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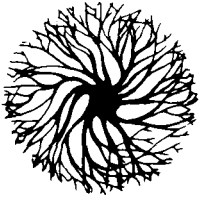
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PREFATORY NOTE

As subscribers to *Centrum* are aware, the journal has fallen far behind its planned production schedule of two numbers per year. So that the issue date and the date of publication might again coincide, the journal has instituted a New Series, beginning with the present issue: Volume 1, Number 1 (Spring 1981).

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The editors wish to thank the patrons of *Centrum* for their patience with its uncertain publication schedule. They expect to publish issues in the New Series at the regular intervals, each spring and fall.

Mary Louise Pratt

The Ideology of Speech-Act Theory

It is with Noam Chomsky that we primarily connect the phrase "ideal
speaker" nowadays, but in an entirely different sense, any linguistic theory
projects a kind of ideal speaker, and one amusing though quite irresponsible
way of characterizing linguistic theories is to speculate on the ideal speaker
they suggest. For Leonard Bloomfield, for instance, one might propose the
Noble Savage, as a kind of ideal naive informant. For William Labov we could
suggest Eliza Doolittle — not for the way she talked by the end of the play,
but for the way she talked at the start. For Basil Bernstein, on the other
hand, we might put forth Lady Chatterley's lover, for knowing never even to
attempt to speak above his station. For Chomsky and disciples, the ideal
speaker would be either an MIT graduate student, or a device which never
speaks at all but gives clear grammaticality judgments on command. For
speech-act theory, we could project an Oxford cricket player, or maybe a Boy
Scout, an honorable guy who always says the right thing and really means it.
Since one should never exempt oneself from this kind of abuse, I might add
that in my own book on speech acts and literature, the ideal speaker that
emerges is probably someone like Eliza Doolittle in a Boy Scout suit.

These idiotic examples are by way of saying that linguistic theories make
assumptions about what are the most basic and important characteristics of
language, and in turn, about what are the most basic and important charac-
teristics of its users, that is, human speech communities. In short, linguistic
theories encode social meanings. Referring mainly to the Chomskyan revolu-
tion in linguistics, Michael Halliday recently said:

> For much of the past twenty years linguistics has been dominated by
> an individualist ideology, having as one of its articles of faith the
> astonishing dictum, first enunciated by Katz and Fodor, in a treatise
> on semantics which explicitly banished all reference to the social
> context of language, that 'nearly every sentence uttered is uttered for
> the first time.' Only in a very special kind of social context could
> such a claim be taken seriously—that of a highly intellectual and
> individual conception of language in which the object of study was

the idealized sentence of an equally idealized speaker. (*Language as Social Semiotic,* p. 4)

The good news about speech-act theory is that it partly corrects the concept of language criticized by Halliday; the bad news is that it does so only partly, and the view of language it has so far produced itself calls for examination. Of particular interest here is how such an examination affects the view of literature that follows from speech-act theory.

What speech-act theory has offered to many people, in linguistics, philosophy, criticism, psychology, even law, is a way to move out of the realm of language as autonomous, self-contained grammatical system into the realm of language as social practice, or, to use Halliday's happy phrase, language as social semiotic. This was the move that followed from Austin's original insight that not all utterances could be accounted for by truth-conditional logic. Some have adopted speech-act theory as a complement to autonomous linguistics, sort of a guest wing added to the house of Chomsky. Others see it as part of a theory of communication distinct from the theory of language (Bierwisch 1980). Others reject outright the claim that language can and should be studied apart from its involvement in social and subjective life, and argue that social practice must be the point of departure of linguistic inquiry (cf. Halliday: "language is as it is because of the functions it has evolved to serve in people's lives" [1978:4]). Speech-act theory has a good deal to contribute toward characterizing language from all these viewpoints.

It should be kept clear, however, that contemporary speech-act philosophers tend to be very skeptical about the theory's potential for characterizing language as social practice. These philosophers commonly acknowledge the theory's dependence on undeveloped assumptions about social interaction, but argue that it is impossible to develop these assumptions in any satisfactory way. Manfred Bierwisch, for instance, acknowledges in a recent article (Bierwisch 1980) that felicity conditions and Gricean maxims of cooperation represent scraps of an unarticulated theory of social interaction on which speech-act theory ultimately rests, but he argues that we are unequipped to begin working out this theory. Relatedly, Searle has observed that "the literal meaning of a sentence only determines a set of truth conditions (or other sorts of conditions of satisfaction) against a background of assumptions and practices" (Searle, 1980:231), but he argues that trying to spell out that background is hopeless and can lead only to infinite regress. Thus, despite Austin's original thrust away from logic, much if not most work in speech-act theory today is focused on exploring the logical properties of individual sentences. Social questions enter the picture as a rule only when a discrepancy exists between a sentence's literal meaning and its potential uses, as for example when someone says **Why don't you call Bill?** and the addressee, instead of answering the question, calls Bill. In short, there seems to be a general supposition among speech-act philosophers that we have

among us no workable means of inquiring into social and signifying practices. There are those, however, who think the picture is not all that grim, and for whom in any case the alternative—a rigorous logical apparatus erected on a jiggly mass of the unknowable—seems too little to settle for without a fight.

With respect to literature, interestingly enough, we can observe a somewhat comparable range of views. There are those for whom speech-act theory, on logical grounds, legitimizes locating literature (or most literature) outside the domain of normal verbal interaction, as involving a use of language negatively characterized by the fact that it does not conform to the rules through which normal utterances are real, social acts. (As I have argued elsewhere [Pratt 1977], this negation typifies the way literary criticism has traditionally 'applied' linguistics.) On the other hand, there are those for whom speech-act theory offers the possibility of a criticism that rejects isolationism and incorporates literary texts into the realm of real verbal action. It is undoubtedly clear which of these projects is of interest to me, but I think it is also clear that at this point both projects stand to gain from a review of some assumptions which speech-act theory makes about linguistic interaction.

We could begin with the observation that speech-act theory implicitly adopts one-to-one speech as the norm or unmarked case for language use. Examples and descriptions of speech acts always refer to THE speaker and THE hearer, and questions of intention and inference are always formulated in terms of only these two presences. Now it is true that private one-to-one interaction does characterize certain highly valued, and highly privileged, contexts in this society, such as lovemaking, psychiatry, private tennis instruction, and dental hygiene. But we need to be skeptical about this as representing any kind of natural norm. Certainly one-to-one speech is not likely to be a quantitative norm, in this society or in any other. In addition to speech situations involving multiple participants with multiple intentions toward one another, think of the myriad encounters we have each day with utterances directed at a mass addressee—radio, TV, labels on packages, instruction sheets, and so many others. Even most of the two-party interaction that does take place is systematically shaped by the presence of other people, be they hearers, as in coffee shops and buses, or listeners as in talk shows and debates, or potential speakers, such as fellow participants in a meal. In short, not all communicative activity is as privatized as the speech-act model might suggest. It is argued that mass and multiple participant speech situations can always be analyzed as variants of or complex combinations of one-to-one interactions. The question I am posing is not whether this can be done, but whether it should be, and why. There are obviously other ways of approaching these cases. It is only fair to point out, however, that speech-act theory is far from alone in adopting one-to-one speech as a norm—nearly all linguistics does so.

The one-to-one norm has been pretty much internalized by speech-act approaches to literature too, so the literary speech situation tends to be

viewed as a one-to-one private interaction between THE reader and THE text (with the text substituting for THE author because she or he is not actually there). Such a model fosters talk of THE role of THE reader, but not talk about readerships, kinds of readers, and kinds of readings; or differentiations, for example, between reading as professional readers (which is what professors do) and reading as apprentice readers (which is what students do), or between reading as a leisure activity and reading as work. It does not foster discussion of how texts are constructed to address mass and multiple readerships, or to place a single reading subject in multiple roles at once, as much contemporary fiction seems to do (*The World According to Garp* comes to mind as an example). This model makes it easy to overlook the fact that, though literary production and reception often take place in private settings, literary works are public speech acts (in the sense that they are institutional, and have no personalized addressee), and people are playing generalized social roles when they participate in them. Again, it is only fair to point out that much literary theory shares the one-to-one model of the literary speech situation. Speech-act theory, however, has the potential for correcting it.

Then too, these lone pairs of speakers and hearers are generally taken in speech-act theory to be much more monolithic entities than people really are. In fact, the speakers and hearers of traditional speech-act theory are clear instances of the notorious unified subject, a heinous entity now being hounded out of France, and seeking refuge in corners of England and North America. Speech-act theory, in at least some of its dominant versions, supposes the existence behind every normal speech act of an authentic, self-consistent, essential subject, a 'true self,' which does or does not want to know the answer to the question, does or does not hold the intention that the other is supposed to recognize, does or does not have evidence for the truth of **p**, and so forth. It is to these selves, in other words, that illocutionary intentions and felicity conditions ultimately attach. The content of linguistic interaction is determined by the intentions these individuals form towards each other, and the quality of interaction depends on personal qualities, like rationality, sincerity, self-consistency, of the individuals involved. It's all a matter, as Austin loved to say, of a man's [sic] word being his bond. The idea is of an authentic self, fully realized through speech, and speech fully adequate to the self—speech from the heart. Derrida's (1977) critique of speech-act theory addresses this aspect of the theory, as does a more recent critique by the anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo, who points out, among other things, the ethnocentrism of emphasizing sincerity and intentionality. Using data from her field work among the Ilongots, Rosaldo argues that these categories, and Searle's taxonomy of speech acts as well, cannot be extended to societies where the concept of self is different from our own (Rosaldo 1980). As Rosaldo also observes, the focus on promising in speech-act theory is symptomatic of its commitment to a unified subject. More than perhaps any other speech act, promises (when felicitous) confirm the continuity of the individual over time—the beliefs, intentions, abilities, and desires that are here

today will still be there a month or a year from now when the promise falls due.

One superficial but revealing consequence of the stress on individual beliefs, desires, intentions, and responsibilities is that speech situations in which people speak for or through other people look like marked or abnormal cases. These would include such examples as a person passing on a message, reporting on a meeting, newscasting, representing a client, being a spokesperson for a group, and many others. In fact, it might strictly include speaking in any institutionalized or ritual role that exists apart from the particular person who occupies it, because for any such role the intentions, beliefs, etc. behind the speech act attach to the office and not the particular speakers. Yet I can see no convincing reason to treat such situations as being odd in any way—they are so only with respect to an excessively privatized view of language. In fact, once you set aside the notion of speech acts as normally anchored in a unified, essential subject, it becomes apparent that people always speak from and in a socially constituted position, a position that is, moreover, constantly shifting, and defined in a speech situation by the intersection of many different forces. On this view, speaking 'for oneself,' 'from the heart' names only one position among the many from which a person might speak in the course of her everyday life. At other points, that person will be speaking, for instance, as a member of some collective, or as a rank in a hierarchy, and so forth. Nor is there any guarantee that these positions will be internally consistent or consistent with each other. Every one of us has had the experience of being situated among complex and contradictory forces—like, say press secretaries stationed between the revelation demanded by their addressees and the concealment demanded by those for whom they speak, or the underling required on the one hand never to correct superiors so they won't look stupid, and required on the other hand always to correct superiors so they won't look stupid.

On this view of the non-essential, socially constituted subject, context is not just the backdrop against which a person speaks—we've always known that was too schematic. Rather, the context and the subject continually mutually determine each other. Beliefs, desires, and intentions are seen not as arising out of and attaching to an authentic self, but rather as forces that are in play in the situation. When Lawrence Welk appears on a TV ad and says **Buy these polka records. You'll love them. I know I do,** a problem of sincerity arises only because we feel we should normally be able to attach those statements and commands to some real Lawrence Welk speaking 'from the heart,' and what we suspect instead is that the real Lawrence Welk is just doing it for the money. But if we agree that there is no one real Lawrence Welk—a hard idea to give up, I concede—that there is only a subject (and in this case only an image) that in a given encounter is positioned in a certain way, then the question of sincerity can be posed in a much more productive manner.

The usual argument in speech-act theory as regards the subject is to say that the actual complexity of a subject's position or inner state is irrelevant. What counts in the game of talk are the beliefs, intentions, knowledge, desires, and so on that the subject **takes responsibility for having** in making the speech act. But I think this will not solve the difficulty, because complex and contradictory subjective states obviously have an impact on what actually gets said. One example staring us all in the face is indirect speech acts. It seems to me to make excellent sense to analyze indirect speech acts as acts which mediate and express complex intentional states, such as wanting to get people to do things as if it were they who wanted to do those things.

In literature, the concept of a unified, personalized speaking subject has had a conspicuous effect on the way the role of author has been understood. For literary texts can manifestly not be taken as involving a private, individualized, monolithic self addressing another such self, sincerely, straight from the heart. To mediate these discrepancies, theoreticians have invented an entity called the implied author, a voice or position abstracted away from the 'real' author who produced the text but who cannot exist personally for recipients of the text. I believe this mediation is the only motive there is for postulating an implied author, and that if you abandon the notion of an authentic, essential 'real author' out there somewhere, the category of implied author becomes unnecessary. With respect to a given text, in this view, 'authorship' is a certain, socially constituted position occupied by a speaking subject and endowed with certain characteristics and certain relationships to other dimensions of that subject. Alternatively, we could say that an implied author exists in all speech acts—an author is implied in a text only in the same way subjects are implied in any speech act they perform. In either view, authorship is no more, and no less, than another of the many ways a subject realizes itself through speech.

So far I have argued that one-to-one interaction and a unified subject are rough norms internalized by speech-act theory. Now when we get these pairs of unified subjects together to talk, what exactly is it that they do? The speech-act answer, implied or explicit, is that they cooperate. The cricket player-Boy Scout image I mentioned earlier alludes above all to speech-act theory's stress on language as essentially a cooperative form of behavior, in which participants work together rationally to achieve shared or common goals. These basic tenets emerge most explicitly in Paul Grice's well-known Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims. The Cooperative Principle, you will recall, is in Grice's words, "a rough general principle which participants in a speech exchange will be expected (ceteris paribus) to observe" and which says "Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk-exchange in which you are engaged." Grice elaborates this principle with four maxims: the maxim of quantity (say as much and no more than is required); maxim of quality (don't say things you believe are false or for which you lack adequate evidence); maxim of relation (be relevant); and

maxim of manner (be clear, unambiguous, orderly, and so on). There is a clear supposition by Grice that cooperativeness is based on rationality, and that both are, to use a loaded but accurate term, human nature. To quote Grice, "My avowed aim is to see talking as a special case or variety of purposive, indeed rational behavior. I would like to be able to think of the standard type of conversational practice not merely as something which all or most do in fact follow, but as something it is **reasonable** for us to follow" (Grice 1975: 46-48).

Many speech-act theoreticians dissociate themselves from Grice's formulations because of either their informality or their value-ladenness. Richard Thomason bestows his kiss of death on them when he says they "have more in common with the best and most rigorous literary criticism than with mathematical logic" (quoted in Gazdar, 1979:7). One frequent claim is that Grice's rules are regulative rules, rather than the constitutive ones speech-act theory is properly concerned with. The regulative/constitutive distinction itself is known to have serious weaknesses. Moreover, it is clear that much of the material stated in Grice's maxims is built into the Austin/Searle felicity conditions as well. Sincerity conditions, for example, are analogues of Grice's maxim of quality; nonobviousness conditions are analogues of the maxim of quantity; and some of the preparatory conditions are analogues of the maxim of relation. In his own writing, Grice is careful to point out that his maxims are formulated only to apply to language used for the "maximally efficient exchange of information," and that they would have to be modified to apply to other situations. Such an elaboration has never taken place, however. Grice's formulations now function in the literature widely as the norm for non-literary verbal interaction (e.g. Gazdar 1979; Smith 1978). This despite the fact that we are surrounded all the time by speech events that are **in principled ways** not cooperative, not exchanges, not efficient, and where truthfulness, proportion, relevance, and informativeness are systematically absent or mitigated. In fact, few if any speech exchanges (telegrams, perhaps?) can be made sense of as "maximally efficient exchanges of information." Yet the Gricean view seems to have been too tidy and too comfortable to give up. Indeed, there has even been some child language research undertaking to show that the Cooperative Principle is innate, a conclusion I suspect at least some parents would be inclined to qualify.

It apparently has been acceptable, however, to question the Gricean maxims in relation to cultures other than our own. In an excellent early paper, anthropologist Elinor Keenan showed the inadequacy of the maxims for explaining the way information exchange went on in the Madagascar community she worked in. Years later, this paper is still routinely quoted as the only living counterexample to Grice. For instance, here is Gerald Gazdar in his widely acclaimed book on pragmatics and presupposition. The quotation is from a section revealingly titled "Some residual issues":

If one could show that there are language communities which do not

obey some or all of the maxims, but are nevertheless reasonable and
rational, then Grice's strong claim about the nature of the maxims
could not be sustained. One such community is discussed in Keenan
(1976 [the paper originally circulated in 1973, MLP]) where she
shows that Malagasy speakers make their contributions as
uninformative as possible. For example, if asked where somebody is
they may typically reply with a disjunction even though they know,
and are known to know, which disjunct is true. Likewise they
normally use syntactic constructions which delete the agent in order
to conceal the identity of the person responsible for the action
described. Also they use indefinites or common nouns even to refer
to close relatives. This last mentioned practice is in direct
contravention of a special case of Grice's quantity maxim. . . .
Keenan's findings imply that Grice's maxims are only "reasonable"
and "rational" relative to a given culture, community, or state of
affairs. They cannot be defended as universal principles of
conversation. (Gazdar 1979:54-55)

The astonishing revelation that the maxims are not universal could of course
have been reached by examining almost any press conference, board meeting,
classroom, or family room in the country, where the exotic and perverse
practices that Keenan found among the Malagasy are likewise routine.
Gazdar's conclusion that "If Keenan is correct, then certain kinds of
presupposition suspension, for example, that in disjunction, will not take place
in Malagasy" (p. 55) is revealing, for it relates the oddities back to the logical
structure of the Malagasy language, rather than to the linguistic practices of
the speech community in question.

At this point, everyone's linguistic training compels them to object: "But
wait. The fact that Grice's maxims are not always fulfilled in actual
interactions is irrelevant. They are the rules that underlie actual interaction,
and they are in practice honored as often in the breach as in the observance.
That is the relation between the grammar and performance." But the fact that
a grammar is not an account of performance does not mean the grammar has
no relation to performance whatsoever. On the one hand, the grammar is in
part an extrapolation from performance. On the other, the grammar does
imply analytical statements about specific utterances—at the very least, it
labels them as being either breaches or observances with respect to the
grammar. Obviously, it matters a great deal where these lines are drawn.
Minimally, analyzing a phenomenon as a breach or a violation means
according it a different theoretical status from phenomena that do not count
as violations. It makes a difference whether repetitiveness in advertising, say, is
analyzed negatively as a violation of the Cooperative Principle or positively as
an observance of some other principle that stands in the grammar on a par
with the Cooperative Principle. I will return to this point below.

If we wanted to look for what is systematically missing in the Gricean

cooperative account, and the less explicit Searlean account, we could start
with three factors: affective relations, power relations, and the question of
shared goals. First, affective relations among participants--degrees of hostility,
intimacy, mutual concern, and so on—have a radical impact not just on what
people do, but also on what rules they operate by in a situation. Take
quarrels, for example. There is an obvious sense in which quarreling is
cooperative. People quarreling do listen to each other, take turns yelling,
maintain a degree of coherence, and so forth. But we obviously have also to
recognize the operation of a logic of hostility which would give rise to
different principles of interaction, such as a maxim of quality that says
'exaggerate the other person's faults' or a maxim of quantity that says 'try to
get in the last word.' At the other end of the affective scale, we are equally
uncooperative, in Gricean terms, with those we care about most. Consider the
amount of sheer repetition that goes on among intimates, to say nothing of
the different standards of truthfulness and relevance. The Gricean
sincerity-and-cooperativeness account expresses only a limited range of
affective settings. Specifically, the account embodies the norms of emotive
distancing, and commitment to efficiency and factualness that hold for
professional, especially intellectual, discourse (such as this essay, for example).
It is far from clear that we want to adopt these as the unmarked case for all
interaction.

Second, power relations. The Cooperative Principle refers to 'talk
exchange,' suggesting interactions in which all parties have an equal part. But
it is equally common for one person or group to be calling the shots for
others, for one person or group to be defining the purpose of an encounter,
determining what quantity is enough, what topics are relevant, what counts as
truth and adequate evidence, who gets to speak at all. Think of your last
interaction with a police officer, or your employer. It would be incorrect to
think of speech roles as always or even normally a matter of choice, of
cooperation as always or normally voluntary, of noncooperation as always or
normally irrational. For hierarchical speech situations, to do so is often to
define things only from the viewpoint of the most powerful party.

More generally, the notion of language as exchange brings before us the
persistent and terribly misleading metaphor of the linguistic marketplace, a
kind of verbal utopia where a mythical free enterprise of words prevails, all
voices vying equally to be heard. Again, one cannot help recognizing in this
formulation the values of the academy with its vision of free exchange of
ideas among peers untrammeled by hierarchy, where the production and
distribution of true statements is seen as a self-motivating, sui generis activity
directed only by the intrinsic quality of the products offered. An account of
linguistic interaction based on the idea of exchange glosses over the very basic
facts that, to put it crudely, some people get to do more talking than others,
some are supposed to do more listening, and not everybody's words are worth
the same. At worst, one is reminded of the recent press conference in which
the rape and murder of four unarmed American nuns in El Salvador was

described by Secretary of State Haig as an **exchange** of fire."

Third and following from the last two points, only some speech situations are characterized by shared objectives among participants. Clearly it is at least as common for speakers to have divergent goals and interests in a situation. Indeed, one of the most conspicuous and most systematic examples is the real language of the marketplace. When you step out of the dressing room in a clothing store in a pair of ghastly ill-fitting pants and the clerk remarks "Those look nice," the remark in quantity, quality, relation, and manner makes sense only in connection with the interests attaching to the clerk's position, and these run partly counter to your own. There may be no good reason at all to think of shared goals as representing any kind of natural norm in verbal interaction. Jean Baudrillard has expressed a similar complaint about Jakobson's model of communication, which depicts a speaker sending a message to a hearer. Baudrillard says, "This 'scientific' construction institutes communication in a simulating model from which reciprocity, antagonism of partners, or ambivalence of their exchange are excluded right away" (Foss and Morris, p. 91). This is a part of what Baudrillard refers to as "the terrorism of the code." Presumably, Baudrillard would be equally terrorized by the Cooperative Principle or felicity conditions.

Now it seems to me you can make two maneuvers to deal with the many cases where the standard account of cooperativeness, sincerity, nonobviousness, and so on, does not fully apply. You can uphold the standard account and say that all these other instances are violations of it, that quarreling, gossiping, flattery, exaggeration, bargaining, advertising, and so on involve deviant or infelicitous kinds of language use. No social value attaches directly to the words "deviant" and "infelicitous," of course. They mean merely that the instance in question falls outside the system accounted for by the grammar and must be dealt with at a different theoretical level, outside the grammar proper. In a Chomskyan model, such instances are referred, for instance, to the domain of performance theory. In their recent book on speech acts, Bach and Harnish use a similar maneuver. They set up a category called 'collateral acts' to contain a disparate set of supposedly deviant practices including jokes, kidding around, punning, mimicking, reciting, circumlocution, changing the subject, small talk ambiguity, and something they call 'sneaky presupposition' (Bach and Harnish, 97ff). These 'collateral acts,' they argue, are not illocutionary acts, but acts which "can be performed in conjunction with or in lieu of illocutionary acts" (97).

Given how commonplace and conventional are so many of the acts that fall outside the cooperativeness analysis, such an analysis would seem to make sense only if embedded in a social critique of some sort. In other words, if you have a theory that designates much of what people do linguistically as in violation of the rules of their language, such an analysis would, it seems, have also to argue that a society in which such activities are routine is itself structured in ways that are divergent from some norm. Needless to say there

has been no stampede to elaborate such an argument. To do so would be to irredeemably compromise the commitment to a socially neutral, universal analysis. A second option is to expand the theory so that it is descriptively adequate to the status quo. In Gricean terms, this could mean adding, for example, a Coercive Principle, a Conflictive Principle, a Subversive Principle, a Submissive Principle, and other new principles of interaction. (It is far from clear that the Gricean model is the best one to pursue, however.) Such an account could presumably be undertaken with or without connection to a social critique, though it would of course look different in either case.

Questioning the norms of sincerity and cooperativeness has some clear repercussions for the analysis of literature. At present, the speech-act view of the pact between the reader and author is one of rational cooperation toward shared objectives. But just as we must question the notion of cooperation in other contexts, so we must do for literature—so that we can talk about reader/text/author relations that are coercive, subversive, conflictive, submissive, as well as cooperative, and about relations that are some or all of these simultaneously or at different points in a text. Such developments would considerably enrich the speech-act account of avant garde texts, and of readings of the sort discussed by Judith Fetterley in *The Resisting Reader*.

I have not yet taken up the literary question to which speech-act theory has been summoned most, namely the question of fictivity. Lengthy treatment of this issue is impossible here, but I would like to make one brief comment. As I have already argued, speech-act theory has so far produced a negative characterization of fictional discourse as a domain of verbal activity where the normal rules for speech acts are violated or suspended. Fictional speech acts are described in terms of what they are not, but little progress has been made in characterizing what they are. People say, "Well, what they involve is pretending." But as far as I can tell, pretending never gets defined as anything more than **not** doing the real thing—and there you are back where you started. Now one can perhaps imagine why philosophers might be satisfied with dropping the matter there. Fictional representations, after all, are not their main concern. But it is a little more puzzling why literary critics, if they are interested in speech action at all, would settle for such a marginalization, yet many seem to seize upon it with joy.

Speech-act theory uses what Roy Harris in his recent book calls a 'surrogationalist' view of representative discourse. That is, it views representative (or constative or assertive) speech acts as language that stands for the world, as verbal undertakings to fit words to the world (see, for example, Searle 1975). In this respect, we can see in speech-act theory the legacy of Russell's dictum that "the essential business of language is to assert or deny facts." Thus, as I suggested before, the making of true assertions tends to be treated as a transparent, sui generis activity by speech-act theory. Perhaps it is because critics know so well the inadequacies of such a view that they have been happy to see literature excepted from it. I imagine that most

critics would argue that it is misleading to think of representative discourse as only a matter of language molding itself to the world, so that true-false are adequate parameters for characterizing such discourse.

What we need is a theory of linguistic representation which acknowledges that representative discourse is always engaged in both fitting words to world and fitting world to words; that language and linguistic institutions in part construct or constitute the world for people in speech communities, rather than merely depicting it. We need to think of all representative discourses, fictional or nonfictional, as simultaneously world-creating, world-describing, and world-changing undertakings. For fiction, we must talk not about assertions that stand in negative relation to the real world, but about utterances which postulate fictional states of affairs that are placed in some complex, but positively specifiable relation to the real world. As this formulation implies, I believe the problem of how fictional discourses relate to reality will not be solved by an attempt to find referential assertions embedded in fictional texts, as some have proposed (Graff; Searle 1978; Woodmansee). It is just too simplistic to reduce all the signifying practices involved in representation to the production of true or false assertions. Another way of putting this is to say that speech-act theory tends to uncritically reproduce the norms of "assertive discourse," the discourse of truth and falsehood now being examined from an ideological viewpoint by many writers, including Foucault, Derrida, Greimas, Fowler, Kress, Coward, and Ellis. An essay by George Alexander indicates the direction this critique has been taking: "A certain kind of function is given to language in assertive discourse which is mined with difficulties: language is seen as representation and intentional, and therefore the position of the subject who signifies (judges, and affirms, and then goes on to legislate) remains unchallenged. . . . the tactics of assertion bring into play an either/or logic essential to the production of the discourses of truth and falsity, which function as effects of power" (Foss and Morris, p. 25). The irony is this: reexamining the norm of assertive discourse promises to open up better ways of talking about fiction. At the same time, it calls into question the very discourse to which linguistics and criticism aspire. Nevertheless, there is no doubt as to how we must proceed. If we are going to have a serious linguistic criticism, we must also have a seriously critical linguistics.

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Stephen Prickett

"Types and Symbols of Eternity":
The Poet as Prophet

In Book XII of the 1805 *Prelude*, Wordsworth describes the "Genius of the Poet" to Coleridge in the following terms:

> Dearest Friend!
> Forgive me if I say that I, who long
> Had harboured reverentially a thought
> That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each
> Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
> Have each for his peculiar dower, a sense
> By which he is enabled to perceive
> Something unseen before; . . .[1]   (299-305)

This claim, that the poet is a prophet, is not an isolated one. Similar hints can be found throughout *The Prelude* and, indeed, running through all his poetry. Nor is it confined to Wordsworth alone. In one of Blake's early works entitled *There is no Natural Religion*, etched in about 1788, we find him arguing—incidentally on excellent Kantian grounds—that not merely religion, but all human knowledge is ultimately dependent upon the prophetic or poetic leap of the imagination:

> If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character the Philosophic &
> Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, and stand still,
> unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again.[2]

In *All Religions are One* (1788), Blake's "Voice of one crying in the Wilderness" proclaimed that "The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius, which is everywhere call'd the Spirit of Prophecy." Two years later, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he elaborated this statement in more concrete terms:

> The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them

how they dared so roundly to assert that God spoke to them; and whether they did not think at the time that they would be misunderstood, & so be the cause of imposition.

Isaiah answer'd: "I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in every thing, and as I was then perswaded, & remain confirm'd, that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God, I cared not for consequences, but wrote."

Then I asked: "Does a firm perswasion that a thing is so make it so?"

He replied: "All poets believe that it does, & in ages of imagination this firm perswasion removed mountains; but many are not capable of a firm perswasion of any thing."

Then Ezekiel said: " . . . we of Israel taught that the Poetic Genius (as you now call it) was the first principle and all the others merely derivative, which was the cause of our despising the Priests & Philosophers of other countries, and prophecying that all Gods would at last be proved to originate in ours and to be the tributaries of the Poetic Genius...."[3]

Similar identifications can be found in Coleridge, and even in Shelley. In his *Four Ages of Poetry*, Peacock had ironically described the poets of ancient times as being

not only historians but theologians, moralists, and legislators: delivering their oracles **ex cathedra**, and being indeed often themselves . . . regarded as portions and emanations of divinity: building cities with a song, and leading brutes with a symphony; which are only metaphors for the faculty of leading multitudes by the nose.[4]

Shelley's reply, in the *Defence of Poetry,* is to claim even higher status for the poet than earlier Romantics had done, supporting his claim that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of mankind" by reference to their traditional prophetic role:

Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters.

Clearly, then, we are dealing with a belief that, though it may not be quite a critical commonplace (it is argued just a little too vehemently for that) is

certainly widespread. Indeed, so typical is this Romantic claim for the prophetic status of poetry that we can easily lose sight of just how extra-ordinary it would have seemed to an earlier generation for whom the two things would have seemed self-evidently distinct.

There are, it is true, classical antecedents. Sidney, in his *Apologie for Poetry,* for instance, writes:

> Among the Romans a Poet was called *Vates,* which is as much as a Diviner, Fore-seer, or Prophet, as by his conioyned wordes *Vaticinium* and *Vaticinari* is manifest: so heavenly a title did that excellent people bestow upon this hart-ravishing knowledge.

He also refers to the fact that the Delphic oracles were delivered in verse. Thomas Percy, the antiquarian collector and, if truth be told, part composer of the anthology published as his *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, added to it an "Essay on the Ancient Minstrels in England" in which he tells us of the "northern SCALDS, in whom the characters of historian, genealogist, poet, and musician, were all united" (4th ed., 1796). These Norse Scalds "professed to inform and instruct, and were at once the moralists and theologues of their Pagan countrymen."

Similarly, Wordsworth, in the passage with which we began, goes on immediately to write of a "reverie" first of ancient Britons, "With shield and stone-axe" striding "across the wold," and then of Druid sacrifices

>   fed
> With living men—how deep the groans! the voice
> Of those in the gigantic wicker thrills
> Throughout the region far and near, pervades
> The monumental hillocks, and the pomp
> Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.   (XII, 331-36)

At other times, he tells us, he saw before him "on the downy Plain"

> Lines, circles, mounts, a mystery of shapes
> Such as in many quarters yet survive,
> With intricate profusion figuring o'er
> The untilled ground, the work, as some divine,
> Of infant science, imitative forms
> By which the Druids covertly expressed
> Their knowledge of the heavens....   (XII, 340-346)

But though Wordsworth hopes, perhaps, to have caught "a tone/ An image, and a character" from these "bearded teachers," he recognizes that it is all an "antiquarian's dream." They are indeed in some sense his spiritual ancestors, but he does not cast himself as a new Druid—the screaming victims in the

wicker cages are a reminder of the gulf between the ancient Celtic bards and the modern poet. If we want to find in Wordsworth the same tone of high seriousness and dedication to the calling of the poet that we find in the lines with which we began, we must look, for instance, to the passage in Book IV of *The Prelude*, where the young Wordsworth is coming home after an all-night dance. As he walks across the fields in the first light of dawn, he is caught up in a sudden mood of exaltation:

> Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
> My Heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
> Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated Spirit.   (340-344)

The contrast in language with the previous passage is total. He is not now concerned with the esoteric mysteries of primitive cults, or with the speculations of an "antiquarian's dream," but with personal commitment, "vows" and "dedication." Moreover, though to break them would be "sinning greatly," they are not vows that he himself has made; he has, rather, become aware of them as an existing condition that affects his entire life. This is neither the language of classical prophecy, nor that of the northern bards and druids, but of St. Augustine in the *Confessions,* and behind him the Old Testament tradition of Samuel and of David. The vows made for Samuel by his mother, Hannah, are echoed by Monica's prayers for her son, Augustine, and now, metaphorically, by Wordsworth's "foster-mother" Nature for her dedicated son.

But there are other, apparently "religious" passages in *The Prelude* that are more puzzling to the modern reader in that they do not seem to have any clear connection with their setting. In Book XIII, for example, after describing his vision of the "sea of clouds" by moonlight from the top of Snowdon, Wordsworth goes on to describe the mind of the poet in these words:

> Such minds are truly from the Diety,
> For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
> That can be known is theirs — the consciousness
> Of Whom they are, habitually infused
> Through every image and through every thought,
> And all impressions; hence religion, faith,
> And endless occupation for the Soul,
> Whether discursive or intuitive;
> Hence sovereignty within and peace at will,
> Emotion which best foresight need not fear,
> Most worthy then of trust when most intense.
> Hence cheerfulness in every act of life,
> Hence truth in moral judgements and delight
> That fails not in the external universe.   (108-119)

The 1850 version is even more markedly "religious" in tone, concluding:

> Hence, amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush
> Our hearts—if here the words of Holy Writ
> May with fit reverence be applied—that peace
> Which passeth understanding, that repose
> In moral judgements which from this pure source
> Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.   (124-129)

Nor is this specifically religious terminology confined to Wordsworth. Shelley's *Defence of Poetry,* for example, places the main weight of its rhetoric on what is overtly the language of secularized religion:

> Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar. . . . A man to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively. . . . The great instrument of moral good is the imagination. . . . Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb. . . . Poetry is the sword of lightning, ever unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it. . . . Poetry is indeed something divine.

"What would have been the moral condition of the world" asks Shelley, "if neither Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Calderon, Lord Bacon, nor Milton had ever existed; if Raphael and Michael Angelo had never been born; if the Hebrew poetry had never been translated?"

It is the reference to Hebrew poetry that gives us the clue. To find the origins of the new prophetic status of poetry—by which, as one modern critic has put it, "the literary act came to be conceived as a sort of raid on the absolute and its result a revelation" (Jacques Rivière, quoted by T.S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*)—we must turn back to the middle of the eighteenth century to the publication of a book that was to transform Biblical studies in England and Germany alike, and was to do more than any other single work to make the Biblical tradition, rather than the classical one, the central poetic tradition of the Romantics: Bishop Robert Lowth's *The Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews.* Delivered first as the Oxford Poetry Lectures in 1741, it was published first in Latin in 1753 and achieved much wider circulation with its English translation in 1787.

Robert Lowth (1710-87) was not merely one of the most distinguished theologians of his day, he was also an outstanding Orientalist. After a highly successful Oxford career (he was only 31 when he became Professor of Poetry), he became successively Bishop of St. David's (1766), Oxford (1766), and finally London (1777).

   To Lowth we owe the rediscovery of the Bible as a work of literature
within the specific context of ancient Hebrew life. Hitherto, it had been read
almost exclusively in terms of allegory and typology as a timeless compen-
dium of divinely inspired revelation. One popular mid-eighteenth century
commentary on the Old Testament, for instance, explained that the story of
Elijah on Horeb, confronted by the earthquake, the wind, and the fire,
followed by "the still small voice" (I Kings, 19:8-12), is a prefiguring of the
way in which "the soft and gentle persuasions" of Jesus in the New
Testament were to follow "the storms, thunders, lightnings and earthquakes
which attended the promulgation of the law" in the Old.[5] The event itself is
entirely lost in its "typological" meaning, whereby the significance of an event
in the Old Testament was held to prefigure and even "explain" events in the
New. In extreme cases the Bible was taken to hold authoritative answers to
every problem of contemporary life. Lowth, in contrast, argues

> He who would perceive the particular and interior elegancies of the
> Hebrew poetry, must imagine himself exactly situated as the persons
> for whom it was written, or even as the writers themselves; he is to
> feel them as a Hebrew. . . . nor is it enough to be acquainted with
> the language of this people, their manners, discipline, rites and cere-
> monies; we must even investigate their inmost sentiments, the manner
> and connexion of their thoughts; in one word, we must see all things
> with their eyes, estimate all things by their opinions: we must
> endeavour as much as possible to read Hebrew as the Hebrews would
> have read it.[6]

Commonsense as this might seem to us today, Lowth was, in effect, insisting
on a quite new and even revolutionary kind of scholarship. The clue to the
relationship between the prophecy and poetry of the Bible, for instance, he
pointed out, must lie in a detailed study of the social setting from which they
arose.

> It is evident from many parts of the Sacred History, that even from
> the earliest times of the Hebrew Republic, there existed certain
> colleges of prophets, in which the candidates for the prophetic office,
> removed altogether from an intercourse with the world, devoted
> themselves entirely to the exercises and study of religion; . . . (II, 12)

The Hebrew word "Nabi," explains Lowth, was used by them in an
ambiguous sense denoting equally "a Prophet, a Poet, or a Musician, under the
influence of divine inspiration" (II, 13). Solomon, for instance, "twice makes
use of the word, which, in its ordinary sense, means prophecy, strictly so
called, to denote the language of poetry" (II, 12).

> From all these testimonies it is sufficiently evident, that the
> prophetic office had a most strict connexion with the poetic art.
> They had one common name, one common origin, one common

author, the Holy Spirit. Those in particular were called to the exercise of the prophetic office, who were previously conversant with the sacred poetry. It was equally part of their duty to compose verses for the service of the church, and to declare the oracles of God. (II, 18).

Lowth also points out that one of the words commonly used for a poem is also the word translated in the New Testament as "parable" (I, 76-78). In other words, Jesus's parables are not an innovation but merely an extension (by the greatest of the biblical "poets") of the basic mode of Hebrew thought as it had been handed down by the Old Testament (I, 224).

In spite of being frequently of humble background, like David, who was a shepherd boy, the prophets of Israel were not rustics but men whose religious training included an elaborate grounding in aesthetics, especially in the arts of music and verse. In short, the prophets were the inheritors of a highly sophisticated aesthetic and intellectual tradition. Though Lowth's *Lectures* were to lead directly to a revival of primitivism in English poetry during the later part of the eighteenth century, there was no suggestion that the poet (or poets) of Isaiah or the Psalms were themselves "primitives," any more than those they inspired, like Smart, Blake, Cowper, or Wordsworth were.

In his humble origins Jesus was also quite in keeping with the Old Testament poetic tradition. Unlike European poets, the Hebrew ones had never been part of a courtly circle, but remained often in opposition to the political establishment of the day, in close touch with the rural and pastoral life of the ordinary people, using in their verse (or "parables") the homely metaphors of agriculture and everyday life. (I, 123, 311). It is this very simplicity and directness of Hebrew poetic language, claims Lowth, that gives it its unmatched, "almost ineffable sublimity."

Lowth's capacity to anticipate, and in many cases, originate, critical principles that were only to come to fruition with Romanticism is everywhere extraordinary. Even his repeated stress on "sublimity" as the ultimate criterion of greatness in art (I, 169) actually anticipates Burke's own *Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful* by several years. Foreshadowing Wordsworth's "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads,* Lowth describes the language of poetry as the product of "enthusiasm," "springing from mental emotion" (I, 336). Even more similar to Wordsworth is Lowth's rejection of the conventions of Augustan diction and his praise for the "simple and unadorned" language of Hebrew verse that gains its sublimity not by elevated diction but from the depth and universality of its subject-matter. It is hardly surprising that through Lowth's influence the Bible was to become for the Romantics not merely a model of sublimity, but also a source of style and a touchstone of true feeling.

To Lowth we owe, above all, the rediscovery of Hebrew prosody: that is,

the technique of its construction. It had always been clear, of course, that a great deal of the Bible was "poetic," and writers like Addison had laid great stress on the poetic qualities of the scriptures, but even in the Psalms (which were known to be songs), it was perplexingly difficult to find any trace of either rhyme or regular meter in the original Hebrew. Even among the Jews the traditional arts of Hebrew verse had been lost completely. Scholars, such as Bishop Hare, had made valiant attempts to discover scansion and rhyme-schemes in the Psalms, but their results looked distinctly unconvincing. Lowth now demonstrated, with impressively detailed evidence, that Hebrew poetry depended upon quite different conventions from European verse and was constructed instead on a principle which he called "parallelism."

> The correpondence of one verse, or line, with another, I call **parallelism.** When a proposition is delivered, and a second subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it in sense; or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction; these I call parallel lines; and the words or phrases, answering one to another in the corresponding lines, parallel terms. (II, 32).

This "correspondence of one verse, or line, with another," Lowth argued, was the basic principle of Hebrew meter. Its origins lay in the antiphonal chants and choruses we find mentioned in various places in the Old Testament. He cites, for example, I Samuel 29; when David returned victorious from battle with the Philistines, the Hebrew women greeted him with the chant of "Saul hath smote his thousands," and were answered by a second chorus with the words "And David his ten thousands" (II, 53). This simple, rhythmic, antiphonal structure of statement and counterstatement, offering either repetition or contrast as desired, gave the Hebrew psalmists and prophets a basic pattern of extraordinary flexibility. Lowth himself distinguishes no fewer than eight different types of parallelism. From the simplest form of repetition and echo, it could provide endless variation, comparison, contrast (as between David and Saul, for instance, in the example above), antithesis, and even dialectic. Form helped to shape content in a way almost unknown in European poetry. Furthermore, this extraordinary coincidence of style and content had another, apparently providential, consequence for European readers of the Bible. It was only in the wake of Lowth's pioneering work that it could be appreciated how little of Hebrew poetry was actually lost through the normal linguistic problems of translation. Whereas contemporary European poetry, which relied heavily on essentially untranslatable effects of alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and meter was extremely difficult to render in another language with any real equivalence of tone and feeling, Hebrew poetry was almost all translatable.

> . . . a poem translated literally from the Hebrew into the prose of any other language, whilst the same form of the sentences remain, will still retain, even as far as relates to versification, much of its native dignity, and a fair appearance of versification. (I, 71-72).

Translated into Greek or Latin, however, with a different word-order "and having the conformation of the sentences accommodated to the idiom of a foreign language," it "will appear confused and mutilated." This point of Lowth's was eagerly taken up by succeeding critics, who noticed also the corollary, that Hebrew poetry was better translated into **prose** than verse. Hugh Blair, a Scottish admirer of Lowth, makes just such an observation:

> It is owing, in a great measure, to this form of composition, that our version, though in prose, retains so much of a poetical cast. For the version being strictly word for word after the original, the form and order of the original sentence are preserved; which by this artificial structure, this regular alternation and correspondence of parts, makes the ear sensible of a departure from the common style and tone of prose.[7]

Though Lowth hardly could have forseen the consequences of his work, its effect was nothing less than a critical revolution. Not merely did the Bible now give authority for the prophetic status of the poet as the transformer of society and the mediator of divine truth, but it was also taken as a model both of sublimity and naturalness—with the added assurance that its precious content was almost providentially preserved in the rich prose of the English Authorised Version.

Yet if Lowth, and his critical successors such as Blair, helped to revitalize the understanding of the "poetic" nature of the scriptures, that very word was elsewhere acquiring connotations of a very different character. For all the interpretative brilliance of his scholarship, Lowth was never a historian in the modern sense of the word. He accepts the biblical narrative at its face value and never questions the textual history of the material he is dealing with, any more than he would question the miracles or the chronology of Genesis. For him, as for his forebears, the Bible is still the inspired Word of God. For all the emphasis on its context in the life of its day, Hebrew poetry is still regarded as having "one common author" in the person of the Holy Spirit. Lowth is certain that the Books of Jonah and Daniel, for instance, are "the bare recital of fact," and the nearest he gets to speculation about authorship is when he discusses whether Moses or Elihu (one of the characters involved) wrote the Book of Job. In Germany, however, by the end of the eighteenth century critics and historians were beginning to take a quite different view of the "poetic" nature of the Bible.

For Lowth, the Bible had been a book that was simply different **in kind** from any other. It was not a historical document in the sense that the ancient Greek and Roman histories by Herodotus or Livy were: since it was divinely inspired by God himself, it provided the yardstick by which the authenticity of other histories might be judged. Mrs. Trimmer put it succintly in her *Help to the Unlearned in the Study of the Holy Scriptures* (1805):

> The Histories they contain differ from all other histories that ever
> were written, for they give an account of the **ways of** GOD; and
> explain **why** GOD **protected and rewarded** some persons and
> nations, and **why** he **punished** others; also, **what led** particular
> persons mentioned in Scripture to **do** certain things for which they
> were approved or condemned; whereas writers who compose histories
> in a common way, without being **inspired of God,** can only form
> guesses and conjectures concerning God's dealings with mankind,
> neither can they know what passed in the hearts of those they write
> about; such knowledge as this, belongs to **God** alone, whose ways are
> **unsearchable and past finding out,** and **to whom all hearts are open,
> all desires known!**

But without guessing it, Lowth and his successor critics had helped to
strike a death-blow to this certainty. Once he had begun to see the scriptures
in the context of their own time, as the literature of a primitive nomadic and
then agricultural Near-Eastern tribe, it was inevitable that their "history"
should also be viewed in the same way. It was clear, for instance, that there
are many levels of sophistication in the Bible; many miracles seem to reflect
primitive taboos rather than the actions of the loving father proclaimed by
Jesus in the New Testament. Indeed, to put it bluntly (and Hume, for
instance, had put it very bluntly in the 1750s), miracles themselves belonged
to a pre-scientific mental set that interpreted impersonal natural forces in
terms of the direct intervention of a personal God with human characteristics
and emotions. To take a fairly minor example: if the sun had **really** stood still
in the sky for Joshua (Joshua 10: 12-14), that would have meant that the
rotation of the earth had been suspended—an event so catastrophic that all life
on earth probably would have been extinguished. Clearly, in another non-
Biblical context, such a story would be seen as a mere hyperbole, or rhetorical
exaggeration, or even, if it were in a particularly important or dramatic
setting, a "pious fraud" to impress and strengthen the faith of the tribe.
Stories of this nature had to be seen as part of a world-picture which took
miracles as a matter of course—and even saw military victories in terms of
miracles.

In his *Introduction to the Old Testament,* published between 1780 and
1783, the German Biblical critic Eichhorn opposed the even more extreme
deist argument that the Old Testament prophets were dishonest by just such a
"historicist" case. So far from being deliberately fraudulent, according to him
they were simply men of their age: credulous in their approach to natural
phenomena (there is, in any case, no word in Hebrew for "nature": everything
is the direct action of God).[8] As the Victorian novelist, Mrs. Humphrey Ward,
was to put it in what is still one of the best English accounts of the German
method of "higher criticism":

> Testimony like every other human product has **developed.** Man's
> power of apprehending and recording what he sees and hears has

grown from less to more, from weaker to stronger, like any other of
his faculties, just as the reasoning powers of the cave-dweller have
developed into the reasoning powers of a Kant....

> To plunge into the Christian period without having first cleared
> the mind as to what is meant in history and literature by 'the critical
> method' which in history may be defined as the 'science of what is
> credible' and in literature as 'the science of what is rational' is to
> invite fiasco. The theologian in such a state sees no obstacle to
> accepting an arbitrary list of documents with all the strange stuff
> they may contain, and declaring them to be sound historical material,
> while he applies to all the strange stuff of a similar kind surrounding
> them the most rigorous principles of modern science. Or he has to
> make believe that the reasoning processes exhibited in the speeches of
> the Acts, or in certain passages of St. Paul's Epistles, or in the Old
> Testament quotations in the Gospels, have a validity for the mind of
> the nineteenth century, when in truth they are the imperfect, half-
> childish products of the mind of the first century, of quite insigni-
> ficant or indirect value to the historian of fact, of enormous value to
> the historian of **testimony** and its varieties.[9]

Though the attempt to see the literature of the Bible in the context of its
time is essentially the same as Lowth's, the **tone** is very different. Whereas his
study of Hebrew aesthetics led him into an increasing admiration for the
technical skills and sophistication of the prophets, Mrs. Ward's interest in the
modern value of their testimony leads her towards a much more critical and
patronizing approach. As we shall see, this was a split that had already begun
by the end of the eighteenth century, and which was to drive poets and
Biblical scholars further and further apart in the nineteenth century.

Mrs. Ward was certainly a formidable scholar in her own right. She was the
granddaughter of the great Dr. Arnold of Rugby, immortalized by Thomas
Hughes in *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* and niece of Matthew Arnold, the poet,
whose attempt to popularize the German higher criticism in *Literature and
Dogma* had, as late as 1873, scandalized pious English opinion. Its reception
illustrates how relatively unknown, even in mid-Victorian times, the historical
criticism was in Britain. Though the work of Eichhorn, Herder, and Lessing
began to filter into intellectual circles in Britain chiefly through Unitarian
channels by the 1790s, and though there were even home-grown critics and
scholars of international standing, such as Alexander Geddes, a Scottish
Roman Catholic priest, it had proved a false start for the new wave of
Biblical scholarship. The popular reaction against the French Revolution by
1793 meant that Unitarianism, with its dangerous intellectual and radical
associations, was itself suspect. As part of a witch hunt against suspected
Unitarians and radicals, William Frend was expelled from his Fellowship at
Cambridge and Thomas Beddoes from Oxford. The higher criticism was not
merely felt to be unchristian, it was unpatriotic and politically dangerous. For

a whole generation it was virtually ignored in Britain, isolated as ever by the
appalling quality of the modern language teaching in her schools and univer-
sities, and engaged in the long wars with Napoleon. It was not until the 1820s
that the intellectual climate was again favorable to the German historical
critics, but when, in 1823, Edward Bouverie Pusey, shortly to become a
leading figure in the Oxford Movement, became interested in the new ideas, he
could find only two men in the whole University of Oxford capable of
reading German.[10] Yet there **were** a few, mostly outside the universities, who
could and had studied the Germans. Coleridge was one. Frend had been a
Fellow of his own college, Jesus, while he was an undergraduate there, and
had been a great influence on his intellectual and religious development. It
had been Beddoes who persuaded Coleridge to go to the University of
Göttingen when he was in Germany in 1798 to read Eichhorn and attend his
lectures. We know more than we otherwise might about this period because
Coleridge was an indefatigable scribbler in the margins of the books he read.
On the whole he seems to have approved of Eichhorn's approach and, as we
can see from his later notebooks, was heavily influenced by him in his own
Biblical studies, but he was by no means uncritical. Eichhorn generally agreed
with Lowth that the prophets were also the poets of Israel—but this time
there is a sting in the tail. If, for instance, Ezekiel is the greatest "artist"
among the prophets, he was, argued Eichhorn, to that degree the least
authentic visionary among them—for to be an artist involves the notion of
deliberate creation, fabrication, and, in this case, therefore, deceit. "All these
raptures and visions," declared Eichhorn uncompromisingly, "are in my judge-
ment mere cover-up, mere poetical fancies."[11] "Poetical," we notice, is now
no longer a term of praise from aesthetics, but implies something that is
historically untrue. The word has come full circle from Lowth: from praise to
abuse. Coleridge is quick to reject this "cold-blooded" division between
"artist" and "visionary," and the down-grading of "poetic":

> It perplexes me to understand how a Man of Eichhorn's Sense, Learn-
> ing, and Acquaintance with Psychology could form, or attach belief
> to, so cold-blooded an hypothesis. That in Ezekiel's Visions Ideas or
> Spiritual Entities are presented in visual Symbols, I never doubted;
> but as little can I doubt that such Symbols did present themselves to
> Ezekiel in Visions—and by a Law closely connected with, if not
> contained in, that by which Sensations are organized into Images and
> mental Sounds in our ordinary sleep.[12]

Eichhorn's argument that Ezekiel's visions are "so magnificent, varied, and
great that the presentation can hardly be an impromptu, but must have been
planned and worked out with much art" is handled brilliantly by Coleridge,
who points out how close Ezekiel's images are to those that come, without
the aid of the conscious mind, in dreams.

Coleridge's criticism of Eichhorn is not, we notice, over the analogy
between the Bible and a work of art, but over the status of a work of art

itself. Whereas for Eichhorn, a work of art was a conscious artifact, for Coleridge it was an expression of man's deepest powers—involving both conscious and unconscious minds, and capable of saying more than its author intended or knew. Their disagreement focuses the new dilemma that was to haunt the Biblical critics of the nineteenth century. If the Bible, with its pre-scientific world-picture of miraculous intervention in the natural order, was no longer acceptable in modern terms as "history," was it then to be discarded as valueless superstition? For some, the rigid certainties of Newtonian science, and the confident materialism of an age more sceptical than today of psychic phenomena or faith healing, made the apparent conflict between science and religion much more clear-cut and uncompromising than it would appear today. For most of the Romantics, however, even including those opposed to established churches (like Blake) or even atheists like Shelley, the answer was still an emphatic "no!". The Bible showed poets not as mere decorators of truth, but as **prophets,** "the makers and shakers of things" and "unacknowledged legislators of mankind." It was the repository of the most profound spiritual truths known to man. Liberated from the need to defend it as a record of unerring historical fact, for many the Bible assumed, paradoxically, a new and enhanced status. Romantic literature is steeped in Biblical images and references in a way that even Augustan litera-ture is not. The scriptures, said Coleridge, are nothing less than "the living educts of the Imagination," conveying their meaning to us in "a system of symbols." Their contents "present to us the stream of time continuous as Life and a symbol of Eternity, inasmuch as the Past and the Future are virtually contained in the Present."[13] Elsewhere Coleridge clarifies this by explaining what he means by a symbol. It is characterized "above all by the translucence of the Eternal in and through the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative."[14] In other words, it both particularizes and focuses a general principle in a particular example, while at the same time bearing an organic relationship to that general principle. The Bible is full of such "symbols," whether it be Elijah denouncing Ahab for taking Naboth's vineyard in the Old Testament, pro-claiming that even the King is not above the law, or the "acted parables" of Jesus's miracles in the New, which particularize the divine compassion.

Nor would Blake have disagreed with this new "symbolic" status of the scriptures. Though we do not have the same kind of firm evidence for his reading that we have for Coleridge, there is every reason to believe from internal evidence (in, for instance, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*) that he too was acquainted with the Higher Criticism. Certainly he was moving in circles during the 1790s where the ideas of the German critics were known and discussed. He too, for instance, knew William Frend. He also belonged to a circle that met regularly at the house of Joseph Johnson, a radical book-seller and publisher, in St. Paul's Churchyard. Other members of the group included William Godwin, Tom Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Joseph Priestley, Dr. Price, and Thomas Holcroft.

But where does Wordsworth stand in relation to these new movements to psychologize and internalize the old external certainties of religion? As we have seen, the idea of the poet as prophet is not an isolated belief that can be separated from its matrix, but part of a total way of looking at human experience: a way that is essentially **typological** rather than historical.

This a point easily forgotten by literary critics. Typology did not simply disappear overnight with the advent of the Higher Criticism. Indeed, the new historicism took almost a hundred years to gain complete hold. As late as 1860 Kingsley's lectures as Regius Professor of History in Cambridge on "The Roman and the Teuton" still show elements of the typological approach—as disgruntled colleagues of his were quick to observe. Moreover, as the notion of a divinely engineered scheme of past events slowly recedes during the nineteenth century, it is replaced by an internalized version of the same belief in literature—a theory of symbolism. Just as one can say that a "type," in the sense of the old-style Biblical criticism, is a divinely planted symbol, so one can say that a "symbol" is an internalized and secularized type.

Wordsworth is in contact with both worlds, and even uses both terms in tandem. When he has crossed the Alps in Book VI of *The Prelude*, for instance, he describes the natural grandeur thus:

> The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> And every where along the hollow rent
> Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
> As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light —
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.   (557-572)

The psychological stress of the Burkean "sublime" is here made even more concrete by the suggestion that these contrasts were "like workings of one mind": "types and symbols" implanted by God for man to read in nature.

This brings us back at last to the Snowdon scene in Book XIII. I myself some years ago was guilty of the error of describing it as "symbolic," but, of course, it is not; it is one of the most striking pieces of **typology** in Romantic

literature. It is only unfamiliarity with the terminology that prevents us from seeing at once what Wordsworth is saying, for he is quite explicit:

>   . . . above all
> One function of such mind had Nature there
> Exhibited by putting forth, and that
> With circumstance most awful and sublime,
> That domination which she oftentimes
> Exerts upon the outward face of things,
> So moulds them, and endues, abstracts, combines,
> Or by abrupt and unhabitual influence
> Doth make one object so impress itself
> Upon all others, and pervade them so
> That even the grossest minds must see and hear
> And cannot choose but feel. The power, which these
> Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
> Thrusts forth upon the senses, is the express
> Resemblance, in the fullness of its strength
> Made visible, a genuine counterpart
> And brother of the glorious faculty
> Which higher minds bear with them as their own.
> That is the very spirit in which they deal
> With all the objects of the universe:
> They from their native selves can send abroad
> Like transformations; for themselves create
> A like existence; and, whene'er it is
> Created for them, catch it by an instinct;
> Them the enduring and the transient both
> Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things
> From least suggestions; ever on the watch,
> Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
> They need not extraordinary calls
> To rouse them; in a world of life they live,
> By sensible impressions not enthralled,
> But quickened, roused, and made thereby more fit
> To hold communion with the invisible world   (74-105)

The quotation is a long one, but it is necessary if we are to catch the full flavor of the passage. Now it is possible to interpret this simply as a psychological experience, for that, at one level, is certainly what it is. Wordsworth is describing that shock of discovery by which we can suddenly find mirrored for us in the external world the objective correlative to an abstract or internal state. It is an experience parallel to, and not unlike that of Kekule's discovery of the benzine ring. But that, of course, is only half the story. What we might call the "symbol" is couched in terms of traditional Biblical typology. Just as the Old Testament prophet-poets exercised their dual office by discerning and proclaiming God's judgments in contemporary

events, so Wordsworth, the poet-prophet of his own time, is perceiving the language of God in nature—"catching," "creating," "transforming." The religious coda to this passage that was quoted earlier is thus not a gratuitous piece of piety, but a direct reminder of the divine calling of the poet. The poetic imagination is also the prophetic vision.

Yet, of course, there is a fundamental difference—and it is a very revealing one. As we have already observed, the Hebrew prophets had no word in their vocabulary corresponding to our word "nature." For them there was no essential distinction between the regular rhythm of the seasons, the fall of Babylon, or the bodily assumption of Elijah in a chariot of fire. All were equally the direct actions of a God who habitually manifested himself through purposeful change. Wordsworth is no less conscious than the Hebrew poets of living in a world of profound, even cataclysmic changes, but for that very reason, he tends to find the evidence of divine meaning and order less in the processes of history than in the great unchanging permanencies of nature against which they must be set. The fall of Robespierre or the career of Napoleon may indeed exemplify the inexorability of God's judgments, but in so doing, they merely reflect flickeringly and by contrast the truths permanently exemplified in the ordered harmony of man and his natural environment. Though *The Prelude* sets out to be a "history," its whole movement is curiously anti-historical. In other words, while Hebrew typology is essentially diachronic, working through history, Wordsworthian typology is in effect, if not in intention, **synchronic.**

As a result, we can see in Wordsworth displayed simultaneously what we are now accustomed to thinking of as two entirely opposing states of mind, the typological and the psychological, balanced and reconciled in a single comprehensive mode of thought. From one point of view, the Romantic era is a strange transitional period in which the two ways of thinking could still incongruously coexist. But we need to remember that warning phrase about the "provinciality of the modern." From Wordsworth's point of view, the later separation could look like what Blake scornfully catagorized as "single vision"—and an aesthetic impoverishment. We need to remember too that typology is not just a feature of pre-nineteenth century thought. A later generation of profoundly Romantic thinkers, Freud and Jung, have taught us that it is, in a different yet related sense, the normal language of the psyche.

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NOTES

1   *The Prelude: A Parallel Text*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971). Subsequent references are to this text.

2   William Blake, *Complete Writings with Variant Readings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 97.

3   Plates 12-13, *Complete Writings,* p. 153.

4   Thomas Love Peacock, *Four Ages of Poetry,* ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1953), pp. 5-6. Quotations from Shelley and Sidney are also from this edition, pp. 27 and 88, n. 5 respectively.

5   *The Royal Bible,* with a commentary by Leonard Howard, London, 1761.

6   *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews,* trans. G. Gregory, 1787, I, 114, 113. Subsequent references are to this text.

7   *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), Edinburgh, 1820, II, 270-71.

8   See Henry Wheeler Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament* (London and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, Galaxy paperback, 1962), p. 34.

9   Mrs. Humphrey Ward, *Robert Elsmere,* London, 1890, p. 317.

10 David Newsome, *The Parting of Friends: A Study of the Wilberforces and Henry Manning* (London: Murray, 1966), p. 78.

11 Elinor S. Shaffer, *"Kubla Khan" and "The Fall of Jerusalem": The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature* (Cambridge, Engl.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975), p. 88.

12 Ibid., p. 89.

13 *The Statesman's Manual,* in *Lay Sermons,* ed. R. J. White (London: Routledge, 1972), pp. 28-30.

14 Ibid., p. 30.

William Beauchamp

Riffaterre's *Semiotics of Poetry* with an Illustration in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson

My topic is Michael Riffaterre's approach to the analysis of poetic texts, as presented—most succinctly and comprehensively—in his recent book, *Semiotics of Poetry*.[1] What I propose is to summarize Riffaterre's principal ideas, then illustrate them by application to a short poem of Emily Dickinson.

But first, a few preliminary questions. Who is Riffaterre? What is semiotics? Why have I chosen this poem?

Over the past twenty years, Riffaterre has established himself as one of the leading figures in contemporary approaches to textual analysis. Trained first as a classicist, then in French literature, he began making his mark as a maverick stylistician, well versed in American New criticism; he absorbed and integrated much of the work of communications theorists as well as of the early structuralists (Jakobson); more recently, he has integrated many aspects of the later structuralists and semioticians (Greimas, Todorov, Genette, Barthes, Lotman, Eco, Kristeva). Today, well known on both sides of the Atlantic, he continues to elicit both heated objections, usually of a theoretical or ideological nature, and at the same time praise for the spectacular cogency, erudition and elegance of his analyses of particular literary texts.

This is why I am interested in Riffaterre, and the reason I like to direct others to his work: he is perhaps the best textual analyst practicing today. What's more, his methodology is clear and transmittable—an incalculable advantage for teachers and students.

As for the second preliminary question, semiotics is a discipline (still an approach, trying to become a science), first postulated by the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce and the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the goal of which is to give a coherent account of the structure and function of signifying systems—how they are organized, how they generate meaning, how they interact. In principle, this includes everything from medical symptomatology, through traffic signalization, to culinary and dress

codes, and major cultural systems such as language, literature and the arts. Thus far, the most developed of the semiotic fields is linguistics; the second is probably literary semiotics. The specific area of literary semiotics on which Riffaterre focuses is poetry.

Some fundamental premises of literary semiotics: the literary text is a space in which many different sign systems come to play and intersect—linguistic systems at various levels (phonological, morphological, syntactic, discursive), poetic systems (meter, rhythm, rhyme, stanza), other literary systems (genre, school), and finally more general cultural systems (such as ideologies, mythologies, religion). A semiotic analysis must accommodate this complexity; it attempts to do so by recognizing that there are hierarchical levels among these systems within the text and that "the assertive power which resides in the interplay between the various modes of error constituting a literary text can be described only relationally."[2]

Let me emphasize here that the purpose of abstractions, of "jargon," is to develop models sufficiently precise and sufficiently broad so as to account for multiple instances of literary phenomena. The experience of the act of literature is usually a private, subjective, solitary one; but the systematic study of that experience is a legitimate object of scientific inquiry—and that's what literary semiotics is about.[3]

One final preliminary comment: why have I chosen this little Dickinson poem as my illustration? I had first thought of using Valery's "Cemetery by the Sea," a much longer and more complex text. It soon became clear, however, that the complexities of interpretation would have eclipsed the illustrative function of the analysis, and my talk would inevitably have focused on Valery rather than Riffaterre. So I have chosen instead a short, relatively simple poem. Riffaterre's own analyses, of course, treat texts of all lengths and degrees of complexity, in English, French and Latin, from all literary periods and many different genres.

Now, to our subject. Riffaterre's earlier work focused on the surface structures of poetic discourse; since about 1971 he has turned his attention to the study of the poem as a whole, the poem as text. His 1978 book, *Semiotics of Poetry,* is the outcome of this second period. In it, he sets out to "propose a coherent and relatively simple description of the structure of meaning in a poem" (p. 1). This will be my focus as well: how do poems mean? My primary interest is not this particular Dickinson poem, or indeed Dickinson at all, but rather how readers generate meaning when cued by the structures encoded in a poetic text.

Let me begin, in an initial stage, to examine a first group of concepts fundamental to Riffaterre's poetics. First, I will define and describe some basic terms; then, in a few minutes, I'll examine the Dickinson text to illustrate these concepts.[4]

Riffaterre's work is based on two postulates. (1) The literary phenomenon involves a dialectic between reader and text; it is a process. Only facts which are accessible to the reader, through linguistic and literary competences,[5] are taken into account. (2) The poem is a finite context, i.e., a text, a single unit, unified from incipit, through derivation, to clausula. The concept of poeticity is inseparable from that of text.

For Riffaterre, all poems are characterized by **indirection:** by saying **something,** a poem says **something else.** This something functions at the **mimesis level** and produces **meaning.** The something else functions at the **semiotic level** and produces **significance.** The confusion associated with poems results from the conflicts between meaning and significance. The transfer of signs from the level of mimesis to the level of significance is the proper domain of semiotics; everything related to this integration of signs at a higher level of discourse is a manifestation of semiosis.

Let me elaborate. Semantic indirection—that feature of poetry whereby the text says one thing by saying another—produces a deviant grammar or lexicon (e.g., contradictory details)—Riffaterre calls them ungrammaticalities—and creates the impression of a generalized, all-contaminating catachresis. This catachresis is perceived by the reader as a threat to the literary representation of reality, or mimesis.

Now, whereas the mimesis level is verisimilar, multiple and syntagmatic, the ungrammaticalities, on the other hand, are eventually perceived to be structural equivalents of each other, all indirectly repeating the same message: they are generating significance which, unlike mimesis, is unpredictable, unitary and paradigmatic. A poem, therefore, is at one and the same time (1) a string of information units (meaning) and (2) one semantic unit (significance).

Significance, then, is the formal and semantic unity of the poem and includes all the indices of indirection, all the ungrammaticalities. It is the principle of unity and the agent of semantic indirection. Ungrammaticalities at the mimesis level are grammaticalities at the significance level. Mimesis is the guideline to semiosis, the key to significance, for mimesis establishes the grammar or norm against which the ungrammaticalities can be perceived and integrated at a higher level. The destruction of mimesis results in the creation of semiosis: this process is co-extensive with the text, it **is** the text.

Let me enlarge the definition of significance with one further clarification. Since perception of significance is the result of a special reading process in the context of the reader-text dialectic, its definition includes as well the reader's very praxis of the transformation from mimesis to semiosis—a praxis which resembles play, the acting out of a ritual, the experience of a verbal detour. What provides the incentive to read poems is not the discovery of some hidden message desirable in itself: what makes poems fascinating is the very **process** of that discovery.

Two further definitions follow from the preceding: (1) The **unit of significance** = the entire text. (2) A specifically **poetic sign** = any sign that modifies mimesis and is therefore relevant to significance.

All this sounds complicated, and it is. Reading poems is complicated. That is why we find them intriguing. This complicated reading process takes place at two levels or stages. In a first stage, reading is syntagmatic, heuristic; meaning is apprehended (mimetic level); ungrammaticalities are perceived (contradictions between a word's presuppositions and its entailments). In a second stage, reading is retroactive, hermeneutic, comparative; the ungrammaticalities are decoded structurally, and perceived as variants of the same structural matrix.

Let me now define two more terms and then we will look at the Dickinson poem. The two terms are **matrix** and **model**. All poems result from the transformation of a matrix, a semantic given (which can always be expressed as a minimal, literal sentence) into a periphrasis (which is longer, complex, nonliteral, and perceived as a generalized catachresis). The matrix is an abstract concept, an invariant, never actualized per se in the poem. It becomes visible only in its variants (the ungrammaticalities).

The model, on the other hand, is the first or primary actualization of the matrix. The model is a variant of the invariant matrix. The form of the model governs the other, successive variants.

Together, matrix and model account for the textual derivation. The two, in combination, create the special language of the text, its idiolect. The matrix is the motor, the generator of the textual derivation. The model determines the manner of that derivation.

The sum of all the variants of the matrix—the model and its successors—is the text.

Matrix, model, and text are all variants of the same structure, and that structure is the structure of significance.[6]

Now let us look at the Emily Dickinson poem.

1 Ended, ere it begun—
2 The title was scarcely told
3 When the preface perished from consciousness,
4 The story, unrevealed.

5 Had it been mine, to print!
6 Had it been yours, to read!
7 That it was not our privilege
8 The interdict of God.

There is no title, so we have no initial orientation. We probably have a feeling of the unity of the text, but we are not sure of the reasons, except for typographical features (there is white space before and after) and certain lexematic, syntactic and prosodic constants. The poem does not seem particularly complicated, and yet at first reading we probably do not feel secure in our decoding.

What are some of the features noted in our first-stage reading, at the mimetic, syntagmatic level? We note various ellipses, a characteristic parataxis. We note a series of semantically related words: "title," "preface," "story," "print," "read." We note a series of antitheses ("ended"/"begun," "mine"/"yours," "privilege"/"interdict"), and a series of negations ("scarcely told," "unrevealed," "not our privilege," "interdict"). There is a first-person speaker actualized in the word "mine"; an addressee, actualized in the word "yours."

And there are a certain number of ungrammaticalities, questions unanswered, problems unresolved. Something cannot end before it begins. What exactly is it that was ended? The syntax is not clear. A preface is a printed text, not something in consciousness. Who is the addressee? Why is this story under interdict? Especially so solemn a one as God's?

Now, what might we observe, or generate, in our second-stage reading—the retroactive, comparative, structural one?

Line 1 poses a conundrum: **what** ended before it began? and **why** did it end? The first question—what?—starts being answered in II. 2, 3, 4: the second—why?—is not answered til I. 8.

"It" of I. 1 is quickly associated with "title," "preface," "story." The first two ("title," "preface") are components of the third ("story"), in which case "it" = "story." Or else: "title," "preface," "story" are all components of "book," actualized only in its semes and presuppositions, and "it" = (book), perhaps even (storybook). In either case, all these words are associated as metonyms.

Indeed, once the primary, orienting metonym, "story," is actualized, we perceive rather quickly, first, that every line of the poem contains a seme or presupposition of "story"/(book), and, second, that every one of these is systematically negated, cancelled. A story has a beginning and an end, but this one has neither. Titles announce, proclaim, identify, but this title is never, or barely, stated. Prefaces explain and introduce, yet this preface never leaves the mind of the teller. Stories are revelations, this one is "unrevealed." Stories/ books are printed and read: not so this one. A book receives a permission, a "privilege" to be printed, an **imprimatur**—a "let it be printed": this book receives an interdict—a "let it not be told." This is a thwarted book, a book that might have been but never was—not only never printed and read, but

never written, only imagined in the mind of the would-be writer who is the
speaker of the poem.

Now, what is the content of this thwarted story? What is the something
else this poem is about? What are all these signs, twisted at mimesis level,
pointing to at the level of significance?

Retroactively, the principal clue comes in II. 5-6, especially as interpreted
in light of I. 8. Two contrary-to-fact conditional sentences, one per line,
present two antitheses: "mine"/"yours" (the first actualization of either
speaker or addressee) and "print"/"read" (= send/receive), the latter
transforming speaker and addressee into a writer/sender and a reader/receiver,
in an unrealized act of communication. The syntactic structure emphasizes
negation: in both cases, the apodoses of the contrary-to-fact conditions are
omitted; only the two protases appear, that is, the clauses containing the
content whose reality is denied (it was **not** mine to print; it was **not** yours to
read). Further, the double exclamation underlines strong emotion: emotion
caused, first, by the strength of the desire to communicate, thereby ending
antithesis, achieving conjunction, and, second, by the frustration of this desire,
the prolongation of disjunction, the absence of communication.

Now, given the preceding analyses; given what from literary experience we
know to be the most frequent subject matter of lyric poems; given what we
know is one of the common tenors for which communication images serve as
vehicles; and given the long literary tradition of committing a special type of
emotionally charged message to collections of lyric poems (books with title,
preface . . .) that are addressed to a special other—we are led to conclude
that the story in question is a love story. The speaker is a lover; the addressee,
a beloved. A love story in book code.

This interpretation is further determined—overdetermined—by II. 7-8. If
permission to write and publish is replaced by prohibition—especially
ecclesiastical prohibition, maximal when hyperbolized in terms of God
himself—it is because the potential book's content is illicit, unorthodox,
heretical. Moreover, in literary traditions, and notably in that of the Romantic
nineteenth century, nothing invites interdiction more frequently than illicit,
heterodox, therefore proscribed and impossible love. The book, if written,
would be banned; expression of the love is forbidden—condemned by taboo, it
is a love that must remain unfulfilled, unspoken, unrevealed.

Let me restate, this time in Riffaterrean terms. The matrix of our poem is
something like: my love for you is forbidden, or, succinctly, forbidden love.
The model, or primary actualization of the matrix, is "story," expanded by
various metonyms which make it a functional synonym of book, qualified as
unwritten because unauthorized. Every sign in the text which, at mimesis
level, elaborates aspects of unauthorized story or book, points, at significance
level, to one, repeated message: forbidden love. Matrix, model and text are all

saying the same thing. All are variants of the same structure. From incipit to clausula, the poem is perceived as a single unit of significance, a text. Line 1 is totally clarified only by l. 8. Word one, "ended," is totally clarified only by the last word, "God."

Let me emphasize: discovery of the invariant matrix and its equivalence with the actualized model and other textual variants, is not, alone, what constitutes significance. "Forbidden Love"—big revelation! Significance includes as well, and especially, the very experience readers go through, the ludic praxis of language, the verbal detour through catachresis at mimesis level to semiotic propriety—a detour they will experience again, always somewhat differently, each time they re-read the poem. There is no hidden revelation at the center of a poem which, once discovered, is ours forever, a precious insight to be seized and guarded like some philosophic stone. Rather, significance is like a doughnut, and the matrix is the hole. At the center of the poem is an abstract nothing, a no-thing without which the poem could not exist. The little jingle which says "As you go through life make this your goal/Watch the doughnut, not the hole" turns out to be quite apropos. It is by watching the doughnut that we find the hole, and until we have found the hole, the thing we are watching is not properly a doughnut, not properly a whole.

Let me now present some additional concepts from Riffaterre's book; in a moment, we will look again at the Dickinson poem to make some precisions.

First, I want to underline briefly the crucial concept of overdetermination.[7] Overdetermination refers to multiple motivation of language: it is the intersection in a single sign of two or more associative chains, such that the sign has not only one reason for being actualized, but two or three, or five. To the normal, linguistic links between words (governed by grammar and lexical distribution) are added the additional links of stylistic and prosodic structures, as well as those connecting the matrix and its variants: thus signs in poems seem, despite their frequent obscurity, especially appropriate and necessary. It is overdetermination that makes literary discourse exemplary, monumental. It is overdetermination that compensates for catachresis. Because of overdetermination, the arbitrariness of language conventions seems to diminish as the text becomes more deviant and ungrammatical. Whence the ultimate literary paradox, observable especially in poetry: maximal catachresis entails maximal propriety.

Let us continue. If significance is what defines a poem, that significance is generated by two semiotic operations: sign production and text production.[8] **Sign production** refers to the transformation of mimetic signs into poetic signs (signs relevant to significance). **Text production** refers to the transformation from matrix to text. Sign production is governed by one rule: the rule of

hypogrammatic derivation. Text production is governed by two rules: the rule of **expansion** and the rule of **conversion.**

First, sign production, that is, the transformation of mimetic signs into poetic signs. **Rule:** "a word or phrase is poeticized when it refers to (and, if a phrase, patterns itself upon) a preexistent word group (p. 23). This preexistent word group is called a **hypogram.** Thus, once again,—and this is absolutely essential—all poetic signs, by saying something (mimesis level), say something else (significance level). This something else is discovered by way of the hypogram, to which the poetic sign alludes. These hypograms are either potential (that is, observable in language, through the reader's linguistic competence) or actual (i.e., observable in previous texts, through the reader's literary competence).

More specifically, there are three types of hypogram.

1) Hypograms formed by the semes and presuppositions of a single word, some of which will be actualized by the poetic sign.

2) Hypograms formed by a cliché (or a quotation, which is a signed cliché). These differ from the preceding in that they are already actualized in set forms in the reader's mind.

3) Hypograms formed by descriptive systems. A descriptive system is a network of words associated with one another around a kernel word in accordance with the sememe of that word or nucleus: each component of the system is a metonym of that nucleus. Example: **wife,** which elicits: husband, home, hearth, mother, children, warmth, nurturing, etc.

Let us return to the Dickinson poem to illustrate these new concepts. The most obvious hypogram governing the Dickinson text is that formed from the semes and presuppositions of "book," which saturate the poem, appearing in every single line from beginning to end. In this type of hypogram, the nuclear word itself may or may not be actualized—here it is not. Its actualized semes, however, make identification of it unavoidable: "title," "preface," "story," etc. All the more so, because of common formulations that associate these semes explicitly with "book," such as the portmanteau word "storybook." In this type of hypogram, "the sememe of the kernel word functions like an encyclopedia of representations related to the meaning of that word" (p. 26). Their actualization saturates the derivative verbal sequence and results in "emphasis, visualization, and the need for the reader to decode connotations as well as denotation" (p. 26). In our poem, it is as if the word "book" were logically dissected, first into its material, sequential parts: the title, the preface, the story itself; then into its social aspects: the writing, the printing, the reading. At each step along the way, with each newly actualized seme, additional indications are provided orienting the manner in which we are to interpret this particular actualization of book's semes and presuppositions.

This hypogram, like all hypograms, is not a creation of the writer: it pre-exists in language and/or literature and is retrievable by readers, through their linguistic or literary competence, once they are alerted by surface features observable in the text.

There is a second hypogram governing sign production in our poem, and this second hypogram, of the cliché variety, accounts for the selection of the first. I refer to the cliché: love story. So common is the collocation of these two words, in our time as well as Dickinson's, that it was able, a few years ago, to generate the very title of a best-selling book, *Love Story,* whose textual derivation—unlike that of our poem—fully realized the banal potential of the phrase and gave us a very old-fashioned tear-jerker about star-crossed love. Dickinson's use of the cliché as hypogram is quite different: in **her** text, "love story" generates, first, the matrix: love, and, second, the model "story." "Story," as principal metonym of "book," triggers in turn the other hypogram already described. Thus all the signs generated by the first hypogram centered on "book" are also variants of the text's matrix, "love," because of the influence of the second hypogram, "love story." Every sign in the poem becomes poeticized, that is, it points to significance, because of its preexistence in one or both of the hypograms. It is only by reference to how these signs function in specific pre-texts that we come to see how they are functioning, uniquely, in this text.

We need, finally, to look at Riffaterre's rules for **text production** and make some concluding comments on the poem. Text production and sign production are the two semiotic operations which generate significance in poems. Text production effects the transformation from matrix to text and is explained by two rules: the rules of expansion and conversion. Both expansion and conversion establish equivalences between a word and a sequence of words. Expansion achieves this by transforming one sign into several. Conversion, by transforming several signs into one "collective" sign.

First, **expansion.** Expansion is the principal generator of significance because, in order to perceive significance, you need to establish equivalences, and a constant can be spotted only where the text spreads out into successive variants of the initial given. **Rule of expansion:** "Expansion transforms the constitutents of the matrix sentence into more complex forms" (p. 48). Typically, this will involve repetition and increasingly complex syntactic structures. In the Dickinson poem, for example, ll. 2, 3, 4 all restate in more specific terms what is already stated in l. 1—they provide illustrations (2, 3) and a consequence (4): all four lines, of course, are expansions of the matrix: my love for you is forbidden. Further, the single participial forms of l. 1 become participle + adverb in l. 2, verb + modifying phrase in l. 3. The message of quatrain I, first stated in l. 1, and summarized more concretely in l. 4, is again restated, in the more complex contrary-to-fact conditionals of ll. 5-6, and again one last time in the two-line complex sentence of ll. 7-8. The

net result of this expansion of the matrix is to provide the variants whose equivalence, once recognized, permits us to construct the invariant matrix.

One frequent, far-reaching effect of expansion involves transformation from abstract to figurative forms. This is particularly striking in our poem, for the abstract, love, and more precisely, the non-expression of that love, is expanded in terms of a concrete, figurative book—elaborated in all its material metonyms of title, preface, story, print—all the while that the book's existence is being denied. The love exists, but not the expression of it; the **idea** of the love story, the book, exists, but not the book itself. Thus the love relationship that might have been is presented in terms of the book that might have been. An absence (no-love-story) is presented in terms of a presence (book), all the while the latter's components are systematically cancelled (no-book). Similar to ll. 5-6, which we saw to be pivotal for our decoding, the entire text functions much like a contrary-to-fact conditional sentence with its apodosis elided: if only I could have expressed my love for you, (this is how it would have been), but I couldn't (so it wasn't). The structure of the text is the icon of a structure of grammar.

The second rule of text production is that of **conversion:** "conversion transforms the constitutents of the matrix structure by modifying them all with the same factor" (p. 63). It creates a formal unity and is immediately apparent. The converted sequence refers back to an original hypogram, and conversion always transmutes the members of that hypogram from positive to negative or negative to positive.

In the Dickinson poem, conversion, of course, is the principle which modifies all the components of the book-hypogram expansion with negative markers, transmuting them from real to non-existent, book to no-book. From beginning to end, every single line contains a conversion marker. The series is not only cumulative but progressive as well. The first seven lines negate indirectly, by cancelling a positive: l.8 negates with the full force of direct, divine prohibition. All the signs of the text, by the shared markers of negative conversion, blend to form one "collective" sign of overwhelming non-existence, or non-realization.

Thus, our poem does actualize one act of communication (the present one, between speaker and addressee), which is about another act of communication (the absent one, the expression and fulfilment of love) which, because it was forbidden, could not be actualized.

We could go on, commenting on still other features of the poem: the reversed logical order of "begun" and "ended" in l. 1 as an icon of the matrix; the one glimpsed conjunction of lover and beloved in the word "our" of l. 7, but negated, even before it appears, by the preceding "not"; suppression of the word "love" from the text as a kind of second-level mimesis of the significance.

But after all is said and done, have we finally, once and for all, pinned our beautiful butterfly to the laboratory table?

Not really, because although reading is restrictive, it is also unstable, and interpretation is never total, final. Reading is restrictive for all the reasons we've been examining: unavoidable equivalences; saturation of the text by the features of its matrix; recognition of hypograms; in short, overdetermination.

But reading is also unstable: the ungrammaticalities in the text remain; they cannot be erased, corrected, or there would be no text. When the poem is re-read, the catachresis still looms as an obstacle, still tempts us to decode mimetically. The appearance of significance in full, total revelation is always chancy: it is here one minute and gone the next, in an endless semiotic circularity. This is why the aim of our analysis is not to establish **the** meaning of the poem, but rather the **structure** of meaning—the way significance is generated and produced in a reader's encounter with a text. This is also why poems are endlessly rereadable and fascinating: for the process, for the praxis, for the game.

I hope, in this brief analysis of the Dickinson poem, to have demonstrated the practical possibilities of Riffaterre's method—its precision and elegance. Important shortcomings in Riffaterre's work have been pointed out by others: his tendency to hypostasize the analytic entities he constructs; his exclusive emphasis of the formal, to the detriment of the historical, dimension, with the consequent evasion of the question of the subject as mediator between the two. But if he thus slights the psychological and the historical in his theoretical statements, he regularly transcends in practice his own strictures, and certainly nothing prevents others using his approach from doing so. That is the emphasis I'd like to maintain today: Riffaterre's superb practice. In the words of one reviewer of *Semiotics of Poetry:* "this book should be compulsory reading for anyone still attached to biographical or 'referential' commentaries."[9] I could not agree more.

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NOTES

This paper is a modified version of a talk delivered in November, 1979, at the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis under the auspices of the Minnesota Center for Advanced Studies in Language, Style and Literary Theory.

1 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1978). See also Michael Riffaterre, *Essais de stylistique structurale* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971) and *La Production du texte* (Paris: Seuil, 1979)

2 Wlad Godzich, "The Construction of Meaning," *New Literary History,* 9 (1978), p. 393.

3 On semiotics generally, see Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976), and on literary semiotics, Yuri Lotman, *Analysis of the Poetic Text* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979), and *La Structure du texte artistique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

4 In the presentation of Riffaterre's ideas, I rigorously paraphase his book, even incorporating much of his own phrasing. To have placed quotation marks around every borrowed expression or clause would have cluttered the text. As to the Dickinson analysis, that is entirely my own: I accept full responsibility for its shortcomings.

5 Literary competence means a reader's previous experience with the literature of her culture: she has read a certain number of poems, novels, plays; a certain number of authors from various periods; she has a certain sense of genres, schools, styles.

6 The concepts discussed thus far are detailed in Riffaterre's first chapter, entitled "The Poem's Significance."

7 On overdetermination, see especially pp. 21-25.

8 These concepts are detailed in Riffaterre's chapters two and three, respectively.

9 Marcel Muller, *Sub-Stance* 23-24, p. 216.

Marvin K. L. Ching

Your Choice: A Delightful Sorrow or a
Mourning Pleasure

When queried on a questionnaire, most people revealed they would choose a **delightful sorrow** over a **mourning pleasure**. Similarly, they would tend to prefer **kind cruelty** to **cruel kindness, humble pride** to **proud humility**, and **pure impiety** to **impious purity**. The reason is that when oxymora of the adjective-noun construction have an equal number of semantic markers, certain projection (combining) rules used by readers to overcome the sense of contradiction put a special emphasis upon the semantic import of the modifier.

Unlike denotative language, it seems that in the interpretation of the poetic language of oxymora, the modifier rather than the head is emphasized. In denotative language, the modifier is to be interpreted in view of the semantic markers of the noun. For example, the adjective **tall** conveys the notion of height, but the actual height can vary greatly depending upon the noun that is modified. The expressions **a tall man, a tall skyscraper,** and **a tall telephone pole** all have the concept of tallness, but the actual height or length is evaluated only in terms of the head noun. Therefore, the height of a tall man differs from the height of a tall skyscraper, and the height of these two objects from the length of a tall telephone pole. What tallness means in each case is determined by the meaning of the noun.

On the other hand, in the poetic language of oxymora, a reverse process of interpretation often takes place. The head noun is interpreted through the meaning of the modifier. In some cases semantic marker or markers of the modifier erase and replace partially or completely those in the head noun.[1] For example, an analysis of readers' responses to **soundless wailing** (from T. S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," in *Four Quartets*) reveals that the notion of "no sound" in the adjective **soundless** erases and replaces the concept of sound in the head noun **wailing**. What is retained in **wailing** are ideas of pain, sorrow, and emotion. The combined meaning of both **soundless** and **wailing** therefore results in readings like "unspoken sorrow or sadness," "silent despair," or "an

expression of grief without sound."[2] In other instances, however, where there is no loss of semantic markers in the amalgamation process of modifier and head, the modifier functions as the focus, the assertion, and the comment of the semantic interpretation of an oxymoron.

The transformational grammatical explanation of the underlying or deep structure of adjectives in the standard theory of Chomsky furnishes some explanation for this phenomenon. In the underlying structure, the head noun is repeated. For example, the oxymoron **delightful sorrow** in the deep structure contains the noun phrase **the sorrow,** but also the embedded sentence "The sorrow is delightful" branching from the noun phrase **the sorrow.** (See Figure 1.) Because the noun **sorrow** is repeated, the noun is the given or assumed idea, the shared or common knowledge. It thus becomes the topic or, in Prague linguistic school terminology, the theme of the sentence. It is the adjective in the verb phrase **is delightful** that gives the new information and functions as the comment or assertion made of the topic in the underlying structure. In the Prague school of terminology for comment, it becomes the **rheme,** whose literal meaning is "What is said," which by way of the Latin **verbum** is the source of the term **verb.**[3] The theme is the topic of the utterance, the point of departure; the rheme is the information which the speaker wishes to communicate.
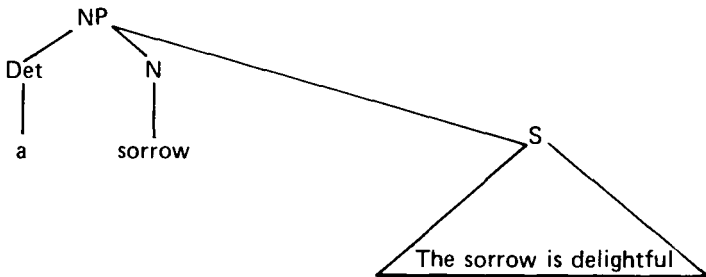
Figure 1. Deep Structure for **delightful sorrow.**

Halliday calls the topic "the peg" and the comment or rheme "the message"; thus the topic's function is to be "the peg on which the message is hung."[4] Because the adjective serves as comment to the noun in the underlying structure of adjective-noun oxymora, the emphasis of meaning is on seeing the head noun in terms of the meaning of the modifier and has far-reaching consequences in the semantic interpretation of oxymora.

This emphasis of information-focus on the comment is preserved even in interpretations of topic and comment, or theme and rheme, when they are not treated as complementary or mutually exclusive ideas. Firbas, for example, in his discussion of "communicative dynamism," or **CD,** as the

degree to which an expression advances or fails to advance the process of communication, defines the theme as the expression with the lowest degree of CD and the rheme as carrier of the highest degree of CD.[5]

This tendency of the modifier to be a kind of filtering lens through which the head noun is viewed is fundamental in the semantic processing of poetic contradictions. It differs from the semantic interpretation of phrases like **long short story, short novel, conservative liberal,** and **liberal conservative.** There is not the striking sense of contradiction as in a true oxymoron because the modifiers in these expressions work like a regular adjective in denotative language where the meaning of the adjective is relative to the meaning of the noun. **A long short story,** for example, is still a short story because the word **long** is given a semantic interpretation within the range of the length of a short story; the evaluation of length by the modifier stays within the confines of the concept of a short story. Similarly, **a short novel** is short for the length of novels, but is not to be interpreted as shorter than a novel. Because the modifier is interpreted within the range of the meaning of the head noun, there is no basic sense of contradiction. These interpretations follow the projection rule for adjectives of denotative language.

Of course, in the real world a short novel and a long short story may actually overlap in length, but semantically speaking, in terms of the projection rules, we tend to assign automatically a non-contradictory meaning to these phrases. Evidence of such interpretation appears in readers' responses to the phrases **conservative liberal** and **liberal conservative** to this item on the questionnaire:

> Is there a difference in meaning when a politician is called a **liberal conservative** and when he is called a **conservative liberal?** Explain.

Though readers state that they are aware that in real life conservative liberals and liberal conservatives may be very similar and hold the same views, readers tend to see the expressions as non-contradictory because the modifier's sense remains within the meaning of the noun. In other words, a **conservative liberal** is basically a liberal, and a **liberal conservative** is basically a conservative. Because the meaning of the modifier is seen through the perspective of the noun, responses to the questionnaire show that readers tend to think of these two political labels—**conservative liberal** and **liberal conservative**—as indicating two different distinct positions that do not overlap.

The following are typical of readers' answers to the question cited above:

> Yes, there is a difference. In each case the latter word designates the class to which he belongs, and the former compares him to the other members of that class. A **conservative liberal** is conservative as liberals go, but he is not a conservative.

The first [**conservative liberal**] suggests one of essential liberal persuasion, but with a cautious approach to issues. The second [**liberal conservative**] would be a man of conservative persuasion but with an eagerness to explore new issues.

The combinatorial rules of denotative language account for these responses where the contradiction is not even perceived because the modifier is automatically restricted to the range of meaning a noun conveys.

Instead of the adjective acting as a filter through which the head noun is interpreted in the amalgamation rules of adjective and noun in poetic language, there is a kind of Boolean union in denotative language.[6] For example, the phrase **a red ball** contains both the concepts of ball and redness. The ideas are added or combined, but one is not made more prominent than the other. In addition, as I have discussed earlier, the concept of an adjective like **tall** in a **tall man**, a **tall skyscraper**, and a **tall telephone pole** is interpreted through the meaning of the noun.

In contrast, a number of readers' responses to **mourning pleasure** and **delightful sorrow** on the questionnaire illustrate the modifier's functioning as the comment on the noun.

Readers were asked the following question:

Is there a difference in meaning between a **mourning pleasure** and a **delightful sorrow**? Explain.

Some responses strongly indicate the simultaneous presence of contradictory feelings, but the modifier emphasizes its role as comment, singling out one of the mixed emotions for special attention. Consider the following response:

Pleasure and sorrow differ. Sad or **mourning pleasure** is grief in joy; **delightful sorrow** is joy in grief.

For each oxymoron, the emotions of joy and grief are inextricably interwoven. But for **mourning pleasure,** what seems to be highlighted or made the comment is grief: there is **grief in joy**; for **delightful sorrow,** joy is the comment or assertion: there is **joy in grief**. Similarly, the following responses assume both contradictory ideas, but treat the idea of the adjective as a comment or assertion about the noun:

Mourning pleasure is sad although elements of pleasure are sensed.

Delightful sorrow is happy although there may be a reason for not being happy.

delightful sorrow: The sorrow is lightened by some delight.

mourning pleasure: The pleasure is colored by sadness.

A certain reader mistakenly substituted **mournful** for the word **mourning** in the oxymoron **mourning pleasure**. However, her response to the pair of oxymora on the questionnaire also reveals the modifier as a kind of comment. In one paragraph she interprets the modifier as a result of the noun but states that there possibly may not be any difference in degree in the mixture of happiness and unhappiness between the phrases **mournful pleasure** and **delightful sorrow**. The difference lies in what she calls **outlook, attitude, expectation,** or **psychological** difference. In the terminology that has been used earlier, we may interpret this difference as a **comment** upon the **topic.** The reader states:

> In both instances described by the terms **mournful pleasure** and **delightful sorrow** there is a mixture of happiness and unhappiness. The degree (or proportion) of happiness/unhappiness in a **mournful pleasure** would differ with each individual case; hence, proportion of feeling is relative. Likewise for individual cases of **delightful sorrow.** There could conceivably be an instance of **mournful pleasure** in which the proportions of happiness/unhappiness are identical to **delightful sorrow;** there would still be a difference, however, in outlook, attitude, expectation. This psychological difference always exists in situations described by the different terms; there may or may not be an emotive difference.

Special emphasis may also be placed upon the modifier because the modifier is interpreted by readers as an end point in time or as the result or effect of the head noun. The modifier, the result, may either be the effect which the noun, the headword, produces, or it may be a change of condition from the idea expressed in the head, a change which is not linked by causation to the head.

Readers' responses cited below to the pair discussed above, but also to **proud humility** and **cruel kindness** and **kind cruelty,** indicate an interpretation of an oxymoron through differentiation of time or a cause and effect relationship. For example, although the first response below mistakenly uses the word **mournful** for **mourning,** the operating principle in interpretation is to designate the time of the modifier as occurring later in time:

> A **mournful pleasure** is an experience normally associated with pleasure and happiness but is either approached with a negative or sorrowful attitude or unexpectedly results in sorrow. A **delightful sorrow** is an experience that would, and may, bring grief and unhappiness, but which is instead associated with or results in pleasure.

The first, **mourning pleasure,** indicates a feeling of pleasure at the

moment, but the person knows that the activity which gives him pleasure now will lead to some unhappy consequences later.

Another evidence of time differentiation is shown in this reader's interpretation of **proud humility**:

Proud humility and **humble pride** are different. The first has made his virtue into a vice. . . .

Long-term results or effects are also seen in interpretations to the following query:

Which would you prefer: a **cruel kindness** or a **kind cruelty**? Or do the two terms mean exactly the same to you? Illustrate your explication of the two terms by drawing upon situations in life.

There is no right or wrong answer. Please follow your own intuition about the two terms.

A student responds:

The terms are by no means synonymous in my mind. A **cruel kindness** represents a tenderheartedness and delicacy of feeling that, through a reluctance to cause **immediate** pain, causes an ultimately more destructive and lasting pain. An example of this is Master Frankford in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness.* Upon finding his wife and friend betraying him, he, rather than killing her or throwing her to the waves (figuratively speaking), as was his prerogative as a cuckolded husband, spared her life, maintaining her in her accustomed comfort in a house apart. Through this deed of kindness, he caused her infinitely more pain and shame than had he wrought his revenge at once.

However, depending upon one's point of view, this may also be an example of **kind cruelty**. **Kind cruelty** is the sparing of a greater pain through the infliction of a lesser one. Frankford caused his wife greater misery by sparing her than she would have suffered had he punished her at once. However, had he punished her immediately, she would have felt purged of her guilt and complacently and smugly gone to burn in hell-fire. However, by inflicting the cruelty on her he did, he caused her to truly repent of her sins and thereby escape sin, guilt, and divine retribution.

That the placement of the contradictory terms in adjective-noun oxymora warrants a differentiation in semantic interpretation can be seen from the context from which I found **mourning pleasure** and **delightful sorrow**:

And with that she pretily smiled, which, mingled with her teares, one
could not tell whether it were a mourning pleasure, or a delightful
sorrow. . . .[7]

(Sidney, p. 490)

The conjunctive words **whether . . . or** indicate a disjunction, a choice
between two emotional states. Therefore, **mourning pleasure** and **delightful
sorrow** are not to be interpreted as synonymous.

Similarly, the oxymora **pure impiety** and **impious purity,** taken from
Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing,* IV.i.101-105, does support a
differentiation between the meaning of the two expressions.[8] Moreover, one
of the pair should be interpreted as conveying fundamentally wickedness; the
other, piety. The context reads:

> *Claudio.* O Hero, what a Hero hadst thou been,
>   If half thy outward graces had been plac'd
>   About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!
>   But fare thee well, most foul, most fair!
>   Farewell,
>   Thou pure impiety and impious purity!

Her **outward graces** and the epithet **most fair** tell in what way her purity is to
be conceived: her **thoughts and counsels of . . . heart,** and the vocative **most
foul** inform us that her purity is in reality only outward; she is inwardly,
and thus fundamentally, wicked, according to Claudio. The phrase **pure
impiety** relates to the appearance she gives—that of purity; the **impious purity,**
to her motivation and character—her wickedness.

In certain instances, however, some readers do not filter the meaning of the
noun through the modifier. The reversal of interpretation, where the modifier
is seen through the perspective of the noun, occurs in these situations: 1)
when the adjective is in the postposed rather than the preposed position, 2)
when the modifier is not a true adjective, and, naturally, 3) when the context
indicates a different interpretation. The unusual position of noun adjective in
fiend angelical (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet,* III.ii.75), for example, may
have caused some of the readers to interpret the epithet as stressing the
fiendish aspect, an interpretation contrary to the more common interpretation
by respondents to the questionnaire. In **mourning pleasure, mourning** is not
considered a true adjective in transformational grammar: an adjective that
can be compared by placing **more** or **most** or **very** before it. Some readers'
interpretations, for instance, reveal that the modifier **mourning** is viewed more
as a kind of verbal noun, a gerund. For example, a reader's paraphrase
indicated that **mourning** is used as the object of the preposition **in**

. . . **Mourning pleasure** would seem to refer to some gratification
received in mourning as the result of the death of someone

—an interpretation that is covered by another way of processing oxymora which can be explained by case grammar.[9]

But the mode of processing oxymora by making the modifier the comment of the noun is perhaps indicated by the way oxymora should be pronounced: unlike regular noun phrases, a heavy stress is placed on the adjective in comparison to that placed on the noun. This signals the listener to the inherent contradiction of terms and that the modifier conveys the fundamental message of the two words. Thus, **IMPIOUS purity,** with the stress on the adjective, alerts the reader to the modifier as the focus or the assertion of the two words. If, as Bolinger points out, pronunciation is stressed and lengthened for the more unusual senses of words,[10] certainly oxymora with their unconventional semantic uses of words deserve a different kind of stress to make the listener aware of the contradiction and the resolution of the contradiction through making the modifier the focus, the comment of the expression. Later, as an oxymoron is accepted and becomes part of conventional knowledge or wisdom and is no longer strange, as in **a living death,** the original stressing of the adjective, **a LIVING death,** may be changed so that it follows the usual pattern of stress on the noun: **a living DEATH.**

This discussion of treating the modifier as the rheme or the comment of a verb phrase in the deep structure is reinforced if we consider one of Samuel Levin's six modes of construing metaphor.[11] In the first of the six construal rules, the features of the verb are added to those of the subject noun phrase and determine the amalgamated reading of the subject and the verb phrase. "... The transferred marker from the noun to the verb is determinative in the reading," he says of "Sincerity wept" and "The tiger evaporated." "The result is not a construal of sincerity as an abstraction of something human, but as a humanization of something abstract, in short, personification. . . . We construe **tiger** as a liquescent animal, not as an animated liquid."[12] His construal rules, however, exclude oxymora. But as we have seen, the poetic language of this trope, oxymora, may be interpreted in the same fashion.

The projection rules of poetic language follow different laws so that what is nonsensical meaning becomes meaningful nonsense.

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NOTES

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William L. Benzon

Computational Linguistics and Discourse Analysis

Loosely speaking computational linguistics is any use of the computer in connection with the study of natural languages. But there is a superficial use of the computer and a profound use. The superficial use deals only with the surface of language and produces concordances, word counts, and statistical analyses. The profound use treats the computer as a device for simulating theories about the production and comprehension of discourse. This paper is concerned only with the profound use (for a review of the field, see Benzon and Hays 1976).

I have only one point to make: the profound analysis of discourse must employ a theory of discourse comprehension and production with which to conduct the analysis. There is no inductive analytical procedure which one can apply to texts and somehow magically "come up with" a theory of discourse. Rather, one must first "come up with" a theory of discourse, no matter how crude the theory might be (and our present theories are very crude), and then see how well it performs with a body of texts. To evaluate the model's performance one can simulate the model on a computer and one can use it as a basis for psycholinguistic experimentation (Norman et al. 1975, Kintsch 1974, Thorndyke 1977). One then creates a better model and it must, in turn, be evaluated.

The models currently employed in computational linguistics have two characteristics which are important:

1) They start with a semantic basis. Discourse is produced by operation on a semantic base and it is comprehended by assimilation into that semantic base.

2) Time is intrinsic to the model. Discourse comprehension and production are goal-directed, making constant use of projections and anticipations of upcoming elements in the speech stream.

To analyze a body of texts one must create a model of the semantic base underlying the texts and of the operations on that base which generate discourse. The analysis consists in the application of the model to the body of texts.

Within this paradigm a theory of discourse is really a theory of the inner structure and processes of the computational model. One is concerned, not with texts per se, but with the processes by which people create and understand texts. The model which I describe here has been developed by David G. Hays and his students at SUNY Buffalo.

COGNITIVE NETWORKS

The basic model is an associative cognitive network. Imagine a spider's web. The junctions between threads are called **nodes** while the threads are **arcs** or **links.** Each node is a concept while the arcs specify the relationships which exist between the concepts at either ends of the arcs. Discourse is produced by generating a path (or paths) through the network (imagine planning a trip using a road map) and it is comprehended by assimilating a particular path into the network.

Both semantics and syntax are embedded within a network structure. (In this model pragmatics is essentially higher-order semantics; see Bloom and Hays, in preparation.) The syntactic network operates on the semantic network. That is, processes in the semantic network are controlled by the syntactic network.

.Semantics is relational and, in a sense, spatial. The meaning of a given node is specified by the place which it occupies in the entire network. That place is given by the arcs which impinge on the node. Syntax is temporal, placing one item after another in the speech stream. The job of the syntactic network is to mediate between the spatial relationality of the semantic network and the linear unfolding of the speech chain in which only one term of a complex relational nexus can be given at a time.

THE SYSTEMIC NETWORK

The basic inventory of concepts of the system is given in the **systemic network**, which is organized into paradigmatic, syntagmatic, and componential structure.

There are two types of paradigms: substantive and functional. Items are organized into substantive paradigms according to their sensory attributes. One such paradigm has **plant** at its root. Tree, grass, herb, vine, and bush are all varieties of plant; oak, pine, maple, sycamore, palm, ginko, etc. are, in turn,

varieties of tree. (Such paradigms have been examined on a cross-cultural basis; see Berlin, Breedlove and Raven, 1973.)

Functional paradigms organize items according to their use. Foods are those plants and animals which can be eaten. And foods can be classified according to their methods of preparation, the ways in which they are eaten, or their place in the menu.

Syntagmatic structure gives the relationship between properties, entities, events, and plans. **Redness, roundness, smoothness** are properties which participate in the entity **apple.** When it falls from the tree, the apple is participating in the event **fall.** And when it is thrown at Johnny's head, the moving apple is participating in a plan, **hit Johnny on the head.**

Componential structure relates parts to wholes. A tree consists of trunk, roots, branches, and foliage. The typical bird has a head, a neck, a body, two wings, two legs, and a tail. The act of hitting a baseball includes watching the ball, swinging the bat to the ball, the follow-through, and watching the ball sail over the fence.

The relationship between any two concepts in the systemic network can be established through tracing the path between the two nodes. Imagine the network as a fisherman's net. The cords are the arcs and the knots are the concepts. Grab the two nodes in question and pull tight; you have found the shortest path between the nodes. The path between **tree** and **applesauce** would consist of three links: 1) a paradigmatic link between **tree** and **apple tree,** 2) a component link between **apple tree** and **apple,** and 3) a syntagmatic link between **apple** and **mash** (the process by which applesauce is created). A paradigmatic link in a functional paradigm would link **applesauce** to **food.** All of these links (and some others) would be traversed in producing or comprehending the sentence: **Applesauce is a food created by mashing the fruit of the apple tree.**

EPISODIC STRUCTURE

Events happen in particular places at particular times. For this we have episodic structure. It is all well and good to talk of apple mashing, but what of that particularly fine apple mashing the Waltons had to celebrate the publication of John Boy's first short story? That happened at a particular time and in a particular place, and so that record is kept in the episodic store. The episodic store is thus the system's historical archive.

Typical episodic structures form the basis of frames (Minsky 1975) or scripts and plans (Schank and Abelson 1977). The creation of good applesauce is actually a moderately complicated affair, involving the coordination of events in several different places at several different times. First one must get

the apples (from the orchard or from the grocer); that happens in one place. Then the apples must be moved to another place where they are washed. They are then moved (but perhaps not so far as the first time) to a place where they are peeled (an optional step) and cored (not so optional). After this they are simmered (a slightly different place) and then mashed (yet another place). And that, roughly, is how you make applesauce. It is too complicated to be handled by basic systemic structure. Rather, it is a spatio-temporal organization of systemic structures.

The same episodic frame which is used to perform some activity can also be used to produce and comprehend discourse about that activity. I use my applesauce-making frame to create my little story about the applesaucing of John Boy and you use your applesauce-making frame to comprehend my story. Even as John Boy is in the orchard picking the apples, you are using the frame to anticipate the next step in the story, and then the step after that. You match my story against your internalized applesauce-making frame. But when Grandpa empties a quart of vodka into the suacepan, your attention is aroused—that certainly is not in the applesauce-frame. And so you must now embed your consequences-of-drink frame in the applesauce frame. This causes you to anticipate that, at some point in the story, John Boy is going to get drunk and do something he might regret.

Well, not quite. John Boy **does** get roaring drunk. And he reveals that he had plagiarized the story from a friend of his. He's been feeling guilty for weeks, but now that he's told the truth he feels better and he's going to tell his friend what he did and make sure that the publisher lists the name of the real author. He asks all to forgive him for what he's done.

Thus, "The Apple-Sousing of John Boy" is a story with a moral: only in sincere repentance do the guilty find relief. This story involves abstract concepts: guilt, repentance, justice. The agent of injustice feels guilt and can find relief only in repentance.

To understand this we have to consider the next level of the system.

THE GNOMONIC SYSTEM

The gnomonic system defines abstract concepts over episodes. The story of John Boy is a particular example of **repentance**. There are many other such stories. Within this particular system all abstract concepts are defined over sets of episodes containing exemplary stories (Benzon 1976, 1978; Hays 1973, 1976; Phillips 1975, in press; White 1975). It is particularly important to note that stories which themselves define a certain abstract concept can contain abstract concepts. Thus one can talk of a first rank abstraction as one defined over stories containing no abstract concepts. A second rank abstraction is defined over stories which contain at least one first rank abstraction. By continuing this process, which is **recursive**, it is possible to build up concepts

of indefinitely high abstractive rank. There is some reason to believe that cultural evolution proceeds in just this way (Benzon 1978).

Let us consider another example.

3) Mary went into the woods and saw some pretty mushrooms. She picked them and returned home where she ate them. Shortly thereafter she became violently ill. Finally, she died.

4) Billy was playing in the yard. A big hairy spider came up and bit him. Not too long afterward he became violently ill and he was unconscious for three days before he finally revived.

Both of these stories involve **poison.** But we have two senses of poison. The physical substance, the mushroom, the spider's venom, is poison by functional definition. Just as something is food by virtue of its capacity to be eaten, so something is a poison by virtue of its capacity to fill a certain role in stories such as 3) and 4) above.

But we also have an abstract concept of poison which emerges only through consideration of the whole pattern. Abstractly considered,

5) Poison is an evil spirit which causes a person's soul to leave his body, temporarily or permanently.

Abstract poison is an ineffable substance which exists in certain physical substances (namely, those functionally defined as poisons) which causes them to have certain effects. Statement 5) is a **rationalization** of abstract poison: it is an attempt to explain how poisons (functionally defined) have their effect. Other elements of that rationalization must also be abstractions (**soul** and **evil spirit** (poison is just a variety of evil spirit)).

Thus, associated with every abstract concept we have the set of exemplary episodes which illustrate the concept and which provide the primary definitional basis for the concept, and the rationalization, which attempts to explicate the concept and which is, as such, the secondary definitional basis of the concept. Notice that this account is consonant with Thomas Kuhn's notion of a paradigm (1970). The primary definitional basis of a Kuhnian paradigm consists of exemplary experiments and problems. The explicit rules of science are secondary to those examples. Those explicit rules are, in my terminology, rationalizations.

DISCOURSE COHERENCE

According to Brian Phillips (1975, in press) discourse coherence must be considered on two levels, the episodic and the gnomonic. At the episodic level

temporal, causal, and spatial relationships must form a coherent pattern. One can't have John Boy picking apples in Twentieth Century Europe and mashing them in Nineteenth Century Africa—at least not in the humble sort of story I described. At the gnomonic level a discourse must have a theme, that is, it must be an instance of some abstract concept. A discourse can be coherent at the episodic level without having any significant gnomonic structure—a straight historical chronicle (and I do mean very straight) would be such a discourse. And gnomonic patterning may absorb apparent anomalies at the episodic level—a rather staid science fiction story can use time travel to have John Boy mash the apples even before he's been born and a writer of contemporary metafiction might use a similar anomaly for a different effect.

A discourse which engenders episodic and/or gnomonic expectations which are not then fulfilled is incoherent. However, it is rarely the case that all the information needed to understand a discourse is present explicitly in the text. Much must be inferred. Consequently, it is possible that a discourse which is coherent for one person is incoherent for another. If one doesn't have the knowledge necessary to make the proper inferences on the basis of the information presented in a discourse, then the discourse will appear to be incoherent without in fact being so. Coherence is a property of the relationship between a given discourse and the semantic base **into which that discourse is being assimilated.**

This is a fairly relativistic notion of coherence, but it isn't quite equivalent to asserting that any discourse is coherent to someone. Consider the fairly frequent situation where someone will make some notes, write a few paragraphs or so, and then come back to that discourse a few hours, days, weeks, etc. later and find the discourse completely unintelligible. Here is a case of a discourse being incoherent in relationship to the semantic base from which it was produced. For that matter, much of the difficulty of writing coherent prose is precisely in the process of making discourse coherent to the author (i.e. to the semantic base from which the discourse is generated). Thus we are not left with the uninteresting notion that any discourse is coherent to someone. Some discourses are so ill-formed that they make sense to no one, not even their creators.

If that defines a lower limit to discourse coherence, then perhaps we might consider what an upper limit might be like. It is no secret that literary critics have widely divergent views on the meaning and significance of literary texts. Norman Holland explains this by the concept of identity theme (Holland 1975). Different people have different identity themes (i.e. personalities) and so read texts differently; each reads according to his own identity theme. Presumably differences in identity theme could be translated into differences in semantic bases, so I have no quarrel with Holland. But I want to make a different suggestion.

Most of the texts studied by professional students of literature were

written by people whose mental and creative powers are probably greater than those of their professional students. Thus what was coherent to the artist might be incoherent to the critic whose powers vis-à-vis the text are like those of the blind men vis-à-vis the elephant. This situation would also lead to critical chaos. We accept this sort of principle when we assign grade levels to texts intended for school children. Why not apply it to ourselves? Perhaps we are 21st graders reading 25th grade texts.

The upper limits to discourse coherence are thus set by the most powerful creative minds. Between the upper and the lower limits we have a cultural community, a group of individuals whose various discourses are mutually coherent in varying degrees. A discourse which falls below the lower limit is coherent to no one. But the upper limit defines the degree to which apparently conflicting discourses can become mutually coherent through higher level patterning.

CONCLUSION

It is probably the case that, for the computational linguist, discourse analysis requires nothing less than a full-blown computational theory of the human mind. That is a tall order. And we are not close to filling it. Indeed, if the human mind does in fact possess the recursive abstraction power this model attributes to it, then the mind will always outstrip our efforts to model it (for it will be constructing the model). But there is much to be learned in attempting to create a computational theory of the human mind. And the tools with which to create that theory are available to those who would use them. The field of computational linguistics is immature and rich in promise.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

How to Be Persuasive in Literary Theory:
The Case of Wolfgang Iser

Wolfgang Iser's latest book, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), is a persuasive book indeed. I have little doubt that it will be welcomed by American literary critics who are attempting to incorporate "the reader" into a critical tradition long preoccupied with the autonomous text. For most literary theorists, the question is no longer **whether** the reader's interaction with the text should be discussed but **how**. Iser's new book, a translation of his 1976 *Der Akt des Lesens,* will find a comfortable place within these contemporary debates over readers reading. But why should this reader-centered "book of Germanic phenomenology" be so easily adaptable to the American critical tradition, a tradition long dominated by the objectivist theorizing of New Critical formalism? In other words, **why** is *The Act of Reading* a persuasive book?

Of course, my opening remarks already suggest one answer to this question: *The Act of Reading* appears in the United States at a time when many American theorists are aggressively promoting the reader's role in creating the literary work and still others are emphasizing the effects of the text on its real and ideal audiences. Reader-oriented critics like Louise Rosenblatt, Stanley Fish, Stephen Booth, Norman Holland, and David Bleich place the interaction of reader and text at the center of their otherwise very different literary theories. Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics,* a most useful introduction to structuralism, transforms this continental import into an account of readers' "literary competence," which consists of reading conventions for naturalizing literary texts. Even American versions of deconstruction include some mention of readers; in describing his Nietzschean premises, J. Hillis Miller writes: "The reading of a work involves an active intervention on the part of the reader. Each reader takes possession of the work for one reason or another and imposes on it a certain pattern of meaning." This recent concern for readers within American criticism is paralleled by the return of rhetoric to literature departments. Whether that rhetoric is composition theory or the "New Rhetoric" of Perelman, Burke, Weaver, and Richards, the discipline of literary

studies discovers in its return a revitalized interest in the **effect** (persuasive and otherwise) that texts have upon their reading audiences. Influencing, and influenced by, this resurrection of rhetoric, reader-oriented theory attempts to find new ways for describing how literature affects its readers during and after the reading process.

Iser's new book, a theoretical companion to his *The Implied Reader* (1974), offers contemporary American criticism a detailed model of aesthetic response by describing the reading process and the effects of that process. This account of reading begins with a functionalist model of the literary text, which focuses on two interrelated areas, the intersection between text and social reality and the interaction between text and reader. Iser does not take a strictly mimetic position in discussing the relation between the literary text and reality: for him, literature does more than simply reflect or represent society; it responds to its deficiencies. "In general, literary texts constitute a reaction to contemporary situations, bringing attention to problems that are conditioned though not resolved by contemporary norms." One of literature's basic functions is "to reveal and perhaps even balance the deficiencies resulting from prevailing [thought] systems." For example, the eighteenth-century novel and drama were preoccupied with questions of morality; this preoccupation "balanced out the deficiencies of the dominant thought system of the time," Lockean empiricism, which called into question the traditional assumptions guiding human conduct without providing new ethical premises to replace them. In effect, "literature supplies those possibilities which have been excluded by the prevalent system." Literature accomplishes this, however, not by formulating these possibilities in the text but by causing the **reader** to formulate them for himself.

Here we move from the intersection of text and reality to the interaction of reader and text. Literature entangles the reader "in the situation to which the text is a reaction." The author extracts social and historical norms (and references to past literature) from their original contexts and places them together to form the "repertoire of the text." In a novel, these "depragmatized" norms are distributed among various textual "perspectives" — the narrator, the characters, the plot, and the fictitious reader — and the system of perspectives they form outlines the author's view without stating it and provides the potential structure for the reader to actualize. The connections among the various perspectives emerge during the reading process, "in the course of which the reader's role is to occupy shifting vantage points that are geared to a prestructured activity and to fit the diverse perspectives into a gradually evolving pattern" that forms the "configurative meaning" of the text. This convergence of the textual perspectives functions as the standpoint from which the reader formulates the text's reaction to its social and historical environment. This reaction is not explicit in the text itself; rather, during the reading process the text becomes a "set of instructions" for the reader's production of the text's reaction, the author's view, the meaning of the literary work. Thus, by presenting familiar norms in unfamiliar arrangements, the

literary text points up the deficiencies of those norms and manipulates the reader into formulating a reaction to these deficiencies. Iser gives Fielding's *Tom Jones* as an example of a detail of this process: Fielding presents Allworthy as a representative of perfect Christian benevolence, but then he juxtaposes the Allworthy perspective to Blifil, whom the reader comes to see as the embodiment of hypocritical piety. But why does Allworthy trust Blifil? The reader soon draws the conclusion that Allworthy is naive and impractical in that his "perfection is simply incapable of conceiving a mere pretence of ideality." Fielding has forced the reader to this conclusion though he has not stated it in the text itself. The reader combines the various perspectives — Allworthy, Blifil, and the plot — into a "consistent gestalt" which resolves the tensions that resulted from the juxtaposition of the perspectives. But, again, "this gestalt is not explicit in the text—it emerges from a projection of the reader, which is guided in so far as it arises out of the identification of the connections between the signs."

Iser's model of the reading process is much more complex than what I have presented so far. I will return later to at least one more aspect of it. But for now I will restrict myself to the short- and long-term effects of reading that Iser describes. For Iser, reading is not a one-way process in which the passive reader merely internalizes the structures in the text; rather, it is a "dynamic interaction" in which the active reader is constantly responding to the meanings he produces in this interaction. Consistency-building and image-making are continual reading activities guided by the text; the configurative meaning must be assembled by the reader, who is then, in turn, affected by what he has assembled. The result of this literary effect involves a restructuring of the reader's experience, a phenomenon which occurs most forcibly in the reading of those texts that incorporate the norms that the reader already holds. Here the deficiencies that the text forces the reader to locate and resolve are deficiencies in the reader's own structuring of experience. A reader open to the text and its effects will have to reformulate his system of norms in order to accommodate the meaning the text has led him to assemble. Thus, the act of reading literature provides "an experience which entails the reader constituting himself by constituting a reality hitherto unfamiliar to himself." It is in this way that literature significantly changes its readers.

Like others before him, Iser makes a distinction between **meaning** and **significance.** "Meaning is the referential totality which is implied by the aspects contained in the text and which must be assembled in the course of reading. Significance is the reader's absorption of the meaning into his own existence." Iser's account provides for differing concretizations (meanings) of the same text and for different applications (significances) of the meanings assembled. But his phenomenology of reading is concerned primarily with describing the **general structure** of concretization and not the **specific, histori-cal actualizations** of that structure. Thus, he distinguishes his theory of aesthe-tic response from the theory of reception (which is an account dealing with "existing readers, whose reactions testify to certain historically conditioned

experiences of literature"). Similarly, Iser is more interested in the structure
of **potential** applications rather than the **actual** ways literary meanings have
been applied in the experiences of historical readers or groups of readers.
Because of these emphases in *The Act of Reading,* there are, by design, few
examples of conflicting interpretations of the same text and few specific
examples of significant changes produced in actual readers by literature. I find
this exclusion disappointing because by constantly refusing to discuss conflict-
ing responses and actual examples of change, Iser talks about potential, pre-
structured effects on readers in a way that at times closely resembles very
traditional discussions of texts in isolation. As we will see in a moment, this
disguised talk of texts becomes another aspect of Iser's persuasiveness within
American critical discourse.

Nevertheless, Iser's account of the reading process and literary effects does
offer much of real value to contemporary critical theory and its emerging
concern with the reader's response to literature. This is one reason *The Act of
Reading* will be welcomed by American critics and theorists. However, I will
make a stronger claim: among the theoretical models of reading now being
promoted in this country, Iser's has the best chance of persuading the most
people to adopt its shape and contents. The reason I make such a prediction
has less to do with the present interest in readers and more to do with the
critical tradition in which this interest is currently manifested. Put simply,
Iser's book will persuade not only because of what it says about readers but
perhaps even more decisively because of what it does (and doesn't) say about
texts.

The Act of Reading and the American critical tradition share some basic
assumptions about literary texts, and these common assumptions constitute
the main source of Iser's persuasive power within American critical discourse.
However, these shared premises are often covered over by Iser's rhetoric of
reading and his critique of certain influential forces in recent American
theory. For example, Iser's direct attack on Anglo-American New Criticism is
especially revealing for what it suggests about his hidden agreements with
aspects of the hegemonic position he is attacking.

Iser places his critique of New Criticism in the context of a more general
attack on the "classical norm of interpretation," which he characterizes as an
outdated mode of referential analysis searching for an extractable meaning in
the text (instead of a meaning experienced by the reader). This extractable
meaning is at the service of a mimetic truth and manifests itself in the text as
a harmonized totality of balance, order, and completeness. Iser writes that
New Criticism marked "a turning-point in literary interpretation" to the
extent that it rejected "the vital elements of the classical norm, namely, that
the work is an object containing the hidden meaning of a prevailing truth." In
place of the search for the hidden message and representational meaning, New
Criticism was concerned with "the elements of the work and their inter-
action," with the **functions** operating within the text. But Iser points out that

despite this important revision in the critical tradition, New Criticism still preserved the classical norm of harmony, which took on "a value of its own, whereas in the past it was subservient to the appearance of truth." This harmonizing of textual elements with its discovery and eventual removal of ambiguities was "the unacknowledged debt of New Criticism to the classical norm of interpretation," and it was here that New Criticism set and reached its limits. New Critics attempted to define the functions of the literary text through the same interpretive norm — harmony — used to uncover representational meaning. But "a function is not a meaning — it brings about an effect, and this effect cannot be measured by the same criteria as are used in evaluating the appearance of truth." Iser's functionalist model of the text and his phenomenology of reading attempt to move beyond New Critical limitations. However, his theory's relationship to New Criticism is similar to the complicitous relation he describes between New Criticism and the classical norm of interpretation: New Critics rejected the classical norm while preserving its value of harmony; Iser rejects New Criticism while preserving its assumption of a prior and independent text. As I will show, Iser's continued valorization of the text affects his theory just as crucially as the preservation of harmony limited the New Criticism.

It is not simply the general valorization of the text that signals a disguised continuity between Iser's functionalist theory and the critical tradition that New Criticism represents. A more surprising link is the role played by Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden and his phenomenology of the literary work. René Wellek and Austin Warren's 1949 study, *Theory of Literature,* crystallized the American movement toward intrinsic criticism, a movement dominated by New Criticism. Wellek made acknowledged use of Ingarden in his central chapter, "The Mode of Existence of a Literary Work of Art," in which he defined a poem as a "system of norms" consisting of "several strata, each implying its own subordinate group"; Ingarden outlined these strata in section eight of *The Literary Work of Art.* Ingarden's stratified view of the literary work formed the foundation of Wellek and Warren's theory of intrinsic criticism, and the *Theory of Literature,* in turn, became one of the most influential theoretical statements for the dominant force in American criticism.

Iser's theory of reading has a two-fold relation to Ingarden's phenomenology and to Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature.* Iser borrows many of Ingarden's concepts — concretization, schematized aspects, sentence correlates, places of indeterminacy, the depragmatized character of fictional language. But Iser's initial use of Ingarden differs from Wellek's: Iser emphasizes the model of reading given fullest treatment in Ingarden's *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art,* while Wellek used only the model of the work presented in Ingarden's much earlier book, *The Literary Work of Art.* Furthermore, Iser criticizes Ingarden's account and considerably revises it. For example, he praises Ingarden for proposing the idea of concretization but critiques its development in Ingarden's theory, where "concretization was just the actualization of the potential elements of the work — it was not an inter-

action between text and reader; this is why [Ingarden's] 'places of indeter-
minacy' lead only to an undynamic completion, as opposed to a dynamic
process" in which the reader is made to switch textual perspectives and estab-
lish connections between them.

But a second criticism of Ingarden by Iser signals a more subtle relation to
Ingarden's theory (and ultimately a closer connection to the critical tradition
Wellek and Warren represent). Iser lists as one of the major drawbacks of
Ingarden's account the fact that Ingarden "is unable to accept the possibility
that a work may be concretized in different, equally valid, ways." Wellek's use
of Ingarden was motivated by the very characteristic that Iser **seems** to be
rejecting here. Wellek wrote that "we can distinguish between right and wrong
readings of a poem, or between a recognition or a distortion of the norms
implicit in a work of art, by acts of comparison, by a study of different false
or incomplete realizations. . . . A hierarchy of viewpoints, a criticism of the
grasp of norms, is implied in the concept of the adequacy of interpretation."
Adequacy, or validity, in interpretation represents an overriding concern for
the American critical tradition. This concern has grown in recent years be-
cause of the challenge from reader-response and post-structuralist theories. In
a 1978 essay in *Critical Inquiry,* Wellek responded to these new onslaughts
against interpretive adequacy, characterizing them as "the new anarchy which
allows a complete liberty of interpretation." In a recent issue of *The Sewanee
Review,* Cleanth Brooks, another respected advocate of intrinsic criticism, has
communicated more colorfully the continuing fear of "what can happen when
there is a lack of theoretical restraints": "Literary interpretation becomes a
game of tennis played without a net and on a court with no backlines."

The question becomes, then, does Iser's critique of Ingarden indicate a
rejection of validity in interpretation, a central tenet of the American critical
tradition? This does not seem to be the case. Iser rejects only the notion that
each text offers just one valid concretization, one correct meaning. For Iser,
there is a prestructured **range** of meanings that the reader can validly assemble
from the same text: "the structure of the text **allows** for different ways of
fulfillment." Iser's stand is simply (and conveniently) another version of the
critical pluralism quite respectable within traditional American literary theory
(as most recently demonstrated by Wayne Booth's *Critical Understanding*).

But what is not acceptable in this tradition is a critical pluralism **without
limits;** note Booth's subtitle, "The Powers and Limits of Pluralism," and the
extended discussion in *Critical Inquiry* among Booth, M. H. Abrams, J. Hillis
Miller, and others over "The Limits of Pluralism." In American theory, valid-
ity in interpretation has been guaranteed most often by constraints in the
literary text that limit the range of permissible meanings to be derived from
that text. Iser's account of reading supplies just the kind of textual constraints
that make most critics comfortable. These constraints are the manipulative
devices for ensuring that the reader can be **properly guided:** "Although the
reader must participate in the assembly of meaning by realizing the structure

inherent in the text, it must not be forgotten that he stands outside the text. His position must therefore be manipulated by the text if his viewpoint is to be properly guided."

For Iser, the text's arrangement of perspectives guides the reader as he attempts to project a consistent pattern resolving the tensions among the various norms distributed among those perspectives. "The interaction fails if . . . the reader's projections superimpose themselves unimpeded upon the text." How exactly does the arrangement of perspectives guide the reader's activities and impede his projections? Between and within the textual perspectives, there are **blanks** (previously called **gaps** in *The Implied Reader*). These blanks are vacancies in the overall system of the text. "They indicate that the different segments of the text **are** to be connected, even though the text itself does not say so. They are the unseen joints of the text, and as they mark off schemata and textual perspectives from one another, they simultaneously trigger acts of ideation [image-building] on the reader's part." The blanks "function virtually as instructions" in the "theme-and-horizon structure" of the reading process. As the reader moves through the text, he constantly shifts from one perspective to another. The perspective he assumes at any one moment becomes the "theme" which is read against the "horizon" of the previous perspectives in which he had been situated; in the *Tom Jones* example given above, the Allworthy perspective is first a theme, then part of the horizon for judging the Blifil perspective, and then a theme again but this time one that is interpreted against the changed horizon that now contains the perspective of Blifil. The reader fills the blanks between perspectives according to the theme-and-horizon structure, which guides him to negate or to modify each thematic perspective in light of the accumulated horizon of previous perspectives. The perspectives, blanks, and theme-and-horizon structure constitute the constraints that Iser's account places on the reader's interpretation of the whole text.

This description provides an adequate composite of the textual constraints Iser presents. In passing, I would like to comment briefly on the status of these constraints in order to clarify the foundations of all such textual theories. The underlying basis of the interpretive constraints Iser proposes is the negating relationship among the perspectives. Negation characterizes the connections that the reader projects to fill the blanks between segments, and it describes the horizon's relation to the theme during any moment in the time-flow of reading. The reader's "process of formulation is continually guided by negation." In each case, what is negated (challenged, modified, etc.) is one perspective by another. And for Iser a perspective's **specific** negating function in any particular text is an uninterpreted given in that text, constraining the reader's assembly of meaning. For example, Iser lists four basic types of perspective arrangements for narrative texts — counterbalance, opposition, echelon, and serial. It is not necessary to describe how each of these arrangements functions. What is important here is that these relations between perspectives, as they appear in any particular narrative text, are not intersub-

jective givens as Iser supposes. Rather they are constructs varying according to an on-going interpretation. This means they cannot serve as **prior** textual constraints on that interpretive work because they are already its **products**. Whether the hero's perspective counterbalances a minor character's or vice versa is always an interpretation and never a given in the text as Iser holds. Of course, I could go even further and say that not only is the **relation** between the hero and a minor character an interpretive construct, but so is the "fact" that a certain character is designated "the hero" and another only "a minor character." The same holds for even the apparently more basic "given," the individual character in a text. And so on. It's interpretation all the way down. However, the textual theorist must start somewhere. Once such a theorist has the category of a "prior and independent text," he must begin filling it with textual elements, givens that will constrain its interpretation. These "givens" form the enabling fiction of any theory of the text. Iser's enabling fiction is the negative relation between textual perspectives. With this "given" he supports his functionalist model of the text and his whole phenomenology of reading. But the problematic nature of Iser's constraints in no way undermines the persuasiveness of his reading model within the American critical tradition because all the textual theories in that tradition also build their models of independent texts upon the fiction of uninterpreted givens.

It might at first seem a bit odd to say that Iser promotes the notion of an independent text, even in the problematic way I have described. After all, his is a **phenomenological** theory of reading, and he continually emphasizes how the subject-object division is destroyed during the reading process. But these claims must be examined closely. For in Iser's account, it is the literary work and not the text that is dependent on the reader for its existence: "the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic pole is the author's text and the aesthetic is the realization accomplished by the reader. In view of this polarity, it is clear that the work itself cannot be identical with the text or with the concretization, but must be situated somewhere between the two." The text remains independent and prior to the reader's activities as it initiates, guides, and corrects the reader's concretization of the literary work. I would argue, then, that despite his critiques of New Criticism and Ingarden, Iser ultimately demonstrates that he shares with Wellek, Brooks, and Booth **a belief in interpretive validity guaranteed by constraints in a prior and independent text**; and these shared assumptions make Iser's detailed account of reading extremely attractive to traditional literary theorists in America.

Unfortunately, by presenting a reading model that is easily adapted to the American critical tradition, Iser is in danger of undercutting one of the purposes for writing his book: in his preface he suggests that the "anthropological side of literary criticism" deserves more attention, and he hopes that some hints in *The Act of Reading* might encourage a concern for the "actual function of literature in the overall make-up of man." Within today's sterile and

restrictive critical discourse, these are daring, even courageous goals, and indeed many of Iser's discussions do direct our attention to how literature functions in this humanistic way. His account of literary effect, of how litera-ture changes its readers, certainly moves in this direction. But this fine attempt might be erased because of the text-centered theory of reading that is its foundation. The emphasis on textual constraints and the prestructuring of effect, combined with the lack of examples of differing interpretations and significant changes in readers, all of this will make it quite easy for Iser's theory to be grafted onto the American critical tradition without really affect-ing the text-centered, a-rhetorical criticism and theory that tradition fosters.

Thus, while it actually contains the seeds of a radically social and rhetorical approach, *The Act of Reading* is persuasive because it appears to be safe: it gives the American critic just enough of the reader but not too much. Or, more exactly, it provides an acceptable model of the text partially disguised as an innovative account of reading. Very economically, then, it fulfills both needs of current American theory: it incorporates the reader into a theory of literature while it maintains the traditional American valorization of the autonomous text. Iser allows American theorists to have their text and reader too.

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REVIEW

David Bleich, *Subjective Criticism.* Johns Hopkins Univ. Press. 1978. Pp. 309. $16.00.

The publication of David Bleich's *Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism* in 1975 provided a compact manifesto for many of the reforms in higher education which had marked the 1960s.[1] The pamphlet was not so much debated as celebrated in issues of journals, sessions of the convention of the Modern Language Association, and elsewhere. The classroom organized along Subjective lines seemed a pleasant place to be a student: a teacher who believed that "a reader's perception of the text is of pedagogical interest far more in its idiosyncratic dimension than in its correspondence to the text"[2] would shelter individual sensibilities, while the grounding of discussion in such personal responses seemed to guarantee relevance; for the teacher too there were potential rewards, because the relaxation of his own intellectual authority seemed to promise that classroom experience might be freshened, indeed perpetually renewed, by fostering attention to his own and his students' feelings.

In *Subjective Criticism* Bleich develops the notions put forward in his earlier pamphlet. In the second half of the book, through extensive presentation and analysis of student responses to his assignments, Bleich offers further illustration of his daily practice. In the first half of the book he seeks to establish the intellectual foundations for his pedagogical strategies. Drawing upon Einstein, Werner Heisenberg, P.W. Bridgman, and, most heavily, Thomas Kuhn, among others, Bleich enlists science to overturn the privileged position of scientific "objectivity," a tyranny which, according to some pages of staggeringly oversimplified historical generalization, the western world has been suffering for centuries, just as it once suffered from the power of institutional religion. In its place Bleich erects the "Subjective Paradigm." He sets out to show that all knowledge is shaped by the motivation of the inquirer and determined finally only by "extended negotiation among the perceivers."[3] Within this framework "interpretation is conceived as motivated resymbolization"[4] of an original symbolic object, such as a poem or novel, which can be studied only through the responses it provokes: "The

assumption of the subjective paradigm is that collective similarity of response can be determined only by each individual's announcement of his response and subsequent communally motivated negotiative comparison."[5] Literature, in short, does not consist of objects to be grasped in themselves: knowledge of works of literature can only be made, not found.

This desire to preserve in the act of criticism the many-levelled engagements of an alert reader with a rich text is one that much of Bleich's audience can endorse. Despite the tone of earnest polemic that characterizes the book, its thesis is perhaps as likely to receive lukewarm assent as to arouse indignant rejection: the opening chapters arrange a great weight of evidence to support propositions already familiar. The terms of the polemic, however, are too crude to enable Bleich to make his case persuasively. That he is a shrewd critic of others is shown by his strictures on the determinacies of E. D. Hirsch, on the one hand, and on the pseudo-subjectivism of Norman Holland, in which "the subjects are, operationally, objects," on the other.[6] But the opposition between "objective" and "subjective" which governs his own argument is inadequate to advance understanding of a problem already widely considered.

Other reviewers of *Subjective Criticism* have pointed out the unsophisticated notion of scientific methods of verification and agreement on which Bleich rests his framework.[7] Whether in any event it would be possible to derive from an investigative method concerned with repeatable experiments inferences applicable to the encounter of a unique reader with a text is a question Bleich explores insufficiently: he finesses the difficulty by reducing the canons of science to mere conventions "aimed at maintaining the existing social practices"[8] (a charge he does not substantiate), ignoring distinctions Kuhn himself has scrupulously made between the realms of art and of science.[9] In this review I shall confine myself to Bleich's view of criticism itself, commenting on what it does first to the idea of a text and then to the idea of an interpretive community.

In his fourth chapter, "Epistemological Assumptions in the Study of Response," Bleich writes:

> The defining difference between the consciousness of a linguistic person and a prelinguistic infant is that in the former there is never a blur between real objects and symbolic objects, or between either of these and people (subjects). There is no sane, conscious person who does not make a decisive distinction between "things and people," or between what is in our imagination and what is not. (pp. 113-14)

The sweeping "never" of the first sentence, like the categorical declaration of the second, is characteristic of Bleich's impatience with fine shadings. Much of literature, however, is concerned precisely with that fertile grey area "between what is in our imagination and what is not," and symbols themselves have

been only half-jokingly defined as fantasies about real objects. It is hard to see how a criticism that denies the very aspects of human perceptions that great writers have taught us to understand can tell us much about their work. In his determination to show that the text does not impose its meanings on the reader but rather is (re)created by him in the act of reading, Bleich loses the text. Within his absolute either/or antithesis there is no way of studying the clues that guide a reader's response, no way of preserving an Other from whom one might learn. A theory that does not allow at least to some degree the independence of the text collapses reading into the soon stale repetition of the reader's subjectivity, which is largely what happens in the samples of student essays quoted in the second part of *Subjective Criticism*. Subjective Criticism turns out too often to resemble solipsistic criticism, a bland, domestic version of interpretation as the will to power. Despite Bleich's useful reminders of the problems it causes, a methodology based upon D. W. Winnicott's concept of the transitional object (as sketched, for example, by Murray Schwartz in "Where Is Literature?"[10]) can better describe the complexly bipolar nature of reading. Bleich lacks Winnicott's most cherishable strength, his willingness to endure paradox. In his first chapter he declares that "the subjective paradigm aims **to remove contradictions from thought**" and in the second chapter proposes that "a satisfactory explanation of language behavior will entail the use of concepts more commensurate [than formal rules] with the subjective experience of language, and particularly with our common feeling of dominion over the language we use." Bleich knows full well, as his discussion of the student papers shows, that language has a deceptive way of conveying both more and less than its speaker intends, often at the same time, but he does not permit the consideration to enter his theory. Some inquiry into the interrelationship of cultural code and individual consciousness like that undertaken by continental criticism would have broadened Bleich's understandings of readers, let alone of the production of the texts they read, but his resolutely atomistic and ahistorical focus on the "subjective" precludes the necessary context.

This last objection suggests the second area in which Bleich's formulation leaves crucial terms unsettled. "Negotiation" is a political term, or at least a social one. Bleich rightly comprehends that a term like "communal" is required to bridge the gap between "objective" and "subjective," but the exclusive concentration on the latter makes it impossible for him to delineate the non-subjective conditions under which one participates in a community. The presentation of Bleich's classroom practice in the second half of the book might have made clear the criteria by which interpretations are negotiated, but no such criteria emerge. Bleich's examination stops before the truly difficult questions of critical debate begin. The instructor's analysis of their papers leaves one with the impression of isolated students and a supervising, somewhat withdrawn analyst, rather than with any sense of a group sharing in a common endeavor: in this **égoïsme à deux** the question of how one might persuade another of an interpretation is scarcely raised.

Moreover, once norms felt to be impersonal and binding upon everyone in the community have deen eliminated, as Bleich eliminates them, the individual becomes vulnerable to the tyranny of the majority. Bleich comments at one point:

> The latter question [What do I want to know?] uses as its criterion of adequacy the satisfaction of the community of askers and of the community of co-askers. In principle, this criterion will allow a super-stitious or otherwise irrational answer to prevail; yet if that is what the human community chooses, it can't be helped. (p. 41)

As de Tocqueville perceived a century ago, the individualism Americans prize renders us peculiarly subject to the pressures of public opinion. It is nonethe-less surprising to witness how easily a book that ostensibly champions the primacy of subjective response slides into the passive determinism of that last sentence. Bleich's comments on his students — notably in the case history of Mr. P (pp. 138-46) — on occasion exemplify a feature of American education against which Edgar Z. Friedenberg has long protested, the cloaking of invidi-ous judgments in supposedly neutral psychological terminology.

What makes reading *Subjective Criticism* a melancholy occupation is that the author, in his messianic hope that his mode "can make important new knowledge, and the means for acquiring such knowledge, available on a much larger scale than heretofore considered possible" (p. 9), seems unaware of both its limits and of the dangers that accompany it. In the course of an illuminating discussion of how Helen Keller acquired language, Bleich quotes from the account of her teacher, Anne Sullivan: "The little savage has learned her first lesson in obedience, and finds the yoke easy. It now remains my pleasant task to direct and mould the beautiful intelligence that is beginning to stir in the child-soul" (p. 56). The poignant narrative reveals the paradox that it is often the authoritarian teacher, sure of standards, who is most respectful of a student's integrity and most genuinely liberating of his or her potential. Bleich misses an important point of his own anecdote.

In the introduction to *Subjective Criticism*, Bleich observes in passing that he "was an undergraduate in a large, scientifically oriented university," and on the second to last page he acknowledges that he was led to the notion of subjective criticism in part because of "the tacit, but overwhelming, assump-tion on the part of English teachers at all levels that knowledge of language and literature, while often interesting or 'enriching,' is ultimately less impor-tant and less authoritative than most other knowledge that is more conscious-ly 'scientific.' " It does not seem either improbable or unjust to suggest that although he seeks to restore the value of subjective experience, Bleich has been trapped into arguing within the polarity of "subjective" and "objective" which he attributes to science, as if those he denounces were still his imagined judges. The most effective argument for subjective criticism is the excitement of watching a mind grappling with a text and self-consciously evaluating its

grounds of understanding; a critic can convey the range and depth of his involvement without the tag "I feel that . . ." simply by the voice he creates for his readers. *Subjective Criticism,* in contrast, reads like a bad social-science textbook, a book assembled by a committee. Infelicities abound: on one page the work of various critics is said to "enlighten this issue" (p. 107); on another a theme is said to have been developed "in retrospect of a great many . . . experiences" (p. 117). In addition, typographical errors and other signs of poor proofreading are in evidence throughout. One expects better from Johns Hopkins.

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NOTES

1   Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1975.

2   *Subjective Criticism,* p. 105.

3   *Subjective Criticism*, p. 20.

4   *Subjective Criticism,* p. 97.

5   *Subjective Criticism*, p. 98.

6   *Subjective Criticism,* p. 118.

7   See, for example, the review by Mark Shechner, *Criticism,* 21 (1979), pp. 153-56.

8   *Subjective Criticism,* p. 15.

9   In "Comment on the Relations of Science and Art," *Comparative Studies In Society and History,* 11 (1969), 403-12; rpt. in his *The Essential Tension* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 340-51. In the 1969 Postscript to *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd ed., revised and enlarged; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970), Kuhn explicitly argues that "terms like 'subjective' and 'intuitive' cannot appropriately be applied to the components of knowledge that I have described as tacitly embedded in shared examples" (p. 175).

10 *College English,* 36 (1975), 756-65.

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