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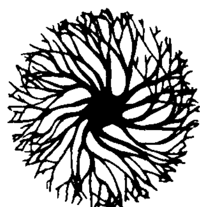

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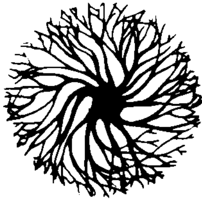

CENTRVM/CENTRUM

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 1 SPRING 1977

/ Prefatory Note 4

Articles

MARILYN M. COOPER / Implicatures in Fictional Conversations from *Days of Our Lives* and *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* 5

ELLEN SCHAUBER & ELLEN SPOLSKY / The Consolation of Alison: The Speech Acts of the Wife of Bath 20

JUDITH GENOVA / Fiction and Lies 35

JESSICA R. WIRTH / On the Necessity of Discourse Grammars 43

PHILIP FURIA / Bloomburied Stevens (Review Article) 58

/ Books Received 63

/ Contributors 66

PREFATORY NOTE

With this volume *Centrum* begins publication in its new format, a change made possible in part by a grant from the McKnight Foundation. Editorial policy, however, remains unchanged; we encourage submission of articles advancing the theory of language and literature, especially those with interdisciplinary approaches. Another *Centrum* tradition – an unfortunate one – continues here: we are still exactly one year behind our stated publication date. This tradition should end during the next year, during which *Centrum* will offer the following:

STEPHEN SCHIFFER / Review of *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts,* ed. P. Cole and J. L. Morgan

CATHERINE GARVEY / Review of *The Acquisition of Pragmatics* by Elizabeth Bates

WILLIAM GIBSON / Review of *The Philosophy of Composition* by E. D. Hirsch

PAUL HERNADI / Why We Cannot Help Genre-alizing and How Not To Go About It: Two Theses With Commentary

ROBERT MEYERS / Speech-Act Theory: A Bibliography

MICHAEL B. KAC / Review of *Arguments for a Non-Transformational Grammar* by Richard A. Hudson

DONALD ROSS / Review article on three books about literary style

RICHARD M. ABEL / Review of *The Mythopoeic Reality: The Postwar American Non-Fiction Novel* by Mas'ud Zavarzadeh

Marilyn M. Cooper

Implicatures in Fictional Conversations from *Days of Our Lives* and *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*

Paul Grice, in his lectures on "Logic and Conversation,"[1] develops his theory of conversational implicatures as a more elegant explanation of phenomena noticed by what he calls the A-philosophers, instances where words, sets of words, or logical symbols and their English equivalents might seem to have other senses than their ordinary ones. Although his primary purpose was not to describe the mechanisms of conversations, in the course of explaining how a speaker can mean something that is not part of the conventional meaning of the words used, he elaborates a set of assumptions about conversation held by participants against which conversational contributions are interpreted; a general Cooperative Principle – "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the state at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged"[2] – and a series of maxims derived from the CP:

Quantity: 1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality: 1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation: Be relevant.

Manner: 1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly.[3]

He asserts that people usually follow the CP and do not casually fail to fulfill the maxims because not to follow these principles would defeat the purpose of conversation:

[*Centrum,* 5:1 (Spring 1977), pp. 5-19.]

> the observance of the CP and maxims is reasonable (rational) along the following lines: that anyone who cares about the goals that are central to conversation/communication (such as giving and receiving information, influencing and being influenced by others) must be expected to have an interest, given suitable circumstances, in participation in talk exchanges which will be profitable only on the assumption that they are conducted in general accordance with the CP and the maxims.[4]

People in conversations often fail to fulfill these principles, however, especially the maxims, and they may do so in various ways and for various reasons, which will be mentioned below. But when speakers wish to conversationally implicate something they usually fail to fulfill a maxim in a characteristic way: they blatantly fail to fulfill it; they fail in a way that will draw their listener's attention to the failure; Grice says they "flout" the maxim. (Implicatures can also arise, however, when no maxims are clearly flouted.) Listeners who assume that speakers are observing the CP will be forced to infer something about the speaker's knowledge or beliefs, and what they infer is what the speaker has implicated. To illustrate, here is an example drawn from Grice's lectures:

SITUATION: A and B are talking about a mutual friend C who is working in a bank. A asks how C is getting on in his job and B replies:

SAID: Oh, quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues and he hasn't been to prison yet.

REASONING: A notes that B in saying "he hasn't been to prison yet" has apparently failed to fulfill the maxim of relevance. A has no reason to assume B is not fulfilling the CP. A figures out (and knows B knows he is able to figure out) that B thinks that:

IMPLICATED: C is potentially dishonest.[5]

In this way speakers can convey meaning beyond that carried by the conventional meaning of what they say. Grice offers a formal definition of the notion of conversational implicature:

> A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that **p**, has implicated that **q**, may be said to have conversationally implicated that **q**, provided that (1) he is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the cooperative principle; (2) the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that, **q** is required in order to make his saying or making as if to say **p** (or doing so in **those** terms) consistent with this presumption; and (3) the speaker thinks (and would expect the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (2) is required.[6]

Assuming that Grice's analysis correctly describes an important aspect of ordinary conversations,[7] it can be used to study the characteristic differences between conversations in different contexts, such as the differences between actual and fictional conversations or between fictional conversations in different genres. Depending on how realistic a fictional conversation is intended to be, conversational implicatures may operate very much as Grice describes or may operate in radically different ways. Because the type and extent of these differences may reflect and/or be the result of the effect the author of the fictional conversation intends the conversation to have on his or her audience, a Gricean analysis of the conversations may explain the source of the author's effect and may help to distinguish among genres which contain a great deal of conversation.

To see what kind of differences in the operation of conversational implicatures might occur, whether the differences are systematic, and whether they can be used to explain genre differences, I taped and examined seven episodes of the NBC soap opera *Days of Our Lives* and nine episodes of Norman Lear's *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman.*[8] The series are related but clearly different in effect. Lear's series was conceived as a parody of the venerable TV and radio genre of soap opera. Both relate events in the lives of a large group of closely related characters, and, unlike most TV series, the plots run continuously and indefinitely from episode to episode.

In screening a set of fictional conversations through Grice's analysis, you might expect several possible results. An interesting result would be the discovery of differing patterns in conversations of different genres, for example more implicatures arising from the flouting of the Quantity maxims. With different expectations being violated, different effects on the audience might be produced, and an author might concentrate on using particular types of implicatures to achieve his or her intended effect. The most interesting result perhaps would be that which reflects the special character of fictional conversations, the discovery of implicatures holding when they shouldn't, or not holding when they should, or having effects not predicted by Grice's analysis. The conversations in these two series do show some differences in patterns of implicatures, and the differing intentions of the authors vis-à-vis their viewers shift the effects of implicatures in different ways in the two series. *Days of Our Lives* conversations contain phenomena that are especially difficult to account for within Grice's analysis.

Fictional conversations present special problems when you wish to analyze speaker-audience relations, because these relations are affected not only by the fictional characters and their situation but also by what effect or message the author intends to convey to the audience. Throughout any fictional conversation the author is communicating with his or her audience through what the characters in the work say to each other. That the characters discuss certain events in their lives and not others, for example, is not determined by what they are interested in but by what parts of their lives will emphasize a point

the authors wish to make. Mary Hartman talks at length about the yellow, waxy build-up on her floors but not at all about her daughter Heather's failing grades in social studies. Knowing Mary, we assume that these two subjects may well be of equal interest to her, but she talks about her floors and not about Heather because the series' authors want to point out that Mary, like many consumers, is gullible and takes commercials seriously. They have no point to make about education (at least so far), so Mary doesn't talk about Heather's educational experiences. In this example, what Mary says **indirectly** makes the authors' point; we draw some conclusions about Mary, and perhaps about ourselves, on the basis of what she says, and these conclusions are the message the authors want to convey.

Occasionally a character more directly states the author's message, which may result in distortions of the normal conversational assumptions. (I am not referring here to the use of narrators who address the author's audience directly but to the occasional use of characters who interject the author's "voice" into the flow of their conversations.) In *Days of Our Lives*, conversations are manipulated to allow characters to state the theme of an episode or series of episodes. Paul and Helen Grant discuss Adele Hamilton's alcoholism; Paul wonders if Adele has really kicked the habit. Helen suggests that what Paul meant (implicated) in asking this was that he was worried that Adele's daughter Brooke might not be able to handle Adele's backsliding. Nothing in the conversation up to this point suggests that Paul might be thinking about Brooke, and Helen knows that Paul worries about Adele a great deal more than he worries about Brooke. It's doubtful that he meant what Helen interprets him as meaning, but her interpretation sets up his following statement of the theme of the episode: "You know, young people don't seem to mind most anything except disappointment in their mothers." The reason for this odd exchange between Paul and Helen becomes clear later in the episode when their daughter Valerie tells her fiancé David that "we all are [square] when it comes to our own mothers," and again when David and his cousin Mike discuss how much and why they resent their mothers.

The largest methodological problem in this study involves the aspects of conversation that Grice doesn't discuss. He emphasizes that implicatures must be intentional; speakers must know they're flouting a conversational maxim and must intend their listeners to know that too and know that they are observing the CP, for the communication of meaning depends on this knowledge. There are other actions speakers can take with regard to the CP and conversational maxims, of course. They may intentionally violate a maxim and hide the violation from their listeners, thus violating the CP; Grice says they are "liable to mislead." They may blatantly or explicitly violate a maxim in a way that shows the audience that the CP is not being observed; Grice says they "opt out." They may be forced to violate a maxim to fulfill another maxim (either conversational or other nonconventional maxims, aesthetic, social, or moral) but still observe the CP; Grice calls this a "clash."[9] But Grice does not talk about what happens when speakers unintentionally fail to fulfill

a maxim. Since such failures are noticed by the listener and have some effect, I will call them betrayals.

Grice also does not discuss how questions can be used to implicate. Although he defines one of the goals of conversation as giving and receiving information, his maxims are directly applicable only to statements meant to give information; at least some of the maxims must be rephrased to state the rules we follow in requesting information. Because the maxims of Quantity and Quality focus on informative content, Quantity and Quality maxims for questions must refer not only to the question itself but also to the expected response, in other words, to what information is being requested. Consequently, the following maxims for questions parallel the maxims for statements, but involve a fuller consideration of the listener's role:

Quantity: 1. Don't ask questions in a way that prevents your listener from answering.
2. Don't ask questions your listener would have answered anyway.

Quality: 1. Don't ask questions you don't want the answer to; don't ask questions you know the answer to.
2. Don't ask questions you have no reason to ask; don't ask questions you don't believe the listener can answer.[10]

(Relation and Manner maxims are the same as for statements.)

The following exchange on *Days of Our Lives* illustrates how a question can be used to implicate. Bill Horton has just talked to his brother Mickey, a lawyer, expressing doubts about Mickey's ability to handle a case. Bill's wife Laura asks him:

SAID: You didn't upset him, did you?

REASONING: By making a statement and them questioning it, Laura blatantly fails to fulfill the first maxim of Quality for questions. But she can be considered to be observing the CP and the maxim too if Bill assumes that she doubts her statement is true. He figures out (and Laura knows he is able to figure out) that what she meant was:

IMPLICATED: I suspect you upset him.

Since Bill knows that she knows that the two brothers constantly irritate each other, he can easily work out her implicature, and he replies, "Oh, of course. I came on strong as usual." But Laura knows that Bill didn't intend to upset Mickey, since Mickey's in the middle of defending their son on a murder charge, and, not wanting to hurt his feelings, she explicitly cancels (denies that she meant) her implicature: "I didn't mean it that way." Grice thinks that all conversational implicatures are cancellable, and although cancellability doesn't decisively establish the presence of a conversational implicature,

Laura's cancellation in this exchange suggests that her question did implicate something.

To get a general idea of the differences between the conversations in *Days of Our Lives* and *Mary Hartman,* I compared two scenes from the series. In each scene four characters discuss an impending legal trial, and both scenes are approximately the same length (the scene from *Mary Hartman* is slightly longer). The scene from *Days of Our Lives* takes place just before the arraignment of Mike Horton, who is charged with murder. Mike is the son of Laura and her second husband, Bill Horton. Laura's first husband was Bill's brother Mickey, and since Mike was born during Laura's marriage to Mickey, Mike and Mickey were allowed until recently to think that they were father and son, although the rest of the extended Horton family knew the truth. Mickey is a lawyer and is defending Mike. Mickey suspects Mike is covering something up (which he is; he has confessed to the murder to protect his girlfriend Trish who killed the man and promptly went insane, blocking her memory of the killing). Laura is a psychiatrist and has Trish in therapy. The other participants in the conversation are Alice Horton (Mickey and Bill's mother) and Maggie Horton (Mickey's current wife).

Despite the fact that these people know each other intimately and could consequently be expected to rely on their knowledge of one another and use many implicatures, the conversation has a curiously spelled-out quality. There are only five clear implicatures, none of which arises from flouting a maxim, since in the situation the relation of the comments to the conversation will be immediately obvious to the participants. Bill and Laura discuss whether Mickey is right in suspecting that Mike is lying about something. Laura says that when Mike was growing up Mickey always knew whether he was lying or telling the truth. Bill protests that the situation is different now that Mike is an adult, but adds:

SAID: Mickey's his father, and, uh, I'm nothing more than his Uncle Bill.

REASONING: Bill might be considered to be violating the maxim of relevance, but the relation of his comment to the conversation is obvious. No maxim has clearly been violated, but Bill meant something more than he said:

IMPLICATED: Mickey's more likely to know whether Mike is lying than I am.

The assumption that parents are especially sensitive to their children's behavior patterns is a commonplace, and besides, the closeness between Mike and Mickey and the hostility between Mike and Bill have been so exhaustively discussed by Laura and Bill in the past year that what he says may in fact be more informative than is required. Three other implicatures arise in the same way; although the intended meaning is not explicit in what is said, the relation of what is said to the purpose of the conversation is so obvious that the

maxim of relevance is not violated. The fifth implicature might be said to arise from a flouting of the maxim to avoid obscurity. Bill discusses Mike's legal problems with Laura, Alice, and Maggie, and says:

SAID: The only thing that Mike has to worry about is Trish.

REASONING: What about Trish Bill thinks Mike has to worry about is obscure, except that Bill can only be referring to Trish's loss of memory. No maxim has clearly been violated, but again Bill meant something more than he said:

IMPLICATED: The only thing that Mike has to worry about is whether Trish will remember what happened at the scene of the murder in time to back up his story at the trial.

Laura replies, "She's being released from the hospital this afternoon," implicating that Trish's mental health is improving (another of the apparent, but not real, violations of the maxims of relevance).

In other places maxims are violated (or nearly so) and the characters neither implicate nor betray anything. In the early part of the conversation, Bill and Laura discuss whether or not Mickey has evidence for saying that Mike is lying. Mickey had pointed out just how full of holes Mike's story was when he told Bill and Laura that he thought Mike was lying, but Bill now says, "I don't know why Mickey feels that," clearly violating the maxim that speakers not say what they know to be false. Laura apparently doesn't notice the violation, for she proceeds to offer more evidence: "Mickey always knew when Mike was growing up whether he was telling the truth." Bill could be implicating that he thinks Mickey needs more evidence that Mike is lying, but the conversation is easier to understand when considered as a communication between the authors and the viewers of *Days of Our Lives.* Although Bill's and Laura's comments to each other express nothing that Bill and Laura don't already know, and thus are probably more informative than is required for the purpose of their conversation, their comments do convey information to less-than-regular viewers of the series, information that these viewers need to have to understand the current plot. After this conversation all viewers will know what regular viewers already knew: that Mike did not commit the murder and that Mike considers Mickey his father even though Bill is his real father. The evidence Bill and Laura offer to prove Mickey is right in saying that Mike's confession is a lie is designed not to convince one another but to convince the viewers, and Bill's reminder that Mickey is Mike's "real" father is similarly not directed at Laura but at the viewer.

Bill again says something he knows to be false when he says to the three women that the only thing Mickey says Mike has to worry about is Trish. Mickey has said that Mike's big problem is his obvious lying – the jury won't believe his story; Laura knows this and Alice and Maggie most certainly know it too, but neither they nor viewers believe that Bill is implicating anything. If

he were implicating that he thought Mickey had no grounds for believing Mike is lying and thus that this is not a problem, you would expect one of the women to agree or disagree with him since its bearing on the case is significant, but instead Laura and Alice take up the related topic of Trish's memory, thus filling in more background for viewers. Laura says, "She's being released from the hospital this afternoon," and Alice says, "Oh, if she were only here to back up Michael's story." Laura responds, "Well, she still doesn't remember that much about what happened that night." Alice concludes the conversation with a prediction that Trish will remember, offering as rather dubious evidence for her prediction Trish's love for Mike. Alice can't really expect psychiatrist Laura to accept this evidence; the violation of the maxim that you not say what you do not have adequate evidence for is most likely a result of a clash with her desire to be reassuring.

The scene from *Mary Hartman* takes place late at night. Mary and her husband, Tom, have just discovered that Dr. Medwick, a local psychiatrist, is a Peeping Tom and witnessed the accidental death of their former neighbor, Garth Gimble. Garth's wife, Pat, has been charged with his murder and so Mary has asked Pat's lawyer, Len Dearborn, to come talk to Medwick. In contrast to the scene from *Days of Our Lives,* the people here (with the exception of Tom and Mary) are merely acquaintances; Medwick and Dearborn have just met. But their conversation is much more telegraphic; it contains more implicatures and betrayals that clearly arise from failures to fulfill maxims.

A variety of implicatures occur. Medwick is faced with a clash in replying to Dearborn's question, "Did you actually see Pat Gimble stab her husband?" Because Pat didn't stab her husband, Medwick can't answer either yes or no, but he feels compelled to answer. So he answers a related question that he can answer truthfully; he says:

SAID: Actually, he, um, fell.

REASONING: His answer apparently flouts the maxim of relevance in that it doesn't directly answer the question. But Dearborn knows Medwick is observing the CP and figures out that Medwick has implicated the answer to his question:

IMPLICATED: Pat didn't stab her husband because no one stabbed him.

Dearborn then asks, "You saw him fall?" Tom interrupts:

SAID: You see, he's a voyeur.

REASONING: Tom flouts the maxim of relevance, and also perhaps the nonconventional nonconversational maxim "Don't interrupt." Dearborn again figures out that Tom has implicated the answer to his question:

IMPLICATED: Medwick saw him fall because he was watching through the window.

Tom then offers evidence that he knows what he's talking about — "we caught him red-handed right outside the door here" — thus anticipating another possible question from Dearborn. Dearborn is momentarily bewildered by the speed with which information is being provided ("Now let me get this straight") but by the end of the scene shows that he has grasped it. Mary implicates what she says earlier in the conversation, that Medwick will be a star witness at Pat's trial, when she reports that Medwick has seen Garth beat Pat; since Dearborn will obviously attribute to Mary the belief that this evidence will clear Pat, the implicature here does not arise from flouting a maxim. Then Dearborn asks:

SAID: But how's the jury going to react to this kind of a witness?

REASONING: He flouts the second maxim of Quality, that you not ask questions you don't believe your listener can answer; Tom, Mary and Medwick can't answer, since the jury hasn't even been chosen. But if they assume Dearborn believes Medwick will not be a convincing witness, they can figure out what Dearborn meant to ask:

IMPLICATED: Since the jury may feel a Peeping Tom is not a reliable witness, how will I convince them that he is telling the truth?

Medwick answers by providing evidence that he is a careful observer with accurate recall — he details other events he has witnessed — and Dearborn accepts this ("I believe you"). Then Mary asks Dearborn:

SAID: Well, then, you believe him?

REASONING: She has apparently failed to fulfill the maxim that you not ask a question you know the answer to; she heard Dearborn say he believes Medwick. But Dearborn has no reason to assume she's not observing the CP; she must be requesting some information. Mary has earlier made a connection between Dearborn's belief in Medwick's testimony and Pat's acquittal on the murder charge, so Dearborn figures out (and knows Mary knows he'll be able to figure out) that what Mary meant to ask was:

IMPLICATED: Will Medwick's testimony save Pat?

He replies, "I believe this will save Pat Gimble's neck."

Mary and Medwick also betray things about themselves by unintentionally violating maxims. Mary is more informative than required when she says of Medwick, "this guy has seen everything"; Medwick has just said he's seen

"every low, twisted, profane, lewd, and revolting thing this town has to offer." She doesn't mean to implicate anything, but she betrays her tendency to dwell on the obvious. She violates the maxim not to say what you know to be false when she says she saw Garth beat Pat hundreds of times; what she said could be taken as hyperbole, but the situation calls for precision and her ignorance of this fact betrays something about the way she thinks. Medwick's litany of what he has seen in Fernwood – spinster piano teachers whipping each other on top of a baby grand, a prominent banker with interesting uses for chopsticks – violates the maxim not to be more informative than is required. He begins it intentionally to get them to believe him, but by continuing it after they tell him they believe him he betrays his interest in what he's seen, something he definitely doesn't want to communicate.

The differences between *Days of Our Lives* and *Mary Hartman* evident in these scenes hold throughout the episodes I studied. *Days of Our Lives* contains remarkably few implicatures, and most which do occur are the less interesting type of implicatures that do not result from the violations of maxims. These seven episodes of *Days* also contained twenty-one instances in which the maxim not to be more informative than required is violated without generating an implicature. The purpose of these violations is invariably to allow the characters to fill in background for uninitiated viewers. On two occasions characters engaged in lengthy rehearsals of their past: one character detailed her psychological ups and downs of the past four years to the man who had known her intimately throughout the four years; another character ran through her history of divorce, depression, and remarriage with two women who knew it all quite well, her daughter and the woman her first husband divorced her for. Instances in which characters fill in background for the author's audience are common in fictional conversations; this is the convention of exposition. But in *Days of Our Lives,* as in other shows of this genre, the number of these instances in markedly higher, often taking up half or more of an episode. And often in *Days of Our Lives* characters manage to implicate in ways that cannot be explained within Grice's analysis, usually to set up a statement of a theme or to introduce a needed plot element.

In contrast, *Mary Hartman* has a plethora of implicatures of all types, a difference which is especially striking since many characters in *Mary Hartman* do not know each other as well as do the characters in *Days* and thus would not be expected to be able to work out what knowledge or beliefs other characters have as easily as the characters in *Days* should be able to. *Mary Hartman* also contains many more instances in which a character betrays something about him or herself by unintentionally violating maxims, thirty-two betrayals as opposed to three in *Days.* Mary consistently says much more about a subject than is required, thus betraying her undiscriminating perception of her world. When asked if she wrote a petition she laments her poor spelling at length; when told she needs no training to answer the Help Line she responds that that's good since she's only had training in home economics although she never learned to make chocolate pudding from scratch. Her

remarks are related to the subject of the conversation but are not significant enough in furthering the purpose of the conversation to warrant the elaboration she gives them. These betrayals, unlike the numerous violations of the second maxim of Quantity and the artifical implicatures in *Days,* do not undermine the believableness of the characters; in fact, betrayal is the principal device used by the authors to develop characters in *Mary Hartman* while at the same time satirizing their foibles. The betrayals in *Days* simply reveal to individual characters something already well known to other characters and viewers, that a character is insane or lying, for example. The numerous instances in *Mary Hartman* of characters unintentionally violating the maxims of Quantity and Relation are also what cause television critics to call the series an "interior monologue" or "unedited unconscious."[11]

In short, the authors of *Days of Our Lives* are mainly concerned with developing intricate plots that will engage the viewers' interest in what happens to people they assume to be like themselves, while the authors of *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman,* though they parody the soap opera plots, are mainly concerned with developing characters who are a satiric comment on current life. Other differences between the conversations in the two series offer further evidence for the authors' differing intents toward their material and their viewers. A characteristic type of betrayal in *Mary Hartman* is the unintentional violation of the maxim not to say what you know to be false. In an eposide in which Tom discusses his "performance anxiety" with a sex therapist, he repeatedly says things which he knows are false, thus betraying his inability to admit that the problem might be his. He continues to insist that he doesn't have a problem and that the problem that exists is Mary's even after the therapist gets him to admit that if one partner has a problem it creates a problem for the other partner and that the problem is not, as he tries to assert, that Mary can't "cut it." No such betrayals occur in *Days of Our Lives.*

Except in this kind of situation, outright lies are uncommon in *Mary Hartman.* In contrast, *Days,* like all soaps, contains "a high rate of lies and concealment. Lies can, of course, provide a basic vehicle for conflict."[12] Incongruously, though, characters in *Days* can be counted on never to lie about their feelings. This is another convention of fictional conversations (note that characters in plays never lie in soliloquies), and characters in *Mary Hartman* often tell us truthfully how they feel. But in *Days* the characters' feelings do not develop naturally out of the situation. Often there is little or no evidence that they feel as they say they do, and what they say they feel may even contradict a great deal of what they've said and implicated about their feelings previously. Nevertheless, other characters believe them implicitly, and the viewers are also intended to believe them. Thus when Bill tells Laura he has no "hang-ups" about Mickey's relationship with Mike not an hour after he's implicated to her that he's jealous of that relationship, she believes him and the viewer realizes that the earlier implication was a red herring and that Bill has other fish to fry. Later in the same episode Bill expresses his complete

trust in Mickey's ability to handle Mike's case, totally ignoring his earlier reservations that Mickey's belief that Mike was lying would keep him from framing a successful defense. Mickey believes him and viewers recognize that the authors wish to put an end to this conflict between Mickey and Bill. These distortions of the normal expectations of participants in conversations, like the paucity of betrayals, reflect the lack of character development in *Days of Our Lives.* Characters don't betray personal traits because they haven't any; their feelings can be established by fiat because they aren't motivated by anything but love, as *Time* magazine has pointed out.[13] Such flexibility in character is required in a genre in which plot is of supreme importance, but it further undermines the believableness of the characters.

Although both series have also developed their own devices to highlight events and themes, again the devices in *Days of Our Lives* work against character development, while the authors of *Mary Hartman* take pains to blend their devices into the natural actions of the characters. As noted above, characters in *Days,* besides having to fill in background, often also have to enunciate themes the authors wish to emphasize. The other common device used in *Days* is a character's remark on how happy he or she is, which invariably signals an impending tragedy in his or her life. Julie says, "I've never been so happy" about two days before she finds out that Doug, who has proposed to her, never got a divorce from his previous wife. Doug says, "I think everything's coming up roses," about half an hour before he's forced to reveal his undivorced state to Julie's former suitor, who remarks, "It looks to me like you're losing all the way around." Johnny says to Rebecca, "Everything's perfect for us, you know," about ten minutes before she reveals that the child she's pregnant with isn't his. This device again obviously diverts the viewers' attention from the characters to the plot.

Themes in *Mary Hartman* are rarely if ever stated explicitly, but they can be revealed by a device that is also used to point up the characters' foibles. Characters who say something they believe, however wrongly, to be true, often find the rug pulled out from under their remarks by subsequent statements or events. When Tom and Mary catch Dr. Medwick peeping in their window, he feebly asserts that he was only doing research. Tom says he thinks Medwick is "a little sick," and Mary reproves Tom: "I'm surprised at you. The man is a doctor. Now show a little respect." But Mary's reproof is immediately invalidated by Medwick's confession: "I've got a terrible problem. I've been a Peeping Tom ever since I was a little boy." It is part of Mary's character that she believe implicitly in the truthfulness and moral uprightness of authority figures; it is one of the main themes of the series that "the experts, the authority figures, the leading citizens, the wise men – those who have a responsible role in society – are charlatans and phonies."[14]

Finally, although both series contain instances of dramatic irony, this device, which directs the viewers' attention to the situation and away from character, is more common in *Days of Our Lives.* The authors of *Days* offer

dramatic irony as a prize plum for faithful viewers. In speaking of past problems characters often unintentionally twist the knife in current wounds, thus providing a double dose of melodrama. In a scene from the January, 1976, episode of *Days,* Mickey Horton is mentally unbalanced, a result of his discovering that Mike is not his son but Bill's son. His niece Julie visits him in the asylum and he betrays his confusion about who and where he is by talking about a legal case which took place about ten years previously (in fictional time). Julie sued to regain custody of her son who had been adopted by Scott Banning; Mickey represented Scott in his effort to retain custody of the child. Mickey now assumes that Julie has come to prevail on him to side with her. He says, "Then you realize you're losing." "Losing?" she asks, uncomprehending. "Your baby," he replies. Thinking he's rather tactlessly referring to the recent stillbirth of her second son, she stoically says, "I already lost my baby, Mickey." Viewers are struck to the heart by the ironic parallel between two of the main tragedies in Julie's life. Later in the scene, the parallel between Scott's situation in the custody case and Mickey's current situation is emphasized by Mickey's unintentionally ironic question, "Don't you understand what it means to a man to have a son even though he's not the natural father?. . .A man and his son being torn apart, Julie. Can't you see that? Don't you understand?" Viewers respond not to Mickey's particular feelings but to the general feeling of loss attached to the situation.

Dramatic irony is rarer in *Mary Hartman,* and when it does occur characters often participate in creating it. In one scene, Mary, Merle Jeter, and his wife, Wanda, discuss their maid, Lila. Mary comments, "She's delightful. Does she do windows?" Wanda, who's had an affair with Lila that Merle knows about, replies ironically, "She does everything." Mary doesn't know about the affair but unintentionally amplifies the irony: "You know what I really like a lot? I like the way you use her around the house, personally, do you know what I mean?" The situation is obviously primarily set up for the enjoyment of the viewers, but it also reveals something about the characters; in response to Mary's comment, Wanda smiles ambiguously and Merle is glumly silent.

Both series are meant to be taken seriously, at least in part, by their viewers; both are meant to reflect the viewers' lives in some way. Paul Rauch, producer of another NBC soap opera, *Another World,* says that his program "truly reflects middle-class Middle-West culture. Its characters are realistic, believable, do things that a lot of the viewing public do."[15] Similarly, *Days of Our Lives* authors undoubtedly want their viewers to see the series as realistic, in theme if not in detail. *Mary Hartman* is also meant to reveal reality. An early press release states that "the series would subtly satirize people as they behave in day-to-day situations – never straying far from reality."[16] Head writer Ann Marcus says that producer Lear encourages them to try to be funny, "but only because life is funny."[17]

The authors of the two series, though, emphasize different aspects of

reality in order to obtain differing responses from their viewers, and the conversations reflect these differences. In *Days of Our Lives* distortions in the conversations reflect the authors' emphasis on plot at the expense of character: there are fewer implicatures than would be expected; implicatures that should hold don't; implicatures that shouldn't hold do; characters rarely betray themselves; characters' statements about their feelings are invested with artificial significance; and dramatic irony is common. Viewers accept these distortions because they facilitate their understanding and enjoyment of the characters' situations. In *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman,* the conversations reflect the authors' interest in satire through characterization: there are a large variety of implicatures and betrayals; there are fewer and more subtle distortions of normal conversational patterns; and themes remain implicit. The characters are allowed the full range of conversational moves and are not often forced into artificial ones. Viewers react predictably; they laugh at the disparity between the accepted picture of contemporary life and the perhaps more realistic picture *Mary Hartman* presents.

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NOTES

I would like to acknowledge the comments and criticism of Michael Root and Martin Steinmann, Jr. on the first version of this paper.

1 H. Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation," William James Lectures, Harvard, 1967. ms. A portion of the lectures has been published in *Syntax and Semantics, III: Speech Acts,* ed. Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan (New York: Academic Press, 1975), pp. 41-58; subsequent citations refer to this publication.

2 Grice, p. 45.

3 Grice, pp. 45-46.

4 Grice, p. 49. Throughout this paper I assume that speakers generally assume the purpose of a conversation is giving and receiving information. Conversations do often have other purposes (and often have more than one purpose at once), but I would like to argue (although I won't do so here) that speakers reveal and listeners become aware of other conversational purposes through violating maxims on information-based conversations.

5 See Grice, pp. 43, 50.

6 Grice, pp. 49-50.

7 An assumption I intend to test at a later date by analyzing actual conversations.

8 *Days of Our Lives:* January 29, June 1, 2, 3, 1976; February 21, 22, 23, 1977. Each episode runs approximately forty-five minutes when commerical time is subtracted; the total data runs about five and one-quarter hours. *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman:* March (exact day unknown), April 26, June 1, 1976; February 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, March 8, 1977. Each episode runs approximately twenty minutes; the total data runs about three hours.

9 Grice, p. 49.

10 For help in formulating these two maxims I am in debt to Jean L. Pollock, "Why-question Implication," ms.

11 John Leonard, "Recycling Our Culture's Junk into Laughs," *The New York Times,* 1 Feb. 1976, Sec. II, p. 27; Stephanie Harrington, "Mary Hartman: The Unedited All-American Unconscious," *Ms.,* May 1976, p. 54.

12 Anthony Astrachan, "Life Can Be Beautiful/Relevant," *The New York Times,* 23 Mar. 1975, Sec. VI, p. 62.

13 "Sex and Suffering in the Afternoon," *Time,* 12 Jan. 1976, p. 48.

14 Ted Morgan, "MH^2 Recycles Our Garbage," *The New York Times,* 3 Oct. 1976, Sec. VI, p. 44. Here *Mary Hartman* parodies the soaps, in which authority figures are central, highly venerated characters, like Dr. Tom Horton in *Days of Our Lives.*

15 Astrachan, pp. 13, 54.

16 John J. O'Connor, "TV: Lear's 'Mary Hartman,' Interesting Innovation," *The New York Times,* 6 Jan. 1976, p. 63.

17 Harrington, p. 54.

Ellen Schauber

Ellen Spolsky

The Consolation of Alison: The Speech Acts of the Wife of Bath

It is easy to think of Alison of Bath as a real person. From her birthmarks to her opinions she strikes us as a vital individual with a complex and unique personality. Even though current trends in scholarship point away from appreciation of Chaucer's 'realism' and 'originality' and toward appreciation of medieval style and ideas, still, of all the travellers to Canterbury, Alison is most resistant to solid grounding in an aesthetic or historical context. When discussing the Wife of Bath, critics otherwise quite sensitive about the fourteenth-century world as it relates to the *Canterbury Tales* are tempted to psychologize in an anachronistic and inappropriate way, or to allegorize in unconvincing ways.[1]

In this paper we will propose a new way of seeing the Wife's position in the *Canterbury Tales.* This new focus will allow us to understand our impression of the Wife's prominence in the *Tales* as a function of her real thematic importance. She is important to us, we propose, because she is important to Chaucer, and she is important to Chaucer because she figures prominently in his moral scheme. As usual, Chaucer teaches as he delights, though not, in this case, through an allegory of truth, but through irony, and a parody of truth. The Wife has naturally been compared to women like Constance, Griselda, and Dorigen. However, we argue that it is more important to see her in relationship to Lady Prudence in the Tale of Melibee, and through her, to Lady Philosophy of Boethius' *Consolation.* This hypothesis seems to us to be a better way than has yet been proposed of reconciling two critical needs: first, that we account for the Wife's prominence in the *Tales* and the sense that readers have of her occupying the foreground of the work; and second, that we understand her iconographic role in the moral drama of the *Tales.*

It will not be belaboring the obvious to point out something very important in the study of style: we did not expect the results we finally arrived at. We started out simply to study the Wife's style, to make explicit those characteristics of her language which set her off as so special to her readers. We looked first only at her syntax, which as you will see, is revealing in itself. However, syntactic analysis was insufficient to account for as much as we had hoped. We needed a more sophisticated stylistic model, one that included a

[*Centrum,* 5:1 (Spring 1977), pp. 20-34.]

semantic dimension as well as a syntactic one. We found suggestions for that model in Austin's speech act theory and Searle's taxonomy.[2] More than Searle, we have been reliant on syntactic clues to identify speech acts. Further, we conflate notions of character creation from both Searle and Ohmann.[3]

The model allowed us to do what earlier students of the Wife and her tale have not done, namely to separate the forms of her speech from its content and to compare her on several axes to other characters in the *Canterbury Tales.* It was this separation and recombination that brought us to the unanticipated but satisfying conclusions that we finally reached. In this paper we will review our analysis with stress on the methodology to demonstrate not only the literary realignment and reinterpretation we propose, but also the power of the model as a tool for the study of literature.

Critics such as Ohmann, Hancher, and Fish[4] have applied notions and terms of speech act theory to various literary works, and Searle has discussed the extension of the model to literature in "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse." Searle says that "the author of a work of fiction pretends to perform a series of illocutionary acts." He or she acts **"as if,"** "without any intent to deceive."[5] Furthermore, in fiction the normal rules of speech acts which correlate words to the world are suspended. The author is not held responsible, for example, for proving the real life existence of characters or events narrated. Searle says that fictional characters are created by pretended reference. When Chaucer writes "a good wif was ther of biside Bath" he does not really refer to her because she does not really exist, but by pretending to refer to her he "creates a fictional person."[6] This idea may be usefully enriched by Richard Ohmann's notion of character ontology:

> Since that [fictional person] has no prior existence, in effect he is largely created by the assignment of speech acts. We ordinarily think of the author as creating characters and assigning lines to them, but it is the other way around: assigning lines is the means of creating characters, along with gesture, costume, motion.[7]

A preference in speech acts is, in fiction, if not necessarily in life, a major way we "know" a literary character. The preponderance of one speech act or group of similar speech acts in a character's discourse in combination with other descriptors gives us a sense of the broad outlines of the character. As a corollary, the use of uncharacteristic speech acts provides a contrast to the dominant pattern, allowing subtle revelation of individual complexity.[8]

Searle's taxonomy[9] gives us a framework in which to begin discussing the kind of fictional character the Wife's speech acts create. Distinctive syntactic and semantic features are clues which identify her speech acts, and it should surprise no one to learn that the overwhelming majority of her sentences contain signs of conflict. A closer look shows her taking a posture of

opposition using four different speech acts: she argues, insists, challenges, and confides. All four are based on setting up a proposition which is then denied. We will discuss these speech acts one by one explaining the clues that allow us to recognize them.

The Wife argues in two ways: directly and indirectly. In the first, she uses several different syntactic patterns to set up and contradict the proposition or opinion against which she argues. For example:

> Men may conseille a womman to been oon,
> But conseillyng is no commandement.[10] (ll.66-67)

The "men may . . ." is a set up, a straw man. Its truth value is compromised by what follows 'but.' The assertion of the sentence "conseillyng is no comandement," is introduced by 'but.' The word 'but' always denies a proposition made earlier, whether stated or implied.

'Yet' is another word which she uses to qualify or deny full acceptance of a proposition, either implied or previously referred to.

> Lat hem be breed of pured whete-seed,
> And lat us wyves hoten barly-breed;
> And yet with barly-breed, Mark telle kan,
> Oure Lord Jhesu refresshed many a man. (ll.143-46)

Other words and phrases which indicate denial of a proposition are 'al,' 'although,' 'though,' 'if,' and 'but if.'[11]

> Experience, though noon auctoritee
> Were in this world, is right ynogh for me. (ll.1-2)

"Experience is right enough" is her assertion. The dependent clause "though noon auctoritee were in this world," introduces the presupposition that experience is not an authority. Each of these grammatical constructions is a way of taking some given (which for the Wife may be conventionally accepted wisdom, clerical precept, or something one of her husbands has told her) and then rejecting or revising it.

The second major way in which the Wife argues is, in good medieval fashion (and against her own precepts), by authority. For her, an argument often consists of an assertion of opinion accompanied by a proverb, a scriptural quotation, or an example to prove her point. Sometimes this form of argument also has the syntactic form described above, but sometimes it is a collocation of the quotation with an assertion acting as an explanation, which comprises the argument. When there are no direct syntactic clues to tell us that this is an argument, "the apparatus necessary . . . to make the inference includes a theory of speech acts, a theory of conversation, factual background

information, and general powers of rationality and inference."[12] Here is an example:

> With empty hand men may none haukes lure.
> For wynnyng wolde I al his lust endure,
> And make me a feyned appetit. (ll.415-17)

These two sentences are not syntactically linked by the 'buts,' 'althoughs,' and 'therefores' by which arguments are made. The hearer, in order to understand the force of the lines, must resort to some inferential strategies. He must assume that the speaker is "cooperating in the conversation and that therefore his utterance has some aim or point."[13] With the factual background that proverbs (medieval "authority") are conventionally used to make arguments, the hearer can infer that the proverb is meant to argue the truth of the assertion. Specifically, the Wife here argues that she was reasonable to demand ransom for sexual favors, enduring lust for her own gain, since no one can expect to catch hawks without bait.

In sum, we see that the various forms her arguments take all deal in one way or another in confrontation. In the first series of examples the surface syntax announces the conflict explicitly by use of words like 'but,' 'although,' etc. In the indirect arguements by authority the Wife presents "proof" in order to counter an assumed opponent. In this latter case, the presupposition which may not be stated explicitly in the immediate context has often been stated earlier in the monologue.

A second way in which the Wife positions herself against received opinion is by insistence: by statements that do not contain overt arguments against stated premises, but whose vehemence can only be explained by the assumption that their speaker presupposes opposition, unspoken though it may remain. The surface markers of that vehemence are several kinds of intensifiers such as

a) extra negatives
Trusteth right wel, they were nat maad for noght. (l.118)
or
I nyl envye no virginitee. (l.142)

b) hyperbole
And trewely, as myne housbondes tolde me,
I hadde the beste **quoniam** myghte be. (ll.607-8)

c) oaths
Yblessed be God that I have wedded fyve! (l.44)
or
If I be daungerous, God yeve me sorwe! (l.151)

Some have all three intensifiers:[14]

> As helpe me verray God omnipotent,
> Though I right now sholde make my testament,
> I ne owe hem nat a word that it nys quit. (ll.423-25)

A future tense expressing intention can also act an an intensifier, indicating a reaction to a conflicting position. The following implies that others think it is good to be "precious."

> In swich estaat as God hath cleped us
> I wol persevere; I nam nat precius. (ll.147-48)

Challenges, like arguments, are constructed with a built-in pattern of contrast, conflict, or opposition. All the challenges in the Wife's Prologue and in the Tale as well are in the form of questions, normally rhetorical questions. They presuppose their answer and make the opposition to that answer clear.

> Wher can ye seye, in any manere age,
> That hye God defended mariage
> By expres word? I pray yow, telleth me. (ll.59-61)

and

> Who peyntede the leon, tel me who? (l.692)

Alison's personal revelations, her unexpected confidences, are perhaps the most surprising feature of her character. It is not possible to tell from the syntax that an act is to be taken as a confidence.[15] We must depend instead on our sense of the appropriateness of the sentence to the situation. The notion of a confidence is based on the surrounding social context so that our knowledge that a particular speech act counts as confiding depends on our sensitivity to the context, part of which includes the force of the surrounding speech acts. As modern readers, we have always assumed that the Wife was taking the pilgrims into her confidence because we have inferred the inappropriateness of such revelations as she makes. If a listener interprets a particular speech act to be a confidence, it must be because the listener judges it particularly personal. When confronted with personal revelation he infers an appropriate context to give it meaning. As the Wife tells near-strangers about her private life, the listener assumes that she does so with one of the following presuppositions:

a) Although some people wouldn't say this publicly, I will confide my opinion

b) Although some people would be ashamed of having done what I relate, I will confide my actions.

Notice that these presuppositions, with their 'although' clauses, take the same form as the Wife's arguments. It is because of her presupposition that others will disagree with her, that we in fact understand her assertions about her private life as confidences and further, as confidences assuming opposition. The following examples will show how she confides. In a) she is confiding an opinion; in b) she is confiding what she has done.

a) Al is his tombe noght so curyus
As was the sepulcre of hym Daryus,
Which that Appelles wroghte subtilly;
It nys but wast to burye hym preciously. (ll.497-500)

b) Baar I stifly myne olde housbondes on honde
That thus they seyden in hir dronkenesse;
And al was fals, but that I took witnesse
On Janekyn, and on my nece also. (ll.380-83)

A large part of Alison's narrative of her behavior toward her husbands comes in the form of a long series of confidences. She claims to be addressing wives, advising them about how to manage their husbands:

Now herkneth hou I baar me proprely,
Ye wise wyves, that kan understonde.
Thus shulde ye speke and bere hem wrong on honde;
For half so boldely kan ther no man
Swere and lyen, as a womman kan.
I sey nat this by wyves that been wyse,
But if it be whan they hem mysavyse.
A wyse wyf shal, if that she kan hir good,
Bere hym on honde that the cow is wood,
And take witnesse of hir owene mayde
Of hir assent; but herkneth how I sayde:
'Sire olde kaynard, is this thyn array?
Why is my neighebores wyf so gay?
She is honoured over al ther she gooth;
I sitte at hoom, I have no thrifty clooth.
What dostow at my neighebores hous?
Is she so fair? artow so amorous?
What rowne ye with oure mayde? **Benedicite!**
Sire olde lecchour, lat thy japes be!
And if I have a gossib or a freend,
Withouten gilt, thou chidest as a feend,
If that I walke or pleye unto his hous! (ll.224-45)

This tirade continues for 150 lines, but since there are, as we know, no wives on the pilgrimage, she cannot really be advising. The hearer must infer that she is confiding how she asserted "maistrie" over her husbands by various

demands, accusations, illogical arguments, etc. The sentences are linked by various kinds of discourse-relating connectives,[16] such as 'and,' 'also,' 'but,' 'thus,' and the frequent repetition of 'thou seist,' by which she begins her accusations of her husbands. Because of these internal links and because of the context (i.e., our "factual background information"[17] about her character, the absence of wives on the pilgrimage, and the address to 'Lordynges' in the conclusion), we understand each sentence as a confidence, with aggressive and argumentative force.

The Wife's four characteristic speech acts, namely arguing, insisting, challenging and confiding, not only express her commitment to her beliefs but demonstrate by their degree of force her prior assumption that her audience will need convincing. Arguing, insisting, and challenging are obviously forceful expressions assuming opposition. Though confiding, in another context, might not express the assumption of opposition with such force, in its context here, and in combination with her other speech acts, the Wife is clearly being aggressive when she confides. That her speech acts all fall at one extreme of a continuum of forcefulness becomes even clearer if we think of other kinds of statements of belief which the Wife does not make. These can range from the relatively neutral "I notice" or "I assume" to statements expressing uncertainty such as "I doubt," "I guess," or "I think." Thus, the degree of force of any speech act is not only related to the commitment of the speaker but is a result of the speaker's assessment of the hearer's knowledge and belief.[18] In sum, arguing, insisting, challenging, and confiding make up almost all of the Wife's discourse in her Prologue, and thus, the overwhelming message we receive from Alison's Prologue is of her incessant struggle against the givens of her world, her indominable revisionism, subversion, reordering. Her individuality is not just something we see in her because she is different from other medieval women in occupation, dress, number of marriages or freedom to travel. Major credit for our preception of her separateness goes to the force with which she constantly sets herself and her opinions in opposition to the opinions of others – she defines herself as apart by these patterns of speech.

The specification of Alison's speech acts gives us new information with which to approach the larger question of her position in the *Tales* as a whole. We now have a tool for specific comparison of her with other characters, and we begin, as others have, by comparing Alison to the Hag in her tale. The comparison seems a natural one since both women are old, interested in marriage, and not as attractive as they would like to be.[19] In bed on her wedding night, the Hag sounds very much like Alison, as she challenges her husband with the Wife's kind of rhetorical questions.

> O deere housbonde, **benedicitee!**
> Fareth every knyght thus with his wyf as ye?
> Is this the lawe of kyng Arthures hous?
> Is every knyght of his so dangerous? (ll.1087-90)

When he explains his unhappiness she launches into her three "sermons" which are in the forms of arguments constructed in the familiar syntax of contradiction: (a) insistence and (b) argument.

> (a) For, God it woot, men may wel often fynde
> A lordes sone do shame and vileynye. (ll.1150-51)

> (b) Now, sire, of elde ye repreve me;
> And certes, sire, thogh noon auctoritee
> Were in no book, ye gentils of honour
> Seyn that men sholde an oold wight doon favour,
> And clepe hym fader, for youre gentillesse. (ll.1207-11)

However, because of the content of the sermons the argument for identity of the two women is hard to maintain consistently. The strident tone of the Hag's arguments to the knight is the same as the Wife's tone of argument, yet the content of the Hag's speech is loftily Christian. Rather than arguing, as Alison does, for practicality and against overly strict interpretation of Christian doctrine, the Hag argues against widely accepted social practices and values, pointing out the lack of Christian charity inherent in the courtly ethic. Furthermore, the Hag argues for more charitable treatment of her conditions of low status, poverty, and old age, but Alison, though aging, is a wealthy bourgeoise. Though the two are boldly opinionated, they have quite different opinions.

Surely it is the importance of illocutionary force in discourse and the similarity of the speech acts in the Hag's sermons and in the first part of the Wife's Prologue that has encouraged critics to argue for a position untenable on grounds of content. We suggest that it is necessary to differentiate between the imperatives of language and the significance of content.[20]

An explanation that is consistent with the content as well as with the speech acts is needed, and the importance of the Hag's serious ethical arguments against a courtly code cannot be fully grasped without recognizing their significance elsewhere in the *Tales.* James Wimsatt gives us a hint of where to look in his suggestion that the Hag is a "stand-in" for the Boethian Lady Philosophy.[21] Indeed, a version of the Hag's argument about riches and nobility is to be found in the *Consolation.* We might then profitably compare the Hag to another Boethian lady, Dame Prudence in the Tale of Melibee.

Like the Hag when she is preaching to the Knight, Dame Prudence's speech acts are (a) argument and (b) insistence:

> (a) But though attempree wepyng be ygraunted,
> outrageous wepyng certes is deffended./ Mesure
> of wepyng sholde be considered, after the loore
> that techeth us Senek. . . . (ll.*2180-81)

> (b) For the trouthe of thynges and the profit been rather founden in fewe folk that been wise and ful of resoun, than by greet multitude of folk ther every man crieth and clatereth what that hym liketh. Soothly swich multitude is nat honest. (I.*2258)

Both women use phrases which explicitly indicate the logical construction of their arguments, and also neutral discourse connectives (such as 'thus,' or 'therefore') which contribute to the impression of the reasonable piling up of evidence. Thus the Hag argues:

> Reedeth Senek, and redeth eek Boece;
> Ther shul ye seen expres that it no drede is
> That he is gentil that dooth gentil dedis.
> And therfore, leeve housbonde, I thus conclude . . . (II.1168-71)

And Prudence:

> And nathelees I conseille you that ye mystruste nat my lord. . . .
> (II.*2948)

In sum, the Hag's speech acts are similar to both the Wife's and Dame Prudence's: all three argue. The Hag and Dame Prudence, as can be seen in the above examples, are reasonable and logical (Dame Prudence to the point of boredom). Prudence's arguments follow a schematized discourse pattern: she asserts her opinion, follows the assertion with proof by authority, follows the authority by a qualification of the original assertion, which in turn is proved by authority. The Wife's discourse, in contrast, though often containing logical arguments, procedes by haphazard association, and the narrative of her five marriages is often interrupted by argumentative digressions. In contrast to the two more philosophical dames, her love of hyperbole forbids her admitting qualification to any of her statements. Her aggressiveness requires swearing to make her argument rather than the calmly logical 'thus' or 'therefore' used by Prudence and by the Hag.

The Hag and Dame Prudence thus differ from the Wife in styles of argument, and perhaps more significantly, neither confides. It would seem then, that it is the combination of favored speech acts, the form of those speech acts, and the way they are combined in the discourse, that is responsible for our differing perceptions of these women. The significance of a few non-characteristic speech acts, precisely because they are not typical, illustrates our point. Everyone who knows Alison of Bath recognizes the importance of these forthright and moving assertions:

> But, Lord Crist! whan that it remembreth me
> Upon my yowthe and on my jolitee,
> It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote.
> Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote
> That I have had my world as in my tyme.
> But age, allas! that al wole envenyme,
> Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith.
> Lat go, farewel! the devel go therwith!
> The flour is goon, ther is namoore to telle;
> The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle;
> But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde. (ll.469-79)

Simple assertions,[22] as in ll.472-73 and 477-78 are not what we have come to expect from Alison, so when we meet them, they are all the more poignant. She lets down, just momentarily, her mask of defensiveness, and we see her for that moment as if her audience, against whom she must constantly argue, were not there. Similarly there is a time, after Melibee tells his wife why he won't listen to her opinions, that Prudence makes a speech of self-defense in which she sounds remarkably like the Wife. She piles up arguments, she "bears him on hand" with the length of her speech, which even includes a catalogue of good women. She uses the first person, "I," as an authority, rather than a classical teacher. Her arguments are based on her own reasoning in addition to quotations from others. For example, sounding very much like the Wife reinterpreting authority to suit her argument, she says:

> And though that Salomon seith that he ne foond nevere
> womman good, it folweth nat therfore that alle wommen
> ben wikke./ For though he ne foond no good womman,
> certes, many another man hath founden many a womman ful
> good and trewe./ Or elles, per aventure, the entente
> of Salomon was this, that, as in sovereyn bounte, he
> foond no womman;/this is to seyn, that ther is no wight
> that hath sovereyn bountee save God allone, as he
> hymself recordeth in hys Evaungelie./ (ll.1075-78)

In her own defense, she even uses the same anti-feminist proverb that the Wife mentions in her prologue (ll.278-80).

> Men seyn that thre thynges dryven a man out of his hous,
> — that is to seyn, smoke, droppyng of reyn, and wikked
> wyves./ (l.1085)

Like Alison she uses this proverb which slanders women to set up a proposition which she then denies.

> And sire, by youre leve, that am nat I;/ for ye han ful
> ofte assayed my grete silence and my grete pacience, and
> eek how wel that I kan hyde and hele thynges that men
> oghte secreely to hyde./ (II.*2277-78)

Prudence's intent in this section is in fact identical with the Wife's: she means to convince her husband to trust her.

> And what is bettre than a good womman? Nothyng. . . ./
> And therefore, sire, if ye wol triste to my conseil,
> I shal restoore yow youre doghter hool and sound./ And
> eek I wol do to yow so muche that ye shul have honour
> in this cause./ (II.*2297,2299-2300)

Alison of Bath explicitly and repeatedly demands this kind of submission from her men. Like her sisters she insists on explicit granting of her sovereignty before she will cooperate. If philosophy brings aid and comfort to men in need, that aid is only available to the man who can say, with Melibee,

> "Dame,". . . "dooth youre wil and youre likynge;/ for I
> putte me hoolly in youre disposicioun and ordinaunce."
> (II.1724-25)

and with the Knight:

> "My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,
> I put me in youre wise governance;
> Cheseth youreself. . . . (II.1230-32)

The comparison of the three women allows us to see the Wife in relationship to medieval ideals of prudence and philosophical wisdom — ideals conventionally personified from at least Boethius' time in a woman. Dame Prudence and the Hag represent this medieval ideal. Alison certainly tries, but she is Lady Philosophy **manquée;** a parody of the ideal revered in the Middle Ages. The Wife argues, insists, challenges, all for the purpose of gaining control and imposing her view of proper behavior in the world. But her view of proper behavior is hardly a prudent or charitable view and her arguments are self-defensive harangues rather than distanced and logical persuasions. Lady Philosophy's consolation offers to lift men above the painful flux of life so that both good and bad fortune can be met with equanimity, and in her way, the Wife also answers those who seek security and happiness above the inevitable changes and disappointments of life. Her exemplary ability to move on happily to whatever life brings is a secular consolation of philosophy. Ironically, though her teaching to "wise wyves, that can understonde"[23] is hardly virtuous instruction, she is sure that it is the only way to achieve domestic peace. Indeed, in the story she tells, the Hag and her Knight "lyve unto his lyves ende/ In parfit joye" (II.1257-58). But the Wife herself does

not. What she gets for her demands and what the Hag, Dame Prudence, and Lady Philosophy get, is the difference between the three. It must be the sense of her as a failure that makes us feel the pathos in her situation. She is knowledgeable but not wise, logical but not reasonable, demanding of worship but not worthy to receive it.

New approaches to literary interpretation have generally, and quite properly, been suspect. A theory or methodology is not innocent until proven guilty, but the reverse. A major cause of this distrust is the abiding and intuitively satisfying belief that literature should be immediately available to a speaker of the language in which it is written, should not need interpreting, should be, excuse us, an open book.

Recent work in poetics based on the linguistic model first proposed by de Saussure has challenged that notion of availability. The work of Jonathan Culler, for example, has gone far toward demonstrating that understanding literary texts calls for a literary competence that is beyond though dependent upon linguistic competence. We see this paper, first, as a demonstration of the usefulness of a version of speech act theory in understanding a part of that literary competence. It is, we have maintained, our ability to understand characters as being in large part defined by their speech acts, that allows us to understand literary characterization. Beyond that we make another claim: the language analysis, undertaken to explain a part of our literary competence, in the end led us further than our original goal. The application to literary texts of a theory designed for other purposes is only worth the awkwardness it causes if it helps us see things we would not have seen or understood otherwise. Although speech act theory is still incomplete, tentative in places, and perhaps even incorrect in some of its aspects, it is still sufficiently substantial to lead us to interesting conclusions that would otherwise go unnoticed. By stating explicitly what had previously been part of a competent reader's intuitive equipment for reading, we made the information available for use in a way it had not previously been. The information about the Wife's linguistic relationship to other characters thus not only explained our various perceptions of those characters but in fact became a new context in which to study Alison of Bath. It thus allowed us to understand the Wife and her tale in relation to Boethian ideals, which we have long known are important to an understanding of the whole of the *Canterbury Tales.*

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NOTES

1 Examples of the psychological argument are to be found in Charles

Muscatine, *Poetry and Crisis in The Age of Chaucer* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1972); Donald Howard, *The Idea of The Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1976); and Ian Robinson, *Chaucer and the English Tradition* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972). The best known of the allegorical arguments is by D.W. Robertson in *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962).

2 J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) and John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. 1969).

3 Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," *NHL,* 6 (1975); Richard Ohmann, "Literature as Act" in *Approaches to Poetics,* (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1973).

4 We refer you to two bibliographies: *Speech Act Theory: A Provisional Bibliography with a Terminological Guide,* Jef Verschueren, Indiana University Linguistics Club, May 1976, and Marcia Eaton, "Speech Acts: A Bibliography," *Centrum,* 2 (1974), 57-72.

5 Searle, "The Logical Status," 325, 324.

6 Searle, "The Logical Status," 330.

7 Ohmann, "Literature as Act," p. 98.

8 For Stanley Fish any inference about characters which could be drawn from the incidence of any particular speech act would be inadmissible because it would be context dependent. "There will be no regular relationship between a particular illocutionary act and the determined significance, which in another context would not need that act to emerge." ("How To Do Things With Austin and Searle: Speech Act Theory and Literary Criticism," TS, n.d., p. 42). The importance of Fish's perception is greater to the theory of speech acts than it is to our undertaking here. Fish quite reasonably notes that it would be a distortion of the direction of the theory to attempt to fix character or personality values to individual speech acts, yet that kind of theoretical rigidity is not necessary or even appropriate to literary interpretation. The speech acts of a character will never be the only key to interpretation, and we do not claim so here. They do though, need examination as part of a complex portrayal, and, as we shall see, they do repay our interest in them, in the case of Chaucer's Alison.

9 Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," *Language in Society,* 1 (April, 1976).

10 Citations from Chaucer in the text are to *The Works of Geoffrey*

Chaucer, ed. F.N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957). James Shay (personal communication) noted that the Wife shows here a clear understanding of the relative illocutionary forces of two different speech acts.

11 The marker of the denial may appear in either clause. As the first word of the sentence it signals an argument. Sometimes the proposition is presented neutrally and then denied.

12 Searle, "Speech Acts and Recent Linguistics," in *Developmental Psycholinguistics and Communication Disorders,* ed. Doris Aaronson and Robert W. Rieber, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, Vol. 263 (New York, 1975), p. 35.

13 Searle, "Speech Acts and Recent Linguistics," p. 36

14 Notice that each additional intensifier increases further the force of the assertion.

15 According to "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts," "confide" is not considered a speech act. It is specifically referred to as marking "the style or manner of performance of an illocutionary act" rather than as an act itself. While we agree in principle that illocutionary verbs are different from illocutionary acts, and that acts are different from classes of acts, Searle's taxonomy, as far as it is now available in print, is less than helpful. It contains unsolved ambiguities about which of the 12 points which are "significant dimensions of variation in which illocutionary acts differ one from another," define speech acts and which define classes of speech acts. Our need, from a critical point of view, is to have a taxonomy whose distinctions mirror a competent reader's intuitions about the text. In our reading of the Wife's monologue her confidences stand out as distinctive, and so for us "confide" becomes a separate speech act. We have found that the latter 9 of Searle's points (4-12), or combinations of them, because they provide more subtle distinctions, seem to reward a literary critic's close attention.

16 Searle, "A Classification," p. 5.

17 Searle, "Speech Acts and Recent Linguistics," 36.

18 Other characters among the Canterbury pilgrims do use these more neutral speech acts, e.g., the pilgrim Chaucer, *GP,* I.37.

19 Donald Howard's discussion of the tale as "a wish fulfillment fantasy" (*The Idea of the Canterbury Tales,* p. 253) implies an identification between the two though he does not make the argument, apparently

feeling it is obvious. Pen Szittya finds the essence of the Hag's sermons to be the "disjunction between appearances and reality" ("The Friar's Parody of the Wife of Bath's Tale," *PMLA,* 90 (1975), 391), which he claims makes them appropriate to the Wife who "might derive some benefit from the doctrine that beauty is inward." ("Forum," *PMLA,* 91 (1976), 293.) But Szittya can only make this argument by reducing a very specific moral speech to a highly generalized summary.

20 Howard and Szittya were not specifically concerned with linguistic analysis, and therefore did not recognize that in identifying these two women they were reacting to the force of the speech acts rather than to the specific content, as they thought they were. Each then forced the content to match his impressions, Howard by inversion and Szittya by over-generalization.

21 James I. Wimsatt, *Allegory and Mirror: Tradition and Structure in Middle English Literature* (New York: Pegasus, 1970), p. 102.

22 An assertion is usually considered the most neutral statement of belief. It commits the speaker to the truth of the proposition expressed but makes no attempt to convince the hearer.

23 We noted earlier that the Wife here addresses non-existent wives, there being no other women but the Prioress and "another Nonne" on the pilgrimage. The invention of an audience for the Wife to teach would seem evidence that Chaucer intended the Wife to be a parody of the greater woman teacher.

Judith Genova

Fiction and Lies

Ever since Plato, poets and by extension authors of all genres have been called liars. Hume, for example, said: "Poets themselves, tho' liars by profession endeavor to give an air of truth to their fictions."[1] There have been dissenters, among them Sidney, who said:

> Now for the poet, he nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth. For, as I take it, to lie is to affirm that to be true which is false. . . . but, the poet is not laboring to tell you what is or is not, but what should or should not be. And therefore though he recount things not true, yet because he telleth them not for true he lieth not.[2]

In the main, however, the orthodox view has it that literary fictions lie. Indeed, authors as well as their philosophical critics espouse it. Mann in *Felix Krull* and Gide in his *Counterfeiters* both worry about the conceits of literature's deceits. Even so sensible a critic as Frank Kermode believes in the lying of fictions:

> The novel, then, provides a reduction of the world different from that of the treatise. It has to lie. Words, thoughts, patterns of word and thought, are enemies of truth, if you identify that with what may be had by phenomenological reductions.[3]

Yet, if language is the culprit, it seems unfair to single out literature; philosophy, too, and all other intellectual pursuits traffic in words. William Gass is particularly adamant on this point. In fact, the more one thinks about the orthodox view, the more difficult it becomes to understand how it was ever taken seriously. While competitive, political motives might explain the philosophers' attack, what kind of dark psychological breast-beating causes authors to berate themselves? Lying, let us remember, is a moral charge.

Oh, I can reconstruct the thinking. Fictions speak about what is not the case. Neither the people nor the events are real. Authors know this and knowingly tell their stories anyway. Therefore, they are liars since lying is the conscious telling of what is not the case. No, the scenario is easy to reconstruct. The question is, how does this grossly literal interpretation of the practice of authors gain a hearing?

[*Centrum,* 5:1 (Spring 1977), pp. 35-42.]

On one hand, I feel that all one should do is respond as Leibniz did to those who would only countenance a mechanical, materialistic explanation of phenomena:

> As if in order to account for the capture of an important place by a prince, the historian should say it was because the particles of powder in the cannon having been touched by a spark of fire expanded with a rapidity capable of pushing a hard solid body against the walls of the place, while the little particles which composed the brass of the cannon were so well interlaced that they did not separate under this impact – as if he should account for it in this way instead of making us see how the foresight of the conqueror brought him to choose the time and the proper means and how his ability surmounted all obstacles.[4]

But then, I remember the limited appeal of common sense, particularly in this day and age. In the following, then, I would like to offer some arguments which will, I hope, show the utter disparity between the logic of lying and that of fiction-telling.

First, let us look at lying. It is commonly believed that to lie is to speak falsely; that is, if "p" is a lie, "p" is false. However, I believe this to be the first misconception. I may lie even though the proposition I utter is true. For example, in Sartre's story, *The Wall,* the hero lies to his captors, hoping to divert them from the hiding place of his comrades. As it turns out, his friends have moved to precisely the spot he has indicated. Now, one may want to argue that his intention to lie, to say something false, was foiled by a truth-telling universe. A similar tactic is taken by all those who defend the proposition, I know that "p," therefore "p"; that is, if "p" failed to be true, then one failed to know what one thought one knew. The comparable argument with respect to lying would run as follows: if while intending to lie, one utters a true proposition, then one has simply failed to lie. This argument, it is said, preserves our ordinary notions about knowledge and lying. I do not think it is a good argument in either case, since it only insists on the necessary condition of truth with respect to knowledge and falsity with respect to lying without ever testing them. Ordinary notions tend to be far more ambiguous than this type of argument allows.

But to avoid getting involved in too much at once, I shall take a different line and respond by arguing for a difference between "knowing" and "lying." The difference is evident in the following observation: whether or not the falsity of "p" is a necessary condition for "p" being a lie, my intention to speak falsely, i.e., to utter what is contrary to my belief, is a sufficient condition; whereas, my intention to speak truly would not be a sufficient condition for my knowing "p." Again, note that when we say to someone, "that's a lie," we mean more than "that's not true." In fact, if we find out that the person did not know it was false, we withdraw the charge of lying. This is so because lying is a matter of uttering what is contrary to one's

beliefs, and not necessarily what is contrary to the truth. Lying is measured by the intention of the speaker to speak falsely. The truth-value of the proposition is irrelevant. Moreover, only people can lie, not the propositions themselves. The opposite of lying is not truth-telling; it is sincerity, and one may speak with utter sincerity while all the time uttering false propositions.

I should note that this account would not do for Plato, who had a very odd conception of lying. In the *Republic,* he says that a true lie – and the paradoxical nature of such an expression does not escape him – is one in which the lie in words mirrors the false condition of the soul. Self-deception, then, a true belief in what is false, is for Plato the primary form of lying. A lie in words, on the other hand, in which one consciously utters the converse of one's true belief either for benevolent political reasons or because one is ignorant of the truth and just guessing, is not necessarily harmful and indeed may be positively useful.[5] One can easliy see how this justifies Plato's own fictions and his "noble lies." But, one wonders why he did not give poets the benefit of the doubt and credit them with the telling of such noble lies. At any rate, the main issue here is that for Plato, the falsity of "p" would be a sufficient condition for lying. But this is because he has reduced all falsehoods to lies. One has a moral obligation not only to tell the truth, but to discover it. While we can sympathize with this sentiment, I do not think we can agree with his logic. It is simply not the case that all falsehoods are lies since lying implies an intention to speak falsely and not every untruth that has been uttered bears this intention. One gets into Plato's difficulty by contrasting lies to truths in a facile way. Then, one is in the uncomfortable position of saying, if not all falsehoods are lies, then not all truths are truths. The way out of this "fly-bottle" is to distinguish between true and false on the one hand, and sincerity and lying on the other.

Nevertheless, you may insist that though the falsity of "p" is not a sufficient condition for lying, it is, at least, a necessary one. This would certainly accommodate those ordinary intuitions which are captured in any dictionary definition of lying: "A false statement made with intent to deceive" (O.E.D.). However, I have not agreed to this because of the following counter-example: suppose someone tells me something which is true, but which I also know that he or she does not believe. People often mouth beliefs which they know others hold to be true, but which they do not believe for one moment. Surely this is lying, speaking falsely, and perhaps, taking a cue from Plato, lying of a most hateful sort. Moreover, in contrast to the example from Sartre, this is a case of consciously lying while saying what is true. However, I shall not insist upon this, nor shall I bicker with Plato about which is the greater evil, hypocrisy or self-deception. My main point has been that the falsity of "p" is not a sufficient condition for lying. On this much, perhaps, we can agree.

Finally, ironically enough, by arguing that falsity is not a necessary condition for lying, I may inadvertently give support to those who would argue that fictions are lies. If by telling lies, I am not necessarily saying something

false, then I have taken the sting out of fiction-telling. In fact, some have argued, in Platonic fashion, that while literary fictions lie, they do so only in a superficial way. On a deeper level, they reveal hidden truths about people and their lives. Kierkegaard, for example, believed in the ultimate value of a deception. Goodman points out that one popular theory about realism is that the test of fidelity is deception, i.e., a picture is realistic just to the extent that it is a successful illusion.[6] However, I find this business of accepting the premise that fictions are lies and then arguing around it beside the point. We still have the condition that to lie, one must intend to deceive, and as I shall now argue, in no way do fiction-tellers intend to deceive.

Bentham argued that among fiction-tellers, whose ranks include philosophers, lawyers, and priests as well as authors, only lawyers and priests are intent on deception. Like Kermode, Bentham believes that language itself is the inevitable source of all fictions. However, for Bentham, only lawyers and priests use these fictions to deceive. Accordingly, he says:

> In the mind of all, fiction, in the logical sense, has been the coin of necessity – in that of poets, of amusement – in that of the priest and lawyer, of mischievous immorality in the shape of mischievous ambition . . . .[7]

Without commenting on Bentham's unfair bias, his general point is that fictions themselves do not deceive, but can be so used. Authors, as a rule, have no intention of deceiving, or making us mistake the real for the imaginary. Of course they are capable of deceit, but this would be a result of their lying intentions, not of their fictive ones. In fact, according to the theory of suspended belief, we are expected to suspend judgment altogether when entering the domain of literature. Frank Kermode's distinction between "fictions" and "myths" is helpful here. For Kermode, fictions must be held as consciously fictive; otherwise they degenerate into myths. "If we forget," he says, "that fictions are fictive we regress to myth (as when the Neo-Platonists forgot the fictiveness of Plato's fictions and Professor Frye forgets the fictiveness of all fictions)."[8] Myths are fictions which, instead of being held fictive, are received as true or, more to the point, as capable of being true or false.

Philosophical fictions often fall into this category, e.g., Descartes' pineal gland or Russell's sense-data. Fictions, on the other hand, are neutral with respect to truth-value. As Kermode says, "They are not myths, and they are not hypotheses; you neither rearrange the world to suit them, nor test them by experiment, for instance in gas-chambers."[9] I believe Kermode goes wrong, however, in relying on Vaihinger's identification of the "consciously fictive" with the "consciously false." If fictions could be analyzed in terms of the consciously false, it would be all too easy to see how poets came to be known as liars. As we have already seen, to speak falsely consciously is the essence of lying. No, to avoid the charge, fictions must be disassociated altogether from the false as well as the lie. They must be seen as neither true nor false.

According to modern theories of truth, only statements or those propositions offered as assertions can be true or false. Questions, exclamations, and performatives, since they are not uttered in the assertive mode, have more obviously eluded the vice of the excluded middle. Fictions, though not by any syntactical distinction, also fall under this category. I might add that even Aristotle argued that only statements could be true or false: "Every sentence has meaning . . . .Yet every sentence is not a proposition; only such are propositions as have in them truth or falsity. Thus, a prayer is a sentence, but it is neither true nor false." [10]

Thus, in an odd way, one might say that propositions in fiction are really fictional propositions, using the term "proposition" as Aristotle used it. Internally, of course, they have all the trappings of a proposition, and this has been the problem. However, unlike the propositions of ordinary discourse, fictions do not refer to or even aim at describing the external world. In Goodman's terms, supposing denotation to be essential to representation, fictions do not even represent since they do not denote. Thus, they can neither be "true of" nor "true to" the real world. So much for any version of the imitative theory of literature.

Once again, since there is no intent to speak of the real, there can be no failure of intent. Fictions are fictions; they presuppose a set whereby we treat them not as descriptions of what is not the case, the false, but as constructions of what is non-real, what neither is or is not the case. In short, it is a category mistake to think of fictions as either true or false. I take it this is precisely what Sidney had in mind, and also what Wittgenstein had in mind when he compared fictions to genre-pictures:

> If we compare a proposition with a picture, we must think whether we are comparing it to a portrait (a historical representation) or to a genre-picture. And both comparisons have point.
>
> Sentences in fiction correspond to genre-pictures.
>
> When I look at a genre-picture, it "tells" me something even though I don't believe (imagine) for a moment that the people I see in it really exist, or that there have really been people in that situation (cf. *Philosophical Investigations,* 522).[11]

As far as the problem of the lack of internal markings by which to differentiate statements from fictional propositions, there is nothing to do but accept the uncertainty. To a stranger to literature, a philistine, a proposition in a novel would look just like one in a text. There is no way of knowing whether we are reading bad history or marvelous invention. It is rather like Descartes' problem of distinguishing the waking from the dreaming state. And just as no satisfactory criteria could be discovered to silence the persistent skeptic, so I doubt whether any will be discovered to resolve the problem of

the philistine. However, there is no need to despair. Wittgenstein can be helpful here too. He reminds us that with sufficient training and exposure, we manage to make the appropriate distinctions. Sometimes we make mistakes, but so it goes. The distinction is there as long as mistakes are possible. It is a question of content, or as Wittgenstein would say, "form of life."

My mention of Sidney again brings me back to another important question raised by his defense of poesy. While he absolves the author of any intent to speak of the world as it is, he commits the author to speaking of the world as it might be. Many have spoken of literature in this way, and not always with the moral overtones of Sidney's account. To speak about what is possible, for example, according to Musil, whether for better or worse, is the special province of literature. Indeed, for Musil, literature is more philosophical than philosophy which is why, no doubt, he turned to it. Whether or not this is literature's mandate, I know not. The point of interest for me is that it is commonly thought in philosophy, particularly since Sartre, that to speak of what might be the case is to speak of what is not, i.e., what is false.

It is primarily this reduction which gives fictions their false appearance. But, surely, there is a difference between speaking of what might be the case and speaking incorrectly of what is the case. Only the latter, I should argue, deserves the label "false." The former, because it cannot be measured by the standard of correctness, cannot legitimately be considered false. Aristotle's classic definition of truth and falsity supports this argument. "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is and of what is not that it is not, is true."[12] The poet, in neither saying of what **is** that it is not, nor of what **is not** that it is, cannot be considered to be speaking falsely. Thus, to speak simply of what is not is not necessarily to speak falsely. Poor Plato, he is really being undone.

One objection that might be raised against the above argument is that, like Plato, we too have reduced all falsehoods to lies; that is, truth and falsity would be contingent upon discovering the speaker's intent. However, this is to confuse intent to assert at all with intent to assert falsely. The two are very different; the latter describes the logic of lying, the former the art of fiction-telling.

Lastly, let me suggest a strategy for dealing with the big problem which usually arises with this view of fictions. In the past, when fictions have been removed from the category of propositions which can have a truth-value, other less rigorous criteria are introduced to fill the void, e.g., pleasure, beauty, expressiveness, emotive function, usefullness, and so forth. All these retreats, for they are compromises, disturb the unsettled dust of the positivists who thought that if fictions could have no truth-value, literature could not be considered a cognitive pursuit. Where there is no possibility of truth, there is

no possibility of knowledge. Now, there are many ways out of this dilemma, including the cynical route which says that fictions are in no worse shape than those propositions which can have a truth-value. This approach recommends a retreat from the correspondence theory of truth altogether. Then, there is the route suggested earlier that although fictions have no literal truth-value, they have a figurative one. Here one is treating fictions in literature as tools comparable to philosophy's use of arguments, often contrary to fact arguments, to make a point. Literature speaks, but indirectly. The most popular version of this theory is that literature shows rather than tells what it has to say. For me, however, there is another far more promising and significant response, one which calls for a reevaluation of our standard conceptions of truth and knowledge. We tend to think that what one knows can be ticked off in true propositions, that truth in terms of correctness is the sole measure of knowledge. However, one knows much more. Here, I am not thinking of what is known but cannot be articulated, e.g., how a clarinet sounds or how coffee smells, to use two of Wittgenstein's examples; rather, I am thinking of the kind of knowing in which the truth of what is known is immaterial to the claim being made, e.g., Nietzsche's saying, "We have art in order that we may not perish from the truth." The last thing one asks is whether or not this is true. In fact, it is probably false. Art does not exist only to break up the ennui of the mundane. Nevertheless, we all know what Nietzsche means; moreover, many of us would agree, muttering something like, "So true, So true!" Now, either the cadence, "So true, So true" is inappropriate or there is another sense of true, one that does not depend upon the accuracy or correctness of the statement.

Dorothy Walsh, in her book, *Literature and Knowledge,* stretches for the second alternative. She points out that when knowledge is opposed to error, the question of truth is pertinent. But knowledge can also be opposed to ignorance.[13] In this event, truth in terms of correctness loses its force. Instead, she argues, if we are going to have a notion of truth in literature it must be something like truth in the sense of authentic. However, as I have already indicated, this amounts to a notion of "true to," a not-so-far distant cousin of "true of"; that is, it constrains literature to a version of the mimetic theory of art. Rather than seek an alternative sense of truth, one that is bound to be seen as yet another retreat, I would prefer to abondon truth altogether as the measure **sine qua non** for knowledge. After all, when one is ignorant of something, one does not necessarily believe something false. More likely, one does not know what to believe. Perhaps, we can liken this sort of knowledge, that which comes from philosophy and literature and which is not ultimately dependent on its truth-value, to wisdom in the Socratic sense. As we know, wisdom for Socrates was not a matter of polymathy. With this briefly sketched view of knowledge, to confess that fictions cannot be evaluated for their truth-value is not to relegate literature to a non-cognitive domain. There is more in the cognitive domain that the criterion of truth will allow. We must remember that forms of inquiry take many shapes. The pro-

cessing of beliefs through the truth-functional machine of logic is only one, while the entertainment of beliefs in literature is quite another.

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NOTES

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4 Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics,* trans. George R. Montogomery (rptd., LaSalle Il.: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1962), p. 35.

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Jessica R. Wirth

On The Necessity of Discourse Grammars

1. INTRODUCTION

One fact about language that is generally agreed to fall within the domain of linguistics is the fact that speakers are capable of producing and interpreting sequences of sentences (discourse) just as they are capable of producing and interpreting single sentences. Indeed, it has been explicitly argued (e.g., Sanders 1970) that discourse facts (including, but not limited to, single sentences) are the proper domain for the construction of grammars. A recent article by Grice (1975), which has met with wide acceptance, includes a proposal to account for certain aspects of the speaker's ability to assign (nonliteral) interpretations to sentences in conversation. Grice's proposal appears to be distinct from a discourse grammar **per se,** but there are a number of facts about discourse which, it appears, could be accounted for by either a conversational account or by a discourse grammar. Assuming that conversational principles of the sort proposed by Grice are necessary, the question then can be raised whether discourse grammars are necessary at all. In the present paper, it is argued that conversational principles, though necessary, are not sufficient to account for certain types of facts about discourse, and that grammars of discourse are necessary. It is shown in addition that discourse grammars must be distinct from conversational principles, i.e., that the function of discourse grammars cannot be taken over by an extended set of conversational principles.

2. ARGUMENTS FOR A DISCOURSE DOMAIN

Three general types of considerations motivate discourse grammars; examples of discourse facts involved in those considerations (taken from Sanders 1970) appear, together with a brief summary of arguments for discourse grammar, under A-C below. The examples in A show that discourses and single sentences have the same general attributes. The examples in B suggest that there are properties of sentences which are best accounted for as instances of general principles governing discourse. The examples in C show that there is a distinction between necessarily incomplete and potentially complete discourses which ought to be characterized. The general conclusion from all of these facts is that a discourse grammar – a grammar whose domain is discourse – would provide a full, simple, natural account of them whereas a sentence grammar would not.

[*Centrum,* 5:1 (Spring 1977), pp. 43-57]

A. Discourses and single sentences have the same attributes (grammaticality, synonymy, ambiguity).

1) Did John go? Yes, he did.	
2) *Did John go? Yes, they did.	[grammaticality]
3) *Yes, he did. Did John go?	
4) Cleopatra will go to Karnak. Cleopatra will see Caesar at Karnak.	[synonymy (between discourses)]
5) Cleopatra will go to Karnak. She will see Caesar at Karnak.	
6) That dog was running. That dog was barking.	[synonymy (between sentence and discourse)]
7) That dog was running and that dog was barking.	
8) Cleopatra was seen by Josephine yesterday. She was eating lunch then.	[ambiguity]

[Arguments for discourse grammar: discourse grammars are warranted in the same way sentence grammars have been; moreover, part of knowledge of sentences includes knowledge of their relations to discourse.]

B. There are properties of well-formed sentences which are best predicted by general principles governing discourse.

i) Contrastive stress

9) Sentences
   a) My brother **John** went to the **store** in the **morning.**
   b) My **brother** John **went** to the store in the morning.

9') Discourse
   a) My brother **John** went to the **store** in the **morning;** my brother **Henry** went to the **market** in the **afternoon.**
   b) My **brother** John **went** to the store in the morning; my **friend** John **came** to the store in the morning.

[Argument for discourse grammar: The forms of 9) can be seen as consequences of a discourse rule which stresses non-identical parts of partly identical sentences (cf. 9').]

ii) Anaphora and definiteness

10) a) She dances well.
b) There is a girl who X. She dances well.

11) a) The girl dances well.
b) There is a boy and a girl who X. The girl dances well.

[Arguments for discourse grammar: The fact that anaphoric pronouns in both single sentences and discourse are felt to be instances of a single, general process can be captured only by discourse grammars; similarly for definiteness.]

C. There is a distinction between potentially complete and necessarily incomplete discourses.

12) It arrived at 6 o'clock. [necessarily incomplete]

13) A train arrived at 6 o'clock. [potentially complete]

[Argument for discourse grammar: Given that this distinction ought to be characterized, only discourse grammars can characterize it.]

3. DISCOURSE GRAMMAR

The functions of a discourse grammar would be to characterize and correctly predict the grammaticality, synonymy, and ambiguity of stretches of discourse, and to characterize the distinction between potentially complete and necessarily incomplete discourses. A grammar whose domain is single sentences has virtually the same functions. The mechanism which accounts for discourse, then, would be identical in its gross outlines to that which has been proposed to account for single sentences. In carrying out the function of characterizing and predicting grammaticality, synonymy, and ambiguity of sentences, sentence grammars contain statements which make reference to the details of constituent structure, linear order, and semantic representations of the expressions in the language. Grammars of discourse would therefore also make reference to such types of elements. The only difference would be that the formal unit which constitutes an expression would be **a sequence of one or more sentences.**

4. CONVERSATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Grice (1975) has pointed out another fact about discourse, namely the fact that utterances of linguistic expressions in a context can "conversationally implicate" propositions which are not the (literal) meaning of the expressions used. An example of conversational implicature, taken from Grice, is in 14.

14) A and B are talking about a mutual friend, C, who is now working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job. B replies, "Oh, quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet."

[What is said: C hasn't been to prison yet.]
[What is implicated (the implicatum): C is potentially dishonest.]

Conversational implicature is such that the determination of the implicatum (that which is implicated) is a function not only of the (linguistic) meaning of the expression used but also of the linguistic and non-linguistic conversational context.

Grice's proposal to account for conversational implicature hinges on the central assumption that participants in a conversation are acting in accordance with a general principle governing behavior in conversation, the Cooperative Principle. Any participant obeying the Cooperative Principle is committed to observing a set of conversational principles (maxims). The set of principles originally proposed by Grice is listed below:

Cooperative Principle: Make your conversational 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.

Quantity maxims
1) Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality maxims [Generally, "Try to make your contribution one that is true."]
1) Do not say what you believe to be false.
2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation maxim
1) Be relevant.

Manner maxims
1) Avoid obscurity of expression.
2) Avoid ambiguity.
3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4) Be orderly.

Within this framework, the characterization of conversational implicature involves an attempt by the hearer to reconcile the fact that the speaker said what he said with the assumption that the speaker is obeying the Cooperative Principle. The hearer must come up with some proposition that he assumes

the speaker to have intended to convey, in order to effect such a reconciliation. A rough sketch of the kind of reasoning involved in calculating the conversational implicature in 14 appears below:

Premise 1: B is obeying the Cooperative Principle.
Premise 2: B's utterance is an apparent violation of the maxim of Relation
Premise 3: B deems his utterance relevant (from Premise 1).
Premise 4: B intends to convey that C is potentially dishonest. (implicatum)
Premise 5: B knows that A can come up with the proposition that C is potentially dishonest.
Premise 6: (perhaps some additional background information)
.
.
Premise n:

Conclusion: B might or would say that C hasn't been to prison yet.

Although the theory of conversation is by no means fully articulated, a general outline of the function of the theory and the type of mechanism envisioned by Grice can be given. The purpose of the theory is to give a general characterization of conversational implicature, and presumably, to predict correctly for any meaningful linguistic expression in any context what set of conversational implicata, if any, could possibly be assigned to that expression as the message that the speaker intended to convey. The theory of conversation contains a set of statements which specifies **what can be said in a context,** and the **manner in which it can be said.** By inspection of the conversational maxims, it can be seen that the statements in such a theory include reference to the speaker, the context (both linguistic and non-linguistic), the content (linguistic meaning) of what is said and to some aspects of the form of the expression used, but not to details of the constituent structure of the expression used.

5. THE QUESTION OF OVERLAP

Although the original functions of discourse grammars and conversational principles are distinct, since each of them seems to have the capacity to account for at least some properties of discourse, the question arises as to whether the sets of discourse facts that each can account for overlap.

Viewed from the perspective of the types of terms that appear in statements representing the conversational maxims, it appears to be the case, at least with respect to the types of examples presented here, that the set of conversational principles could possibly be used to account for all the types of facts illustrated by the examples in A-C above. The way in which the conversational principles might be used to do this might be the following:

a) Constraints on sequences of sentences

The contrast in 1 and 2 with respect to oddity/well-formedness could be construed as the difference between conformity with or violation of the

1) Did John go? Yes, he did.
2) Did John go? Yes, they did.

maxims of Relation and Quality. The maxims of Quality could be construed as requiring that appropriate answers be given to questions[1], and that in 2, the speaker, by answering with "Yes, they did." has given more information than required by the question, where such information is irrelevant to the question. The oddity of 3

3) *Yes, he did. Did John go?

could also be considered to be a violation of the maxims of Quantity construed as requiring, in effect, that questions precede, not follow, their answers.[2] Under these interpretations of examples 1-3, the claim would presumably be that the sequences are not ungrammatical, but simply nonsensical, or serving no purpose.

b) Synonymy

The synonymy of examples 4 and 5

4) Cleopatra will go to Karnak. Cleopatra will see Caesar at Karnak.
5) Cleopatra will go to Karnak. She will see Caesar at Karnak.

could be accounted for as follows. The conversational principles presuppose some specification (presumably provided by a sentence grammar) of the meanings of the words used in an utterance. Part of the meaning of a definite referring expression could be said to be the fact that it has a referent associated with the expression. The proper noun, "Cleopatra," is associated with a referent, and, by the maxim of Relation, the second occurrence of "Cleopatra" must be interpreted as having the same referent as the first occurrence of "Cleopatra." Thus in 4 the same individual is being referred to in both occurrences by the use of the noun phrase "Cleopatra." By the same reasoning, since part of the meaning of the pronoun (also a definite referring expression) is that it is associated with a referent, its particular referent is determinable again by the maxim of Relation to be that denoted by "Cleopatra." Since all other aspects of the meanings of 4 and 5 are identical, 4 and 5 are correctly predicted to have identical meanings. Examples 6 and 7,

6) That dog was running. That dog was barking.
7) That dog was running and that dog was barking.

though somewhat more complicated, can still be accounted for by the types of statements that would appear as conversational principles. The principles could include some statement to the effect that all propositions asserted by

the same speaker are interpreted as associated with the logical connective "&." (Such a statement might be construed to be necessary anyway in order to determine if the speaker has contradicted himself in successive utterances. This would then allow a determination of whether what the speaker said (or part of what the speaker said) was false or not, so that it could be decided if the speaker had obeyed or violated a maxim of Quality.) Given some such statement, since the meanings of the words and sentences in examples 6 and 7 are otherwise identical, the two stretches of discourse would be given the same interpretations.

c. Ambiguity

By the type of reasoning used for examples 4 and 5, the ambiguity of example 8 can naturally be accounted for.

8) Cleopatra was seen by Josephine yesterday. She was eating lunch then.

"Cleopatra" and "Josephine," being definite expressions, are each associated with a particular referent; "she," being also a definite expression, also has a referent. By the maxim of Relation, the referent of "she" has to be relevant to the context and thus can be either that of "Josephine" or that of "Cleopatra."

d. Predictability of sentence properties by general principles of discourse

i) Constrastive stress

The fact that the placement of contrastive stress in sentences is predictable from discourse context can, it appears, be accounted for with a further elaboration of the maxims. Kempson (1975:191-98) has, in fact, proposed an elaboration of the maxim of Relation (precisely in order to account for contrastive stress) to include a statement to the effect that the form of the expression must be relevant to its content. Although the details of her proposal are beyond the scope of this paper, it can be pointed out that her elaboration of the maxim of Relation is in the spirit of the Manner maxims. Thus, with an articulation of the maxims which seems to be consistent with the general outlines of the coversational principles, it seems to be possible to account for the placement of contrastive stress based on (what appears to be) a simple principle of conversation.

ii) Anaphora and definiteness

It should be clear from the discussion of 4-8, that the fact that the same processes are operant in the interpretations of anaphoric pronouns and definite noun phrases between and within sentences can be captured by the conversational principles. Given that definite expressions are associated with referents as a part of their meanings, the interpretations of their particular

referents are determinable by a single principle, the maxim of Relation, regardless of whether the definite expressions and their antecedents are in single sentences or in multi-sentence sequences.

e. Potentially complete versus necessarily incomplete discourses

It appears that the distinction between potentially complete and necessarily incomplete discourses could be characterized by invoking the principles of conversation. Since completeness is associated with context, it might be proposed that the set of necessarily incomplete discourses is that set of utterances which result from a violation of one or more of the Quantity or Relation maxims.

Thus, at least with respect to the examples considered here, it appears that a fuller articulation of the conversational principles could reasonably account for the examples which illustrate characteristics of discourse listed in A-C. Such an articulation would be consistent with the general properties of statements representing conversational principles because the types of statements which would be used to more precisely formulate the maxims would generally only refer to the content and context of the expression used, and not to the particular structural details of the expression used.

It may be concluded then, that the sets of facts that discourse grammars and conversational principles can in principle account for do indeed overlap. In fact, it has been seen that, with respect to the examples given to illustrate the types of facts which motivate discourse grammars, all of the examples can in principle be accounted for by a theory of conversation. In view of this, and since it can be argued that conversational principles are necessary,[3] the question arises whether discourse grammars are necessary at all. The question may now be asked whether all types of facts about discourse can be accounted for by a set of conversational principles as originally conceived.

6. THE NECESSITY OF GRAMMARS OF DISCOURSE

There are properties of discourse involving well-formedness and interpretations of discourse (synonymy, ambiguity) which cannot be accounted for by discourse grammars. The examples which show this are such that the statements which provide an adequate account of them must necessarily refer to the particular constituent structure properties of the constructions involved and not just the content of the expressions used.

a) Grammaticality

On a conversational account of examples 15-18

15) Did John read the book? Yes, he read it/the book.
16) *Did John read the book? Yes, he read.

17) What did you do with the banana? I ate it/the banana.
18) *What did you do with the banana? I ate.

it might be suggested that the oddity of 16 and 18 is due to a violation of the Quantity maxim requiring that the speaker give as much information as is required. But a conversational account fails. The oddity of 16 and 18 cannot reasonably be claimed to be due to a violation of the Quantity maxim, for the object of the verb is information which has already been given. Moreover, even if the speaker obeys the Quantity maxims non-linguistically by overtly pointing to the book/banana while uttering "He read"/"I ate," the response would still be ungrammatical as a response. Furthermore, the same discourse rendered in Japanese is grammatical:

19) John wa sono hon o yomimašitaka? Hai, yomimašita.
theme this book obj. read Q yes read

20) ano banana wa dō šimišitaka? Tabemašita.
that theme how did Q ate.

The well-formedness of the Japanese compared with the ill-formedness of the English examples suffices to show that the oddity of 16 and 18 is not due to aspects of the content of the responses, but rather to aspects of the particular structural details of the form of the expression used. In the case at hand, it is a particular structural fact about English, as distinct from Japanese, that objects of non-deleted verbs in sequences of sentences cannot be deleted. An account of the ill-formedness of 16 and 18 would thus necessarily make reference to aspects of the constituent structure of sequenced sentences. Conversational maxims as originally conceived do not refer to such structural elements as object noun phrases; thus, a theory of conversation could not in principle account for such facts about the grammaticality of sentence sequences.

Other examples which show the insufficiency of a theory of conversation to account for certain cases of grammatical/ungrammatical sequences of sentences are examples like 21 and 22:

21) Where did John go?
He went to a lake.
To a lake.
? A lake.
* Went to a lake.
* To lake.
* Lake.
* Went lake.

22) Japanese version:

John wa doko e ikimašitaka?
theme where to went Q
Mizuumi e ikimašita
? Mizuumi e.
Mizuumi.
lake to went

Although all the responses seem to conform to the conversational principles, not all the responses are well-formed as responses. Moreover, no non-discourse alternative can be appealed to, such as the possible claim that the ungrammaticality of the responses is due to the fact that the responses are not themselves **sentences,** for some of the grammatical responses are themselves not sentences. Thus, it appears that the only way to account for the grammaticality/ungrammaticality distinction in these cases is by a discourse grammar which contains references to such structural elements as subject noun phrase, preposition, postposition, article, etc.

Many examples can be found which exhibit the grammatical/ungrammatical distinction in discourse in languages with agreement and case markings. The expressions can be used in complete compliance with the conversational principles but the grammaticality of the sentence sequences depends on the particular structural details of the forms of the expressions used. A few examples are listed in 23-26.

i) Agreement

23) French

De quelle couleur est cette balle?	Verte.	What color is this ball?
	*Vert.	Green.
De quelle couleur est ce livre?	*Verte.	What color is this book?
	Vert.	Green.

24) Spanish

Como es Maria?	Alta, hermosa. . .	What is Maria like?
	*Alto, hermoso. . .	Tall, pretty. . .
Como es Juan?	*Alta, hermosa. . .	What is Juan like?
	Alto, hermoso. . .	Tall, handsome. . .

ii) Case marking

25) German

Wen hat er gesehen?	Den Mann.	Who did he see? The man.
	*Der Mann.	
Wer hat ihn gesehen?	*Den Mann.	Who saw him? The man.
	Der Mann.	

26) Hungarian

Kit látott John?	A fiút.	Whom did John see? The boy.
	*A fiú.	
Ki látta Johnt?	*A fiút.	Who saw John? The boy.
	A fiú.	

It may be concluded then that sequences of sentences are governed by principles that necessarily make reference to such aspects of constituent structure as subject and object noun phrases, prepositions, postpositions, articles, agreement particles, case markings, and so forth. Since the statements of conversational principles do not refer to such structural properties, conversational principles in their original conception cannot in principle account for these types of facts about the grammaticality of discourses, but discourse grammars, which do make reference to constituent structure, can.

b) Interpretations of discourse (synonymy and ambiguity)

It is necessary for the statements representing the principles governing discourse to refer to the constituent structure of the discourse, not only in order to account for **grammaticality,** but also to account for the **meanings** that are assigned to stretches of discourse.

In Japanese, for example, the pronoun **kare** receives varying interpretations depending on whether **kare** and its possible antecedent are in the same discourse constituent or not. Although by the maxim of Relation the synonymy of 27 and 28a could be correctly predicted.

27)	John	wa	hon	o	katte.	Ø	empitsu	o	utta.	(Ø = John)
		theme	book	obj.	buy conj. form		pencil	obj.	sold.	

28)	John	wa	hon	o	katta.	Kare	wa	empitsu	o	utta.
		theme	book	obj.	bought.	he	theme	pencil	obj.	sold.

a) kare = John
b) kare ≠ John

the non-synonymy of 29 with [27 or] 28a could not be correctly predicted,

29)	John	wa	hon	o	katte,	kare	wa	empitsu	o	utta.
		theme	book	obj.	buy conj. form	he	theme	pencil	obj.	sold

(kare ≠ John)

for the maxim of Relation as it has been construed here would predict that in 29 as well as [27 and] 28a, John can be the seller whereas in fact in 29 John cannot be the seller.

Since the difference in interpretation of **kare** in 28a and 29 varies with its appearance in a single sentence (discourse constituent) or two sentences (two discourse constituents), the statements which assign the interpretations must necessarily refer to the constituent structure of the expressions. Thus, there are cases where an adequate characterization of the synonymy or non-synonymy of pairs of expressions requires crucial reference to the discourse constituent structure of the expressions.

The Japanese example also suffices to show that ambiguity is present or absent depending on the constituent structure of the discourse, since 28, a sentence sequence, is ambiguous, and 27 and 29, single sentences, are not.

Another example which shows that ambiguity is a function of discourse constituent structure is illustrated by 30-32:

[A possible previous statement: I went to a concert that Bill and Mary were in, which was excellent; the program was good, too – it included, "Ave Maria," which I just love.]

30)	Bill played and Mary sang "Ave Maria."	(ambiguous)
31)	Bill played. And Mary sang "Ave Maria."	(unambiguous)
32)	Bill played. And Mary sang. "Ave Maria."	(ambiguous)

In 30 and 32 the ambiguity involves the two possible readings of **Bill played.** On one reading, Bill played some unspecified piece or instrument; on the other reading, Bill played "Ave Maria." In 31 the only possible reading of **Bill played** is the former. The only thing that differentiates these examples is whether they are one, two, or three single sentences; thus the ambiguity difference can only be attributed to the constituent structure of the discourse. It is thus clear that any characterization of the ambiguity/non-ambiguity of these examples must make reference to the structural properties of the expressions.

Thus, there are facts about discourse involving grammaticality, synonymy, and ambiguity in which the well-formedness and ranges of interpretation are specifically a function of the constituent structure of the expressions. Clearly, any adequate account of these types of facts must make crucial reference to the constituent structure of the expressions. Principles of conversation do not refer to such structural properties but discourse grammars do. Thus the theory of conversation as originally conceived cannot in principle account for certain properties of discourse, but discourse grammars can. The conclusion then is that discourse grammars are necessary.

7. THE INDEPENDENCE OF DISCOURSE GRAMMARS AND CONVERSATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Even if the conversational principles could refer to specific constituent structure properties of discourse, the set of principles governing grammaticality, i.e., discourse grammars, would have to be distinct from the set of conversational principles.

Suppose, for example, that the theory of conversation took on the function of characterizing and predicting instances of grammaticality, as well as its original function of characterizing conversational implicature. Presumably then, some or all of the principles of conversation would constitute the princi-

ples governing the grammaticality of discourse expressions in the language. Suppose, in particular, that **all** of the principles of conversation are taken to be principles governing grammaticality. Any expressions used in violation of any one of the conversational principles would presumably then be claimed to be ungrammatical. But the theory of conversation also functions to characterize and predict conversational implicature, and many (if not all) instances of conversational implicature are due to the violation of (at least) one of the conversational principles. Thus, any cases of expressions that are false, are unclearly stated, are not informative enough, etc., would be predicted to be ungrammatical (for they violate conversational principles), a result which is obviously counterintuitive. Therefore, if intuitions about grammaticality are to be captured, it is impossible for the entire set of conversational principles to simultaneously have the functions of characterizing grammaticality and conversational implicature.

Suppose, however, that only **some** of the conversational principles functioned in the characterization of grammaticality, and others functioned in the characterization of conversational implicature. In this case, in order for the theory to correctly predict, in the case of violations of the principles, whether the violation results in an implicature or simply in ungrammaticality, it would be necessary to mark each principle for whether it governs grammaticality or implicature. But this amounts to admitting that the set of principles governing the grammatical structure of discourse (i.e., a discourse grammar) is distinct from the set of principles governing conversation.

The conclusion then is that even if the conversational principles **did** make reference to details of constituent structure, they cannot wholly take over the functions of discourse grammars without making incorrect predictions about grammaticality. Thus, the set of statements which functions as a discourse grammar is distinct from the set of statements which constitutes the set of conversational principles.

It has been established that discourse grammars are necessary; and it has been assumed that a theory of conversation is necessary. But it has also been established that there are sets of facts which each set of principles – a discourse grammar or a theory of conversation – can account for, namely, those illustrated in 1-13. The question of which is the best way to account for each of those examples is thus left open, and the alternative proposals to account for each of them must be individually evaluated for their empirical adequacy and explanatory value.

8. CONCLUSION

It has been seen that, given that discourse facts must be accounted for, there are some discourse facts that can be accounted for by either a discourse grammar or by a theory of conversation. Given that it can be argued that a theory of conversation is necessary, the question has been raised whether

discourse grammars are necessary at all. It has been further seen, however, that there are types of facts about grammaticality, synonymy, and ambiguity which conversational principles could not in principle account for because such facts require for their characterization types of statements which make reference to details of constituent structure, and statements representing conversational principles do not make reference to details of constituent structure. Grammars of discourse, on the other hand, do make reference to constituent structure of expressions, and hence, can in principle account for such facts. Thus, grammars of discourse have been established as necessary. It has been seen, moreover, that even if the conversational principles **did** make reference to details of constituent structure, the set of conversational principles could not take over the function of characterizing grammaticality without making incorrect predictions. The general conclusion, then, is that discourse grammars are necessary, and constitute a set of principles of well-formedness of discourse structure which is distinct from the set of principles of conversation.

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NOTES

This paper was delivered at the Third Minnesota Regional Conference on Language and Linguistics, May 1977. An expanded version will appear in Perry 1978, Evidence and argumentation in linguistics.

1 The maxims of Quantity have in fact been construed in this way (Kempson 1975: 149).

2 The maxims of Quantity have in fact been construed in this way (Kempson 1975: 170).

3 An argument for the necessity of conversational principles is given in the expanded version of this paper in Perry 1978.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Bloomburied Stevens

Harold Bloom, *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate.* Cornell Univ. Press. 1977. Pp. 413. $17.50.

Anyone who picks up Harold Bloom's latest book solely out of an interest in Wallace Stevens is bound to be confused, frustrated, and, if he has paid $17.50 for it, outraged. For *Poems of Our Climate* is not really a book about Stevens. True, it consists of close readings of nearly a hundred of Stevens' poems often accompanied by gutsy devaluations of such sacred pieces as "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" and "Of Modern Poetry" as well as long-overdue praise for such lyrics as those in *Parts of a World.* Bloom's book also gives us a fairly new Stevens – anguished, strange, and passionate – who, if he at times looks a little like Moses Herzog, at least offers a refreshing change from the figure proffered by what Bloom calls the "canonical" critics and once dubbed by Randall Jarrell "G. E. Moore at the spinet." Bloom carries on a running battle with these other critics, though, except for a respectful but incessant bickering with Helen Vendler's *On Extended Wings,* there's little hand-to-hand fighting with such major scholars as Joseph Riddel, J. Hillis Miller, or Hugh Kenner. The source of Bloom's quarrel with what he narrowly regards as a homogeneous line of his predecessors is his insistence that all of Stevens' ironies and qualifications could not quell his post-Romantic yearnings for a native American sublime and a transcendent view of the self. Stevens is thus central to Bloom's great tradition that arises with Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, passes through its American strain with Whitman, Dickinson, and Emerson, gathers around Stevens' contemporaries Frost and Hart Crane, and continues in our own time with Ashbery, Ammons, and Warren. Bloom even proposes that we re-deem the early twentieth century as "the Age of Stevens" ["(or shall we say the Stevens era)" Bloom quips against his unnamed adversary in the field, Hugh Kenner] a century, for Bloom curiously devoid of cubist painting, two world wars, or a poem called *The Waste Land.*

Yet while *Poems of Our Climate* has a great deal to say about Stevens, both the general reader of modern poetry and the Stevens specialist are likely to find the book virtually unreadable. It is not so much the complexity of the subject, not even the density of Bloom's argument, but the tortured language that presents these that will daunt all but the most committed reader. Such a reader must witness again and again the spectacle of a poet introjecting his own metalepsis, must be willing to enter and re-enter the problematic of a poet's stance, and must cross pages bristling with terms like **clinamen, tessera,**

[*Centrum,* 5:1 (Spring 1977), pp. 58-62.]

aporia, and **meaning-through-sparagmos** (though the true student of Bloomsprache will miss such gems from Bloom's earlier books as **tikkun** and **zimzum** and will not even blink at Bloom's deadpan complaint of Emerson that the latter's "multiplication of terms is more than a little maddening"). One could forgive Bloom his educational psychologist's libido for jargon if he only explained some of these words. To be fair, he does offer such explanations, but they are contained in his other books – *Anxiety of Influence, Kabbalah and Criticism, Poetry and Repression,* and *A Map of Misreading.* It is for readers who have read these theoretical works – or who are willing to pause and read them in order to find out what Bloom is saying about Stevens – that *Poems of Our Climate* is pitched.

Such readers will find the new book interesting as a full-scale application of a literary theory Bloom has been evolving in the earlier books. When Bloom first articulated that theory in *Anxiety of Influence,* he wanted it to do two things: one, "to de-idealize our accepted accounts of how one poet helps to form another" and two, "to provide a poetics that will foster a more adequate practical criticism" (A/I, 5).* It seems to me that he has succeeded in his first goal but failed in his second. Once one grants its implicity acknowledged limits as a theory designed to account for poems (not novels or plays) written by male poets (or female poets with the proper Oedipal anxieties toward influential older poets) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Bloom's argument that as literary history grows longer, later poets grow more acutely conscious of their own belatedness, seems true. He also persuades me that any young poet (whom he calls an "ephebe") harbors guilt and hatred toward the great poet (the "precursor") who fathered him by inspiring him to become a poet, yet deprived his offspring of a pure and prior language with which to win the maternal Muse. The ephebe who merely repeats the father's words becomes a weak poet, but the strong poet grapples with the father's language in order to repress the anxiety of influence and win a place for his own poems in the history of such struggles that constitutes English poetry since Milton. It is when Bloom, in search of "A theory of poetry that must belong **to** poetry, must **be** poetry" so that "it can be of any use in interpreting poem" (K/C, 109), argues that the individual poem is the battlefield for this Oedipal struggle that I dispute his claim that his theory's "usefulness for practical criticism, . . .can be demonstrated" (M/M, 10).

Let me single out two fundamental questions about such a demonstration that crop up in the theoretical books and bloom into major problems with the readings in *Poems of Our Climate.* Seeking a theory that will avoid the extremes of reductionism and contextualism, Bloom argues that poems are "neither about 'subjects' nor about 'themselves'" (M/M, 18). Instead, a text "is a relational event" (K/C, 106) whose dialectical meaning "can only be a poem, but **another poem – a poem not itself"** (A/I, 70). When we ask,

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*I'm using the following abbreviations –A/I for *Anxiety of Influence,* M/M for *A Map of Misreading,* K/C for *Kabbalah and Criticism,* and P/C for *Poems of Our Climate.*

however, in what wise a poem shows its own father, Bloom's answers offer little practical help: "Poetic influence, between strong poets, works in the depths" (M/M, 21); it is in "a poet's stance, his Word, his imaginative identity, his whole being" (A/I 71); "A poem is a deep misprision of a previous poem when we recognize the later poem as being absent rather than present on the surface of the earlier poem, and yet still being **in** the earlier poem, implicit or hidden **in** it, not yet manifest, and yet **there**" (K/C, 67); it lies in taboo-like "antithetical meanings" the ephebe gives his precursor's "primary words" (A/I, 70); finally, the parent poem that is held in a dialectic of meaning with a particular poem is "not a poem chosen with **total** (**my** italics) arbitrariness, but any central poem by an indubitable precursor, even if the ephebe **never read** that poem" (A/I, 70). (Though how indubitably precursive can a poet be if his ephebe's overlooked one of his central poems?) Bloom is clearer on how such determinations of influence are **not** made: it has nothing to do "with the verbal resemblances between one poet and another" (M/M, 19) nor "with the borrowings of images or ideas, with sound-patterns, or with other verbal reminders of one poem by another" (K/C, 67).

Yet when we turn to *Poems of Our Climate* we find Bloom asserting Stevens' relation to such precursors as Shelley, Whitman and Keats with the very means he ruled out in the earlier books. It is usually a matter of ideas – Whitman's nocturnal and oceanic mother of death in "Auroras of Autumn" – or of images – Shelley's trope of autumn leaves in the wind in "Domination of Black" – or of verbal resemblance – Stevens' "place honey on the altars and die" as an echo of Keats's "Fall of Hyperion." Seldom do we see Stevens' antithetical use of their primary words or the **apophradic** phenomenon of reading one of these earlier poets and finding he eerily seems to be echoing Stevens. At times, Bloom is too busy trying to establish the very indubitable influence he would like to assume to involve himself in further convolution. For example, when faced, in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," with the "idiot minstrelsy" of birds madly chirping "Bέthou me" – Bloom neglects what seems a hilariously antithetical response to a precursor's primary words and solemnly argues that rather than "a mockery" Stevens' "point is precisely Shellyan" (P/C, 196). Bloom could better substantiate those influences if he did not affect such disdain for "trivial" verbal resemblances or the drudgery of source-study. For example, in his analysis of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," his hunch that Stevens' evening star, "The most ancient light in the most ancient sky," may "be an allusion to Keats's sonnet *Bright Star,*" gains more credence if we first recognize that Stevens is echoing his own early poem, "Nuances of a Theme by Williams," itself a rewriting of Williams' "El Hombre" with its address to the "ancient star," an address that, in turn, richly underscores Williams' own early anxiety of influence toward Keats.

Part of the reason *Poems of Our Climate* offers little practical guidance in determining a poem's precursor may be that Bloom has shifted his theoretical emphasis from a poet's wrestling with his literary father to the darker struggle

this displaces — the poet's contrary pulls toward and away from his own mortality figured in the play of language itself. That struggle, when it emerges directly in a single poem or in the final phase of a poetic career such as Stevens', Bloom calls the "Crisis of Identification," and is usually preceded by two other displacements which he calls the "Crisis of Election" — confronting "the death of the creative gift" — and the "Crisis of Solipsism" — confronting "the death of love," the capacity to love another (P/C, 403). In many nineteenth- and twentieth-century poems, which Bloom calls post-Enlightenment crisis-poems, these three crises are marked by "Crossings" and it is this theory of crossings that constitutes *Poems of Our Climate's* major extension and completion of Bloom's model for reading poems that has been developing since *Anxiety of Influence.* Since each crisis is mediated by a shift from one particular psychic defense to another (i.e., from Sublimation to Projection) and since each psychic defense is linked to a particular trope (i.e., Repression is linked to hyperbole) in a relationship Bloom calls a "revisionary Ratio" (of which there are three classically-named dialectical pairs: *Clinamen/Tessera; Kenosis/Daemonization; Askesis/Apophrades*), it follows that the crises beneath a poem's surface can be "mapped" by examining the imagery to locate the points where one kind of figurative language leaps into another.

Near the end of *Poems of Our Climate,* Bloom insists, "Obviously, I am **not** saying that every strong poem in English follows a prescribed dance of tropes," only that "the paradigm of the post-Enlightenment crisis-poem" is "a definite progression of six tropes" (P/C, 405). Yet this qualification is neither so definite nor so sweeping as it sounds. In *Map of Misreading,* where Bloom offers a full-page diagram of his tropes, defenses, and ratios, he affirms "the pattern exists," suggests "it is both more intricate and more precise than we have realized" (M/M, 96), and argues that far from being just "more than a handful," a "remarkable number of poems, from the *Intimations Ode* to *Auroras of Autumn,* will be shown to follow this model of the six ratios quite closely" (M/M, 105). Here and at the end of *Poems of Our Climate* Bloom grants that some strong poems violate this pattern "though generally in clearly discernible schemes of re-arrangment" or, if they "rebel from the model," that "rebellion is frequently equivocal." In *Poems of Our Climate,* Bloom finds this pattern, without re-arrangement or violation, in a staggering number of Stevens' poems, from the early "Domination of Black" to the late long poem, "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven." Even when Bloom does not seem to be explicitly mapping a lyric, the wary reader can spot an **askesis** lurking behind one of his seemingly innocent glosses and hear a **kenosis** coming a quatrain away.

The basic difficulty with Bloom's map is not that he applies it too extensively but that it doesn't even work for his paradigms. He says many poems begin with a Crossing of Election intervening between a figure of irony and a synecdoche, follow with a Crossing of Solipsisim in the gap between a metonymy and a hyperbole, and conclude with a Crossing of Identification as

a metaphor shifts antithetically into a metalepsis. The problem in demonstrating this is not just with what Bloom confesses is his "apparently arbitrary locations and namings of these rhetorical disjunctions" (P/C, 17), but with the more practical issue of showing how, in a short poem like "Blanche McCarthy" a thrice-repeated phrase is ironical the first time, metonymic the second time, and metaphoric the third, or how the line "glare of revelations going by" is hyperbolic at all. Or how each stanza of "Sunday Morning" is matched to the proper trope in the proper order when stanza three seems to be metonymic only because it has a lot of m's ("metonymic mutterings") and, since there are seven stanzas and only six tropes, metaphor has to do double-duty for stanzas five and six. It would help if Bloom at least mentioned the fact that Stevens originally published "Sunday Morning" with the stanzas in a completely different order. It may be that one quickly comes to anticipate the steps of the map in any reading (and is seldom disappointed) but I think even an innocent reader would resist some of Bloom's identifications.

When Bloom drops his map and gets lost in a poem, however, the results can be exhilarating. He reads Stevens the right way – with the Concordance in his left hand, the (compact) *Oxford English Dictionary* in his right hand and his ear – the shrewdest at detecting poetic tone – to the text. His own theory, whatever its attendant problems, at least frees him from the reliance upon the usual jargon of Stevens critics (and of Stevens himself) so that we could count on one hand the times "imagination" and "reality" appear in conjunction and seldom do we find a chunky quote from *The Necessary Angel* or *Opus Posthumous.* His snipings at those who would make Stevens a Christian or a French Symbolist may silence those drums and keep him as native a dandy as Whitman. All of this, however, is just Bloom's skillful reading, good sense, and shrewd intuition; it doesn't emerge as an application of his theory, which, as a theory of literary history, seems to me enormously suggestive and persuasive but, at least in *Poems of Our Climate,* does not help me read individual poems. Whether in his next book Bloom will return to that theory, offer a new application of it, or abandon the attempt to bring theory and practice together is hard to tell but, given his track record over the last few years, we won't have long to wait.

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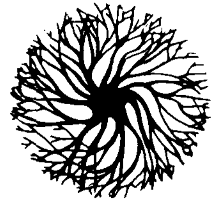

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