intuitive judgments of narrative to judgments of its illocutionary value. Obviously, since speakers may simultaneously utter sentences and make requests, tell stories and make excuses, and legitimately describe their products in either or both ways, our intuitions are not as limited as Turner contends.

Confusion arises about such a point in narrative theory since there is no distinct term for a "narrative syntactic/semantic object" as opposed to a "narrative pragmatic object." Thus it is difficult to tell whether the judgment that "x is a narrative" is grounded in locutionary or illocutionary considerations. In ordinary parlance, "narrative" is almost hopelessly ambiguous in this regard, and theories of narrative are often insensitive to the way analysis itself shapes the intuitive evidence it uses. Turner's suggestion, for example, is theoretically circumscribed. The original context can provide interesting evidence of the nature and components of any utterance, but to choose this evidence and ignore all else presumes that we have a certain theoretical perspective which makes this evidence alone important. In addition, the evidence Turner requires is not always available. It may be impossible to recover the original context of a narrative, and it seems odd to claim we cannot know it is a narrative until we have done so. Moreover, few illocutionary acts are explicitly "announced" in the way Turner seems to suggest. People tell each other stories without explicitly naming their act, and stories occur in a wide variety of circumstances.

Yet, though structural vs. pragmatic interpretations have different claims on the concept of narrative, there is sufficient reason to construct a model of the pragmatic aspects. We would hope that, ultimately, such a model could clarify all the pragmatic factors entering into any judgment that "x is a narrative." We can make a preliminary sketch of what the model should include by examining one such judgment. Labov, for example, holds that the following is a narrative (1972, p. 360):

- a Well this person had a little too much to drink
- b and he attacked me

c and the friend came in

d and she stopped it.

What must we assume in order to recognize this as a narrative act? First, we must assume that the occasion and the speaker are continuously the same from clause to clause--otherwise the interpretation of pronouns, definite articles, etc., would not have the necessary guarantee of co-referentiality. If the speaker or the occasion were to change, we would need extraordinary reasons for supposing that the clauses cohere to form a single text (e.g., grounds for assuming that separate speakers were "collaborating"; or some tradition and/or record for identifying an interrupted presentation when it is later resumed¹⁹). We use the fact of a single source and a single, uninterrupted occasion, then, as grounds for assuming that the text is single and coherent, even if this contextual condition is not a necessary and sufficient condition in logical terms.

That we are able to read the word "and" in Labov's example as a sequential/temporal conjunction is more difficult to explain. To account for this ability, we must admit that something in the original occasion of utterance and/or in the frame in which the example is now presented to us guides our interpretation, since there are no linguistic clues in the text itself. Perhaps we are directed to this interpretation by assuming a causal connection between "drinking" and "attacking"--yet even this semantic relationship seems to be influenced by the context in which the words occur rather than the formal semantic structure of the individual words.²⁰ If we do not posit specific contextual features which focus our interpretation of words, we could instead construct a model with a closed set of "speech events." Our ability to see narrative relations in the absence of formal signals would then be explained as a matter of choosing from among a fairly small number of pragmatic alternatives.

Research into the procedures which we use to recognize, organize, and interpret semiotic displays has hardly begun. We do not yet know the nature of these procedures or how they draw upon physical and cultural contexts, traditions and conventions. Narratology could still borrow profitably from the fledgling science of ethnomethodology, with its goal of explaining how members of a culture "make sense of activities," how they "orient" themselves in any situation. We can ask what "cultural resources" help us to locate narrative when it occurs and make our own narratives recognizable in turn. Consider the role of gathering times and places as aids to

the recognition of narrative: "bedtime stories" or Nigerian "moonlight tales" are cases in point. There are also individuals and institutions associated with narrative, whether particular literary figures, local raconteurs, or publishing houses.

Since a pragmatic model is concerned with the purposes and participant roles of those who narrate and those who listen, it is especially useful for cultural history. Differences between literary and non-literary narrative can be handled more effectively by a pragmatic model, which takes account of conventions and institutions, than by either a syntactic or semantic model. Then, too, if we see narrative as an act rather than a structure, we can more easily explain the relationship between verbal and non-verbal narrative. A pragmatic model allows us to consider the super-ordinate purposes narrative may serve, its relationship to turns at conversation, for example. Normally, a speaker telling a story has the right to complain if other speakers (even would-be collaborators) interrupt. Therefore, to engage in the act of "telling a story" is one way a speaker can extend the length of his turn beyond its "first possible completion point" at the end of his first sentence.²¹

The pragmatic model raises the question of whether aspects of narrative which are described as syntactic or semantic should instead be treated as a set of devices for achieving pragmatic recognition. We do not know if these are competing distinctions, or if they are irreducible aspects of narrative structure. Perhaps the ideal model of narrative would be one that integrated pragmatic, semantic, and syntactic description. We are not likely to construct a successful integrated model, however, until we have examined and tested each of these approaches separately. I have not argued the superior claims of any one of these models, since there is no a priori ground for judging between them. As metaphors, each creates its own goal by allowing the theorist to see possibilities and problems he might have otherwise ignored. We can judge a metaphorical lens only by trying it out. When such a lens fails, it is often because we are frustrated by our inability to see clearly or consistently what we otherwise might not see at all.

iii.

All of the foregoing proposals are extremely tentative, but I hope it is clear why they must be so. I have attempted to demonstrate the "enabling power" of some metaphorical models, the tasks to which they are suited, the constraints

which they impose, and a few of the more interesting questions which they raise. I would like to end by recalling the fact that modelling is a semiotic act, with its own range of purposes, its own semantic and syntactic rules. It would be naive to suppose that meta-languages allow us to transcend the requirements of natural languages. Theories, after all, are designed to be communicated; they are therefore subject to all the conditions which make communication possible, including formal constraints on the flexibility of our symbols and contextual constraints on when, how and to what ends we may direct them. If the goal is a "science of narrative," we must be even more careful to uncover the expectations which are implicit in any model. As Karl Popper has pointed out, only well defined expectations can be refuted and only refutable expectations are scientific (Passmore [1959], p. 407). Unless we know what a model or a metaphor leads us to expect, we can never know when it has been refuted.

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NOTES

¹I draw upon Max Black's "Models and Archetypes" (Black [1962], pp. 219-243) here and throughout my discussion.

²Black's complaint that mathematical models are often treated "as if the mathematical equations referred to an invisible mechanism whose operation illustrates or even partially explains the operation of the original . . . system under investigation" (1962, p. 222) is applicable to linguistic models even in their primary application. Consider the talk in Chomsky and Katz of a "language acquisition device."

³Propp (1968), pp. 15, 19. Levi-Strauss has formally acknowledged his debt to Propp, and several recent studies of the history of narratology have also stressed Propp's role: cf. Hendricks (1970), Chatman (1968), the entire special edition of *Communications*, No. 8 (1966), and Pavel (1973). Further information on Propp's relationship to Russian Formalism can be found in Matejka and Pamorska (1971).

⁴E.g., Bremond (1966), Barthes (1966).

⁵There is actually a good deal of ambiguity in Levi-Strauss' work regarding the question whether sequence is an accidental or necessary property of narrative.

⁶Genot seems to have a broader notion of narrativity than Greimas intended, however, since the latter admits the existence of "une sous-classe de recits. . . definie par une propriete structurale commune: la dimension temporelle" (Greimas [1966]) despite his interest in semic categories which "are not affected by the presentation of the signifier" (Greimas [1972], p. 162).

⁷See Hendricks (1973), Dundes (1965), and Todorov (1969).

⁸My diagram and explanation is derived from Genot's extension of Greimas' model from the domain of myth to that of all narrative (Genot [1973], pp. 34-6).

⁹See, for example, Todorov (1969). Todorov's "grammar" of the Decameron does have the virtue of a distributional analysis of a well-defined corpus, however.

¹⁰See Pavel's subtle discussion of some of these points (1973, pp. 9-10). Pavel also mentions the related problem of treating literary texts, which are by definition "monuments," as though they were not one of a kind, merely "documents" (p. 12). One could overcome this latter problem by stipulating that it is not the narrative structure but the plotting and texture which is unique to a given literary text.

¹¹See Dundes' introduction to the second edition of Propp's Morphology (1968, p. xv) for suggestions for studying the "acquisition of folklore."

¹²Genot (1973, pp. 57-9) discusses textual "saturation."

¹³Genot adds to this list "cantos, stanzas, verse and prose, fixed forms associated with a particular register, and formulaic openings and closures" (1973, p. 56).

¹⁴See "The Functional Basis of Language" (Halliday [1973], pp. 22-47). A study devoted to linguistic cohesion and the "text-forming component" in language is forthcoming from Halliday and Hassan, as well.

¹⁵In work on the semantics of English verbs such as "begin/end" and "continue/end," Talmy Givon has demonstrated that in presupposition and implication, as well as selectional restrictions, these verbs necessarily "contain" an implicit reference to a "time axis" as part of their sense (Kimball [1972], pp. 29-50). Thus Greimas' proposal to define time in terms of "reversal" may well beg the question, if "reverse" is another such deictic verb.

¹⁶See Todorov (1968, pp. 97-166), where he discusses the process of "enchainment" in several authors, including Beckett, with respect to "causality."

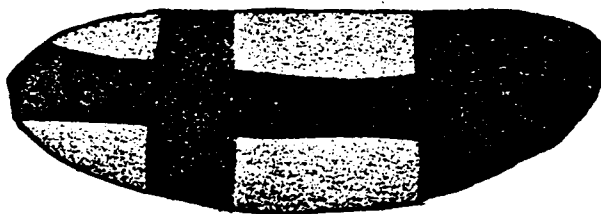
¹⁷Hymes made his remark during a lecture at the 1971 Summer Institute of Linguistics sponsored by the Linguistic Society of America at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

¹⁸See Doležel (1971, pp. 98-99, 104-5) for further discussion of how narrative "kernals" may be abstracted from texts. Although "logical models" for narrative structure are few, the work of Fillmore (1971), Karttunen (1973), and the articles appearing in Jakobovits and Steinberg (1971) seem applicable to the problems of presupposition in narrative.

¹⁹The term "collaboration" comes from Sacks (1974) and various seminars at the University of Michigan and the University of California-Irvine.

²⁰Grice (1968) has suggested that all semantic and logical relations are constrained by pragmatic conditions, that we interpret in terms of "implicature" rather than strict "implication" in most cases. See also Lakoff (1973) for further treatment of this issue.

²¹See Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974, pp. 696-735) for an analysis of the phenomenon of "turn-taking" in conversational exchange.



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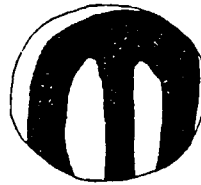
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EUGENE R. KINTGEN

Effective Stylistics

I would like to have my title understood--if it can be understood at all, both halves begging so many important questions of value and definition--as illocutionarily ambiguous, a locutionary act simultaneously enacting several different illocutionary acts. First, it is a negative verdictive: I will suggest some reasons why so much stylistics is ineffective. Second, it is an exhortation or perhaps an "influencer"--I urge you to produce an effective stylistics or Let us produce an effective stylistics--and I will point a direction that might be profitable. Partially obscured by the exhortation, but clearly present in the might of the previous sentence, is a wish--May there be an effective stylistics. Most importantly, the title is not a promise or commissive, for I can imagine only too clearly what perlocutionary effect such a promise would have on me, and I can hardly expect others to be much more charitable.¹

Stylistics, it seems to me, has suffered from two complementary ills: the sterility of objectivity and the solipsism of subjectivity. Near the objective pole of the scale might be placed the practical studies of Jakobson, Sinclair, and early Halliday, which in essence provide a full or partial linguistic analysis of some literary text, perhaps emphasizing recurrent (types of) structures.² The results of these studies is merely an accumulation of linguistic data--poems taken to pieces and left that way--that is neither particularly illuminating nor especially consonant with common sense notions of the distinction between the style and the linguistic structure of a text.

To focus more clearly on the style of a text, in the sense of what distinguishes it from other similar texts, this objective approach has often been bolstered by comparisons, either between two texts or between the text under consideration and some concept of linguistic norms. A recent example of the normative approach is David Crystal's argument for "a definition of stylistics which subsumes all systematic variation within a language accountable for by postulating that its occurrence is restricted (in some probabilistic sense) to norms of behavior characterising social groups or (secondarily) individuals."³ Examples of the former tack are

[Centrum, 2:1 (Spring 1974), 43-55.]

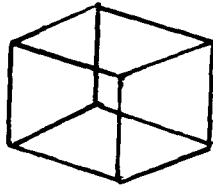
legion: Halliday's comparison of three paragraphs describing rooms, Milic's comparison of Swift and his contemporaries, Ohmann's of Shaw and his contemporaries, and so forth.⁴

Comparison naturally leads to the problem of deciding which differences between texts are in some sense important, and various mathematical approaches have been suggested. One of the best, to my mind, is that of Curtis Hayes, who argued persuasively that comparison, to be meaningful, must be put on a statistical basis.⁵ This approach emphasizes the objectivity of the study: the question is not whether Gibbon's passives have an effect different from Hemingway's, but whether statistical analysis reveals the difference between them to be statistically significant. When used naively, quantification leads to results at best unilluminating and at worst absurd. John Sinclair, in discussing a poem consisting of four sentences, two exactly three lines long and two exactly four, points out "Sentences are on average three and a half lines, half a stanza long."⁶ More recently, Dolores M. Burton has proposed a "style function" to distinguish between styles. Her initial discussion is intriguing: the style function will assign a stylistic value to elements in the text, thus clearly distinguishing between stylistic and linguistic facts.⁷ But the function, when it is finally unveiled, turns out to be nothing more than a distance formula, which assigns no value at all to specific characteristics but only to differences between characteristics. Those with a taste for the absurd will be amused to learn that "the number 321 represents the difference in the styles of Richard II and Antony and Cleopatra with respect to sentence mood."⁸

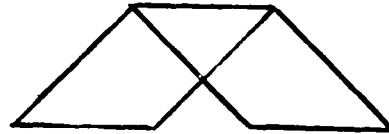
These objective studies, it seems to me, share the defect of emphasizing something external to the act of reading. Strictly, of course, this is an impossible assumption: Richard Ohmann some time ago quashed the notion that language could exist independently of minds to perceive it. Without such minds, language is merely specks of dried ink on the page or sound waves in the air.⁹ But in a weaker version--that there is an isomorphic relation between a linguistic "cause" even if properly understood and a stylistic "effect"--this assumption sustains a good number of stylistic studies, perhaps because it is operationally so convenient: it enables stylistic investigations that are relatively simple to produce. One needs only a text or two and some linguistic terms. (Of course, a deal of time and some sensitivity are also necessary, but any approach would require them.)

This assumption, convenient as it is, seems to me naive and potentially misleading, a criticism for which we might

cite evidence from two rather different sources. First, experiments in visual perception have shown conclusively that there is no simple relation between what is "seen"-- the image on the retina--and what is "perceived": two different retinal images may be perceived as the same, and a given image may be perceived differently in different circumstances.¹⁰ For example, consider the figures below, known as reversible-perspective figures because although "objectively" they consist of only lines on a two dimensional surface, they may be perceived either as two dimensional or three dimensional, and if perceived as three dimensional their spatial orientation seems to shift spontaneously.



A



B

The twelve lines in A seem to produce a cube, which we observe sometimes from above and sometimes from below. In B, the seven lines seem to form a tent which at times opens to the left and at times to the right.

These amusing diversions merely illustrate that in the field of visual perception--a field relatively uncluttered, at the level of our illustrations, by problems of value, "aesthetic pleasure," etc.--there is not necessarily any simple relationship between what elicits a perception and the perception itself. And recently some critics have been telling us the same thing about literature: David Bleich, Walter Slatoff, and, probably best known, Norman Holland have been emphasizing the wide differences between what readers perceive in a given work of literature.¹¹ One of Holland's most effective demonstrations concerns his five readers' responses to the following sentence from Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily":

We had long thought of them as a tableau; Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door.

Holland's readers differed dramatically not only in their

interpretations of (the larger meanings of) the sentence, but also in the basic scene it describes: some thought the father was standing (as I did, though spraddled, according to the OED, means 'sprawling'), some thought he was sitting; there were differences of opinion on how Miss Emily was visible behind her father (was she seen from below, through his legs, from the side, or some other way?); and one of the readers apparently disregarded the description in the passage to ascribe to her "a penchant for wearing dark clothes."¹² Now one might complain, with I.A. Richards, that these readers were not reading very closely, that they allowed their various preconceptions and prejudices to interfere with their perception of the work, especially in the case of the reader who mistook the color. And indeed, one feels that Holland's readers were not "close readers"; in fact, he discouraged literary analysis and encouraged what might be considered fanciful speculations. But his major point is essentially Richards' restated in psychological terms: certainly readers let preconceptions and prejudices--in short, their personalities -- interfere with their reading: that is the only way one can read. Since different readers have different personalities, they will necessarily respond differently to the same work, and there can be no fixed literary "cause" that will have the same "effect" on each reader. What Holland attempts to do in his book is to specify "that something, that inflexible effect of personality on perception"¹³ that prevents everybody from perceiving everything in exactly the same way.

If the assumption of a simple relationship between literary "causes" and their "effects" on the reader cannot be maintained--and the evidence from both studies of visual perception and the subjectivist critics argues that it cannot--then what I have called objective stylistics will necessarily be unsatisfying because it treats what is felt by the reader as style only peripherally, only when there happens to be a fortuitous connection between some pattern "in the text" and the response of the reader. Some stylisticians have recognized this difficulty, and have tried to relate the linguistic patterns of the text to the response of the reader. It is here that the other danger I mentioned at the beginning of this paper is found.

Richard Ohmann, for instance, analyzes three lines from "Ode to a Nightingale":

But here there is no light
Save what from heaven is with breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

He claims that the concrete mass nouns moss and verdure, which would be present in the deep structure, appear in the poem as adjectives, "so that their concreteness is diffused, distributed broadly."¹⁴ The effect of the prepositional phrases of the last line is also noted: "To me the construction suggests attenuated motion, a series of further re-moves. Syntax, in short, does something in this image that the sensory words cannot do: it creates an almost physical sense of diffusion, removal from the source, distancing, and attenuation."¹⁵ Ohmann is perfectly candid about his procedure: there are the constructions, he says, and here are their effects on me. But we must wonder why the constructions allow those effects: surely prepositional phrase adverbials of motion do not always suggest attenuated motion, nor do denominal adjectives necessarily lack concreteness. Why does Ohmann react the way he does? Would others react the same way? Until stylistics can answer questions like these,--indeed, until it at least begins asking them--its attempts to deal with response are going to remain largely anecdotal, matters of merely biographical interest.

One way out of this dilemma, of course, is to claim that personal responses, provided one is the right sort of person, are somehow more than merely personal. Stanley Fish, who lately has been saying more terrible things about stylistics than critics have said before, and hinting darkly that even his criticisms are not terrible enough, takes this tack in purveying his own brand of "affective stylistics."¹⁶ That approach consists of "simply the rigorous and disinterested asking of the question, what does this word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, chapter, novel, play, poem, do" followed by analyzing "the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time."¹⁷ It is probably carping to insist that the words, phrases, etc. do nothing; if anything, they provide the reader an occasion to do something. The real difficulty lies elsewhere: as Fish himself admits, his method is essentially solipsistic--we are treated to a blow-by-blow description of what happens to Stanley Fish as he reads. Again, this might have some kind of vague biographical interest, but its relevance to criticism is not immediately clear.

Fish tries to sidestep this objection by constructing the "informed reader"--of which he, naturally, is an example--the reader linguistically and rhetorically competent who is "sufficiently experienced as a reader to have internalized the properties of literary discourses, including everything from the most local of devices (figures of speech, etc.) to whole genres. In this theory, then, the concerns of other schools

of criticism--questions of genre, conventions, intellectual background, etc.--become redefined in terms of potential and probable response"18

But these various competences often hinder the reader more than they help him, since they encourage him to analyze the sentences of literature linguistically rather than what Fish calls "experientially": "in an analysis of the sentence as a thing in itself consisting of words arranged in syntactical relationships, 'not' would figure prominently, while in an experiential analysis it is noted chiefly for its weakness."¹⁹ This "experiential analysis" concerns a rather diffuse kind of meaning: "What I am suggesting is that there is no direct relationship between the meaning of a sentence (paragraph, novel, poem) and what its words mean The information an utterance gives, its message, is a constituent of, but certainly not to be identified with, its meaning. It is the experience of an utterance--all of it and not anything that could be said about it, including anything I could say--that is its meaning."²⁰ One naturally agrees that illocutionary force and the influence of context must be taken into account, if that is in fact what Fish means, but his humble denial in the last sentence would be more convincing if his analyses referred to his own experiences rather than to those of "the reader," of "us," and if he avoided talking about constructions "pressuring" the reader or "declaring" "the tidy well-ordered character of actual experience."²¹

Fish's breakthrough, then, lies not merely in being solipsistic and idiosyncratic, since after all, literary criticism is full of personal quirks and oddities, but in reasserting the central importance of one's own experience of a work while at the same time meaning (in Fish's sense of the term), through the use of impersonal constructions, locutions such as "the reader," and the use of the editorial or critical plural pronoun, that his experience is, in fact, the experience. This assumption of affective (or subjective) stylistics, like the assumption behind objective stylistics, is convenient because it allows relatively simple kinds of stylistic investigation: here one needs not linguistic expertise but literary awareness and the willingness to introspect mercilessly (as well as the deal of time, sensitivity, etc., mentioned before).

It seems to me that stylistics has to escape the pitfalls of subjectivity and pratfalls of objectivity, that it has to accomodate the undeniable existence of subjective responses that Bleich, Slatoff, Holland, Ohmann and Fish

emphasize while avoiding the solipsism these critics all too often illustrate. One way to do this is hinted at in the various ramifications of my title. To be effective, stylistics should study the relationship between linguistic constructions as possible "causes" ("effective" in its obsolete sense of "efficient cause") and their "effects" on readers ("effective" adjectivally). Such a study would be both objective and subjective: the responses themselves are subjective, but the methods of analyzing them would be statistical. It would incorporate both subjectivity of response and some notion of the externality of the text without surrendering to either, by emphasizing neither the text alone nor idiosyncratic responses to it, but rather the relation between the text and shared (extraindividual, social, intersubjective) responses elicited.²² And it would be clearly distinguishable from linguistic study, thus fulfilling in a perhaps odd way two of Richard Bailey's desiderata (though he calls them assumptions) for stylistics: that it be distinct from linguistics and that it be a probabilistic concept.²³

There are two obvious objections to such a study. The first is purely practical: this kind of stylistics is going to be difficult to perform. More equipment is needed than a book and a linguistic theory or a knack for accurate introspection. Experiments will have to be devised to see how readers respond to language in different settings, and those findings will have to be analyzed rigorously. But sticking with either of the major brands of stylistics currently on the market suggests the inebriated gentleman in the old joke who looked for the quarter he lost under the streetlamp half a block away from the dark corner where he dropped it, on the theory that he would never find it in the dark, and beside, in the light he could at least see what he was doing.

The second difficulty is more theoretical: the kind of stylistics I am suggesting doesn't seem to correspond to any normal sense of style--as in The Later Style of Henry James--whether by that term we mean "a way of doing it," or a particular statistical predominance of certain constructions or words, or just some kind of deviation from a vaguely defined norm.²⁴ That is, style seems to be inherent in works rather than in responses. I think this view is a fiction licensed by our normal use of language: when we speak of "James's style," I would argue, we are actually talking about a series of essentially private mental events occasioned by reading something by Henry James. As David Bleich has argued in Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism, we continually express internal, subjective events in external, objective terms: "the habit of objectification is fundamental in human functioning, and no one does

without it."²⁵ By means of what Bleich calls "intellectual reformulations"²⁶ the series of responses James's prose elicits in us is objectified into "James's style," and then, by application of the assumption of isomorphic relations between linguistic configurations and responses, this "style" is located in--and identified with--certain linguistic characteristics of James's works.

If this explanation is correct, the reason some "objective" stylistics seemed so insightful and informative--and one thinks here especially of Richard Ohmann's studies--is that the linguistic configurations isolated seemed so plausibly related to our responses. Faulkner's embeddings, Hemingway's indirect-discourse transformations, James's self-embeddings, Lawrence's deletions²⁷ --all seemed so transparently linked to our responses that it was unnecessary actually to specify the connection between them. But that ignored connection is the most important step in the demonstration, for without reliable information on how people respond to language it is impossible to know which responses are connected with which constructions, and thus impossible to account for response by isolating certain configurations.

What is needed, then, is information about responses to language. More importantly, if stylistics is to transcend autobiographical anecdotage, it must gather information about the extent to which such responses are shared. Such information is not easy to come by: it is not the result of introspection or common sense, and it cannot be deduced from the form of linguistic structures themselves. And, so far as I know, it is not available today, for explanations of the effects of particular constructions differ widely. For instance, passive constructions are quite common in English, used freely by mature speakers and much discussed by linguists, yet there is no agreement on what their effect is. For Richard Ohmann, "the semantic tendency [of the passive] is toward throwing emphasis on the direct object and reducing emphasis on the subject"²⁸ (here subject and object refer to deep structure functions). Halliday, however, claims that "the passive . . . can be regarded as an option dissociating the roles of actor and theme while leaving theme unmarked"²⁹--i.e. without especially emphasizing the object. And recently A Grammar of Contemporary English has stressed "the importance of the passive voice as a means of reversing the normal order of 'agentive' and 'affected' elements, and thus of adjusting clause structure to end-focus and end-weight"³⁰--i.e. the agent is emphasized rather than the object, as the example provided makes clear.

Presumably the passive can elicit any of these effects (as well as any of the others linguists have proposed), but it clearly cannot have all of them at the same time. There is no agreement on the effect of the passive because there cannot be: in different environments passives will have different effects. This unsurprising fact should call into question the usefulness of stylistic studies which concern themselves with such things as the comparative frequencies of passive constructions in different authors, since there is no way to relate those figures to what we experience as style. And what is true of passives is true of most constructions: there is very little information available on subjective response to linguistic configurations at all (with the exception, of course, of words and catch phrases), let alone on how that response is affected by environment--linguistic and otherwise--and how much of that response is shared; in short, on what distinguishes stylistic descriptions from linguistic descriptions. For stylistics, then, linguistic descriptions are much like Burton's magical 321: both might be meaningful--321, indeed, is a wonderful number to conjure with--but we have no way of deciding whether they are or not, or even, if we consider it, of supporting our suspicions that the former are more likely to be useful than the latter.

The only way out of this embarrassing muddle that I can see involves empirical research on how people respond to linguistic configurations, how the environment affects those responses, how much agreement in response there is--what I have called "effective stylistics." Obviously there is a possibility that such empirical study will reveal that individual responses are completely idiosyncratic. But this seems rather unlikely, since at least one of the functions of language is communication, and purely personal responses would amount to lack of any shared code and thus render effective communication impossible. On the other hand, unanimity is not to be expected either, as can be seen from the difficulty so many readers have in agreeing with the ever-expanding array of question marks, asterisks, and exclamation points with which linguists preface their example sentences. What might be expected from effective stylistics--though this is entirely conjectural--is the kind of finding characteristic of other linguistic fields that have applied statistical analysis to individual characteristics: something like Labov's variable rules or DeCamp's implicational scales.³¹

In any case, if future directions are unclear, past ones are not, and that in itself should constitute a sufficient argument against continuing in them. To escape redundancy, stylistic descriptions must differ from linguistic ones, and

to escape absurdity, that difference must be somehow related to what we usually think of as style, however imprecise that may be. Now the salient fact about style, it seems to me, is that it is concerned with response: if we speak objectively and normally, we might say it calls forth response, if we speak more subjectively and perhaps more correctly, we might say it is response. Either way, effective stylistics cannot avoid response, and the only real question is whether the best way to approach it is idiosyncratically and anecdotally--I'll tell you mine if you tell me yours--or on a somewhat larger and more rigorous (experimental, empirical) scale. And that does not strike me as an especially felicitous question.

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NOTES

¹The terms are defined and discussed in Richard Ohmann, "Instrumental Style: Notes on the Theory of Speech as Action," Current Trends in Stylistics, ed. Braj B. Kachru and Herbert F. W. Stahlke (Edmonton: Linguistic Research Inc., 1972), pp. 115-41.

²See, e.g., Roman Jakobson, "The Grammatical Texture of a Sonnet from Sidney's Arcadia," Studies in Language and Literature in Honor of Margaret Schlauch, ed. M. Brahmer (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1966); Roman Jakobson and Lawrence G. Jones, Shakespeare's verbal art in Th' expence of spirit (The Hague: Mouton, 1970); M. A. K. Halliday, "Descriptive Linguistics in Literary Studies," Linguistics and Literary Style, ed. Donald C. Freeman (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 57-72; John Sinclair, "Taking a Poem to Pieces," in Freeman, pp. 129-142, and "A Technique of Stylistic Description," Language and Style, 1 (1968), 215-43.

³David Crystal, "Objective and Subjective in Stylistic Analysis," in Kachru and Stahlke, p. 103.

⁴Halliday, pp. 63-66; Louis T. Milic, "Connectives in Swift's Prose Style," in Freeman, pp. 243-57; Richard Ohmann, Shaw: The Style and the Man (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1962), pp. 169-85.

⁵Curtis W. Hayes, "A Study of Prose Styles: Edward Gibbon and Ernest Hemingway," in Freeman, pp. 279-96.

⁶Sinclair, "Taking a Poem to Pieces," p. 130.

⁷Dolores M. Burton, Shakespeare's Grammatical Style (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), pp. 5-17.

⁸Burton, p. 223.

⁹Richard Ohmann, "Mentalism in the Study of Literary Language," Proceedings of the Conference on Language and Language Behavior, ed. Eric Zale (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), pp. 209-210. Similar remarks have been made by many; e.g., "the dangerously false impression that a work of literature is objectively independent and that it somehow functions apart from those who write and read it. The fact is that a work of art must be rendered so by a perceiver. . . .with regard to symbolic works, all aspects of their existence, function, and effect depend on the processes by which they are assimilated by an observer" (David Bleich, Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism [forthcoming], ms. pp. 3-4); and, "A literary text, after all, in an objective sense consists only of a certain configuration of specks of carbon black on dried wood pulp. For these marks to become words . . . the reader must play the part of a prince to the sleeping beauty. He must give them life out of his own desires" (Norman Holland, Five Readers Reading [forthcoming], ms. p. 20).

¹⁰These examples and others are discussed in Julian Hochberg, "In the Mind's Eye," Contemporary Theory and Research in Visual Perception, ed. Ralph Norman Haber (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 311.

¹¹See David Bleich, "Psychological Bases of Learning from Literature," CE, (1971), 32-45, Readings and Feelings, and The Subjective Reader (in ms.); Walter J. Slatoff, With Respect to Readers (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970); and Norman Holland, The Dynamics of Literary Response (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), Poems in Persons (New York: Norton, 1973), and Five Readers Reading (ms.).

¹²Holland, Five Readers Reading, ms. pp. 1-6.

¹³Holland, Five Readers Reading, ms. p. 6. See also I. A. Richards, Practical Criticism (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939). I agree with Holland's points, but for ease of exposition I use cause and effect in the familiar, naive way.

¹⁴Ohmann, "Mentalism," p. 206.

¹⁵Ohmann, "Mentalism," p. 206.

¹⁶Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," Self Consuming Artifacts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 383-427; reprinted from New Literary History, 2 (1970), 123-67. See also "What is Stylistics and Why are They Saying Such Terrible Things About It?" Approaches to Poetics, ed. Seymour Chatman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).

¹⁷Fish, "Affective Stylistics," pp. 387-88.

¹⁸Fish, "Affective Stylistics," pp. 406-7.

¹⁹Fish, Self Consuming Artifacts, p. 296.

²⁰Fish, "Affective Stylistics," p. 393.

²¹See, e.g., pp. 366 and 394 of Self Consuming Artifacts.

²²Again I am using cause, effect, objective and subjective in their usual if imprecise meanings for ease of exposition.

²³Richard W. Bailey, "Linguistics and Stylistics: The State of the Art," 1973 MMLA paper, p. 5.

²⁴For these characterizations of style see Donald C. Freeman, "Linguistic Approaches to Literature" in Freeman, pp. 3-17.

²⁵Ms. p. 61.

²⁶Ms. p. 89.

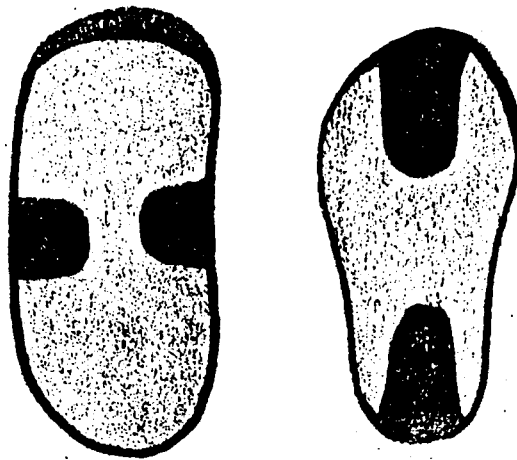
²⁷See Richard Ohmann, "Generative Grammars and the Concept of Literary Style" in Freeman, pp. 258-78 for these examples. I am, of course, ignoring completely the interesting relation between the author and his style, a relation Ohmann stresses.

²⁸Ohmann, "Mentalism," p. 194.

²⁹M. A. K. Halliday, "Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English," Journal of Linguistics, 3 (1967), 215.

³⁰Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik, A Grammar of Contemporary English (New York: Seminar Press, 1972), p. 943. However, compare: "But although the structure of a sentence changes under voice transformation, its meaning remains the same" (p. 802).

³¹See William Labov, "Contraction, Deletion and the Inherent Variability of the Copula," Language, 45 (1969), 715-62, esp. 738-42; David DeCamp, "Toward a generative analysis of a post-creole speech continuum," Pidginization and Creolization of Languages, ed. Dell Hymes (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 349-70; and Ralph W. Fasold, "Two Models of Socially Significant Linguistic Variation," Language, 46 (1970) 551-63.



ROBERT L. BROWN, JR.

Intentions and the Contexts of Poetry

If I post a note on the door of my classroom which says "We can't meet here this afternoon; they want to paint the walls. Go to 209 Aeronautical Engineering. Thanks.", I have performed the most ordinary sort of language act. If all goes well, my message will be clear to my students when they apply the most ordinary sort of interpretational techniques to my text. But even such commonplace instances of language use follow the paradigm for meaning in natural language generally, and, while not simple, they are relatively familiar and straightforward. A brief examination of the "meaning" of such texts should clarify the intentionalist position I recommend.

I can assume that we all know what the words of my note mean. We understand what language philosopher H.P. Grice calls the "timeless," or conventional, meanings of the linguistic forms." Briefly, we know the sorts of physical objects speakers usually intend to refer to when they utter the sound "wall" in using English. And we know the sorts of actions speakers typically intend to predicate of painters on walls, wagons or paintings when they utter the sound "paint." Further, our basic linguistic competence tells us that the words of my note (when regularized to correct ellipsis, etc.) are examples of English sentences, and we know the paradigmatic modifications of word-meanings that occur when words become parts of more complex syntactic structures. In short, we know the formal rules of the language.¹ It should be quite clear, however, that this sort of meaning definition does not go far toward explaining what the note or any other utterance means as an instance of communication. No grammar, even one with the most elegant generative semantic base, and no dictionary, however elaborate, provides the sort of information we need, nor are they intended to do so.

Most obviously, we need to know the spatial and temporal context which allows the speaker to refer successfully to a particular place by the use of the deictic "here," and for the tense-time relations underlying the use of "this afternoon." Other context-dependent items are the referents of the pronouns, and the identity of the presupposed "I" and "you" in the command

[Centrum, 2:1 (Spring 1974), 56-66.]

"Go to 209 Aeronautical Engineering," and the presupposed "I" and "you" in the illocutionary act of thanking represented by the simple form "Thanks." Finally, the context will enable the readers to distinguish the illocutionary forces of the different parts of the note, i.e., two assertions, a command and an act of thanking. The note, like most utterances recorded from everyday language use, seems to represent more semantic content than is encoded in its surface form, and more disturbingly, this content seems inextricably linked to the context, placing the "meaning" beyond the power of any autonomous, context-independent model.

What we want to know, then, when we ask what an utterance means is not the "timeless" meaning of the formal structures, but what some speaker, at some particular time and place, intended to communicate to some particular audience. We are asking, simply, what the speaker meant in saying what he said. Naturally the first and perhaps the best clues for determining the speaker's meaning are the conventional meanings of the words and structures of the utterance, but these are never sufficient in themselves. In the most interesting and atypical cases, the conventional meanings may be entirely misleading.

A clear, though perhaps extreme example is found in situations where a speaker "misspeaks" himself but is nevertheless understood. If I am approached on the mall by a student who asks me the way to the library and say "see that building there, the one with the Roman arches. That's the library."² In fact, the library has Greek columns, not "Roman arches," (whatever they may be), but I doubt not that the student will easily grasp my intended reference to a particular building, and my predication of its location and some particular architectural features. The point is simply that my intended meaning, though in conflict with the conventional meaning of my words, is easily recovered from aspects of the speech situation. A second example might be formed around the "note-on-the-door" case. Suppose I return the next week to find my note still in place and the class missing. Clearly my written utterance has been "mis-taken." Finding the note, my students reinvested it with meaning by assuming a new context. More accurately, they attributed to me a new and unjustified meaning. The linguistic object, the text of the note, significantly, remains the same, as must its conventional or "timeless" meaning. But I no longer mean "this afternoon" in writing "this afternoon." I meant it a week ago, but now I mean nothing by my leftover note.

Thus far I have been presenting two related notions which I shall now try to separate. First, I am assuming a fairly

typical intentionalist conception of natural-language meaning. Following Grice, I claim that all language utterances mean what their speakers intend them to mean, no more and no less. Such a claim anchors language meaning in epistemic acts of language users, "volative" acts which are prior to any linguistic form.³ Thus all linguistic systems are defined as systems of conventions formed to allow the communication of this meaning. In this view the meaning of every utterance is uniquely determined by its speaker, and although speakers typically mean (intentionally) what they say (conventionally), they are by nō means required to do so. I will not argue this immensely complex issue here. I mention it simply because all of my remarks on poetic context assume such a conception of meaning.

Second, and most crucially, I have been suggesting that the context of an utterance supplies significant parts of the total language-act meaning, and is of equal importance with the linguistic object or "text." In everyday conversation there seems to be a sort of conversational convention at work requiring speakers to make explicit only that information not already clear on the basis of the contextual shared knowledge of the discourse participants.

Such a view disturbs many literary and linguistic theorists because it seems to deny the possibility of rigor in description. It seems, as Leonard Bloomfield claims in Language, to require us to know everything that speakers and hearers might mutually know: we seem to be forced to formalize the conceptual universe.⁴ In other words, if we deny that linguistic objects (at whatever level: words, phrases, sentences, or whole texts) are complete encodings of meanings, we seem to lose our object of study. Without a definable, specific "thing itself," our analysis seems unavoidably indeterminate. The utterance may mean variously, as the context changes.

The dilemma for both linguistic and literary theory, is this: either we rigidly limit the scope of our analysis by defining meaning as conventional meaning or "sense," and consigning the rest of meaning phenomena to a theory of use (variously: a "performance theory," or a "pragmatics"), or we set out as Bloomfield gloomily predicted to formalize the universe.

The problem has not been confronted in linguistic theory; the question of what the semantic notation notates must, of course, be answered before one builds "referential indices: higher performative verbs or presuppositions into the grammar."⁵

So far, the various meanings of "meaning" seem largely unrecognized.

In literary theory there has been more effort, if not greater success. The problem here is complicated by the traditional separation of poetry from everyday language use. Monroe Beardsley, one of many critics of this familiar persuasion, is willing to admit the sort of context-dependency I described in my note-on-the-door example of everyday language, but adheres to a strictly categorical definition of poetry. Beardsley claims that poems mean by virtue of "the interaction of their words," independent of any context or intentions.⁶ Such a view, of course, preserves a determinate object of study, but forces us to assume a priori that the language of poetry is different in kind from the language of notes, greetings, orders for meals or lectures to literature classes. Do poems exist as semantically autonomous wholes? Are they, in other words, complete encodings of meaning, in radical contrast to everyday language utterances? I find it very difficult to believe in such a rigid separation of poetry from everyday speech. I find it particularly hard to believe that poems are complete and context-free, in light of the number of context-providing footnotes we find, for example, in the Norton Anthology. Yet the intuition that some poems "mean" differently from everyday utterances must contain some truth; if poems have contexts, they are significantly different from the contexts of everyday speech. We can, I think, provide a beginning for a definition of the contexts of poetry through a short account of the intentionalist view of meaning in complete language acts.

William Carlos Williams' "This is Just to Say" is a defiantly unpoetic poem.

This is Just to Say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
They were delicious
so sweet
and so cold⁷

Except for the typography and the repetition of "so" in lines 11 and 12, both trivial, the poem has no "poetic" features. There seems to be no formal basis to distinguish it from a leftover note from some speaker to his/her wife, husband or roommate. Beardsley, I suspect, would claim that it is no poem at all, or that at best it is a weak one, and would support his contentions by citing the lack of poetic features. Yet I feel that most readers, encountering this text in a proper setting, e.g., in an anthology of poetry, would read it differently from the way they would read a note on the icebox door. The difference is conventional, not formal. We would apply conventions to the Williams poem which we would not call upon in interpreting everyday language. These conventions underlie our sense of genre; they specify how generically different texts are to be taken. The difference in interpretation which results is precisely a difference in what we take to be the author's intended meaning, not a difference in the timeless meaning of the words.

The key lies in whom we take to be speaking (writing) the utterance, and for what audience we assume it is intended. In everyday language, we take the "I" of the text to be the speaker, and the "you" to be some specific audience. These roles are usually patent in spoken discourse where the speaker speaks and his intended audience is easily identified by eye contact, gesture, etc. In the written everyday language of notes, memos and letters, the potential for misfires or misinterpretations is increased by the possible separation of the text from its intended context (many classes may have been sent astray by my note on the classroom door as students automatically supplied other "I's," "you's" and time relations in constructing their interpretations). But whether written or spoken, the structure of the language act remains the same. Such language acts might be labeled "situated" language use, since they are inextricably linked to particular contexts upon which they depend for their meaning. This context allows hearers to supply referents for referring terms, to complete elliptical forms, to regularize syntax, to determine illocutionary force and logical modality, and perhaps to perform other interpretational acts in arriving at their construction of the intended meaning of the utterance.

The poem, on the other hand, is not heard as a situated utterance of the poet to his readers. This observation should not be surprising; it merely restates the poetry-class commonplace that the "I" of the poem is not automatically to be taken as the poet, the "you" as the reader, nor the "here and now" as the historical context of the writing of the poem. This is most obvious in dramatic poetry, where it is clear

that fictive characters speak all of the utterances of the text, with the meaning of each utterance dependent not on an actual real-world context, but on the fictive context defined (if all goes well and the poet is competent) by the poem itself. Put another way, we do not "hear" the utterances of dramatic characters as we would situated utterances intended for us as audience, nor do we "hear" them as we would written records of situated utterances, e.g., news reports, political speeches or the Gettysburg Address. Rather, we "overhear" them as reported speech acts between fictive speakers and hearers, who are themselves "spoken" by the poet. The mode of this reporting may be constitutive of different genres, but the crucial meaning distinction, which allows us to separate poetry from everyday speech, is our awareness of these multiple layers of intentions, our knowledge that an author is behind the fictive speaker and his fictive audience.

These claims seem safe enough when made for dramatic and narrative poetry, and they easily extend to the dramatic monologue. I would, however, go further, to claim that lyric poetry (even when spoken in the first person by a persona remarkably like the historical poet) often has the same "dramatic" structure.

It is precisely this "layering" of speakers and language acts which allows us to differentiate the Williams poem from the simple situated utterance it purports to be. The poem has a language act structure roughly analogous to reported speech in everyday language. We might say, for example, "John told Mary he would like to go," and be heard as asserting that another speaker asserted that a third speaker asserted "I would like to go." Similarly, we hear the Williams poem as the poet (largely unidentified) "saying" to some historical audience (his intended readership, however general) a text, in which a fictive character (with, we guess, a wife and an icebox) "says" to his wife "This is Just to Say." The full intended meaning in both cases includes the identities of the multiply nested speakers and hearers, both real and fictive. Part of speaker's language-using competence includes this ability to distinguish the various levels of attributed meaning.

The poem, however, differs from reported speech forms in everyday language in that it contains no formal evidence of these layers of speakers and intended audiences. On the surface, it seems identical to my note to my class. This is, of course, the cause of much of the confusion surrounding the identities of poetic speakers, but it is also the best argument for treating poetic meaning as intended meaning.

In this way we are able to capture the intuition that poems may be read differently from everyday language texts and that there is more meaning to a poem than meets the eye or the ear.

Significantly, I am not suggesting anything in this account of poetic meaning which goes beyond the resources of everyday language. We typically leave out of utterances all information we assume will be clear from the context. J. R. Ross (probably unaware that he was arguing for an intentionalist position) has suggested this view in a proposal for the semantic structure of declarative sentences. Ross has proposed a transformational-generative model in which the explicit sentence is framed in the deep structure by a higher "sentence" which defines the speaker-hearer roles and the illocutionary force. This material is deleted in the generation of the surface form of the sentence, but is an authentic part of the meaning, known to the discourse participants, and recorded in the transformational history.⁸ This, I argue, is the normal case.

Thus the meaning of the poem, in the intentionalist conception, is determined by the volitive act of the author, who intends the complex layered structure of fictive speech within speech. The communication of this meaning is accomplished through conventions which specify the appropriate way in which the poem is to be taken. Readers "know" (from guided reading of poetry) that poets intend their texts to be heard as speech by fictive characters to fictive hearers. Further, poets (in full knowledge of these conventions) intend their poems (white space, strange typography, modes of publication and all) to serve as a reason for their readers to take their texts this way.

Assuming that this account is correct, at least in general, we can define two senses of the context of poetry, each of which leads to different types of interpretational statements. Focussing on the fictive speakers--whether characters in a drama or narrative, narrative personae, or the personae of lyrics--we can define the context of their utterances. Just as in everyday speech, the fictive speaker may leave unsaid any information he expects his fictive audience to be able to provide from mutual knowledge. Thus, in Kent and Gloucester's opening exchange in King Lear, Kent uses three proper names in typical conversational fashion, "knowing" that his intended reference will be communicated to Gloucester on the basis of their mutual knowledge.

Kent: I thought the King had more affected
the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

Gloucester: It did always seem so to us; but now
in the division of the kingdom, it
appears not which of the dukes he
values most, for equalities are so
weighted that curiosity in neither
can make the choice of either's moiety.

Gloucester's reply, similarly, contains a definite reference:
"the divisions of the kingdom," used without further identifica-
tion.

But however well these fictive characters may "understand" each other (assuming that Shakespeare represents language behavior accurately) we, the overhearing audience, are left uncomprehending. Our position in this early part of the play is like that of strangers overhearing an intimate conversation. However, in contrast to everyday speech, we expect--from our knowledge of the genre--to gain access to the mutual knowledge of the fictive characters; we know "generically" that this information will be provided if we simply store what information we already have and wait for the rest to be divulged. Thus, in answer to Kent's second speech: "Is this not your son, my Lord?" Gloucester provides a long biographical note on Edmund:

Gloucester: His breeding, sir, hath been at my
charge. I have so often blushed to
acknowledge him that now I am brazed
to't.

Kent: I cannot conceive you.

Gloucester: Sir, this young fellow's mother
could, whereupon she grew round-wombed,
and had indeed, sir, a son for her
cradle ere she had a husband for
her bed

Such a speech would be at least strange if this were really a conversation between two old friends, but its function here is clear: at this point Edmund has been identified for us, the audience. Later references to him can take the truncated form typical of actual speech, for we are now intimates of the characters; we share that body of mutual knowledge upon which the meaning of their utterances is based.

This brief account of the introduction of the audience to the mutual knowledge of the fictive characters leads naturally to the second sense of the context of poetry. The

characters themselves, and the world in which they speak, are all part of the larger language act between the poet and his intended audience. This language act is also based on an assumed body of knowledge, including, for example, knowledge of the genre-rules defining the meaning structure of the play itself. Even though we recognize that the characters speak in a historically unsituated world which defines its own time and place--e.g., the ancient Britain of King Lear or the 20th-century kitchen of "This is Just to Say"--we recognize that the author speaks his text to a real intended audience who share with him the knowledge upon which the success of his language act depends. Even the poet who sets out to disrupt genre conventions and establish a new form assumes a readership competent in the old genre; with out this shared knowledge his intended rebellion may be mistaken as mere incompetence or outright nonsense.

Thus, the hierarchical layering of language acts within language acts requires that the meaning of any character's speech--whether explicitly formalized in the utterance or left to the context--is entirely dependent upon the author's intended meaning in performing the complete language act we call a poem. More simply: characters obviously can "know" (and hence can mean) no more than their author. In this way, the lines of the poem, regardless of their fictive setting, are bound by the actual knowledge shared by the author and his intended readers. This knowledge, functioning like mutual knowledge in everyday speech, imposes limits on what an author can assume in his text without risking incomprehensibility.

Pope, for example, has his fictive persona in An Essay on Man command the fictive hearer "Awake, my St. John! leave all meaner things . . .," assuming that his readers will know about the historical Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, his reputation and his political position, and, knowing this, will infer that the fictive speaker is to be treated with sympathy and respect. He is, after all, in a position to perform the language act of commanding to Viscount Bolingbroke. All of this is part of the meaning of the poem, but it is left to the reader to supply it from the body of mutual knowledge he shares with the poet.

Pope's assumption no doubt held for his intended audience, but the necessary contextual knowledge is, of course, no longer current. Part of the full intended meaning of the poem is thus "lost" unless provided by the sorts of definitional footnotes typical of modern editions. In an intentional view, the information provided by such notes is

not supplementary to the meaning of the poem, but directly constitutive of it; part of the poem, although not part of the text.

My intention in these diverse and unfortunately brief remarks has been programmatic: to suggest some of the theoretical consequences of regarding poetic meaning as intended or author's meaning. The advantages of such an account are sufficient to recommend it over alternative views. It treats poetic meaning as continuous with meaning in everyday language, but still allows us to formulate sufficient conditions to differentiate distinct types of language acts. Such conditions would formalize the conventions known to speakers and hearers which constitute their sense of genre, or at the highest level, their intuitions about differences between poetry and everyday language use. The intentionalist position does not, I think, force us to claim indeterminacy of poetic meaning simply because we recognize the inadequacy of the linguistic object as an encoding of meaning. To do so would run counter to all our intuitions; certainly we approach poems when interpreting them as if they have a determinate meaning, and we frequently feel that we are successful in recovering this meaning. Further, the same indeterminacy could be claimed for everyday language, where the linguistic objects are typically incomplete, and frequently ill-formed, but in this case the claim would be clearly false. Everyday language utterances, however elliptical, communicate complex meanings quite accurately.

The intentionalist view does suggest that speech competence of language users is highly sophisticated--perhaps even more so than the basic linguistic competence--but it is clearly rule-governed and regular, and as such is amenable to description. A small start has been made here in the account of the difference in meaning structure between everyday "situated" utterances and the "layered" or dramatic fictive speech of poetry, and in the description of the nested contexts within the poem. A complete intentionalist account--whether for poetic language use or for everyday speech--will be immensely complex. But the threat of such complexity need not force us to either the false rigor of purely formal accounts or to the resignation of assumed indeterminacy of meaning.

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NOTES

¹This is a radical, perhaps misleading condensation of Grice's account of several distinct senses of "meaning," the core of which can be found in "Meaning," Philosophical Review, LXVI, 1957, and in "Utterer's Meaning, Sentence-Meaning, and Word Meaning" in John Searle, ed., The Philosophy of Language (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

²I am indebted to Professor Martin Steinmann for this example.

³Grice made this radical intentionalist claim in conversation at the University of Minnesota in 1974 in order to separate his conception from John Austin's and John Searle's. While Austin and Searle take conventions as the primitives of meaning, Grice wishes to push the basic meaning act back further, prior to any language system. The question, however, does not effect the account of meaning and context I suggest.

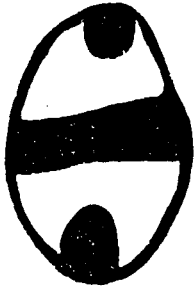
⁴Leonard Bloomfield, Language (New York, 1933), p. 170.

⁵A serious attempt at such an account is George Lakoff's "Linguistics and Natural Logic," in D. Davidson and G. Harman, eds., Semantics of Natural Language (Dordrecht, Holland, 1972).

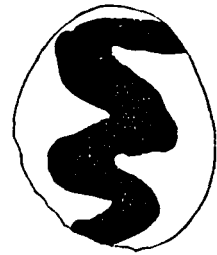
⁶Monroe Beardsley, The Possibility of Criticism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970).

⁷William Carlos Williams, The Collected Earlier Poems, (New York: New Directions, 1938), p. 354.

⁸John R. Ross, "On Declarative Sentences," in R. Jacobs and P. Rosenbaum, eds., Readings in English Transformational Grammar (Waltham, Mass., 1970).



DISCUSSION



[See prefatory note, p.4.]

Q: I'd like to ask Professor Brown: you said that this hierarchical layering of language acts in language acts occurs in some--what you call "border-line lyric poems"; and I'm wondering if you want to extend that and say that it in fact occurs in all lyric poems, and that it's part of what we mean by "fiction," and [is] almost definitional of "literature."

BROWN: That's a wonderful question.

Q: Thanks.

BROWN: No, I do not want to create a category term "poem": because I think, as a good intentionalist, that whatever meaning it has--whether it's a layering of speakers, the presence of a fictive audience or fictive speaker--whatever kind of meaning it has, it's put there by its author. And, in order to account for situations like Elizabeth Barrett writing a sonnet to Robert Browning, and speaking in propria persona, in her own voice, we, I don't think, would want to create the category term. We'd just like to say that whether it has the "dramatic" (or "layered," or whatever) structure, or not, is determined solely by the author's intention. If we call that layering--or that nesting of speakers--characteristic of poetry, then we're going to have terrible problems with things like De Rerum Natura, to--a friend of mine gave me that example--or any of the eighteenth-century moralistic essays. Or going back to Latin poetry. Frequently poets speak in their own voice, as though they were writing essays. We call it poetry for other reasons. I think sometimes this layering and this dramatic structure occurs; and we have conventions which tell us when to do it and when not to do it. But I think that doesn't force us to create a category term

[Centrum, 2:1 (Spring 1974), 67-78.]

that'll just clutter up the argument with a lot of counter-examples.

The second question, whether I'm not really talking about fiction, is much more interesting. I may be. I'm trying to avoid that because it's a very, very difficult issue--to get into the logical or truth-value status of poetry. But certainly if you recognize that a fictive character is speaking the utterance, then you will not be required to subject it to the truth-conditions that you subject historical utterances to. But I'd like to leave the question of fictionality sort of "waiting in the wings" till I get a better grip on some of these other problems.

Q: I wanted to ask Professor Kintgen: First, I think your paper was excellent; it was one of the most clear presentations of a real problem. The question I have is whether the kind of research you're proposing, that might--I don't necessarily think, as you do, only be different in its erroneous sense but perhaps be really fruitful--is related to the work that I remember Michael Wallach was doing some years ago (I don't know if it's continuing), where they were working, I would say, through the psychology department, and testing aesthetic responses in a very scientific way--or at least as scientific as psychology at this stage claims to be. And if that is the direction in which you're tending, I'm wondering if you're seeing a literary criticism or a literary study that--frankly, for those of us who are not psychologists and are not linguists--means the end of our job? Or, in what way are these all going to be combined, since this seems to be the core that will pull the subjective and objective together?

KINTGEN: Well, unfortunately, right now I'm not clear on that. I did an experiment sort of like the one I suggested here, myself, just to see what would happen. I asked graduate students and faculty to respond to twelve different paragraphs and I gave them eight semantic-differential scales. Half of the people responded to style and half responded to content. I had originally hoped that they would show a clear distinction between style and content and that I would be able to write a paper saying: "style" is not an artificially reified term; in fact it can be empirically proven; and so let's get on with studying it. That did not work out. What happened instead was that there was something similar to what Holland talks about when he tried to find [unintelligible phrase] fantasy responses to his works: that people responded in just completely unpredictable ways. But I think that we can go on from that and study how each individual person responds: that there will be some sort of predictive value in that for the person.

Now it seems to me that once we have that kind of thing sketched in--we know how different people respond, and how those responses differ--then we might want to be able to suggest that some responses are in a sense "fuller"--no less private and no less important to the person, but in some outside sense "fuller" and more inclusive than others. I don't know if that's a thing to work for. David Bleich has--I've referred to his work several times in here--and he has [a] very interesting distinction between his responses to a work of literature and his analysis of it. He talks about the reason why his response and his analysis are not the same; and why his analysis is much fuller; and why it is psychologically necessary for him, and presumably for everybody, to cut certain things out of an analysis in a response. Now, I think that if we found the same kind of response to linguistic structures, that we could map the same kind of argument: we could ask why it is that some people respond in some ways and not in others. Why is it that some people characterize passive style as being "good" style whereas others characterize active style as being "good" style? I don't know, it might do away with our jobs; but, as I tried to make clear in the paper, I think that our jobs, if they're depending on the kind of thing that's going on in stylistics right now, are hanging by a thread anyway.

PIERSSSENS: I'm not surprised, but I'm interested by the ideological presuppositions that are at the basis of the discussions that I've heard here. For example, especially when Mr. Brown discusses the questions of poetry, I am really interested to know why he needs something like an author to be held responsible for meaning; why there should be somebody responsible for a meaning; and why this should be assigned to a central instance which, in a way, would be the master of this. I ask this question, of course, from a certain philosophical position which derives from what Derrida and some other philosophers have criticized in a certain metaphysical stance towards language, which assumes that meaning somehow must have a source, must have someone held responsible for it or someone be the origin of it. So this is something which, to me, leads to very complicated problems and assumptions, assertions, to which I would object: especially with the non-critical notion of intentionality as related to the author. Something also that I would like to ask Mr. Kintgen is this: I'm not quite sure that what you are doing is very different from what Michael Riffaterre was trying to do at a certain time with his notion of archilecteur--arche-reader--I don't know how it was in English. And this also raises ideological questions, like: what do you suppose, what do you assume about the reader when you universalize

the notion of "reader"--even if it is to draw out differences between the different responses. What do you assume about this mental structure, psychological structure, or ontological structure that should allow you to make comparisons between the different responses? And this also raises questions about the text, since you seem to be oscillating between specifications of the reader, and specification of the text--and stylistics at least to me, seems to be situated somewhere in between; so this is the kind of question I would like to ask.

BROWN: Let me start answering by begging the question: it wouldn't surprise me at all if I found out that the way that I see meaning, as perfectly clear and distinct and unquestionable, turned out to have [a] very interesting psycho-analytic or cultural basis that I'm not aware of. But I'll answer the question using Searle's famous stone-at-the-bottom-of-the-Nile example; which is basic to all intentional views of meaning. Say an anthropologist recovers a stone from the bottom of the Nile, and finds on it tracks--scratches, marks--which he takes to be writing. This taking it to be writing, assuming that there is some intelligence--some informing intelligence, some intending intelligence--behind it, is the first condition of someone's beginning the process of interpretation. First thing that you assume about an object which has "non-natural meaning" in this sense, is that someone put it there. And if you find that instead of being an example of writing from an old culture, that it's merely the marks of tree-worms or some Pleistocene animal making marks on the stone, then you throw the stone back in the Nile. Then [if] this assumption--that is if the meaning exists non-naturally in any kind of an object (whether it's two dimensional art, three-dimensional art, language utterances or whatever)--is inherent in intention theory, it does, I recognize put a great deal of emphasis on the individual as the creator, as the meaning-maker. But I guess that's just there. I can, however, within that paradigm make some interesting distinctions, using E.D. Hirsh's distinction between "meaning" and "significance"--which is borrowed from further back than that, I realize. When we talk about the meaning of a text--when I talk about the meaning of text, I mean that which the author intended, no more and no less. But we have to recognize that texts, or just objects out of the real world, become meaningful in other ways. For instance, I can walk along a beach and pick up a piece of driftwood and say, "Ah, a sea gull," in a perfectly reasonable sort of way. I'm not saying that someone meant that to represent a sea gull: I'm simply saying that as sort of--"creating observer," I'm assigning some significance to that--I put it in there in the process of looking. In the same way, if you think about the accumulation of

literary criticism, we recognize that texts accumulate meanings as they go through different cultures. We talk about this as a kind of "meaning." I would say: not "meaning" in the sense that I want to talk about it, but "significance": things which are assigned to it by readings and re-readings. This is one of those possible, tentative answers to that first question: what do we mean when we say "meaning"? I would say, we can talk about two distinct senses: the intended meaning--what the author put there; and its significance, those bodies of ways of meaning that the text acquires as it goes along through history. I still want an intelligence behind it; I do not want things to mean by themselves. I want to assume some sort of volative act behind it.

PIERSSENS: This sounds like Leibniz or Kant: you assume that the noumenon is there, but that there is no way to know about it, so whatever you can say about it is true or false, and it makes no difference. . . . I think the whole question is really metaphysical--philosophical; and your attitude about meaning there--which expresses desire--which is the basis of your faith in meaning, faces a question of desire; and psychoanalysis would say something about [this]. This reminds me very much of theories by Leibniz or by Kant, assuming that the noumenon is there; and it has no windows, nothing, but it's there. And it is because of the noumenon that cannot be known by itself that phenomena have a signification. So this, to me, rests on a purely ontological act of faith which has no relevance to the analysis which can be done of, for example, here--and I think this is very interesting, what you say--on "speech acts" as such. Also it's interesting that you also talk about this meaning that reading or the act of scrutinizing the text, puts into a text. And in that sense I was very much interested by your remark about the fact that footnotes belong to the text, are part of the text (I'm extrapolating a little bit); but I guess that this is something which would underline my position here: that if there is meaning--and I don't think that the world is naturally meaningful and that meaning is not its source--I don't think that meaning has its source in one mastering or sovereign meaning-creator, whether it be--I don't know--God, or writer. Meaning is something which is derived from the praxis--from an activity on the text.

BROWN: I think your analysis is a hundred percent accurate. I can't imagine meaning that doesn't have a meaner behind it. Be that as it may, I guess that's where I'll have to stop.

Q: [Unintelligible passage] would you say: "all works, when the authors have died, have only significance--they've lost their meaning"?

BROWN: No, of course not.

Q: Does the meaning remain, somewhere, somehow.

BROWN: If I put a name on my mail box [that] says, "Robert Brown," and I die, it still means "Robert Brown." [It] doesn't pre-suppose any kind of an ontological reality at all; it just supposes that at some time, as Wittgenstein said, someone believed, in performing these kinds of language acts, that the thing he's referring to existed.

Q: The meaning remains?

BROWN: Sure.

Q: Independent of the author?

BROWN: Sure.

Q: Like the significance.

BROWN: When we ask what Sonnet No. 95 means, we're asking-- or, we can ask two kinds of questions: usually we mean "What did Shakespeare mean?" He put the meaning in the text. That's kind of simplified and hard-nosed, but I guess that is the case. We might also ask, "What does it mean to me? What does it suggest to me? What sorts of things out of my psycho-analytic past does it drag up?" These are also valuable kinds of questions, different in kind from the question about intended meaning.

Q: What that really adds up to [is]: "What would it mean if I had written this poem?"--right? That is, if we say not "What did Shakespeare mean?", the alternative is, "What would it mean if it were my poem?" Which strikes me as supremely irrelevant.

BROWN: Either I don't understand what you're asking or I can't answer it.

Q: Well, the point that I was getting at is, the alternative to assuming that, when we ask "What does Sonnet 95 mean?"-- the alternative to assuming that that means "What did Shakespeare mean in Sonnet 95?"--it would be the other one: "What would I mean if I had written this poem?" Do I follow what you were saying before: is that a correct statement?

BROWN: It's not an either/or distinction. There are lots of kinds of ways you can talk about the meaning. One thing you might mean is "What might I have meant had I said this?" That's certainly there. And that's another one of those senses that seems valuable to talk about. But it's--those are not mutually exclusive categories, I hope.

Q: I have a question of Mr. Brown. If I understood it, then I have a question. If I didn't understand your statement, then I have none. I think you said, characters know more than the authors.

BROWN: Can not know any more than the authors.

Q: Oh, can not know more.

BROWN: Yeah.

Q: Okay, I have no question.

BROWN: Okay.

Q: Can I ask Mr. Kintgen a question? I was at a conference recently where Martin Steinmann was saying that an innocent linguist who innocently decided to become a stylistician as if he had never read any literary criticism before--who just decided it might be an interesting thing to do--might decide that the way he would go about doing it would be to characterize literary competence. That is, just as he did when he was dealing with ordinary language, trying to characterize normal linguistic competence, he would characterize those things that people need to know in order to interpret literary texts. Does that seem to be the kind of balance that you are trying to achieve with your ideal stylistics? That's the first part of the question: and the second part of the question: Does it seem to you that something like Halle-Keyser metrics, which posits just that kind of metrical competence--a special kind of literary competence--is a step in the right direction?

KINTGEN: First off I'll take the second part: No, I don't think so; because what Halle and Keyser do is essentially step back from the issue and they haven't gone out and asked people how in fact they interpret poems. They step back and say, "Well, if we wanted to put this in terms of rules that people could follow, we would do it this way . . ."; and I think, in so doing they have certainly shown that it can be formalized; but there is even less way to relate what they have to say to anybody's response to meter, I think, than there

is to relate iambs and anapests and stuff like that--just those terms--to a person's response. So it seems to me that they are not talking about response in the sense that I am. And while I'm here, just let me clarify a point that was asked before: it seems to me that what I would like to try is altogether different from what Riffaterre did. Because Riffaterre took a whole bunch of responses, and threw out the content of the response, and said, "We'll look at the linguistic cause of all those responses. What stylistics is going to be is the study of linguistic causes of responses. We have to have the responses only to find out what linguistic things to study." But it seems to me that we want to study the relationship, somehow between the causes and the responses.

Q: John Carroll wrote an article in the late forties, that's been reprinted [unintelligible phrase] places, where he did a great big factor analysis . . .

KINTGEN: "Vectors of Prose Style."

Q: Yeah--is that the sort of thing [unintelligible phrase]?

KINTGEN: That's similar to it, yeah; but I would like to find out, if, looking at the way that people respond to particular things, you can set up perhaps different kinds of responders, different classes--it may not be possible, but it may. Then you may decide that one kind of responder is better than another kind--or more to be encouraged, in one sense or another, than another kind. Now the first question about setting up a kind of literary competence: It seems to me that that's similar to what Stanley Fish does, in saying that he is setting up an "ideal reader"--a person who is perfectly at home with literary conventions, and with linguistic theory, and with cultural history; and that he is going to respond most fully to a text. Now I think that's okay, except that, as long as we don't know how people in fact respond--we don't know what the differences are between those responses--I don't think we can talk about characterizing those responses.

Q: We do, though have literary criticism [unintelligible phrase].

KINTGEN: That's right: we have a whole bunch of anecdotes--that's in essence what we have. It seems to me that instead of trying to put those anecdotes together, and find out what they have in common, it would probably be easier to start out with a controlled experiment in the first place where you didn't have to worry about the anecdotes. Now I think it would be possible to take literary criticism and reduce it to a series of responses. One of the difficulties with that is that

people tend to use altogether different vocabulary, and to mean different things--"intend" different things--by even the words that they use that are the same. So that it would be very difficult to translate from one critic to another, very often.

Q: You mean you'd never find out what any of them mean.

KINTGEN: I often have that feeling, yeah.

Q: I want to take this point to Mr. Kintgen. In your paper and here in your discussion this afternoon, you've said that the stylistic study, from a linguistic approach, leaves the text in a shambles and pieces, and that this is not a satisfactory procedure [unintelligible phrase]. On the other hand, in this proposal that you have for stylistics you abandon the work as well to study the reactions of the readers. And this, I would say, also is an insufficient critical approach. That is, the purpose of stylistics or any other critical method is to illuminate the text--not [unintelligible phrase] the responses of the readers or to just leave the text in pieces without any illumination at all.

KINTGEN: The question is whether the proposal I've made doesn't leave the text behind altogether to study just the responses of the reader, and whether that's not an unsatisfactory way of going about it. I think I agree with you part way: that if in fact such a study left the text behind altogether, I would agree, it would be unsatisfactory. It seems to me there must be a way of doing it, so that you relate the responses so closely to the text--to the thing that those responses are called up by--that you can't talk about studying just one or just the other.

Q: How can you do that, unless you have some responder to the text to use as a basis for testing the responses of the people whose responses are being tested?

KINTGEN: Well, it wouldn't be "testing" in that sense, I don't think; it would just be gathering responses. I think if you just give a text, give a sentence--to, say, five hundred people, and ask them to rate it on eight scales--good/bad, passive/active, complex/simple--scales like that, that you will in fact find out very interesting things about the way people respond differentially.

Q: What will you find out about [unintelligible phrase]?

KINTGEN: Well, I don't know; but then, literature isn't just sentences. You see, it seems to me that if we can find out about those simple things--I wouldn't suggest that that's the end--then from there it seems to me that you move on to groups of sentences that actually form recognizable literary units. If you know how people respond to particular sentences, and then you find out how they respond to groups of sentences, you're going to see that there's a difference somehow. And it seems to me that the difference in response is going to be somehow related to the fact that these sentences are now being put together, that they are being ordered in a certain way, and I think it's part of what we think of as literature--is that ordering of things together. It's not just that it's a bunch of sentences you might come across, but it's a structure of language.

Q: I'd like to ask Professor Pierssens whether the hope of linguistic analysis is to find some universal patterns, or forms, or structures, that would mean that we wouldn't have to speculate about intentionality--of the author.

PIERSSENS: I'm not sure I have the answer to that kind of question--because I'm not a linguist, of course. But one thing that I could say is that to me, some distinctions should be made on the very broad epistemological level of what we are doing when studying something. I don't think that notions like "intentionality" have anything to do with the epistemological context of linguistics. So in that sense, whatever happens in linguistics can not be taken as an argument--to validate or invalidate theories about something which is a metaphysical and ontological view of language. And I think--of course, this happens all the time in science: scientists hold scientific values or notions about what they study, but at the same time they hold ontological notions about what they are studying; so they are actually applying several paradigms at the same time. But I don't think that there is cross-causality between each other.

I take advantage of this to ask a question to Mr. Kintgen: What kind of categories are you going to use to test the responses? In other words, what are you going to label as responses to the text? Because you were mentioning good/bad--things like that, but I suppose that responses to sentences of a text can be very different. You can want to just throw the test sheet away, or you can want to write a novel, or you can want to write a book about stylistics, *n'est pas*? And this I suppose, would be a response. Or you can also have a dream, or nightmare. So on what basis do you choose those qualitative features as responses?

[Gap between the tapes.]

KINTGEN: . . . is that those are the things that stylisticians (which is a terrible term) have traditionally talked about. That is, it seems to me that Richard Ohmann again is a very good example. When he talks about poems--or anything--he talks about specific linguistic features, and then he says, "Those features mean to me . . ."--and then he tells you what they mean to him. Now, what I'd like to know is why those features mean that to him. For whatever reason--it may be a psychological reason. But I'm believing him that when he says that--that is, I don't think that he means that he actually threw the book across the room, or wrote a novel--he did write an article, explaining why he had--why he thought he had those responses. Now, all I'd like to find out is, whether it's possible on a broader level to specify why people respond in that way, and what they would think of as being responses. It's true, you do have to use a straitjacket at first, and I used semantic differential scales because that was the only thing I know how to use; I couldn't think quickly of a better way of doing it. Now, there may very well be a better way of doing it, and I'd be very anxious to find out about it, but I think something along these lines ought to be done.

Q: I think that there is a way that you can do this. You can ask students to pair off different sentences or stories and simply judge them in terms of their similarity or difference. And there is a technique called multiplexual scaling, that [unintelligible phrase] in fact what criteria they are applying, without enunciating or articulating the criteria beforehand. There are several articles that have been done in this area including in a journal called Scientific Aesthetics, and they allow you this kind of flexibility without having to commit yourself to a set of criteria beforehand.

KINTGEN: Just--I ask you: does that require a large--it sounds like it requires a large number of paragraphs.

Q: No, some studies have been done using nine--for example, either stories, poems, paragraphs, or words. You simply ask the students to pair each of them and to judge them according to similarity or difference: if they're different they give them a 10, if they're similar they give them a 1. Then you re-construct a chart, and it'll show you the number of dimensions or criteria that they're using to base their judgement on.

KINTGEN: Can I speak to you afterwards?

Q: . . . Isn't your view of poetic language predicated on the notion that there is a one-to-one correspondence between whichever linguistic feature and meaning?

KINTGEN: No.

Q: That's what I thought you had said.

KINTGEN: I would expect that the responses to a particular feature would vary according to the context. Where the context--

Q: Yeah, but how are you going to test for that if that's all you're going to get?

KINTGEN: Well, it seems to me that you can artificially limit context to begin with--that you can give a particular feature you want to test without any context, by itself, and in just a sentence that illustrates that; and then build up the context progressively until eventually you're actually talking about this feature in a whole literary work, this feature in a poem. It would also be possible, I think, to take examples and to rewrite the examples so that . . . the original shows the feature and that the re-written version does not show the feature, and then see if people respond differentially to that.

Q: I did that [unintelligible phrase].

KINTGEN: Does it work?

Q: Yes.

KINTGEN: Can I speak to you afterwards, too?

Q: I've been wanting to [unintelligible phrase] your comment earlier. I think that you're concerned with: what does this have to do with literature? And if I'm right--and what I like about this is that--if I have your idea right--after you understand this and get some basis for these different ways of responding, I'm assuming they give you then some support for the anecdotes. In other words, that then you have some way to say something about your interpretation with an understanding of how it actually works in reading. It gets you away from the problem that he was expressing about an element of Fish--which we may think is great, but we're not sure it's ours.

KINTGEN: Correct.

EDITORIAL

Sermons in Stones

The debate between Professors Brown and Pierssens (pp. 69-71) recalls a hermeneutic parable that Robert Frost first published in 1934 under the title "A Missive Missile." This poem is not much read or discussed, but Frost evidently took it seriously (he gave it emphatic final placement in A Further Range [1936]), and it bears directly on the disputed question of the interpreter's obligation to the author's meaning.

The speaker in "A Missive Missile" contemplates a pebble that has much in common with what Professor Brown calls "Searle's famous stone-at-the-bottom-of-the-Nile-example" (p. 70).¹ Because the speaker sees his pebble as deliberately marked by someone in some symbolic way, and because he is a more-or-less orthodox intentionalist, he confronts the need--and the difficulty--of judging what it was that the inscriber meant by what he inscribed. He tries first one interpretative hypothesis, then another, only to come to doubt the very possibility of interpretation in this case.

*Someone in ancient Mas d'Azil
Once took a little pebble wheel
And dotted it with red for me,
And sent it to me years and years--
A million years to be precise-- 5
Across the barrier of ice:
Two round dots and a ripple streak,
So vivid as to seem to speak.
But what imperfectly appears 10
Is whether the two dots were tears,
Two teardrops, one for either eye,
And the wave line a shaken sigh.
But no, the color used is red.
Not tears but drops of blood instead.
The line must be a jagged blade. 15
The sender must have had to die,
And wanted someone now to know
His death was sacrificial-votive.
So almost clear and yet obscure.
If only anyone were sure 20
A motive then was still a motive.*

The speaker's doubts create anxiety as he realizes that he is failing to uphold his half of a human dialogue. Addressing a supposed "messenger" (identified with the spade that he has been digging with), who has conveyed the inscription to his hands and who stands in wait for a reply, the speaker makes his unhappy apology:

*O you who bring this to my hand,
You are no common messenger
(Your badge of office is a spade).
It grieves me to have had you stand 25
So long for nothing. No reply--
There is no answer, I'm afraid,
Across the icy barrier
For my obscure petitioner.*

He goes on to imagine the anxiety that he in turn must be causing in the petitioner, and then to summarize the dilemma that he suffers as an uninformed interpreter: either he recovers no meaning at all from the pebble or else the meaning that he does recover is only a subjective projection--something "unsatisfying" to both participants in the illocutionary act:

*Suppose his ghost is standing by 30
Importunate to give the hint
And be successfully conveyed.
How anyone can fail to see
Where perfectly in form and tint
The metaphor, the symbol lies! 35
Why will I not analogize?
(I do too much in some men's eyes.)
Oh, slow uncomprehending me,
Enough to make a spirit moan
Or rustle in a bush or tree. 40
I have the ocher-written flint,
The two dots and the ripple line.
The meaning of it is unknown,
Or else I fear entirely mine,
All modern, nothing ancient in't, 45
Unsatisfying to us each.*

The speaker concludes that the recovery of meant meaning is not always possible, though it is always desirable:

*Far as we aim our signs to reach,
Far as we often make them reach,
Across the soul-from-soul abyss,
There is an aeon-limit set 50
Beyond which they are doomed to miss.*

*Two souls may be too widely met.
That sad-with-distance river beach
With mortal longing may beseech;
It cannot speak as far as this.*²

55

This last set of verses does run afoul of intentionalist objections to what E.D. Hirsch has labelled "radical historicism" (the dogma that all old texts are time-bound and inaccessible): "If we believe from experience that linguistic communication through texts past or present has ever occurred, then the dogma of radical historicity is rendered improbable If the historicist wishes to emphasize the possibility of communication within a given period, he had better not insist that time itself is the decisive differentiating factor that distinguishes one 'period' from another" (Validity in Interpretation [New Haven, 1967], p. 257). But if the argument of Frost's speaker is adjusted so as to bear on particular cases only (and so not to propound any rule of historical skepticism), little remains to distinguish his approach from that of an intentionalist like Hirsch. "It is one thing to say blankly that we can never 'truly' understand the texts of a past age; it is quite another thing to venture the less absolute and no doubt true conception that we sometimes cannot possibly acquire all the cultural givens necessary for understanding an old text" (Validity, p. 40).

Even if these issues were the only ones displayed in "A Missive Missile," the poem would make a fine primer for interpreters. But in his poem Frost raises an issue yet more fundamental to hermeneutics than these, and makes a point that coincides with the point of Searle's stone-at-the-bottom-of-the-Nile example.

To grasp that point as Frost makes it in "A Missive Missile" it will be necessary to distinguish the speaker from the poet himself--a distinction that is appropriate in reading many poems (as Professor Brown remarks in his paper), and one that is appropriate here despite the evident blending of speaker and poet in line 37. For Frost "knows" something about his supposed stone that his dramatic speaker does not; and by a convention of dramatic irony he would have us understand what he knows even by means of the speaker's own uncomprehending words.

What Frost knows, and what he would have us understand, is that the missile in question is no "missive" but only an ordinary stone; and that the speaker's whole effort at interpretation is based upon a mistake. The mistake is a category

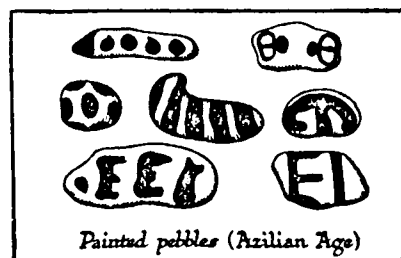
mistake: for the speaker is trying to recover an intended, "non-natural meaning" (in Grice's terminology) from an object that is a natural object only--and one that therefore possesses "natural meaning" only. Frost knows (though his speaker does not) that the only interpretative science competent to explain the "meaning" of this particular stone is not hermeneutics but geology.

Consider the equivocal reference, in line 1, to "ancient Mas d'Azil." Mas d'Azil is a commune in Arriège in southern France; late in the nineteenth century a large cave there was found to contain archaeological evidence of a prehistoric culture (promptly named "Azilian") that had flourished between the paleolithic and neolithic eras. Édouard Piette, who explored the cave, reported many interesting discoveries, including skeletons that had been scoured with flints and then stained red with iron peroxide before burial: but those vestiges proved less fascinating to him than an adjacent array of missive missiles:

Mais les objets qui frappaient le plus la vue dans cette assise, étaient de nombreux galets coloriés avec du peroxyde de fer. Ce n'est pas sans étonnement ni sans un vif sentiment de curiosité que j'ai fait la découverte de ces peintures les plus anciennes que l'on connaisse.³

Early in the 'twenties H.G. Wells drew popular attention to Azilian culture and Azilian pebbles in The Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind. He played the archetypal Romantic interpreter, intensifying Piette's "astonishment" and "curiosity" to "mystery":

For a time there were in Southern Europe drifting communities of some little known people who are called the Azilians. They may have been transition generations; they may have been a different race. We do not know. . . . These Azilian people have left behind them a multitude of pebbles, roughly daubed with markings of an unknown purport (see illus. [reproduced below]). The use or significance



of these Azilian pebbles is still a profound mystery. Was this some sort of token writing? Were they counters in some game? Did the Azilians play with these pebbles or tell a story with them, as imaginative children will do with bits of wood and stone nowadays? At present we are unable to cope with any of these questions.⁴

Frost's speaker, too, comes to recognize that he cannot cope with the questions prompted by his newly unearthed pebble. That pebble does look "very like" (to borrow a useful phrase from Hamlet) a mysterious galet colorié from Mas d'Azil. The "two round dots and a ripple streak" are in the Azilian style; so is the "red" color of those markings. To describe the pebble as "the ocher-written flint" (line 41) is to enforce the similarity; for through Frost's speaker may say "ocher" simply as an elegant variation on the epithet "red" said twice before, it happens that red ocher, or hematite (Fe_2O_3), is the same red substance ("le peroxyde de fer") used by the Azilians to mark their stones.

The question that Frost would have us ask, though his speaker simply takes it for granted, is how the ocher markings came to be on this particular stone. For hematite can occur naturally in conjunction with a "flint"--be that word technical and specific, or poetically generic (equivalent to stone, pebble): iron ore is commonly a mix of hematite and other kinds of stone and earth. "Two dots and a ripple streak" are not a pattern so elaborate as to presuppose a human patterner; streaks and dots are common geological markings. If the speaker in "A Missive Missile" were digging with his spade somewhere in southern Europe, his pebble might be thought of as, perhaps, a real Azilian pebble--identifiable as a certain product of culture, not nature, and properly subject, therefore, to hermeneutic or semiotic inquiry. But if not, not. Nothing in A Further Range suggests a European locale for this or any other poem. Frost himself never visited southern France. Most likely the American speaker in "A Missive Missile" is to be understood as proposing "ancient Mas d'Azil" not literally but metaphorically--as the type of an ancient stone-marking culture. The question remains whether or not his pebble is in fact (as he assumes) the product of such a culture. Anthropological probabilities suggest otherwise: his pebble derives not from culture, but from nature. Quasi-Azilian pebbles are not, in fact, widespread in the United States; but pseudo-Azilian pebbles are. Frost probably knew this fact and expected his reader to know it also, and to draw the appropriate inferences regarding the dramatic speaker of his poem.

Frost's speaker then, is a solipsist despite himself, and even more than he acknowledges in lines 43-44: "The meaning of it is unknown,/ Or else I fear entirely mine." Like the dramatic speaker in Frost's "A Tuft of Flowers," he interprets, or tries to interpret, the book of nature as if it had been inscribed by some other person; but the only such author in evidence is himself. Oscar Wilde's metaphorical comment on Wordsworth applies more literally to this interpreter: "He found in stones the sermons he had already hidden there."

In "A Missive Missile" Frost invokes profoundly intentionalistic norms for interpretation--like those now endorsed by Searle and Grice--so as to undermine and satirize (if with sympathy and affection) the poem's beguiled, sentimental and sentimentalizing speaker. Such satire is what Frost meant to communicate. The chief internal evidences of this meant meaning are the equivocal implications of both "Mas d'Azil" and "ocher," already discussed; other internal evidence includes the uncritical self-centeredness apparent in line 3, and a suggestion that the speaker is not careful to distinguish the supernatural appearance (as in line 39) from the natural fact (as in line 40). The chief external evidence is the recurrence of a similar theme, in many variations, throughout Frost's poetry; here I'll cite only "The Tuft of Flowers," "The Woodpile," "For Once, Then, Something," "The Most of It," "On the Heart's Beginning to Cloud the Mind," "Grief May Have Thought It Was Grief," and "The Generations of Men," particularly lines 135-137: "It's as you throw a picture on the screen:/ The meaning of it all is out of you;/ The voices give you what you wish to hear."

But for the moment, so as to further hermeneutic cooperation, I shall waive any appeal to evidence and ask, rather, that those who hold with Professor Pierssens, as well as those who hold with Professor Brown, judge the present interpretation not according to their habitual standards but according to those proposed by Frost in his poem. If, as I have argued, those standards are strict intentionalist ones, then my interpretation meets them (Q.E.D.). Alternatively, if I am wrong--that is, if Frost was invoking a more generous, flexible and forgiving set of hermeneutic standards than those reported in this interpretation--then there will be no need to object of "the meaning" here discovered, that it is "entirely mine." Quot capita, tot sententiae.

M.H.

NOTES

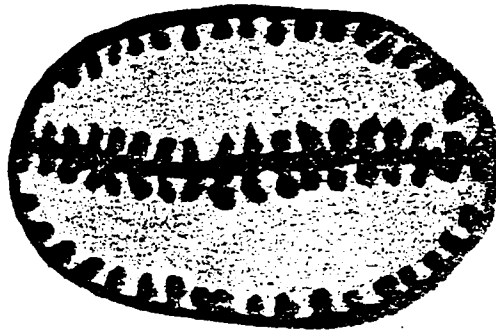
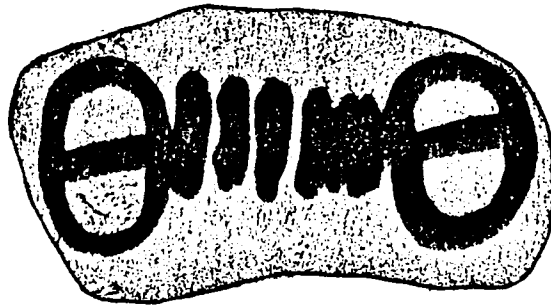
¹To the best of my knowledge Searle has not explored this example in print; but he has cited it in public lectures at the University of Minnesota (May 1973), as has his colleague Stanley Fish (April 1973).

²Reuben Brower partially explains the last four lines by tracing them to Virgil's phrase ripae ulterioris amore (Aeneid 6.314); cf. The Poetry of Robert Frost (New York, 1963; rpt. 1968), p. 16. The present text is that given in The Poetry of Robert Frost, ed. F.C. Lathem (New York, 1967), pp. 326-328; copyright is held by Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

³Édouard Piette, "Les Galets Coloriés du Mas-d'Azil," L'Anthropologie, 7 (1896), 385-427: 386. The bulk of this illustrated monograph is given over to a taxonomy of the pebbles and attempts at interpretation; Piette extended these in "Notions Complémentaires sur l'Asylien," L'Anthropologie, 14 (1903), 641-653. See also Émile Cartailhac's preliminary report, "Les Fouilles de M. Ed. Piette dans La Grotte du Mas-d'Azil (Ariège)," L'Anthropologie, 2 (1891), 139-149; A.B. Cook's essay "Les Galets Peints du Mas-d'Azil," L'Anthropologie, 14 (1903), 655-660; and the page of illustrations in Piette's valedictory L'Art pendant l'âge du renne (Paris, 1907), p. 58.

An early passage in Cook's essay makes an apt if ironic gloss on the twin enterprises of interpretation that we have in view here (of the stone, of the poem): "Il saute aux yeux . . . que les galets peints doivent avoir voulu dire quelque chose; et si l'opinion de M. Piette ne peut nous convaincre, qu'avons-nous à présenter à sa place? Plusieurs idées ont été mises successivement en avant. Les uns, par exemple, voient dans les cailloux les jetons d'un jeu, d'autres les regardent comme des archives de la tribu, d'autres comme le matériel d'un devin préhistorique, d'autres enfin pensent y voir les objets de culte d'un fétichisme primitif. Quot capita, tot sententiae. Ces explications sont pour la plupart de simples conjectures que n'appuient aucunes preuves . . ." (656). After these skeptical preliminaries Cook proceeds to solve the riddle (to his own satisfaction, at least) by applying comparative anthropology.

⁴H.G. Wells, The Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind, 3rd ed. (New York, 1922), pp. 74-75; the illustration is on p. 73. Wells's footnote to the end of the first sentence here quoted mentions Mas d'Azil by way of explaining the word Azilian; conceivably it was Wells's account that introduced Frost to ancient Mas d'Azil and its pebbles (though Wells does not mention that the pigment was red). Frost may have had direct or indirect knowledge of "a small collection representing the Azilian industry and fauna [that] was presented to the Peabody Museum of Harvard University" in the late 'twenties; see Papers of the Peabody Museum, 11:4 (1931), 217.



REVIEWS

Richard A. Lanham. Style: An Anti-Textbook. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974. Pp. x + 142. \$6.95.

This lively book has a clear moral: instruction in prose composition in the United States works toward a single goal--clarity--and that goal is a false one (11). It reflects a view pervasive in the society (including its linguistics [13, 67]): words are for use, not enjoyment, and what matters is what is behind (or beneath) them. Lanham proposes an alternative goal: not a style that disappears, but self-conscious pleasure in words; not clarity, but attention to stylistic surface.

Instead of the conventional hierarchic metaphor for styles (high, middle, low), he proposes a horizontal one, a spectrum, which allows an infinite number of steps from extreme stylistic self-consciousness on the "left" to lack of it on the "right" (47, 54). Rather than ask the student to match style with unique self through sincerity, one should encourage him to play with many styles--hence with many roles, ways of thinking, and ways of being. Prose style is a presentation of self, but a central self is established through experimentation with various social selves. Sincerity in prose must be allowed to grow in a similarly experimental way (ch. 6, "Essential Hypocrisies").

Lanham's proposals reinforce important sociolinguistic concerns. His general statements about American attitudes toward language are interesting hypotheses about at least some sectors of the society. (He seems not to consider those American cultural traditions in which stylistic play is still vital). But just when Chapter 1 has put a sympathetic reader on Lanham's side against a misguided "establishment," Chapter 2 squanders the advantage. The first example is a letter to a student newspaper, and Lanham indulges in

[Centrum, 2:1 (Spring 1974), 87-90.]

contemptuous fun at the expense of its undergraduate author. The letter, a complaint about a genuinely unjust form of grading, engages one's sympathy; it conjures up the ghosts of all the supercilious English teachers and Englishmen one has had cause to resent. Perhaps Lanham knows the student and knows him to be "a donkey" (25). But the letter itself, like many snippets of style which critics too easily quote as self-evidently defective, does not bear the weight put on it. Having made it the premise of his book that students are not taught to write well or in ways true to self, Lanham has here an instance of poor writing, perhaps, but not any certain evidence of a "morally defective" self.

Here and elsewhere in the book, Lanham cites passages as evidence for one hypothesis or another without paying sufficient evidence to context. His comparison of the King James Version and the New English Bible (35ff.) ignores the common experience of the King James as something that does not obtain stylistic simplicity and enhancement, but merely lulls, and of the New English version as something that arrests attention to form and message both. Here, indeed, Lanham resorts to a double standard, praising the King James for patterns of sound-arrangement, while calling alliteration in the NEB inadvertent and a reason to giggle. It would have been better, rhetorically (Lanham is author of a handbook of rhetorical terms), to begin the chapter (2, "The Uses of Obscurity") with the last example, Dryden, showing good prose style, and making the main point that such style is worth concern and different from what it is usually thought or taught to be. The chapter might have ended, if need be, with the student letter, but in a tone expressing some sympathy with its author as a victim of the system the book attacks.

Lanham himself teaches this lesson at another place:

A style is a response to a situation. When you call a style bad, or exaggerated, much less mad, you ought to make sure you understand the situation it responds to. You may be objecting to the situation, not to the style invented to cope with it. (58)

(Here as elsewhere Lanham makes good use of insights from Kenneth Burke). The lesson is nicely conveyed in analysis of the middle examples of Chapter 2--a professor's memo, and a presidential letter to his faculty about retrenchment (25-32).

Much of the book is very enjoyable, especially Chapter 4 ("The Delights of Jargon") Lanham shrewdly suggests that Parsons' sociological theory of action would have a style

emphasizing verbs if it were true to itself (73). The stress upon the "rhetorical corrective" (67) and upon performance (100) must strike a responsive chord especially among contributors to sociolinguistics from folklore and anthropology.

It is strange, however, to find a literary man reducing the difference between poetry and prose to typography: "Print it as poetry and it is poetry" (99). A passage of textbook prose is printed in spaced, indented lines (97) to show that it can invite an attitude of poetic play, and Hopkins' "Spring and Fall" is printed as prose, to show how even so exquisite a sonnet thus loses its song. The examples do not prove the point--if he has in mind more than to show that almost anything can indeed pass as poetry today if set as such. For there is a real difference between poetry and prose: the organization of the former into lines is based on discernible, recurrent principles. The original lines of "Spring and Fall" can be recovered from its printing in a paragraph, and reliably so by different investigators. Principles of organization into line vary with genres, traditions, and styles, some being rigorous and/or complex enough to permit consistently unique recovery, others not. The prose passage used by Lanham admits no such recovery at all. Lanham himself notices a distinction which, as he says, is clear: prose cannot be preponderantly regular in its rhythm, cannot have, though it may occasionally use, meter (99). This distinction approximates the fundamental principle of organization into lines. Unfortunately he sets the distinction aside, because he thinks one would have to make an arbitrary quantitative decision as to how much meter (and rhyme, etc.) would make writing poetry. It is usually a mistake to abandon clear cases because not all cases are clear. Here, what is required is not a single quantitative criterion, but a plurality of qualitative criteria, appropriate to various genres, traditions, and styles.

Sociolinguistic research into the use of language has concentrated upon choice of language, variety, dialect, code, on the one hand, and upon choice of individual markers, on the other. If it is to cope with the full complexity of language use, it must join with the study of style, rhetoric and poetics. Lanham's book seems representative of much of the literature from which one must seek to learn: sensitive to details and organizations of verbal means that lie beyond the present scope of linguistics, and worthily concerned with the value and human meaning of speech; yet given to premature value judgements and technical decisions that a deeper knowledge of cultures would revise. No doubt sociolinguistic

writings seem to the literary scholar to show many faults of their own. Let us hope that such faults on all sides can be rectified. Anyone who does hope for the co-operation of the two enterprises will find Lanham's book well worth reading.

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DELL HYMES

ULRICH WEISSTEIN. Comparative Literature and Literary Theory (Einführung in die Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft), tr. William Riggan. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974. Pp. xii + 340. \$10.95 (\$2.95 pap.).

Weisstein's book is broadly comprehensive, both descriptively and bibliographically, as the survey it proposes to be. After a chapter on the definition of comparative literature follow sections on the study of influence and imitation; reception and survival; epoch, period, generation and movement; genre; thematology; and a final chapter on literature and the other arts. An appendix on the history of comparative literature is both exhaustive and reasonably concise, while a second appendix is a creditable performance of the thankless and frustrating job of presenting a basic bibliography for comparative literary studies (although this example pales before the unpublished and one hopes continuing project of Peter Boerner to assemble a full-scale reference bibliography for comparatists). It is then, on the whole, a very sane book, if not an inspiring one. It would be too easy to over-react at the often mechanical and heavy-handed presentation, or the hardly self-evident principles of selecting examples and degrees of elaboration for particular topics. Weisstein names directly the problem of this field called comparative literature which "does not have a methodology of its own but must be regarded as a specialized branch of literary history and theory" (p. ix) but does not seem to take us much beyond the contributions of Wellek in formulating definitions, nor beyond Wellek and Warren's Theory in bringing out the basic coherence of literary study as a whole.

But for whom was this book written? The book might well supersede Stallknecht and Frenz's Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective on the grounds that it is simply more up to date. But if this is "the first systematically conceived . . . survey of our [sic] field in English," and the

"discipline" has "no methodology of its own" then who should be expected to read it, and with what value? Would Wellek and Warren's Theory, the Demetz, Greene, and Nelson volume The Disciplines of Criticism, or Nichols and Vowles' Comparatists at Work not profit the beginning comparatist more, and provide a greater interest and more refined understanding to, say, the classicist who would like an idea of what is lively and rich in other literary fields of more or less broad appeal? Granted, the book will introduce a beginning graduate student to all sorts of names, basic issues, and a certain kind of ease in dealing with comparative literary study. But, to take an example, the twenty-five pages on genre attempt some historical comments (locating the segregation of genres in Cicero, contrasting Schiller's reluctant confession that mixing is inevitable, briefly accounting for the 1967 MLA session and the founding of Genre), describe different principles of classification, and discuss general aesthetic implications and difficulties in generic criticism. It is at best sketchy. Bits of didactic polemic appear puzzlingly intermingled with description and survey, e.g., "Far more familiar, and far more serious in its consequences is the division of literary genres by their intended effect For the student of Comparative Literature this approach is especially unproductive, since twentieth-century man is fully aware of the fact that the same event or object is judged variously, and produces diverse effects" (pp. 117-118); so much for structures of expectation. It is this double impetus, both to an impossible comprehensiveness and justice, and to a questionably appropriate pronouncing of the truth, which most mars Weisstein's work. Time after time, there appears a paragraph which seems more an aside in a seminar presentation than an integral part of a survey, and what might be an emulable example of critical procedure becomes a passing comment in a slightly off tone. (Compare the comment on the 1967 MLA forum on generic studies: "Of the three speakers, Eliseo Vivas displayed by far the soundest understanding of the logical and historical problems involved, whereas Sheldon Sacks' paper was more psychologically oriented, and Germaine Bree's suffered from a certain lack of consistency in the use of such key terms as theme, motif, mode, and genre.") Is this the tone and style of a basic survey for students, or of reasoned argument for "us" of the field?

There are other quirkinesses. Weisstein generally comes off well as defender of terminology, an irritating but finally important issue for comparatists who can never know all the languages of their colleagues; but, for example, in the midst of discussing the theme/motif relations comes a parenthesis: "(Situations, by the way, are groupings of human views,

feelings or modes of behavior, which give rise to, or result from, actions in which several individuals participate)" (p. 139). Which may be useful but seems hardly central to any comprehensive, much less pluralistic, view of comparatism as happily free of single dogma. Perhaps this is one of those many examples in which the English idiom has not quite jelled. It is, at any rate, from the chapter on thematology in which Weisstein's own predilections--both taxonomic and philosophic--are clearest, and the particulars of "situations" as a sub-sub-group of Stoff come in for another few paragraphs. Or again, Weisstein becomes thoroughly involved with Trousson's work, to the extent of taking him to task for considering "the idea of happiness or [of] progress" as "motifs" (rather than formulae) while proclaiming "it is only a question of time until [Trousson's] contribution to scholarship will be universally acclaimed" (p. 131). This mixture, again of the off-hand comment, particular detail, and ex cathedra pronouncement makes the book as a whole awkward and unpolished. Is the attempt to deliver lasting evaluations in such a difficult task of survey perhaps doomed from the start?

The uncertainty of tone and style seems borne out not only in the matter of organization and choice of material. but finally as well in a stiff if not untenable theoretical position. (The second half of his English title falls uncomfortably into the place of the -wissenschaft of his original.) With Stoffgeschichte, influence studies, and historical survey, Weisstein is more than at home. But not all Wissenschaft is theory. He can dismiss the contribution of statistical and quantitative studies to generic criticism with the examples of the number of acts in a play on words in a piece of prose fiction and a nod to "such lyric genres as the sonnet" where quantitative stylistics may have some, apparently small, value. Interdisciplinary study is characterized by the joining of two other disciplines, as in reading Balzac with one eye to economic history and the other to Romance literary scholarship; and such strabism becomes more restrictive when "mystics like Meister Eckhart and Jakob Boehme . . . [and] philosophers like Arthur Schopenhauer and Henri Bergson" are left in limbo while "Kant's, Hume's, and Aristotle's writings, finally, . . . seem to be too technical in most instances to deserve a prominent place in literary history" (p. 26). If there is here no argument for a comparatism centered on belles lettres, such attempts to define and restrict literature and the proper matter for literary study seem equally out of date, and particularly so in regard to literary theory. Of course every reader will have names he misses in such a book, but, assuming no revision from the

German edition of 1968, would it be too much to expect mention of one or two of Richards, Levi-Strauss, Crane, Poulet, Booth, Barthes, Sebeok, and Goldmann? Stylistics profiting from linguistics, anthropology, or philosophy would seem to fall outside comparative studies, along with what Wellek and Warren called the ontology of literature; and the theory of interpretation has no place here. The uncertainty of Weisstein's own theoretical involvement is only compounded by these limits.

Comparative literature is and must be deeply involved with literary theory. Even the more technical rapid changes in information theory, data processing, and linguistic analysis should be welcomed by comparatists if the discipline is not to become superseded or divided by another "new" field under some such name as "communications"; it is perhaps to everyone's advantage that structuralism, semiology, quantitative stylistics, and other recent developments have produced few university departments and many journals. Many institutions have acted on Wellek and Warren's call of some decades ago for a unified study of literature. The challenge is for comparative literature and literary theory to keep that kind of synthetic joining of the disciplines together, by integrating all useful techniques and principles. Weisstein's book is not a step forward.

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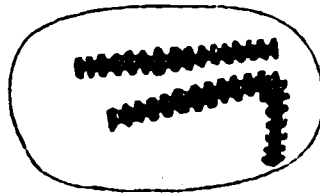
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and Literary Theory

