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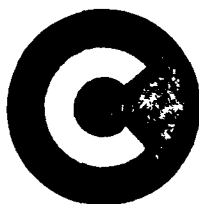

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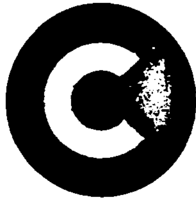

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JONATHAN CULLER

STRUCTURAL SEMANTICS AND POETICS

A. J. Greimas's Sémantique structurale contains a semantic theory designed to account for verbal meaning of all kinds, including the "global meaning" of a complete work. Examination of his theory shows that it does not constitute an automatic procedure by which the meaning of the whole could be derived from the meaning of its parts or even for the isolation of levels of coherence. The problems Greimas's theory encounters suggest the impossibility of a theory of discourse which does not take into account readers' expectations concerning kinds of meaning and coherence to be sought in various types of discourse.

Katz and Fodor, who like most transformational grammarians are not known for the modesty of their theoretical claims, see the task of semantics as that of describing selected aspects of a speaker's competence: his ability to determine the literal meanings of sentences, to recognize synonymous sentences, and to reject anomalous readings. They are concerned with the meaning of sentences only, not of utterances or of discourse, and do not attempt to characterize in detail the meaning of deviant (e.g. metaphorical) strings.[1] The literary critic who hopes that semantics might make a substantial contribution to the understanding of meaning in poetry will doubtless concur with Uriel Weinreich's view that Katz and Fodor are "concerned with an extremly limited part of semantic competence," and that "whether there is any point to semantic theories which are accountable only for special cases of speech--namely, humorless, banal prose--is highly doubtful."[2] The critic would prefer a more ambitious theory, even though it might be less systematic; and it is therefore surprising that A. J. Greimas's Sémantique structurale, which attempts to account for verbal meaning of all kinds, including the thematic organization of a writer's "imaginative world," should have received so little attention.[3] This article attempts to remedy that neglect and to define the relationship between semantics and poetics through a critical discussion of Greimas's theory.

A semantic theory must aim at both operational and descriptive adequacy; that is, it must use concepts which can be

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defined in terms of empirical techniques or operations and it must account for intuitively-attested facts about meanings. In the present state of research in semantics, any theory will probably fail in one of these respects: either it will use a coherent and explicit metalanguage but fail to account for semantic effects, or it will develop concepts which successfully specify the effects to be explained but which are not themselves explicitly defined in operational terms. The initial problem in evaluating Greimas's theory--and which perhaps explains why, despite his reputation, so little serious critical attention has been devoted to it--is that one is not sure in which way it fails. When introducing a new concept he defines it both in terms of other concepts of the theory and in terms of the semantic effects it is supposed to explain, but often these two definitions do not coincide and one must choose which is to be the crucial specification. Is his theory a set of interlocking and coherently defined concepts which fail to explain the semantic effects they were designed to account for, or is it rather a specification of aspects of semantic competence whose terms must be more explicitly defined? It is not difficult to show that he has failed to attain his goal of accounting for metaphorical meaning, the meaning of sentences in connected discourse, and even the "totalité de signification" of a text, but the crucial question is how does he fail and what can we learn from the obstacles he encounters and his attempts to overcome them.

Greimas's theory can be outlined as a series of descriptive stages which begin with the notion of meaning itself and work upwards through the concepts required to take one from minimal semantic features to the meaning of a discourse. One can isolate seven descriptive stages, though one should bear in mind that the first stage is of a different order from the others, since Greimas distinguishes between meaning as immanence and meaning as manifestation (p.24): lexical items manifest certain combinations of semantic features, but the features themselves are the result of immanent oppositions (the lexical item _man_ manifests the feature _human_, which is the result of an immanent opposition _human_/_animal_).[4]

1). Minimal semantic features, comparable to distinctive features in phonology, are called "semes." They are the result of oppositions within the semantic universe (e.g. _masculine_/_feminine_) and combine with one another in any manifestation of meaning. The criteria of adequacy for semes is quite simple: if the commutation of any two lexical items produces a difference of meaning, there must be one or more semes which account for that difference. Any semantic theory will require a hierarchically organized set of semantic

features, but none, including Greimas's, has produced a thorough and adequate system of semes.

2). Lexical items or lexemes are signs which combine a phonological shape and a meaning.[5] The meaning of a lexeme consists of an invariant core of semes (le noyau sémique) and a set of contextual semes, which are necessary to account for the different readings a word may have in different contexts. A single reading or effet de sens is called a sememe. To determine the composition of a sememe, one takes all the occurrence of a lexical item in a corpus and sets aside those features of its meaning which do not vary as the noyau sémique, while arranging the variant features in sememes as the contextual semes. The second step in semantic description, therefore, is to rewrite each lexical item as a set of possible sememes, which can then be identified in a given stretch of text. The first two steps, taken together, amount to a formalization of the dictionary of a language.

3). Given semantic entries for each lexical item, one can, in theory, proceed to establish what Greimas calls "classemes." Any seme which, by its presence in a sequence, selects an identical seme as part of the reading of another lexical item is a classeme. For example, Greimas claims that aboie is given different readings in Le chien aboie and L'homme aboie, in that the semes animal and human, present in the respective nouns, entail selection of corresponding contextual semes in the sememes for aboie (animal and human cry, respectively) (p.50). Since they have this function, animal and human are classemes. To identify classemes, one collects the contexts in which a single reading of a lexical item occurs (contexts which have, therefore, enforced selections of one particular sememe for that lexical item) and one determines the feature or features which these contexts share.

There are two basic problems here.[6] First, Greimas's theory does not work even for the lexical items he cites: though the police are human, La police aboie après le criminel does not involve human cries so much as animal pursuit. If such effects are to be accounted for in an explicit fashion, the theory must become considerably more complex. Secondly, Greimas's claim that correct readings are selected by the presence of an identical seme in two items of a sequence imposes severe conditions upon the information contained in sememes. In order that the correct meaning be assigned to colourful dress and colourful character, one must invent some feature which is present in both colourful and dress and another in both colourful and character. This suggests that we cannot first rewrite lexical items as sememes and then discover classemes by looking for features which are repeated in the sememes of a given sequence. On the contrary, we must

know what the classemes are in order to know what information to put in the sememes. Classemes cannot be deduced from the rep tition of semes; they are, rather, a concept introduced to represent an important aspect of semantic competence: the ability to choose the correct reading for a lexical item in a given context.

4). Just as the repetition of semes is supposed to lead to the formation of classemes, so the repetition of classemes leads to the next level of integration, which Greimas calls the "isotopie" of a text. Classemes which are repeated in a discourse indicate a level of coherence, an *isotopie* which unifies it:

> Such a conception of classemes, items whose characteristic is to be repeated, can have definite explanatory value if only in making more comprehensible the concept, still very vague and yet necessary, of *meaningful whole* [*totalité de signification*]....We shall attempt to show, by use of the concept of *isotopie*, how it is that whole texts are situated at homogenous semantic levels, how the total meaning [*le signifié global*] of a set of signifiers, instead of being postulated *a priori*, can be interpreted as a real structural property of linguistic manifestation [p.53].

If he could succeed in showing how the total meaning might be derived by some definable operations from a set of signifiers, his work would be of great moment to the literary critic; but unfortunately the notion that the repetition of classemes leads to a particular form of unity is simply not borne out by any example Greimas cites.

Jokes, he argues, provide excellent evidence of the functioning of *isotopies* because the joke is a form which "deliberately displays the linguistic operations it uses." At a splendid and elegant party one guest remarks to another, "Ah! belle soirée, hein? Repas magnifique, et puis jolies toilettes, hein?" To which comes the not unpredictable reply, "Ça, je n'en sais rien...je n'y suis pas allé." Greimas claims, quite correctly, that the first part of the joke, introducing the situation, establishes one context and level of semantic coherence and that the reply of the second speaker "destroys its unity in suddenly opposing a second *isotopie* to the first" (p.70). Certainly this is what happens, but one cannot see how this could be explained as the result of the repetition of classemes. The reading of "dresses" for *toilettes* is determined by rather more subtle features of the context than the sort of classeme previously discussed. To see that no feature of *brillante soirée mondaine* suffices in

itself to determine this reading of _toilettes_, one need only turn the joke around and have the first speaker ask, "Où sont les toilettes?" or "Avez-vous vu les toilettes?", with the reply, "They're all around you." In this case the reader selects the correct meaning with no difficulty even though the seme "sanitary facility" or whatever relates to nothing in the introductory sequence of the joke. He knows that one is not likely to ask where the dresses are at a fashionable evening party. It is extremely important for a theory of discourse to be able to account for readers' abilities to choose among alternative readings and establish levels of coherence, but the process involves some rather complex notions of vraisemblance and appropriateness which cannot be rendered, it would seem, by a list of the classemes that appear more than once in a text. Greimas seems to recognize this difficulty when he writes in a later chapter that

> the need for a _cultural grid_ to resolve difficulties concerning the _discovery of isotopies_ calls into question the very possibility of objective semantic analysis. For the fact that, in the present state of knowledge, it is difficult to imagine such a grid which would meet the requirements of mechanical analysis indicates that description itself still depends, to a large extent, on the subjective decisions of the analyst [p.90].

In other words, Greimas sees that the proposed scheme is not in itself a procedure for semantic analysis. _Isotopies_, like classemes, cannot be machanically constructed; but they do represent an important aspect of the competence of readers which must be explained. Greimas's use of this concept will be considered in more detail in the second half of this paper.

5). Once one has isolated various _isotopies_ one can proceed to what Greimas calls the "transformation of corpus into text" by extracting from the corpus elements belonging to a particular _isotopie_. As Greimas sadly notes, this procedure is very much "subject to the subjective perceptions of the researcher" but he claims that omission can be identified and picked up by retrospective analysis, by going repeatedly back over the text (p.145). This assumes, of course, that one knows what one is looking for, which is far from clear. For example, Greimas has identified what he calls the basic _isotopies_: the "practical," which is a manifestation of the "cosmological" or exterior world, and the "mythic," which concerns the "noological" or inner world (p.120). The example which illustrates this distinction--_un sac lourd_ (_a heavy bag_) versus _une conscience lourde_ (_a heavy conscience_) is clear

enough but does not succeed in establishing a principle that would enable one to class every phrase in one or the other of these categories (e.g. what does one do with _La police aboie après le criminel_? Is that purely external?). Greimas appears to assume that phrases will already be marked with the relevant classemes, _intéroceptive_ and _extéroceptive_; but this simply transfers the problem to a lower level. Even in simple cases the procedures are not clear: what happens when one tries to extract from a text all sequences (but how long is a sequence?) containing the classeme _human_?

6). The next step in semantic description is the "normalization" of the text which has been constructed by isolating the elements belonging to a single _isotopie_. One eliminates everything which refers to the act of enunciation: first and second person pronouns (which are replaced by "the speaker" and "the listener"), all references to the time of the message, deictics "insofar as they involve the subjectivity of the speaker," etc. (pp.153-4). The syntax is cast into a regular and constant form: each sequence is reduced to a set of nominal phrases (_actants_) and a predicate which is either a verb or a predicate adjective (Greimas calls them "dynamic" and "static" predicates or _functions_ and _qualifications_). Predicates may also include, in addition to the basic element, modal operators and an adverbial element of some kind (referred to, for reasons which remain obscure, as an aspect, pp. 154-5). _Actants_, or nominal groups, will fit into one of six different slots or roles: subject, object, _destinateur_ (sender), _destinataire_ (receiver), _opposant_, and _adjuvant_ (helper). For a single sentence the schema would be as follows:

Function
or (modal)(aspect) / $\text{Actant}_1 \ldots \text{Actant}_6$ /.
Qualification

One could not represent complex sentences in this way without some elaborate modification. For example in _John likes Mary to come to visit him_, the subject of the modal verb (_likes_) is not the same as the subject of the _function_ (_to come to visit_). In fact, such practical problems do not arise because Greimas does not attempt to analyse a stretch of text using this schema.

7). "Normalizing" the text helps one to "discover more easily its redundancies and structural articulations" (p.158). In his last chapter Greimas attempts to determine the structure of the "imaginary universe of Bernanos" as a way of illustrating his method of semantic description. Unfortunately he does not begin with the texts themselves and show how one might start from semantic features and go on to determine

classemes and isotopies. He bases his study on an Istanbul thesis by Tahsin Yücel on L'Imaginaire de Bernanos whose results, he rather surprisingly claims, "permit us not to avoid the difficulties that any description involves" (p.222). This bold claim is scarcely convincing. What one would like to see is how a text can be "regularized" or brought to the point at which one can, by some well-defined procedure, determine its redundancies and structural articulations. And it is precisely this point which Greimas avoids. No stretch of text, however small, is presented and analysed.

Greimas claims that his procedure is as follows: he chooses as his basic isotopie the opposition between life and death and extracts from the corpus all terms which are therein used to qualify life and death. Taking the items which qualify life, one reduces them to a limited number of sememes and then, by a second process of extraction, collects all the contexts in which each of these appears. For example, if one had a sequence such as Life is beautiful, one would ask in the second extraction what other nominal groups were qualified by beautiful. Less skilful analysts would no doubt find such sequences as This dress is beautiful or Marie is beautiful and be forced to relate life to dress and Marie, but for some reason it does not work out thus for Greimas, who discovers the distributional equivalence of death, water, and ennui, which as a class are opposed to life, fire, and joy. One can then proceed to determine the qualifications which appear with the four new terms, "and so on until the corpus is exhausted, that is to say until the last extraction (n) using the last inventory (n-1) makes no new qualifications appear" (p.224). This spurious rigour would not be so objectionable if Greimas deigned to indicate by a single example how he proposes to deal with such sentences as contain the first uses of vie in Bernanos's Sous le Soleil de Satan: "It is the hour of the poet who was distilling life in his head, so as to extract its secret, perfumed, poisoned essence." "He still broods in melancholy fashion on the paradise lost of middle-class life." "The Marquis of Cardigan led in the same place the life of a king without a kingdom." Such sequences have presumably been reduced or eliminated by previous steps, but one would like to know how this is done.

The semantic features which Greimas extracts from his series of inventories are arranged in a system of oppositions representing the associations of life and death, and various transformations of the schema are proposed as versions of Bernanos's aspirations and ideological choices. Most of the tableaux have considerable intuitive validity as the oppositions are inherent in the structure of the language (e.g. heat/cold, light/darkness) and because the choice and grouping of

categories seem not unrelated to the eccentricities of Bernanos's imaginary world. But that is not the essential point. The crucial question is what claims might be made for an analysis of this sort. One might present these categories as those which readers use in reading Bernanos, maintaining that the effects of his work can be explained only by supposing that the reader organizes elements in roughly these groups as he goes along. To make this claim one would have to consider in some detail extracts from the texts themselves and the ways in which they are interpreted, but Greimas takes no steps in this direction. One could, on the other hand, maintain that these categories represent, in some sense, the "objective" structure of the imaginative universe in that they can be derived from the texts by a set of explicit discovery procedures. This claim would seem nearer to Greimas's intentions, though here too one would need to check the results attained against the intuitions of readers so as to justify the procedures of extraction themselves. But more important, one would need to see the procedures of extraction at work on the actual texts to be convinced that the familiar indeterminacies of distributional analysis had somehow been overcome.

As an account of procedures for semantic description Greimas's theory is thoroughly inadequate. Insofar as his concepts are explicitly defined they seem unable to perform the tasks he assigns them. If one tries to move automatically from seme to classeme and from classeme to _isotopie_ one finds that these concepts explain little, but if one wishes to retain the explanatory function they are given, then one must reject the operational definitions offered. Whichever course one chooses, the implied conclusion is the same: the "effets de sens" in complex texts cannot be accounted for by the simple combination of lower-level features.

From time to time Greimas recognizes that he has encountered a problem which "calls into question once again the diachronic status of description considered as a procedure" (p.167). For example, although theoretically a step-by-step procedure should enable one to reduce a text to a series of sememes, in fact it is clear that such reduction "presupposes the hypothetical representation of structures to be described, but that in turn structuration, to be successfully achieved, presupposes a completed reduction" (p.167). From Greimas's point of view this is an obstacle to the formulation of an algorithm for description, but for the literary critic this is a useful observation about the process of understanding. As Merleau-Ponty says, the meaning of the whole is not arrived at inductively by summing up the meaning of the parts; it is only when the sense of the whole is perceived that the meaning of individual signs can be defined. Understanding "is not a series of

inductions--it is Gestaltung and Ruckgestaltung [postulating and repostulating wholes]...That is to say, there is germination of what is going to have been understood [ce qui va avoir été compris]."[8] The reader forms hypotheses about the texts "totalité de signification" and then attempts a reduction in those terms. If that reduction does not work--the text does, after all, impose constraints--he proposes new hypothetical structures. Semantic description, at least at the level of discourse, is itself a structuring activity which must provide a representation of the structuring activity of the reader.

Hence Greimas's most fruitful suggestions are those which bear directly on the process of reading and indicate the problems it poses for semantic description. His work offers, first, a number of suggestions about the "conditions de la saisie du sens" (p.160)--basic formal structures through which the meaning of a text can be grasped and which are conditions of the production of meaning--and secondly a discussion of the process of establishing levels of coherence. In both cases the value of his theory lies in its specification of the problems to be overcome, though Greimas himself may be rather too sanguine about the possibility of overcoming them without the aid of theories bearing on the specific conventions of particular types of discourse.

In constructing cultural objects, Greimas argues, the mind is subject to certain constraints which define the "conditions of existence for semiotic objects" (p.135). The most important of these is the "basic structure of signification," which has the form of a four-term homology (A:B::-A:-B) and "furnishes a semiotic model suited to accounting for the initial articulations of meaning within a semantic micro-universe" (161). At its most general level, the meaning of a text can be represented as a correlation between two pairs of opposed terms. This structure can be either static or dynamic, depending on whether the text is read syntagmatically or paradigmatically: that is, as narrative or as lyric. To have a meaning, Greimas argues, a narrative "must form a unity of meaning and thus can be presented as an elementary semantic structure" in which a temporal opposition is correlated with a thematic opposition: avant: après::contenu inversé:contenu posé (p.187). In other words, the relation between an initial state and a final state is correlated with the opposition between a problem and a solution at the thematic level. The claim is, roughly speaking, that the reader can grasp the récit as a whole only by fitting it into this structure and relating a thematic development to the development of the plot.

Lyric poems, however, may often be grasped as a whole without any reference to temporal development. Modern poetry

in particular, Greimas writes, is frequently "the discursive manifestation of a taxonomy" (p.136). The reader is faced with a series of images, linked in rudimentary discursive structure, from which he must extract features that he can use to construct classes. The fundamental structure of a poem, by Greimas's hypothesis, will be a pair of such classes which can be related to another and perhaps more "profound" thematic opposition.[9]

Greimas also argues that a major constraint on the formation of thematic "classes" in both poetry and prose is that they be binary: "an inventory of items cannot be reduced to a class and denoted by a single sememe except insofar as another opposing inventory is, at the same time, constituted and named" (p.167). The logic of this claim is not difficult to grasp: to class a series of elements together is to pose as constitutive of this class a feature or set of features which are supposedly pertinent to the meaning of the text as a whole. If they are indeed pertinent, it is because of an opposition between them and other features which, in turn, are constitutive of another class. Van Dijk reaches a similar conclusion: "one may postulate that the occurrence of a thematic seme requires the existence of an opposing thematic seme which serves as its partner."[10] But, as will be argued below, though this condition may hold for the organization of features at a single isotopic level, there is reason to believe that it does not govern the selection of _isotopies_ themselves.

Closely related to this claim is the suggestion--unfortunately not fully developed--that the process of symbolic or figurative interpretation

> consists of retaining in the process of extraction only those semes which are pertinent to the construction of models. Thus, the description of poetic manifestation will abandon, for example, the figures of _attic_ and _cellar_, retaining only the semes _high_ and _low_, useful for the construction of axiological sememes...such as euphoria of heights and dysphoria of depths [p. 138].

Since for Greimas the "axiological" is defined as an _isotopie mythique_ (concerning the inner world) manifested in _qualifications_ (and hence, roughly, evaluative description), one can read this passage as suggesting that interpretation of figurative language is a process of discovering oppositions which can be correlated with opposing values. The implicit claim is that reading, at a symbolic level, is not completed until one has discovered oppositions that can be related to a structure of values.

In short, Greimas's position would be that there are a small number of formal principles that govern the process of "structuration" that takes place when a reader encounters a literary text. Van Dijk, after attempting to apply some of Greimas's concepts to the analysis of poetry, concludes that the problem, for the reader, of deciding which features have a thematic function and which, therefore, are to be extracted from the text, "is partially resolved by several structuring principles (perhaps of an *a priori* nature, it is true): repetition, parallelism, opposition, and isotopie."[11] He hesitates over "*a priori*" because he fears that to use such principles is to abandon the inductive method. But some such principles must be introduced if we are to explain the reader's ability to propose hypotheses about the structure of a text.

These observations bear on the very general and formal models which might guide the process of reading. A more specific problem to which Greimas has devoted some attention is how relevant *isotopies* or levels of coherence might be identified. "The principal difficulty of reading," he writes, "consists in discovering the isotopie of the text and in remaining at that level" (p.99). Literary theory and semantics face the same problem:

> The struggle against the logomachic character of texts, the search for conditions for establishing objectively the isotopies which permit reading, is one of the principal worries of semantic description in its initial phases.[12]

In reading a text one gains a sense of what it is about; one isolates a semantic field in which a number of items fall as the topic of the text and hence as the central point of reference to which other items one encounters should, if possible, be related. But as Greimas notes, one can choose at random a series of elements in a text, treat them as a set, and construct some general category encompassing them all: "it is always possible to reduce an inventory, taken on its own, to a constructed sememe" (p.167). What, then, prevents the reader's activity from being totally arbitrary, though logical? Ideally, the explicit description of the *isotopies* of a text "should account for all possible coherent readings. Without going so far as explicitly listing each reading, it would define the conditions of each."[13] If such a goal is to be even remotely possible, one must formulate some general rule to account for the fact that not every conceivable *isotopie* is valid for a given text. What are, then, the "conditions for establishing objectively the isotopies"?

In some simple cases it might be argued that repetition

of a particular item suffices to account for an _isotopie_. Baudelaire's second "Spleen" poem, "J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans," begins with a paratactic sequence of sentences, each containing a pronominal form in the first person singular, and in each case the relationship between the pronoun and the predicate is that of container to contained. Thus, when a reader comes to the line, "Je suis un vieux boudoir plein de roses fanées," he will "attempt, more or less consciously, to extract from the 'physical' description of the boudoir all the semes which can develop and maintain the second isotopie, which has been postulated from the beginning, of the poet's inner space" (p.97).

But in other instances it is considerably more difficult to explain what happens or how a dominant _isotopie_ comes to assert itself. Greimas's erstwhile collaborator, François Rastier, has applied the descriptive techniques to Mallarmé's "Salut," in an analysis which shows the intuitive validity of the concept _isotopie_ but also the formidable problems involved in specifying how it is isolated:

Salut

Rien, cette écume, vierge vers
A ne désigner que la coupe;
Telle loin se noie une troupe
De sirènes, mainte à l'envers.

Nous naviguons, ô mes divers
Amis, moi déja sur la poupe
Vous l'avant fastueux qui coupe
Le flot de foudres et d'hivers;

Une ivresse belle m'engage
Sans craindre même son tangage
De porter debout ce salut

Solitude, récif, étoile
A n'importe ce qui valut
Le blanc souci de notre toile.[14]

"The work of the reader," Rastier writes, "consists of listing and naming in metalinguistic fashion the semes that characterize the chosen _isotopie_."[15] The first of these can be designated as _banquet_. Any item which can be read as bearing a relation to the general semantic field surrounding this concept is extracted from the text and its interpretation integrated into the _isotopie_. For example, "_rien_= these lines (connotes the modesty required of speakers); _écume_= champagne bubbles; _vierge vers_= a toast offered for the first time...."[16] A second

isotopie is that of navigation (e.g. salut= saved from the sea; écume= the froth of waves). And finally a third level, "which can be designated by the word writing," is postulated.

But it is clear that these three isotopies are not simply the result of the repetition of semantic features. For one thing, in constructing the first the reader requires knowledge of "the semiotic system defining the ritual of banquets."[17] In order to be able to extract "modesty" from rien, "champagne" from écume, "tablecloth" from toile, he must know what takes place at banquets and have a strong desire to read the poem in these terms. Moreover, to read the sonnet as about writing he requires considerable evidence from Mallarmé's other poems, where he will find, for example, the coupling of writing and negativity. Certainly this last isotopie cannot be the result of the repetition of features, since the only element of the text which directly relates to it is vierge vers. That is to say, if we imagine a reader who knows French but has no experience of poetry or knowledge of literary conventions, it is not difficult to see that in reading this poem he would not find a series of items which repeatedly suggest to him that the poem might be about writing. The experienced reader of poetry, on the other hand, knows that poems, especially poems by Mallarmé, are likely to be about poetry, that neither banquets or sea voyages serve as a satisfactory final isotopie in that banquets always celebrate something and voyages are traditionally metaphors for other types of quest. It is only because he possesses knowledge of this sort--only because he approaches the poem with implicit models of this kind--that he is likely to attempt to read the poem as about writing.

The importance of readers' expectations about poetry is even clearer in another case discussed by Rastier. "In Gerard Manley Hopkins' 'The Windhover,' no semantic interpretant enables one to read anything other than the obvious isotopie which may be crudely summed up as 'a falcon rises and then swoops'."[18] How is it, then, that readers are not satisfied with this interpretation? What enables them to "go on"? Committed as he is to the view that levels of coherence are manifested by a repetition of features in the poem, Rastier is forced to argue that

> the presence...of a large number of lexemes of foreign origin, French for the most part, indicates a foreignness whose connotations, for an Englishman, are aristocratic and, for a Jesuit, sacred (through Latin origins); whence the discovery of a second isotopie crudely summed up as "Christ rises in the heavens and comes to earth."[19]

By this criterion, of course, it would follow that one could read any text containing many words of Latin origin as a text on a sacred subject. However "objective" such a procedure, it fails on simple grounds of empirical adequacy. Moreover, the hypothesis is totally unnecessary in this particular case. The reader of poetry knows that when such metaphorical energy is expended on a bird the creature itself is exalted and becomes metaphor, so that he would in any case seek analogues through which to generalize the splendour of "buckling"; and if the religious isotopie did not propose itself in that interpretive search, it might be justified by the general expectations concerning the author, whose poems demand at least an attempt at a religious reading. As Rastier's specimen analysis shows there is no reason to believe that the process of constructing levels of coherence can be explained without reference to some general literary models which guide readers' approach to the text.

In discussing an example of a different kind--a joke taken from Freud--Greimas demonstrates that even in prose texts consisting of perfectly comprehensible well-formed sentences the process of reading may consist of seizing upon a single feature of the text and building upon it an elaborate conceptual hypothesis for which there is really extraordinarily little evidence in the language itself--though everyone would agree about the correctness of the interpretation.

> A dealer offers a client a horse:
>
> --If you take this horse and leave at four in the morning you'll be at Presbourg at half-past six.
>
> --And what will I do in Presbourg at six-thirty in the morning?

The reader recognizes that there is a conflict of isotopies between the dealer's remarks and the client's and that this is what creates the joke. But the text itself contains very little evidence indeed for this interpretation. The reader does not know where the exchange takes place, whether the journey to Presbourg is long or short, or how swiftly a fast horse could cover the distance. There is thus little objective cause for the natural and correct reaction of taking the dealer's remark as an illustration of the horse's speed. The crucial factor here, although Greimas does not mention it, is probably the closure of the text: if the dealer's and the client's remarks were on the same isotopic level the text would not end where it does, but since it comes so abruptly to a halt there must be meaning enough in the few sentences presented and that meaning will probably be generated by an

oppositional structure. If the passage is to be of any interest at all there must be a contrast between the dealer's statement and the client's reply, and this expectation is strong enough to make us reject plausible literal readings in order to discover a conflict. We can take the brief introductory statement as establishing an isotopie which suggests that what follows will be a statement by the dealer about the horse and, given our cultural models, that it will concern some positive quality of the horse. Thus, when we encounter in the next sentence the opposition between departure and arrival this determines, as Greimas says, "the choice of one of the variables within the class of positive qualities of riding horses" (p.92). We can then read the client's remark as a misinterpretation--either foolish or deliberate--and do so with such confidence that we can laugh at one of the two figures.

This case provides excellent evidence, if it were needed, of the fact that it may be misleading to think of texts themselves as organic wholes; their unity is produced not so much by intrinsic features of their parts as what one might call the intent at totality of the interpretive process--the strength of the expectations which lead readers to look for certain forms of organization in a text and to find them.

One is tempted to say, then, that Greimas's real contribution lies not in the theory itself but in the problem he tackles and the difficulties he encounters. The strong hypothesis about semantic description, which he attempts to test, is that if words and sentences are transcribed in terms of semantic features it should be possible to define a series of operations which would lead, in algorithmic fashion, from these minimal features to a series of readings for the text as a whole. This proposal encounters serious obstacles: the reader's ability to recognize isotopies cannot be represented as a process of noting which classemes are repeated, and the more one attempts to stretch one's analysis to account for isotopies which readers obviously do use in interpreting texts, the less one's theory will resemble an explicit procedure. It would seem that the semantic description of sentences cannot be treated as an independent initial step which provides the material from which the meaning of a text can be deduced. And the reason is not simply that a given sentence will have different meanings according to its context. That in itself is not the difficulty so much as the given problem. The obstacle to discourse analysis of this kind is rather that the context which determines the meaning of a sentence is more than the other sentences of the text; it is a complex of knowledge and expectations of varying degrees of specificity, a kind of interpretive competence which could

in principle be described but which in practice proves exceedingly refractory. For it consists on the one hand of various assumptions concerning coherence and general models of semantic organization and on the other of a knowledge of the world which provides goals toward which one may read. And at a level of greater specificity it involves expectations about particular types of texts and the kinds of interpretations they require. If a newspaper editorial is set down on a page as a lyric poem, the semantic features of its elements remain the same but they are subjected to different kinds of treatment and organized at different isotopic levels; and a theory which attempts to derive the meaning of a text from the meaning of its constituents will fail, however perspicuous and explicit it may be, to account for differences of this kind.

Greimas's inability to provide an algorithm for semantic analysis indicates that the meaning of texts cannot be explained without reference to literary models and expectations and thus suggests the impossibility of characterizing understanding as a process of induction, in which smaller units are first assimilated and then combined on the basis of resemblance to form larger units. Semantic organization at the textual level is the result of a complex dialectic between the meanings of lexical items and a structure of knowledge about the world and about literary forms. Discourse analysis might stand more chance of success if it were to begin with the latter rather than with the former.[20]

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NOTES

[1]J. Katz and J. Fodor, "The Structure of a Semantic Theory," The Structure of Language (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1964); see also J. Katz, "Semi-sentences," ibid.

[2]"Explorations in Semantic Theory," Current Trends in Linguistics, ed. T. Sebeok (The Hague, 1966), vol.3, pp.397-9.

[3]Sémantique structurale (Paris, 1966). References to this work are henceforth included in the text. The best discussion of Sémantique structurale, though it does not touch on the problem of literary analysis, is E. U. Grosse, "Zur Neuorientierung der Semantik bei Greimas: Grundgedanken, Probleme und Vorschläge," Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie 57 (1971). Cf. also reviews by J-C. Coquet, Critique 248 (1968) and S. Ullmann, Lingua 18 (1967).

[4]Grosse argues (op. cit., p.392) that a lexical level between immanence and manifestation is required. This is certainly correct, but one might argue that Greimas assumes the presence of such a level.

[5]It is scarcely to the credit of Greimas's presentation that his critics should err on this simple point. T. Van Dijk calls the lexeme "un sens global" ("Sémantique structurale et analyse thématique," Lingua 23 [1969], p.31). Ullmann speaks of it as "the minimum unit of the signifié" but also of the sememe as the "signifié of a lexeme" (op. cit., pp.298-9). In fact the sememe is the signifié of a single manifestation of a lexeme.

[6]I leave aside the problem of whether classemes can be defined purely in terms of repeated contextual semes. For discussion see Grosse (op. cit., pp.370-71) and B. Pottier, "Vers une sémantique moderne," Travaux de linguistique et littérature 2 (1964), pp.124-6.

[7]"Splendid evening, eh? Magnificent food, and the dresses (toilets) are lovely, eh?" "I wouldn't know about that... I haven't been."

[8]M. Merleau-Ponty, Le Visible et l'invisible (Paris, 1964), p.243 (his italics).

[9]For example, in analysing a poem of Du Bouchet, T. Van Dijk discovers two isotopic classes, paysage and maison, which are correlated with contrasting values (op. cit., pp. 49-51 and passim).

[10]Op. cit., p.41.

[11]Op. cit., p.53.

[12]Greimas, Du Sens (Paris, 1970), pp.93-4.

[13]F. Rastier, "Systématique des isotopies," Essais de sémiotique poétique, ed Greimas (Paris, 1972), p.96.

[14]Toast/Safety/Salvation

Nothing, this froth, virgin verse
To indicate only the cup;
So in the distance many a troup
Of sirens drown themselves, topsy-turvy.

We sail, O my varied friends,
I already on the poop
You the gaudy prow that cuts
The seas of winters and lightning;

A lovely tipsiness (passion) engages me
Without fear even of the pitching
To offer this toast

Solitude, reef, star
To whatever was worth
The white care of our canvas.

[15]*Op. cit.*, p.88.

[16]*Ibid.*, p.86.

[17]*Ibid.*

[18]*Ibid.*, p.100.

[19]*Ibid.*

[20]For further discussion see my *Structuralist Poetics* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, forthcoming), from which this article is an extract.

GERALD PRINCE

ON PRESUPPOSITION AND NARRATIVE STRATEGY

The presupposition of a statement, defined as the semantic element common to that statement, its negation, and its corresponding yes-no question, can help characterize the way a given narrative imparts information and, more particularly, the narrator's stance with regards to his audience and narration. A brief examination of certain passages from Flaubert's _Un Coeur simple_ shows how presupposition is used to manipulate point of view, control distance, and impose a certain universe of discourse. It is hoped that a more thorough study will lead to interesting discoveries about the nature not only of narrative but also of language.

1.0 Consider the following statements:

(1) John thinks that Peter's brother is intelligent.

(2) John realizes that Peter's brother is intelligent.

It is clear that (2) carries all of the information contained in (1), that is:

(3) John has a positive opinion concerning Peter's brother's intelligence.

But (2) also carries information not contained in (1):

(4) Peter's brother is intelligent.

It is also clear that the semantic elements (3) and (4) are not presented by (2) in exactly the same way: (4) is put forward as something which is not in question; it is merely given as a point of reference from which one speaks, a point of reference whose nature is not to be the object of a special assertion, of a discussion, of a further development.

To express in a different way the distinction which I am trying to establish, I will say that, in (2), (3) is asserted whereas (4) is presupposed and I will define the presupposition of a statement as the semantic element common to that statement, its negation, and its corresponding yes-no

question.[1]

According to this definition,

(5) John will come.

is presupposed by

(6) Mary knows that John will come.

since it is a semantic element common to (6) and to

(7) Mary does not know that John will come.

and

(8) Does Mary know that John will come?

Similarly,

(9) Someone ate the cake.

is a presupposition of

(10) John did see who ate the cake.

and

(11) Jane Smith likes scotch.

is a presupposition of

(12) I found out that Jane Smith likes scotch.

To summarize, it can be said that a statement often imparts information on two levels, that it carries meaning in two different ways.

1.1 Saying that the presupposition of a statement is put forward as something which is not supposed to be questioned does not mean, of course, that it cannot be questioned. Should A say (2) to B, it is quite conceivable that B may answer:

(13) Does Peter have a brother?

Similarly, should A say (12) to B, it is quite conceivable that B may answer

(14) Who is Jane Smith?

or

(15) But Jane Smith does not like scotch!

It is to be noted, however, that, in these cases--which are not uncommon--B does not develop A's primary topic (How do you know? How did you find out?) but rather begins discussing another topic (Peter's brother's existence, Jane Smith's identity, Jane Smith's drinking tastes). This is probably one of the reasons why B's conduct, in many circumstances, may be considered out of place: B has broken a rule of discourse according to which the presuppositions of a statement does not constitute a primary topic for discussion.

1.2 Saying that a statement often imparts information on two different levels is not saying that it cannot impart information on other levels, implicit ones for instance. If, for some reason, I do not wish to state something explicitly, I can imply it by saying in its place something which can be viewed as the cause or consequence of what I did not state.[2] Thus, and depending on circumstances, I may say

(16) It's raining out.

to imply

(17) I don't feel like going out.

and I may say

(18) John is very friendly; he must have had a lot to drink.

to imply

(19) John is friendly only when he's drunk.

Another kind of implicit information can be imparted not so much through what is said but rather through the form adopted for saying it. If I tell someone

(20) Go get me a pastrami sandwich.

I may imply, through the command form I used, that I am superior to him since I have the right to order him around.

Note that there are two fundamental differences between these implicit meanings (as well as others) and presupposition. First, and most obviously, the implicit meaning _is not_ stated whereas the presupposed meaning _is_, though not _directly_. It is therefore easier to deny having implied something ("You mean that John is friendly only when he's drunk?" "I never

said that!") than to deny having presupposed something. Second, the implicit meaning always depends on an explicit one: it can be understood if and only if the explicit meaning is understood first, while the reverse is, of course, not true. If I do not understand the explicit meaning of (16), surely I will not understand what possible implicit meanings it has. Furthermore, my understanding of its explicit meaning clearly does not guarantee my understanding of its implicit meaning. This is not the case with presupposition since it is part of the explicit meaning: saying that someone understands (2), for example, is equivalent to saying that someone understands (3) and (4).

1.3 Presupposed information is unlike the various forms of implicit information. It is also unlike information imparted not only explicitly but directly.[3]

2.0 The notion of presupposition, which can help characterize the way a given statement imparts information, can also help characterize the way information is presented in a given narrative. More specifically, it can lead to a better understanding and determination of a narrator's strategy, where _strategy_ is taken to mean not so much the order in which various events are introduced during a narrative and the modes in which they are subsequently developed but rather the stance chosen by the narrator with regard to his narratee--that is, the audience he is addressing--and to his narration.[4] It is the role of presupposition in that strategy which I should now like to discuss very briefly.[5]

2.1 Any narrative implies not only a narrator but also a narratee. Just as the narrator in a tale is not its real author but a fictional construct having (perhaps) a certain number of features in common with him, the narratee in any tale is also a fictional construct and should not be confused with a real reader or listener, or an ideal reader or listener, even though he may very closely resemble him.

The relationship between a narrator and his narratee in a given narrative partially determines the nature and shape of that narrative. To give but one rather obvious example, in _Arabian Nights_, Scheherazade is forced to tell stories in order not to die, for, as long as she can hold the Caliph's attention, she will not be executed. It is clear that the continuation of the telling rests upon the bonds developed between the narrator and her narratee: should the Caliph be offended by Scheherazade's narrative attitude, for instance, he would stop listening, the heroine would be killed, and the tale would come to an end. Furthermore, it is also clear that this narrator-narratee relationship makes of _Arabian_

Nights a story about the importance of narrating and narrating well: he (she!) who cannot tell good stories must die. Finally, it is rather evident that this relationship gives the tale its characteristic shape: every night, Scheherazade interrupts her narration so that she may have one more day to live.[6]

The study of the presuppositions made by a narrator is one way of arriving at a partial description of his situation in relation to his narratee. When he presupposes something, he--like anybody making presuppositions--puts himself in the position of someone whose audience knows that which is presupposed. The proportion of presuppositions in a narrative can therefore tell us how much a narrator has in common with his narratee, or would like to have in common with him. The kind of presuppositions can show us what he has in common with the one he is addressing, or what he wishes he had in common with him. The distribution of presuppositions (In what narrative passages do they occur? When are they particularly prominent?) can indicate to us at what points during his narrative the narrator is particularly close to his narratee, or would want to be closer to him.

2.2 In any narrative, the narrator adopts a certain attitude towards the events he is recounting, the characters he is describing, the emotions and thoughts he is presenting. He may, for instance, emphasize the importance of certain incidents and not others; he may judge certain characters outright or in a roundabout way; he may state what he thinks explicitly or present it without seeming to; he may take personal responsibility for arriving at certain conclusions or deny any such responsibility. Once again, the relative number of presuppositions in his narrative, their nature, their place in the narration can help us define the narrator's posture.[7]

3.0 To give a somewhat more precise--but still very sketchy!--idea of how presuppositions function in narrative and how they help reveal the narrator's strategy, I will briefly examine a few passages from Un Coeur simple.[8] Flaubert's short story, like most of his fiction, contains little direct commentary by the narrator: the latter is supposed to intervene as rarely as possible and keep a dispassionate, an "objective," stance vis-à-vis his narrative and his narratee. There are, however, quite a few presuppositions (even excluding existential ones) made in Un Coeur simple which allow us to understand better how the narrator manages to impose a certain universe of discourse, how he manipulates his audience, how he succeeds in presenting certain facts as irrefutable without pointedly interrupting the flow of events.

3.1 Presupposition, the narrator and his protagonist. At eighteen, Félicité, the heroine, goes to the Colleville assembly with a few companions. A young man invites her to dance; then: "Il lui paya du cidre, du café, de la galette, un foulard, et, s'imaginant qu'elle le devinait, offrit de la reconduire" (p.31).[9] One obvious presupposition in this passage is that Félicité does not understand the motives behind the young man's actions. Now, this is the first example of Félicité's naïveté, of her simplicity, in the narrative. The protagonist's most fundamental characteristic is thus introduced as a datum. It is presented as something that goes without saying. Félicité is naïveté, she is simplicity and that should be taken for granted.

One day, Félicité saves her mistress, Mme. Aubain, and her two little children from a wild bull: "Cet événement, pendant bien des années, fut un sujet de conversation à Pont-l'Evêque. Félicité n'en tira aucun orgueil, ne se doutant même pas qu'elle eût rien fait d'héroïque" (p.38).[10] What is presupposed here, but not asserted, is that Félicité did something heroic. The narrator wants his audience to appreciate his protagonist's valor yet refuses to make a straightforward declaration about it. Such a declaration may, after all, seem exaggerated. More significantly, a direct statement about Félicité's heroic stature would add too important a dimension to her character: Félicité is supposed to be "a simple heart" and only "a simple heart." Indeed, the narrator's use of presupposition allows him to underline, rather than undermine, his protagonist's simplicity: if she does not derive any pride from her feat, it is because she is so simple that she does not even realize it is a feat.

3.2 Presupposition, the narrator, his protagonist, and his narratee. Among the people who often visit Mme. Aubain is M. Bourais, a gentleman Félicité admires: "Sa cravate blanche et sa calvitie, le jabot de sa chemise, son ample redingote brune, sa façon de priser en arrondissant le bras, tout son individu lui produisait ce trouble où nous jette le spectacle des hommes extraordinaires" (p.35).[11] Up to that point, the narrator has kept himself at a distance from his protagonist by never indicating that she might possibly have something in common with him. In a similar way he has kept the narratee quite distant from her. Félicité's simplicity is an exemplary feature distinguishing her from other people. It must not, however, make her so unlike everybody else as to make her extraordinary. The narrator, therefore, has to reduce the distance between himself and Félicité as well as between her and the narratee. Through presupposition, he points out that he as well as his audience have experienced feelings very similar to those of Félicité and that this similarity barely

even needs to be asserted. Furthermore, since the narrator has now also brought his narratee closer to him (they too have experiences in common), the latter should accept much more readily whatever he is told.

3.3 Presupposition and justification. The heroine attends little Virginie's first communion: "Quand ce fut le tour de Virginie, Félicité se pencha pour la voir; et, avec l'imagination que donnent les vraies tendresses, il lui sembla qu'elle était elle-même cette enfant; sa figure devenait la sienne, sa robe l'habillait, son coeur lui battait dans la poitrine" (p.47).[12] The narrator wants to (has to?) justify the fact that a character defined by narrow simplicity can have enough imagination to put herself completely in somebody else's place. He could do it directly, by stating that "real love endows one with great imaginative powers" and taking full responsibility for the statement. By using presupposition, he succeeds in giving a stronger justification, without having to be held personally accountable: he is saying, in effect, that the relationship between love and imagination is so well accepted, so evident, it can be mentioned simply in passing.

3.4 Presupposition and point of view. Presupposition often helps a narrator to preserve a certain restricted point of view while at the same time assuring his audience of the reliability of that point of view. Virginie dies of a lung ailment and, for two nights, Félicité sits by the body: "A la fin de la première veille, elle remarqua que la figure avait jauni, les lèvres bleuirent, le nez se pinçait, les yeux s'enfonçaient" (p.59).[13] The narrator wants to present events according to Félicité's perspective. At the same time, his presupposition allows him to indicate that the protagonist is not hallucinating out of despair and that Virginie's body has indeed changed the way Félicité sees it has. On the one hand, the point of view is situated; on the other, it is not: anybody would notice what Félicité noticed.

4.0 The study of presupposition in narrative can help illuminate various features of narrative strategy: the manipulation of point of view, the control of distance, the nature of justifications and motivations. It also raises several problems which would be worth investigating, I think: Does the use of presupposition vary with different kinds of narrative? Is it more prevalent, for instance, in novels or epics? Does the medium adopted for presenting a narrative (oral or written language, for example) significantly affect the number and kind of presuppositions in that narrative? Are there any important differences between presuppositions in narrative and in poetry? In narrative and in everyday speech acts? Why? In short, a more thorough study than my very preliminary

discussion may lead to interesting discoveries about the nature not only of narrative but also of language.

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NOTES

[1]On the notion of presupposition, see, among many others, Bas C. van Fraassen, "Presupposition, Implication, and Self Reference," Journal of Philosophy, LXV (1968), 136-151; George Lakoff, "Linguistics and Natural Logic," in Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman, eds., Semantics of Natural Language (Dordrecht, 1972), pp.569-588; and Oswald Ducrot's excellent Dire et ne pas dire. Principes de sémantique linguistique (Paris, 1972), which I follow very closely.

[2]As should be clear from the context, I use "imply" in the sense of "communicate implicitly, suggest" and not in a more strictly logical sense.

[3]See Oswald Ducrot, Dire et ne pas dire, pp.1-24.

[4]Presupposition would also be helpful in describing the style of a given narrative as well as the extra-linguistic code on which that narrative is based.

[5]I will not deal with so-called presuppositions of existence, i.e., those contained in such statements as "The king of France is bald" (presupposition: There is a king of France) or "John saw the car" (presupposition: There is a John).

[6]On the narratee, see, among others, Roland Barthes, "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits," Communications, no. 8 (1966), 18-19; Gérard Genette, Figures III (Paris, 1972), 265-267; and Gerald Prince, "Notes Towards a Categorization of Fictional 'Narratees,'" Genre, IV (1971), 100-105; "On Readers and Listeners in Narrative," Neophilologus, LV (1971), 117-122; and "Introduction à l'étude du narrataire," Poétique (forthcoming).

[7]On the narrator's relationship to his narrative and his characters, see Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, 1961).

[8]Un Coeur simple in Flaubert, Trois Contes (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1965). All my references are to this edition.

[9]"He bought her cider, coffee, cake, a scarf, and, not realizing she did not understand him, offered to take her home." The translations are mine and so is the underlining.

[10]"This event, for many years, was a topic of conversation in Pont-l'Evêque. Félicité did not derive any pride from it, not even realizing that she had done something heroic."

[11]"His white necktie and his baldness, the frill of his shirt, his ample brown frock-coat, his way of taking snuff while curving his arm, his entire person produced in her that turmoil in which the spectacle of extraordinary men throws us."

[12]"When it was Virginie's turn, Félicité leaned over in order to see her; and, with the imagination that true tenderness gives, it seemed to her that she herself was this child; her face became hers, her dress clothed her, her heart beat in her breast."

[13]"At the end of the first vigil, she noticed that the face had turned yellow, the lips became blue, the nose was pinched, the eyes were sunken."

JULIE CARSON

LINGUISTICS, STYLISTICS, AND THUMPER RABBIT*

Until recently, stylistics in America has been primarily a study of the linguistic structures in literary language, using the strategies and insights of linguistics. But in the last few years, an increasing number of critics have forsaken linguistics as the major means of stylistic inquiry in favor of J. L. Austin's speech-act theory.[1] In doing so, they have come to consider questions of presupposition, intentionality, and context as major factors in determining the nature of literary language--in addition to (and often rather than) whatever linguistic facts they can muster. The shift is obviously away from notions of stylistics as a stepchild of linguistic "science" to visions of it as at least a near-relative of philosophy, aesthetics, and semantics. Though many critics have rejected the union of linguistics and literary criticism as an unfortunate miscegenation, there is sufficient evidence in the work of several linguist-critics to believe that the basic premise of linguistic-stylistics is indeed still valid: that any study of the nature of literary language can only benefit from the insights of the discipline that studies the nature of all language, linguistics.

The reasons critics have given for turning their attention away from linguistics to speech-act theory are various, but perhaps at the heart of them all is most critics' frustration in trying to blend linguistics and literary criticism--and in often finding that by reducing literature to a corpus of linguistic data they have had to sacrifice what they believed to be the literary nature of literary language. Elias Schwartz represents that position when he writes:

> What distinguishes the language of literature is not some inherent feature, but its function in relation to the whole of which it is a part. This function is not marked in the language so used; it inheres rather in the relation of that language to the total structure of the poem, a structure which is aesthetic, not linguistic. There is no such thing

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as a distinctive literary language. And if this is true, though linguists may tell us a great deal about language, they can tell us nothing about literature.[2]

In reacting to linguistic stylistics Schwartz is necessarily reacting to the work of prominent men in the field, both here and abroad. In Britain, Geoffrey Leech alarms literary critics with statements such as: "From the linguistic point of view, literary interpretation can be seen as a negative process: a coming to terms with what would otherwise have to be dismissed as an unmotivated aberration--a linguistic 'mistake'."[3] And observing the dubious American custom of not being outdone, Archibald Hill once postulated a mathematical formula for determining the meaning of items in poetic lines.[4] Quite justifiably, much criticism of linguistic stylistics can be traced to such reductive proclamations.

But to dismiss linguistic stylistics because of them is at best naive and at worst suspect. It is amazing that literary critics should expend so much energy in condemning a stylistics that they believe so little worthy of their attention. Yet the denunciations proliferate so fast that a literary critic with a peripheral interest in stylistics could easily come to know linguistic stylistics only by its failures. Not even for summary's sake do I wish to list these failures here. Though some literary critics might suggest that my reluctance to recite that sorrowful litany derives from the maxim of Thumper Rabbit, "if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all,"[5] the question that I want to try to answer is "Can we say anything nice?"

In trying to answer it, I must necessarily return to the work of the leading analysts of style, to those very men (or at least to one of them) whose words I quoted earlier and found so distressing. This circularity is not self-destructive, for in pulling lines out of context it is not difficult to distort. But it scrutinizing the whole of stylistics, particularily in America, we can discern a viable, valuable theory of linguistic stylistics. And most representative of the linguist-analysts in America are Archibald Hill, Samuel Levin, and Richard Ohmann.[6] I choose them, not because their work is necessarily the best in the field, but rather because their efforts to marry linguistics and literary criticism have clearly indicated--if sometimes by default--what direction further work in stylistics must take. Furthermore, I have chosen to limit my discussion to work done in America, not because of any displaced chauvinism, but because in America there has always been a concern to do more than just objectively describe the language of a text. There has always been explicit concern

for the literary values the language of literature projects. And it is this concern that those of us who believe stylistics to be an aspect of criticism and not linguistics must favor.

Though currently several approaches to the study of language flourish, just two schools of linguistic inquiry have dominated this century: first structuralism and then transformational-generative theory. Hill came to stylistics as a structuralist; Ohmann, as a transformationalist. And Levin got caught in the crossfire. These men came to stylistics, in other words, at different points in a decade marked by dramatic change in linguistic theory; and their work varies accordingly.

Yet all three would agree with Schwartz that linguistic analysis, in isolation, can "tell us nothing about literature." Their research shows, however, that using the results of linguistic analysis in combination with standard literary-critical interpretation can lead to a new, interesting kind of criticism. It shows that linguistics played a crucial, though early, role in analyzing the language of literature. It is an early role, for linguistic analysis is probably the first stage in stylistics. It is a crucial role, for it must provide an accurate, formal statement of the linguistic nature of the material in question.

But there is a matter far more important to stylistic theory than the fact that Hill, Levin, and Ohmann each acknowledged the limited scope of linguistic analysis in stylistics. Despite their different methods of stylistic analysis, and even despite their various uses of linguistic theory, all three men were working within the same general procedural framework. And it is with this framework (rather than, say, Ohmann's explication of Conrad or Levin's dissection of Dickinson) that the literary theorist must concern himself. The Thumper Rabbits of literary theory, that is, those critics who thump away at obviously mistaken notions or naive explications would do better, I think, to examine the general procedures of linguistic stylistics and then chasten or chastise. It is simply too easy any other way.

Accordingly, I would like to deal with the problems inherent in Hill, Levin, and Ohmann's basic methodology, for it is from examination of it that we can develop guidelines for further research in stylistics. Three steps seem to form the basis of their various analytical procedures:

1) a delineation and analysis of linguistic structures in the text;

2) a statement of the pattern those structures effect;

3) a hypothesis of the significance of that pattern for critical interpretation of the text.

(At this stage, Hill and Levin suggest, the linguistic pattern becomes important in terms of a nonlinguistic pattern in the text. Ohmann, unfortunately, is wont to relate the pattern he finds to the writer's epistemology.)

In this paper I shall concentrate on steps one and two, for they, more than step three, are the basic procedures of the linguistic analysis of literary texts. Step three is the first link to critical interpretation, and the problems there (for the most part) are literary rather than linguistic.

The first stage actually entails two procedures: discerning what might prove to be important linguistic structures in a text, and then analyzing these structures for a formal statement of their phonemic, syntactic, or semantic features. That initial delineation is not easily programmed. Levin speaks directly to the issue: "The problem in linguistic analysis of poetry is not so much in how to analyze it linguistically...it is rather in knowing what linguistic structures to analyze."[7] The most formal suggestion offered in American stylistics for a solution to this problem is Michael Riffaterre's use of the cues of a "super-reader."[8] But even this pseudoscientific notion ultimately relies on the interpretations of a literary-linguistic analyst. Consequently, Levin proposes that "just as intuitions (linguistic competence) guided our analysis of ordinary language, so they should be used to direct our analysis of poetry."[9] And, in fact, Hill, Levin, and Ohmann all relied on their "informed intuitions" (to use Ohmann's term) in this first stage of analysis. It is, furthermore, what Leo Spitzer meant, I think, when discussing the first level of his philological circle:

> The first step, on which all may hinge, can never be planned: it must have already taken place. This first step is the awareness of having been struck by a detail, followed by a conviction that this detail is connected basically with the work of art; it means that one has made an "observation,"--which is the starting point of a theory, that one has been prompted to raise a question--which must find an answer.[10]

In other words, the determination of certain linguistic structures as those most likely to be important, first for linguistic and then for literary analysis, a subjective procedure. Every text projects phonemic, morphophonemic, syntac-

tic, and semantic structures that attract the attention of the reader in varying degrees. And, subconsciously for the most part, the analyst sifts through each of those categories as he tries to discern the potentially most important linguistic units. Aware that in his next step he will bring linguistic theory to bear upon the units he selects, he is, I think, inclined to choose those units about which the current research in linguistics has the most to say. For example, Hill and Levin were especially drawn to positionally equivalent structures because of the structuralist notion of positions determining grammatical categories. Similarly, when Levin was writing his papers on deviance in poetry, his focus on word-category violations and feature switching may have evolved out of the Katz and Postal research in semantics and the change in the *Syntactic Structures* model. And clearly, I think, Ohmann's concentration on syntax developed from the important research done in transformational-generative syntactic theory in the sixties. But in principle, the analyst must in any case be open to all possible linguistic structures.

This openness is vital, for there is no single linguistic structure dominating literary language (despite Levin's claims about deviance in poetry). Accordingly, there is no single linguistic approach to literary analysis. Again, Spitzer approaches this issue:

> For every poem the critic needs a separate inspiration, a separate light from above (it is this constant need which makes for humility, and it is the accumulation of past enlightenments that encourages a sort of pious confidence). Indeed a Protean mutability is required for the critic, for the device which has proved successful for one work of art cannot be mechanically applied to another....[11]

How sensitive or perceptive this first apprehension of a text as a language structure is depends on the sensitivity and background the analyst brings to the poem. For example, Ohmann's linguistic analyses seem more reasonable and insightful than Hill's or Levin's because of his intensive training in and obvious affection for literature. We feel when reading Ohmann's explications that he has a sense not only of the linguistic structures of the text, but of their relation to its literary and cultural meanings as well. But still, Levin's approaching poetry in terms of the aesthetic responses it evokes and Hill's sense of "heightened symmetry" in poetry perhaps also indicate that they, with Ohmann, have the intuition Spitzer described:

> What tells us that [certain linguistic structures] are important is only the feeling, which we must have already acquired, for the whole of the particular work of art.

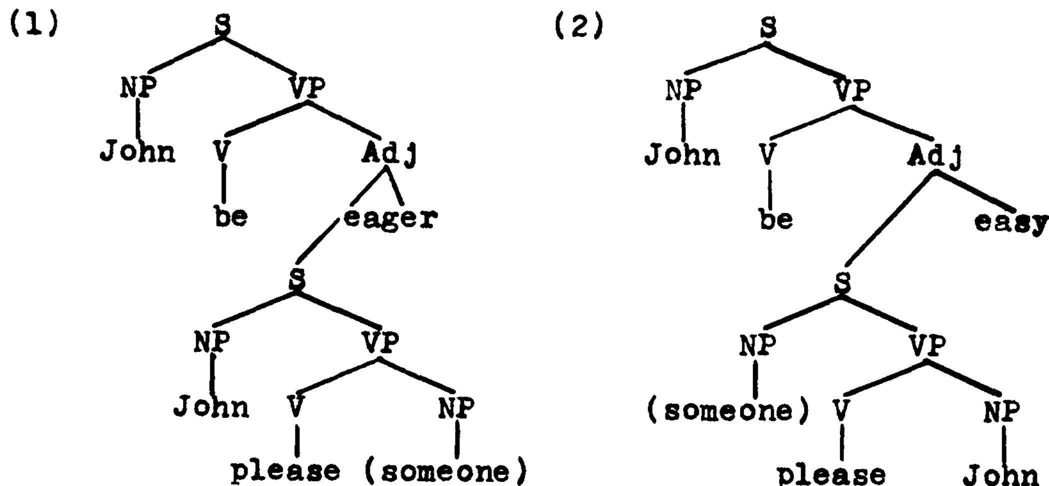
> And the capacity for this feeling is, again, deeply anchored in the previous life and education of the critic.[12]

The first step in linguistic analysis--a delineation and analysis of linguistic structures in the text--is, then, a subjective, though informed, selection of potentially important linguistic units. Once isolated, according to the procedures developed by Hill, Levin, and Ohmann, these structures become the data for the next step in linguistic analysis.

The linguistic analysis performed by this second step must be characterized by three qualities: objectivity, consistency, and accuracy. By his inattention to them, Levin, particularily, emphasizes their importance. The analysis must be objective in that the analyst cannot have a rigid, preordained conception of what he expects to find. That is to say, though perhaps the surface structure of a line may suggest that some sort of equivalence or pattern exists, the analyst must objectively investigate the nature of the line. Chomsky makes this point early in the development of his theory with the sentences

(1) John is eager to please. (2) John is easy to please.

Admittedly, these two sentences have comparable surface structures--but a closer look at them reveals that "John" is the subject of an embedded sentence in (1) and the object of such a sentence in (2).



Now in Levin's theory, the surface structures represent comparably equivalent positions, the strongest snytagmatic axis for a <u>coupling</u>. And I think Levin would be justified in designating them so. But he or any analyst attempting to find couplings is obligated to proceed to the deep-structure analysis, especially when it reveals dissimilar basic phrase markers. In fact, the tension created by two similar surface structures which are derived from quite different underlying structures is an aspect of language manipulation with which an analyst

must be concerned. And strictly objective analysis of all the isolated data is perhaps the surest way to discover all the patterns and tensions in a text. It may be that consideration of the selected linguistic units may cause the analyst to re-examine the entire text and draw more data into his study, but only richer readings can result.

Objectivity is closely allied with consistency in linguistic stylistics. That is to say, if an analyst decides to deal with a text in terms of a transformational-generative interpretation, all linguistic analysis and all statements of linguistic structure he eventually makes must be in those terms. Lest this mandate seem simplistic, consider Levin's motley of surface and deep structure couplings in his *Sonnet 30* explication where his random mixing of linguistic structures served only to weaken his arguments. This is not to say that an analyst is limited to either surface- or deep-structure readings. Rather, he must make clear distinctions between the results of his different analyses. For example, I think that interesting interpretations of literary language could evolve from a statement of how the deep structures of the lines differ from their surface representations. It could well be that greater structural similarity exists than either of the two interpretations alone might suggest.

Accuracy in linguistic analysis is also not as simple a requirement as first appears. In one of his latest papers, Ohmann writes:

> Stylistic critics will want to talk about language, and when they do they had best use what linguists know. To do so is to risk amateurish misapplication of new theories, no doubt, but not to do so is to risk misapplication of old and discredited theories, and to guarantee that certain areas of thought will be excluded.[13]

The analyst, in other words, walks a perilous path--one familiar especially to Ohmann and Levin. Ohmann suggests here that when a critic incorporates linguistic theory into his interpretations he may err by *misapplying* either new or discredited theories. Actually there are several other risks for the critic, many of which could be avoided by using linguistic theory only after the threat of "amateurish misapplication" has passed. But Ohmann himself ran yet another of them: the correct application of an outdated theory.

The solution to that problem, if there is one, is not easy. Linguistics has experienced radical changes since 1957 and is constantly developing and modifying its own theories as it seeks to refine its description of language. Change

(and controversial arguments demanding it) is indeed so much a factor in current linguistic study that often by the time an article, or especially a book, is published, its notions are already more or less out of date. The latest developments in the theory are circulated through an "underground" of pre-publication mimeographed papers. Even Master's and doctoral dissertations which never reach a publisher figure significantly in the debate among linguists. The analyst of literary language wishing to use the best theory available (i.e., the most revealing, according to the dominant linguistic schools) is therefore in a precarious situation. He must choose not only from among competing schools of linguistics, but also among their own (internal) competing theories. That is, he must choose from among metatheories, and often, from among competing versions of one metatheory. And this must be a discriminating choice. He must select the school and the theories that appear to be the most valid linguistically as well as those which will render the most intuitively satisfying literary interpretation.

A literary critic with no formal training in linguistics simply cannot make this decision. But neither can a linguist with no sense of literary criticism. The analyst of style must be, as Hill, Levin, and Ohmann suggest, a hybrid of critic and linguist. He must be enough of a linguist to know the competing schools and be able to choose among them. He must, furthermore, be aware of the various analyses within the schools. But when it comes to a choice among competing theories (assuming he has narrowed his choice to those considered most valid linguistically), he must assume the role of literary critic. For merely to present differing analyses of a particular linguistic structure in a poem leads to a motley of subsequent stylistic interpretations--each of which is dependent not upon the poem itself, but upon the function of linguistic theory. And this procedure would, as Schwartz suggests, tell us about language, not literature.

Rather, the analyst of style must review the alternatives and select the analysis which he considers the most revealing linguistically--and, which also most adequately verifies his own critical intuitions. Ideally, they will be the same. But if they are not, the linguistic analysis must take precedence. Linguistic stylistics depends upon literary interpretation evolving from linguistic investigation. To reverse that relationship and have the critic supply the "linguistics" is to lose sight of the goal of the discipline.[14] There is, of course, no guarantee that the particular linguistic theory the analyst has chosen might not be discredited eventually. But if he has clearly established his rationale for adopting a particular linguistic school and analysis, and then has attempted

to prove, by his subsequent explication, that his interpretation may be the most reasonable, he has proceeded as all other scholars working with theories, not facts, proceed. Admittedly, his interpretation might have to change as the theory on which it is based changes, but this is the risk any interdisciplinary critic must take. There appears to be no alternative.

Accuracy in stylistics, then, means more than simply applying linguistic analysis correctly to literary language. It means choosing among what seem to be the best theories available, applying them correctly, and wagering the subsequent literary interpretation on the validity of those theories. I shall return to this important issue of theory and change, for it is vital in the relationship of stylistics to literary criticism. There are, however, two other aspects of _accurate_ application of linguistic analysis in stylistics: the _first_ is the matter of working with a particular linguistic model; the second, that of historical change.

So far I have assumed that an analyst would incorporate features of "standard" linguistic theory only. That is to say, he would avail himself of those aspects of current linguistic research generally accepted as consonant with a specific _meta-theory_ (i.e., a particular model of language structure). In "The Analysis of Compression in Poetry," however, Levin argues that poetry can evoke certain intuitive, aesthetic responses which are not ordinarily effects of casual language. The linguistic structures responsible for them must somehow differ from the linguistic structures of casual language. Consequently, the "grammar" of poetry may entail transformational rules that are exclusive to poetry. But this sort of theorizing can lead to serious difficulties, not only for the transformations suggested, but, more importantly, for the whole concept of linuistic stylistics.

The natural extension of Levin's proposal is that analyst-critics develop a poetic linguistics, a grammar of poetry. But as Levin's single notion of non-recoverable deletion requires, this model of poetic language would have to be based on different assumptions than the assumptions of casual language.[15] This sort of fundamental distinction would lead to the development of an entirely new discipline--one whose linguistics is based on poetic as well as linguistic competence. But poetic competence is even more elusive than linguistic competence, for it is peculiar to each critic. That is to say, unlike native-speaker intuitions about language, there are as many critical intuitions (i.e., poetic competences) as there are critics. So, within the notion of a poetic linguistics, each critic would be working, not objectively within a metatheory of language structure, but within a quasi-linguistic model based not on language _per se_, but on his conception of what

poetic language is. He would, in effect, be developing the model from the poem, rather than interpreting the poem in terms of the model.

Finally, another matter to consider concerning accuracy in linguistic analysis of poetry is the historical perspective. I question whether a theory of linguistics developed from a corpus of twentieth-century American English can be applied accurately to the language of a poem written four hundred years earlier. To answer that question negatively is to limit severely the scope of linguistic stylistics, yet to disregard the issue it suggests is to display serious historical naivete concerning the nature of language.

English, of course, has changed from the time of Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Pope; it could be argued that it has changed even within this century. Levin's and Hill's method of analysis seems to ignore this fact. They suggest that analyzing the linguistic structure of a poem leads to proposing another structure which especially characterizes the poem. Yet to analyze a medieval lyric in terms of, say, modern generative grammar, and then propose the artistic structure it supposedly projects, is to miss an obvious point; the artistic structure the medieval poet designed probably differs from the one Levin and Hill would find simply because the language which projects it has changed. Spencer and Gregory emphasize this issue in "An Approach to the Study of Style":

> It will be clear that one essential dimension required for placing a text must be historical....Linguistic restraints and opportunities, grammatical, lexical, phonological, and even graphological, are never precisely the same in one period as in another. The possibilities for grammatical innovation which the English of Shakespeare's time offered to the creative writer were not the same as those offered by the English of the Augustan period, for example.[16]

Here, as with the problem of accuracy in linguistic stylistics generally, the solution is to be tentative. Until a grammar of the standard language of the historical period in question is developed, an analyst must present his analysis as tentative, and include as much supporting evidence from his studies in historical linguistics as possible. Phonological analysis of poetry may more easily lend itself to such discussion because of the development of theories about this aspect of historical change, but semantic and syntactic statements of analysis may have to rely on the analyst's informed (albeit conjectural) correlations between standard grammatical and lexical studies of the historical period in question and the results of his analysis with "modern" grammar. In any case, however, the historical aspects of literary language cannot be ignored.

The complexity involved in placing linguistic analysis in its contemporary theoretical, as well as its historical, perspectives should emphasize one important issue: that linguistic analysis of literature is not a simple matter. It must be an objective, consistent, and accurate utilization of standard linguistic theory. And though these terms smack of scientific precision, it is unfair to demand that stylistic analysis make rigorous, unequivocal, eternal statements about language. To do so is to ignore the fact that linguistics, like all major disciplines, is constantly developing. And because linguistic stylistics is necessarily dependent upon the research of linguists, all it can offer is insights commensurate with the current stage of that research. But this dependency leads to two valid concerns on the part of both linguist-analysts and their critics. First, if linguistic stylistics cannot contribute unequivocal linguistic analyses, why devote the time and training involved to develop it? Second, if linguistic theory is itself as conjectural as it at times seems to be, how can analysts ever hope to say anything substantial about literary language?

Prefatory to any attempt to answer these questions must be the understanding that I take stylistics to be a way of interpreting literature. That is to say, with Ohmann and Spitzer I consider such analysis as one facet of literary criticism. And as such, it takes on the requirements (e.g., interpretation) as well as the conveniences (e.g., informed impressionism) of that discipline.

In _A Grammar of Motives_, Kenneth Burke introduces the notion of "dramatism," whose "pentad" of act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose may help provide an answer to the two questions I raised. And although Burke's main thrust is not necessarily literary criticism still his pentad can provide an interesting analogue for linguistic stylistics. Burke introduces the five members of his pentad simply: "what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)."[17] He points out that "certain formal interrelationships prevail among these terms" (p.xix), which he calls "ratios." In literary criticism the "act" is the literary text, and investigating its relationships to the other members of the pentad can help to illuminate it. That is to say, the critic can interpret the "act" in terms of its agent, scene, purpose, or agency. And it is thus, I suggest, that most literary criticism proceeds.

But as a critic proceeds to discover the "ratio" between, say, the act and the scene, he comes to that determination with a _theory_ of the "scene" (e.g., a theory of history). Indeed,

he approaches all possible ratios with theories appropriate to the members. And so, with the act-agency ratio--the relationship between the literary text and its language--the analyst-critic must come equipped, as it were, with a theory of language.[18]

I do not think that Burke's pentad is the only model for representing the critical process, but I include it here for the clarity (if metaphoric) it affords. My point is essentially that any time a critic brings any other discipline to bear upon the interpretation of literature, he brings--if only implicitly--a _theory_ of that discipline with him, And if this is true, then by approaching a literary text with a theory of language, an analyst of style should be no more vulnerable to vagaries of his theory than any other type of critic is to his.

In answer, then, to the questions of what benefit linguistics can afford studies of literature, I propose that it provides insights into the nature of literary language possible from no other discipline. It does so not only by providing the analyst with a clear statement of what "facts" there are about language, but also by suggesting to him various theoretical approaches for the study of the nature of language. These approaches may, in turn, be valuable for an understanding of an author's particular manipulation of language. Moreover, to provide the analyst of literary style with a theory of language is to do no less than any other discipline drawn into literary criticism does. Theories change as new information or research develops; to wait to use one until there are no more questions to be answered is to await the millenium. But it is also to misunderstand the nature of scholarly pursuit and to risk the loss of what can be valuable interdisciplinary insights.

I have so far dealt mainly with the problems inherent in the first two of those three steps in American stylistics. The third, wherein an analyst relates the linguistic pattern he has found to critical interpretation, obviously involves concerns more literary than linguistic. And it is at those tenuous relations analysts are wont to draw that the Thumper Rabbits poise their paws. I believe, however, that if the procedures of the first and second stages were conducted within the guidelines I have discussed, the conclusions the analyst might draw would be less arbitrary than those of the past. The linguistic analyst must become, at this point in his explication, a sensitive, competent literary critic if stylistics is to be at all valuable. In other words, good linguistics is not enough; it must be complemented by sensitive critical interpretation. And it seems to me that recent

critics of stylistics have paid far too much attention to specific critical interpretations and far too little to the underlying method. As in so many areas of scholarship, the theory has been sound; it is its application that has gone awry.

Can we say anything nice about stylistics? I think so. And what is nicest--or most promising--about stylistics is what it could do, if only it is done well. Stylistics is a way of interpreting literature. It is an aspect of literary criticism which, in an eclectic but principled manner, draws upon linguistic theory and procedures to investigate the language of literature. And although stylistics must, early in its procedures, include precise analysis of the text _as language_, literature is not thereby reduced to merely a _piece_ of language, nor stylistics to linguistic analysis. Rather, the analyst of style, like every other literary critic, acknowledges the special, "literary" effects a text projects and tries to account for those he finds related to his particular field of interest, language. In effect, he does what every other literary critic does: he attempts to provide a sensitive instrument for the fuller interpretation and understanding of a literary text. What distinguishes stylistics from the other types of literary criticism is that--by using many strategies of a science, linguistics--it can provide an analysis which is explicit and without ambiguity or overly subjective appeals to intuition.

At the end of Disney's _Bambi_, Thumper Rabbit appears followed by a large family (_sons_, as a matter of fact). And somehow, this is not the least surprising--for the woods are full of Thumper Rabbits who have forgotten how to say anything nice.

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NOTES

[1]_How To Do Things With Words_ (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965). See also John Searle, _Speech Acts_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). Representative of research which utilizes speech-act theory are several articles by Richard Ohmann: "Instrumental Style: Notes on the Theory of Speech as Action," _Issues in Linguistics_, ed. Braj Kachru (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, forthcoming); "Speech, Action, and Style," _Literary Style: A Symposium_, ed. Seymour Chatman (New

York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp.241-262; "Speech Acts and the Definition of Literature," Philosophy and Rhetoric, 4 (1971), 1-19; "Speech, Literature, and the Space Between," New Literary History, 4 (1972), 47-64.

[2]"Notes on Linguistics and Literature," College English 32 (November, 1970), 190.

[3]"This Bread I Break--Language and Interpretation," A Review of English Literature, 6 (1965), 72.

[4]"Principles Governing Semantic Parallels," Texas Studies in Language and Literature, 1 (1959), 356-365.

[5]Bambi (Walt Disney Version) (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1941), n. pag.

[6]The conclusions I have drawn in this paper derive from all of Hill's work in stylistics; representative, though, are: "An Analysis of 'The Windhover': An Experiment in Structural Method," PMLA, 57 (1955), 968-978, and "'Pippa's Song' : Two Attempts at Structural Criticism," University of Texas Studies in English, 25 (1956), 51-56. Most of my discussion of Levin centers on Linguistic Structures in Poetry (The Hague: Mouton, 1962) and "The Analysis of Compression in Poetry," Foundations of Language, 7 (1971), 38-55. Because Ohmann's latest work involves speech-act theory (see n.1), this paper refers to articles such as "Generative Grammars and the Concept of Literary Style," Word, 20 (1964), 423-439; "A Linguistic Appraisal of Victorian Style," The Art of Victorian Prose, ed. George Levine and William A. Madden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968),pp.3-38; and "Literature as Sentences," College English,27 (1966), 261-267.

[7]"The Analysis of Compression in Poetry," p.38.

[8]See Michael Riffaterre, "Criteria for Style Analysis," Word, 15 (1959), 154-174; "Describing Poetic Structures: Two Approaches to Baudelaire's Les Chats," Yale French Studies, 36-37 (1966), 200-242; "Stylistic Context," Word, 16 (1960), 207-218.

[9]"The Analysis of Compression in Poetry," p.39.

[10]"Linguistics and Literary History," Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics (New York: Russell & Russell, 1948), p.27.

[11]Ibid., p.28.

[12]Ibid., p.29.

[13]"Instrumental Style."

[14]The reply to my suggestion of priorities in stylistics is, of course, that a critic of literary language may well have insights about the use of language which linguists ought to consider. And this may be true. But until a literary analyst can develop a theory of both casual and poetic language which adequately accounts for what the native speaker and the poet intuitively know about language, that analyst must depend upon the research of linguists.

[15]As Kintgen points out ("Review of 'The Analysis of Compression in Poetry'," Foundations of Language, forthcoming) Levin's non-recoverable deletion would have to precede lexical insertion. In this case, the conjunction transformation (which Levin's interpretation requires) would also have to apply to pre-lexical units; but this procedure makes the conjunction transformation poetry-specific, for in standard theory transformations can operate only after lexical insertion. It is likely, Kintgen argues, that "we will have to include in our grammar of poetic competence all or almost all the rules that appear in regular grammar." The result would be two grammars, having essentially the same rules, but based on different underlying assumptions.

[16]Linguistics and Style (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.85.

[17]A Grammar of Motives (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1945), p.xv.

[18]This is a development of an idea originally presented in various lectures by Owen Thomas.

WILLIAM B. STONE

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF LITERARY REALISM

"the measure of reality is very difficult to fix"

--Henry James, The Art of Fiction

Literary realism--a redundant expression from one point of view, but a contradiction in terms from another. Even Aristotle, who, although containing multitudes, is not much given to Whitmanesque self-contradiction, provides support for both views. For, if art is imitation, then it is all, in one sense or another, "realistic"; this, indeed, is a common enough view which helps explain the persistence of verisimilitude as a standard for literary evaluation. From Harace's dictum that "closeness to nature is necessary in a fiction intended to please" (Ars Poetica), one can trace a path up to Herbert Read's surrealism, piping us through the labyrinths of the unconscious to the tune of super realism, "the material world reflected by the human mind,"[1] and to James T. Farrell's praise, as a realistic work, of Alice in Wonderland.[2] Yet Aristotle, who holds that "the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities" (Poetics, Chap. 24), makes the distinction between history, a description of what has happened, and poetry, a description of what might happen; and this distinction supports the belief that literature creates its own world, a world not reflecting reality, but manufacturing it. The ultimate extension of this view is the valuing of literature in proportion to its ability to produce "the willing suspension of disbelief" (Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, Chap. 14).

We need not say "credo" to Coleridge's "poetic faith," however, to accept the idea that "telling it like it is" is one thing, and literature is another. There is, certainly, on the one hand, reportage, which may be accurate and even well written enough, but is not art; on the other hand, there is literature, whose power to produce aesthetic pleasure is not dependent upon its correspondence to any "objective" reality. But there is also no necessary contradiction between telling it as it is and producing aesthetic pleasure. Between, say, Jonathan Kozol's Death At An Early Age and Kafka's Metamorphosis is a vast body of work which attempts, with varying degrees of success, to meet the demands of both realism and art; it is from this work that any definition of

literary realism should be derived. Although the incidence of such work is greater at certain periods in history, and in certain forms, than in others, I take literary realism to be, not a description of a particular historical phenomenon or a function of a particular genre, but rather a category used to describe works which produce a certain effect upon their audiences, the effect of both seeming in accord with objective reality and being aesthetically pleasing.

In attempting to explore ways by which such effect is produced, I choose to beg the metaphysical question "what is reality?" One may grant that, in one sense, Alice or Metamorphosis is certainly "realistic," yet I think the common usage of realistic may be accepted; by such usage, it is not realistic for playing cards to play croquet or men to become insects--such vraisemblance extraordinaire is so extraordinaire as to be no longer vraisemblance. The more interesting question is, I think, not what distinguishes a realistic work of literature from a supernatural one, but rather what distinguishes literature from other forms of written realism. Here again Aristotle is suggestive: "poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature of universals, whereas those of history are singulars" (Poetics, Chap. 9). Although Aristotle probably meant by this something rather different, I choose to interpret it as implying that poetry, i.e., literature, imposes an order upon its materials in a way and to an extent that history does not. It is the perception of this order or pattern in a work of literature that gives rise to the aesthetic experience. It is the absence of this pattern, conversely, which keeps some realistic writing from being literature.

Life itself, however, while it has, for individuals and societies, a beginning, a middle, and an end, is not organized according to an aesthetic pattern. Therefore, the imposition of order necessarily tends to run counter to the production of a sense of reality. For a work to be termed an example of literary realism it must be able to impose an aesthetic order on its materials, but it must do so unobtrusively. Without the order we have works, such as the contemporary "history as a novel," which may be realistic, but are not necessarily literature; without the sense of reality we have, of course, works which may be literature, and indeed, excellent literature, but are not realistic. On this side of the spectrum we have not only the previously excluded supernatural works such as Metamorphosis, but also those which, because of the obtrusive quality of their order, are also not realistic. Here I would place, for example, allegory, even when it does not employ the supernatural ("Young Goodman Brown" is not a work of literary realism even if Brown is dreaming), the Brechtian A-

effect drama (Mother Courage, even though based on history, is not realistic), and literary naturalism. Although naturalism is generally thought of as realism moving toward a reductio ad absurdum, in actual practice it takes more than what Henry James termed Zola's "magnificent treadmill of the pigeonholed and documented"[3] to produce realism. Naturalism, which tends to obstinately impose a deterministic philosophy upon its material, generally does so so determinedly that it should be seen, not as a kind of super realism, but, rather, as similar to allegory.

The exemplary work of literary realism, then, I take to be one that is balanced between the extremes of "reality" and aesthetic order. A clear example of such a work is Joyce's "The Dead"; everything that happens in the story is plausible; in no place does the pattern of the story obtrude upon the versimilitude, and yet virtually nothing in the story is irrelevant to that pattern.

To help explain what I mean by literary realism involving a balance, I would like to discuss some of the problems of unobtrusive order, to indicate from what it arises and how it relates to genre and various literary elements.

Most aesthetic theories recognize the importance of a work of art's containing some pattern, organization, or principle of unity. For Aristotle it is the Plot, "the first essential, the life and soul" of Tragedy, that provides the basic organizing principle; Stephan Dedalus talks of "Rhythm...the esthetic relation of part to part in any esthetic whole"; Poe speaks of "Unity" centered upon the production of a particular "effect."[4] Indeed, as an introductory aesthetics text says, "no one has... succeeded in persuading men that an object can be beautiful without unity."[5] The nature of this unity is, of course, the rub. Here, I would like to take Plato for my text: "the comprehension of scattered particulars in one idea ...which whether true or false certainly [gives] clearness and consistency to the discourse" (Phaedrus). I believe unity arises from the operation of what is usually called theme, the central organizing principle in a literary work. That is, I think it is possible to find in every well-constructed work of literature an "idea," a "statement" of a "universal," which organizes the work's separate parts in that these parts all serve to illustrate this idea or theme. Although Aristotle takes "Thought" to be less essential than "Plot," I believe that "Plot, Characters, Diction, Spectacle, and Melody," to use his terms, can, insofar as the work has aesthetic pattern, be seen as being controlled by thought or theme. In a sense, this is a circular argument, for "theme" in literature can be defined as that central idea which the work, in all its integrated parts, serves to display.

But to take one specific example, which is relevant to realism, we might consider Shakespeare's reduction of the historical Hotspur's age, so that, in Henry IV, he becomes a contemporary not, nearly, of Henry IV, but of Prince Hal. If we ask why Shakespeare did this, or to pose the question in a more answerable form, what is the effect of his having done so, the obvious answer is that this tampering with historical reality increases the antagonism between Hotspur and Hal. But it is not difficult to see that this aspect of characterization in turn is connected to the plot, which is climaxed on the battlefield, and that both the plot and the characterization serve to illustrate a theme, that of the education of the prince, as indeed, does Falstaff, the sun-moon imagery, and virtually everything else in this well-constructed work. Thus, there is thematic significance to the age assigned to Hotspur, and recognition of the theme allows us to see this detail in its proper place in the overall pattern. This is, I believe, what recognition of theme generally does, and thus the question "how may a writer unobtrusively pattern his work so that it is both realistic and literary?" may be discussed through another question: "in what way is theme presented?" Here we approach, in respect to the central distinction between realistic and nonrealistic works, an area discussed in Wayne Booth's germinative work The Rhetoric of Fiction, but we may well go back to Poe's idea of "the heresy of The Didactic" ("The Poetic Principle"). Poe's view, that "a poem should not mean/But be," as MacLeish put it, may be accepted, and yet it is, I believe, through theme, which is, in a sense, "meaning," that a work's "being" can be best understood. However, when that "meaning" obtrudes, the work becomes, artistically, if not morally or philosophically, "didactic." I do not believe that the work is therefore ipso facto less good; I do believe that it is less realistic.

In what ways then is theme presented, and which of these may be termed "realistic"? A complete analysis would be, of course, more than this paper can undertake, but guidelines may be suggested. I use the term "guidelines," not as a victim of a contemporary cant term, but as a student of Henry James. For, in fact, the problem is similar to, although rather the opposite of, that which he discussed in a relatively famous passage in his preface to The American where he wrote, of romance:

> The balloon of experience is in fact of course tied to the earth, and under that necessity we swing, thanks to a rope of remarkable length, in the more or less commodious car of the imagination; but it is by the rope we know where we are, and from the moment that cable is cut we are at large and unrelated: we only swing apart from the globe...The art of the romancer is, "for the fun of it," insidiously to cut the cable,

to cut it without our detecting him.[6]

If we are, however, to "swing" not with romance but with realism, the writer's art is to, "insidiously," not cut the lines, but get us aloft without our being aware of the ascent.

Perhaps the most direct way for the reader to be so moved, to appreciate the theme, is for the author, in his own voice, to enunciate it. As this is hardly insidious, we would suspect that authorial intervention would tend to preclude realism. As a general rule, this is true, and it is this fact, plus a prevailing belief that realism is good, which does much to explain the modern concern with "point of view," the use of "chorus characters" and a whole range of devices. However, the question is not quite this simple. We have, for example, as Wayne Booth has explained, the "unreliable narrator," who may point out to us the pattern in the work, but whose view may be wrong. We may also have an "Olympian" author intervening, but if we do not find his intervention to consist of relevant or valid comments the realism is not necessarily reduced. Only that intervention which truly points to the basic pattern or theme necessarily attacks the realism. For example, consider the introductory chapters in Tom Jones. Much of the material in them is only coincidentally related to the story, and thus they are something like the advertisements one encounters while reading a story in a magazine; one may find them attractive or annoying, but they do not directly affect the degree of realism of the story itself. At other times Fielding's remarks are obviously tongue in cheek, as when he tells us, in the penultimate introductory chapter that "as to poor Jones...we almost despair of bringing him to any good; and if our reader delights in seeing executions, I think he ought not to lose any time in taking a first row at Tyburn." We may find this coyness charming, but we cannot take it seriously enough for it to affect our judgment of the story's realism.

It is a different case, however, when Dreiser, in An American Tragedy, tells us that, "To say the truth, Clyde had a soul that was not destined to grow up" (Book 2, Chap. 3). Here, the thematic point is so "noninsidiously" presented that we recognize Dreiser's conscious manipulation of the story to bring out this point, and realism is reduced.

A rather more subtle way for the author to intervene and present his structuring theme is for his to create a mouthpiece, or "chorus character." Aeschylus provided the prototype, a chorus, with some degree of involvement in the action, which comments upon, and generalizes about, the action. In Greek tragedy this device was, of course, obtrusive; it was

for subsequent realists to refine it so that it need not be. Shakespeare's fools are in this tradition; whether their words have the cryptic quality of Feste's "virtue that transgresses is but patched with sin; and sin that amends is put patched with virtue. If this simple syllogism will serve, so..." (Twelfth Night I.v.), or the clarity of Lear's fool, "thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise" (I.v.), these words frequently contribute to our understanding of the theme. Yet it is basic to the Fool's position that his "wisdom" is indirect, unobtrusive, and therefore tending to be realistic.

An interesting example of a chorus-character-fool-figure is Trifimov in The Cherry Orchard. Although he is given set speeches which subtract a bit from the play's realism, their didactic quality is reduced by the way Chekov pictures Trifimov as a ludicrous figure who falls down stairs and forgets his rubbers. Of course, the chorus character's appearance is not restricted to the drama. In Pip, Ahab's cabin boy, Melville, as Charles Olsen pointed out,[7] created a character similar to Lear's fool; a somewhat similar, although less prominent, figure is the servant Gerasim in Tolstoy's The Death of Ivan Ilych. Examples are numerous, primarily, I believe, because such characters provide for a relatively realistic, indirect, authorial intervention.

But even when the author does not spell out, explicitly or through a chorus character, his theme, the work may, of course, be patterned so obviously that, however plausible may be all the events, however lifelike may be all the characters, the work still appears other than realistic. Plausiblity is a necessary, but not sufficient, cause of realism. The prototype of this sort of manipulation may be seen in the Biblical parables. One need not admit the divine inspiration of the Gospels to recognize that there is, for example, nothing described in "The Parable of the Prodigal Son" which might not have happened, but one does not need Jesus's introductory words "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv.10) to recognize the point of the story--a point, or theme, which is so obtrusive as to make the parable other than "realistic." The same comment applies to the allegory and to innumerable "didactic" works.

Another aspect of patterning, less directly related to the didactic, is the question of genre. "The novel has generally been considered the form best suited to the artistic treatment of reality" as The Oxford Companion to American Literature says (see "Realism"); and the basic reason for this, I believe, is that in poetry, and to a lesser extent, in drama, as opposed to fiction, the conventions of the genre make the artistic structure, of necessity, more obvious.

With quite limited exceptions, such as some hip disc-jockeys, and users of Australian riming slang, people do not ordinarily speak in rime; this poetic structuring device is almost inherently unrealistic. The same thing can be said of meter, and to a lesser degree of other sound qualities, such as alliteration, as well as of patterns of imagery, kenning, stanzaic organization--most of the devices that tend to differentiate poetry from prose. These devices are not, of course, incidental ornamentation, but, in a well-made work they are essential to theme. The stanzaic pattern of Shakespeare's "That time of year thou mayst in me behold," narrowing down from a year, to a day, to a fire, and indicating the conclusion in a couplet illustrates the unity of "being" and "meaning" in the sonnet. Tennyson's manipulation of end-stopped lines and caesurae, in "Ulysses," has an integral relationship to that poem's theme, as do the "o" sounds in Arnold's "Dover Beach." The common quality of the reaction, by men wise, good, wild, or grave, to "that good night" is brought out through the repeated end rime in the Dylan Thomas poem. Examples are as numerous as are good poems. In all, theme depends on obtrusive devices.

However, the more conventional these devices become, at any given historical period, the less they contribute to theme, and the less obtrusive they may become. Thus, a poetic work, even though constructed within the confines of a rigid convention, need not, therefore, have been considered, by its contemporary audience, as unrealistic. English and Scots narrative ballads in the 16th century, for example, in spite of their conventional quatrain pattern, need not have produced an unrealistic effect. However, influenced perhaps by realistic standards developed in prose (the limits of this paper preclude extended historical speculation), modern poetry has tended to move away from the use of previously established conventions of rime and meter. While the lyric remains essentially tied, for its aesthetic effect, to the relatively obtrusive relation between device and theme, it is no coincidence that such poets who might be thought of as practioners of literary realism, such as Whitman or Browning, in his dramatic monologues, avoid obtrusive patterning through conventional rime and stanzaic organization. It is thanks more to the latter's skill in the flexible use of blank verse (the most "natural" or unobtrusive of regular metric patterns) than to Vasari's facts that Browning's gallery of renaissance artists is hung with realistic portraits. And it is thanks more to Whitman's use of free verse than to his philosophy ("I accept Reality and dare not question it/Materialism first and last imbuing" ["Song of Myself,"23]) that he may be considered a realist.

Generally, however, because it is not content *per se* which determines whether a work produces the impression of literary realism, the forms of poetry tend to make poems which produce this impression relatively rare. Drama can more readily appear realistic, but not so readily as can fiction. Verse drama, of course, shares with poetry some of the "problems" of obtrusive patterning, but even prose drama is likely to be somewhat obvious in its organizing devices. The simple reason for this is, I believe, that, just as poetry was originally meant to be expressed through the ear, drama is ordinarily meant to be experienced, not through reading, in the "closet," but on the stage. However alert the audience may be assumed to be, in the rapidity of the production and in the lack of an opportunity to review and reread, it must be relatively "hit over the head" with the author's theme. Although the contemporary cinema, like current rock music, may be moving towards an assumption that the audience requires a reading knowledge of the work in order to appreciate it, this has never been, in spite of Shaw's prefaces, a prevailing idea in drama. Therefore, although some of the thematic structuring devices in drama may be quite subtle, they ordinarily need to be reinforced by fairly obvious material that the audience will not miss.

Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, for example, is certainly a relatively realistic work; its organizing theme, which is related to creativity,[8] is expressed in a number of fairly subtle ways, such as Hedda's remarks on flowers, Tesman's research interests, and the General's picture dominating the set. However Ibsen, as a master play builder, understands that more than subtlety is required; he not only insists on Hedda's lack of femininity through the repeated comparisons between her sparse and Thea's abundant hair, he goes further and has Hedda say, in burning Lövberg's manuscript: "Now I am burning your child, Thea!--Burning it, curly-locks! Your child and Eilert Lövberg's. I am burning--I am burning your child" (Act III).

The Cherry Orchard, to take another example of an essentially realistic play, demonstrates its organizing principle, the theme of change from the old order to the new, in a variety of unobtrusive ways, such as Gayev's billiards, Lopahin's misquoting of *Hamlet*, and Pischik's mention of Caligula; but Chekov still finds it necessary, as I have mentioned, to provide the set speeches of Trifimov: "All Russia is our orchard..." etc. Nevertheless, this obtrusive insistence on theme is occasional; the playwrite faces fewer inherent problems than does the poet in creating a work of literary realism.

Some playwrights, of course, choose to batter the reader's head more than the form necessarily requires. A case in point

here is Brechtian drama, as well as much intentionally propagandistic theater from Aristophanes to Le Roi Jones. While this work is often self-styled realism, in it, as in parables, the "being" is intentionally subordinated to the "meaning." Realism is defined, by Brecht, as "laying bare society's causal network";[9] his view is that a work is realistic or not depending primarily upon the validity of its theme and the effectiveness with which it is brought out. Didacticism, far from interfering with realism, is necessary to it. From this follows his _Verfremdungseffekt_ theory and practice, in which, as he says _of Chinese acting_, an effort is made "to make the incidents represented appear strange to the public."[10] While one may appreciate the results which Brecht's theory produced, and while some degree of "alienation" is essential to any art--without aesthetic distance there is no aesthetic effect--to term alienation which is carried to the extent of "appear[ing] strange and even surprising to the audience"[11] as "realism" is a curious use of words only explicable if one makes the unnecessary assumption that _realistic_ and _good_ are synonomous. This seems to me to be a _case of Brecht's_ saying "When I use a word...it means just what I choose it to mean." Brecht, of course, like Humpty Dumpty, felt that the basic question was "which is to be the master?", but while this may be a central question in our times, unless plausibility is irrelevant to realism, one must say that a work such as _Mother Courage_ has, at most, realistic material organized in _other than a_ realistic way. Perhaps an appeal to authority, Friedrich Engels, is worth making here: "I think that the bias [in realistic art] should flow by itself from the situation and action, without particular indications."[12]

Intentional "alienation," like parable and allegory, rime and set speeches, is only one of many ways that the "bias" is given "particular indications." There is, of course, a whole index of other sins against realism, all of which essentially involve a form of obtrusive patterning or the didactic, and examples of which the reader can no doubt readily supply. How then may these "sins" be avoided?

Here again, the list of techniques is long and often obvious, but I would like to consider a few particular aspects. The correlate of the old saying, "truth is stranger than fiction," indicates a basic point. While in real life coincidences, surprising reversals of fortune, Aristotle's "Discoveries" through "signs and necklaces," occur with some frequency (and, consequently, verisimilitude suggests that coincidence should not be entirely eliminated from a realistic work), these surprises occur in literature generally as a function of obtrusive patterning, so that no appeal to the objective reality of a newspaper story is sufficient defense for a work accused upon

these grounds of being unrealistic. The deus ex machina resolution of the plot is, of course, unrealistic not because one may object to the deus, but because the machina is too obtrusive a device. But the more cleverly organized the plot, the more its organization is likely to call attention to itself. The plot complexities of a comedy by Ben Jonson, for example, provide pleasure proportionate to our awareness of the author's manipulative skill; this unrealistic aspect provides the greatest asthetic delight.

It might seem then that a picaresque sort of plot structure, in which the events, rather than being clearly patterned with rising and falling action on both sides of a climax, occur almost randomly and interchangeably, would be the most realistic. However, one need only think of specific examples, from Nash's *Jack Wilton or the Unfortunate Traveler* to Bellow's traveler *Augie March*, to realize that one cannot bank on this plot structure to produce a realistic impression. It is the reverse of the coin of which Brecht's drama is the obverse; the one organizes realistic material unrealistically; the other organizes frequently unrealistic incident realistically. Viewed from either side, the coin must be rejected by one treasuring realism.

To be able to organize realistic incident realistically and still produce an aesthetic effect--it is not easy. Poe, who held versimilitude to be "the most vitally important point in fiction," felt compelled to choose between "ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or...peculiarity of both incident and tone";[13] ordinary incident-*and*-tone was not considered. The difficulty presented by this combination may help explain why there is a correlation between concern for realism and lack of emphasis upon plot, for it is in a work in which, rather than a "racing and chasing o'er Cannobie Lee," "nothing happens" that realism is often more apparent.

What this means, in practice, is that in realistic literature there tends to be a shift in emphasis from plot to character. Both Aeschylus and Shakespeare dramatized the idea that "character is fate," i.e., that plot and character are necissarily bound, but it remained for Arnold Bennett to state, "The foundation of good fiction is character creating and nothing else"[14] and for Henry James to ask, rhetorically, "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?"[15] These questions represent the essentially realistic approach to plot--an approach through character.

If we next ask what sort of characterizarion is more realistic, there are, of course, two established, and valid, answers.

Characters are more realistic insofar as they are more "rounded" or "three dimensional" and "developing," and insofar as they are revealed "indirectly," through action. These are trite ideas, but perhaps my approach to literary realism may help explain why such characterization is considered to be realistic. We return to the connection between character and plot. A "flat" character has only one way to go; his actions are readily predictable. Whatever the dusty main street, at any high noon, we know, and indeed enjoy the knowledge, that the moustachioed man with the black hat will have a little more trouble with his hardware than will his opponent. Good triumphs over evil; the theme is clear, because the plot, with the help of character, has been obviously structured. But if the plot is to avoid obtrusive patterning, it follows that, insofar as incident illustrates character, the characters must remain flexible in order that plot not be, unrealistically, a foregone conclusion. Similarly, when the author directly describes character, he tends to obtrusively impose pattern. However, as we have previously seen, authorial intervention, as it may be unreliable or irrelevant, is not necessarily unrealistic; consequently, we may have, realistically, direct authorial characterization, provided such characterization refrains from insisting upon essential thematic points, or when its insistence may be "unreliable." This latter technique happens more frequently in works told from other than a simple "Olympian" point of view (e.g., consider the way Conrad's _Lord Jim_ is presented), but the possibility of authorial irony allows for direct "Olympian" thematic comment on character which does not necessarily reduce the realism. This procedure is, however, fairly rare (one possible example is Stephen Crane's treatment of Henry Fleming in _The Red Badge of Courage_), and it is clear that realistic characterization arises more readily through "showing" rather than "telling."

But if character, in a sense, may determine plot, character itself may be determined by setting. Here again, the relevant question, in assessing the degree of "realism," is not the material _per se_, but the author's treatment of it. While there are some settings which are inherently unrealistic, Swift's land of the Houyhnhnms, e.g., there are none that are inherently realistic. A setting contributes to the impression of literary realism insofar as it is integrated into the theme in an unobtrusive way. Thus, realistic settings should, ordinarily, influence and illustrate character without dominating it. When we see Prince Hal in the Boar's Head Tavern, the Eastcheap setting contributes in many ways to the theme, not the least of which is through the way the Prince learns to sound "the very base-string of humility" and "drink with any tinker in his own language," so

that when he is "King of England" he may "command all the good lads in Eastcheap" (1 Henry IV II.iv) with a skill that is put to the test at Agincourt, but at no time do we feel Hal to be a victim of a "disadvantaged" background. Compare Frankie Machine, in Nelson Algren's The Man With The Golden Arm, who "had not even been a sucess in the taverns";[16] Frankie's world, the world of West Division Street, Schwabtski the landlord, Record Head the cop, Antek the owner, a world skillfully and truthfully pictured, defines and creates Frankie the dealer. The Tug and Maul Bar is a long way from the Boar's Head, not only in time and space. The one contributes to complexity of character and thereby versimilitude of plot; the other determines character and thereby makes Frankie's end as inevitable as a showdown at high noon. Thus, paradoxically, it is the very verisimilitude of the setting which, through its obtrusive patterning, reduces the realism.

If setting, like plot and character, presents both problems and opportunities to the literary realist, the same is true, of course, of any literary factor, but one is particularly useful to him. Symbolism, which can be subtly used to give thematic pattern to the most "ordinary" material, is perhaps literary realism's single most appropriate technique. As used by Dante, the obtrusive quality of the symbolism, of course, predominates and contributes a major part of the greatness of his Commedia; as used by the naturalists (e.g., the squid and octopus in Dreiser's The Financier), the symbolism, if less complex, may also frequently be obtrusive. But used "realistically," symbolism, while not interfering with versimilitude or seeming too forced, may be so organically related to the theme as to become the prime organizing principle of the work. This is what we have, e.g., in Frost's "Mending Wall," Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," and Hemingway's "The Big Two-hearted River." While this kind of realistic-symbolic unity can be approached in a novel, through patterns of imagery, such as those related to decay in Madame Bovary, to vegetation in Adam Bede,or to gold in The Golden Bowl, it is easier to maintain in a shorter work, so that, as I suggested earlier, Joyce's "The Dead" might be taken as a work which approaches, as closely as is practically possible, "pure" literary realism.

The theme of the Joyce story I take to be the deadening influence of the past--memories, traditions of family, church and country, etc. Once this is understood it is clear that virtually nothing in the story is unrelated to this theme. In bringing out the theme, the "guidelines" I have suggested for literary realism are all followed: the incident is plausible; the author avoids direct intervention; plot is subordinated to character, which in turn expresses theme (the climax, in the hotel room, is a result of the way in which "the past"

has affected both Gabriel and Gretta); and the setting (middle-class Dublin) conditions Gabriel, but he is not in a passive relationship to it. But it is primarily through symbolism, from Gabriel's rubbers, through the story of the horse going around a statue, to the softly falling snow, that material, realistic to the point of dullness, is used to illustrate a theme and thereby to form an unabtrusive pattern that produces aesthetic delight.

Joyce's story, then, illustrates an essential point about literary realism, that it is basically a question of "aesthetic distance." If a painter paints upon his canvas a fly so realistic that we wish to brush it off, there is no aesthetic pleasure until we realize that it is, actually, paint; yet, if the fly does not look like a fly, there is no realism. Similarly in literature. We feel that Joyce's Dubliners are as real as any who ever passed over O'Connell Bridge, yet at the same time we know that they have been portrayed by an artist, for Stephen Dedalus has had his wish, "the reality of experience," we realize, was "forge[d] in the smithy of... [his] soul."[17]

This then, is what we ask of literary realism, that it "distance" us from the work of art only as far as is necessary for us to know it is a work of art. Pure literary realism, in this sense, is an ideal, or even like the attempt to define it, a will of the wisp. But in pursuing a will of the wisp, some come closer than others. All that can be said, finally, I believe, is that those who come within a certain distance should be termed literary realists. Others may chase a different _ignus fatuus_ and run as well. I hope my discussion has at least suggested that the term "literary realism" is not the same as the term "good writing." Literary realism is, nevertheless, a label that may be pinned on some of the most satisfactory works produced by the human imagination.

I have attempted, therefore, to suggest some factors that help produce this sense of literary reality, but being forced, at last, to accept James's statement that "it will be difficult to give you a recipe for calling that sense into being," I might well close with his wise words: "Humanity is immense, and reality has a myriad forms; the most that one can affirm is that some of the flowers of fiction have the odor of it, and others have not."[18]

Chicago

NOTES

[1]"Surrealism and the Romantic Principle," in Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgement, ed. Mark Schorer, Josephine Miles, Gordon McKenzie (New York, 1948), p.101.

[2]"Growth and Decay in Literature," in Criticism...op.cit., p.121.

[3]Notes on Novelists With Some Other Notes (New York, 1914), p.60.

[4]Poetics, Chap. 6. James Joyce, Portrait of The Artist As A Young Man in The Portable James Joyce (New York, 1947), p.471. "The Poetic Principle."

[5]DeWitt H. Parker, The Principles of Aesthetics (New York, 1946), p.66.

[6]The Art of The Novel (New York, 1934), pp.33-34.

[7]Call Me Ishmael (New York, 1947).

[8]This is pointed out in Brooks and Warren, An Approach to Literature (New York, 1964), pp.661-665.

[9]Brecht on Theatre, ed. John Willett (New York, 1964), p.109.

[10]Ibid., p.91.

[11]Ibid., p.92.

[12]Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Literature and Art (New York, 1947), p.45.

[13]"Twice-Told Tales," "The Philosophy of Composition," in Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. Edward H. Davidson (Boston, 1956), pp.445, 453.

[14]Quoted in Joseph T. Shipley, ed. Dictionary of World Literature (New York, 1953), p.51.

[15]"The Art of Fiction" in Criticism...op.cit., p.50.

[16](New York, 1951), p.21.

[17]Joyce, op.cit., p.525.

[18]"The Art of Fiction," op.cit., p.48.

REVIEW ARTICLE

GRAMMAR AND RHETORIC

Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. Modern Rhetoric. 3rd ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970. Pp.xvii + 880 + xix. $8.75.

Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike. Rhetoric: Discovery and Change. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970. Pp. xxi + 383. $6.95.

Grammarians, like lexicographers, do not like to think of themselves as entirely harmless drudges. If they can find some wider application for the fruits of their incessant labors, they will climb the highest lectern to say so. Noam Chomsky's transformational analysis will reveal that the rationalists were right all along; Kenneth Pike's tagmemic analysis will provide the model for all of human behavior. On a more modest level, both have offered a theoretical basis for coping with aspects of the immensely difficult problem of teaching composition. Transformational analysis has yet to yield a composition textbook that bears on anything more than the problem of revising sentences,[1] but tagmemic analysis has produced a whole "new rhetoric": Young, Becker, and Pike's Rhetoric: Discovery and Change.[2] In a recent enthusiastic but cursory review, Garland Cannon called Rhetoric "the best of the various applications of modern linguistic principles and data to communication."[3]

One would expect, since Young, Becker, and Pike emphasize the newness of their "new rhetoric," that Rhetoric: Discovery and Change would contrast significantly with older, more traditional composition textbooks and that the contrast could be traced to the fact that their textbook is based on "modern linguistic principles and data," while the more traditional ones are not. Brooks and Warren's recent edition of Modern Rhetoric,[4] a traditional and widely used textbook, cannot be accused of being unduly influenced by "modern linguistic principles and data": the grammar it occasionally draws upon is largely but not entirely traditional.[5] It should, therefore, provide an interesting and revealing contrast to Rhetoric: Discovery and Change. What is at issue here is not whether or not Rhetoric is "the best application," but the extent to which it is, if it is, an application of "modern linguistic principles and data" to composition.

Perhaps the most striking and crucial difference between the two textbooks is their basic conceptions of the nature of language, its purpose, and consequently the purpose of a composition textbook.

"Language is tied to the process of thought," write Brooks and Warren (p.3). No one can take issue with claims as slippery as that one, but Brooks and Warren go further by insisting upon the power of language to clarify our thinking: "whatever a man's practical success, he will, if he lacks competence in language, spend much of his life fumbling in a kind of twilight world in which ideas, facts, and feelings are perceived only dimly and often in distorted shapes" (p.5). But how can anyone achieve any degree of practical success if he lacks "competence in language"? How can he read or write business letters, talk on the telephone, order supplies? Everyone has "competence" in his native language; he knows, in the Chomskyan sense, its grammar. What he may not know is how to interpret "Ash Wednesday," how to express precisely why he prefers Rod McKuen to William Blake, how to give his writing a mock-heroic tone. He can manage ordinary, everyday affairs, but perhaps not the extraordinary ones.[6]

It is the man of letters whose competence in language is extraordinary; it is the literary critic, the poet, the novelist who, because of an unfortunately widespread arrogance, is said to possess the language skills necessary for seeing vividly and accurately. Everyone else is condemned to fumble in a twilight world. At the end of a section entitled "Persuasion and the Emotions," Brooks and Warren insist, without bothering to justify themselves, that "what is important for you is to cultivate your awareness of the psychological appeals of literature and to study its techniques of persuasion" (pp.249-50), for "what is involved in selling Jell-O or greeting cards is simple in comparison to the complexity of an even moderately successful literary work" (p.249). In short, "language," for Brooks and Warren, seems to be equivalent to something like "literary language," or "competence in language," to something like "literary competence." This is a competence beyond the capabilities of "the ordinary student," for whom the textbook is intended (p.viii); yet Brooks and Warren tell that same student that failure to achieve it, inability to produce elegant prose, will leave him fumbling in a twilight world.

For Young, Becker, and Pike as well, "language is tied to the process of thought," but in a different way. Incorporated into their textbook are applications of a weak form of the Whorfian hypothesis: "A language is, in a sense, a theory of the universe, a way of selecting and grouping experiences in a fairly consistent and predictable way" (p.27). Unlike Brooks and Warren, Young, Becker, and Pike admit that

they do not know "just how deeply language is involved in the ways people understand the world" (p.28); yet they make clear, using examples, that a language is "a set of symbols that label recurring chunks of experience" (p.27). Private languages, usually called "idiolects," differ considerably not only in labelling but also in "chunking," as any reader of student essays can testify, and although it does not discuss private languages as such, Rhetoric, in effect, offers a warning to students about the existence of private languages and suggests ways of overcoming them. Young, Becker, and Pike feel that "psychological [perceptual] change in the audience, rather than elegant prose, is the immediate and proper goal of the writer" (p.xiv). If language is a way of seeing the world, as many linguists have suggested, it followes that the use of language to convince or persuade or enlighten involves inducing perceptual change in an audience; it may also follow, as no linguist has yet suggested, that more sophisticated ("elegant" or "literary") uses of language involve more sophisticated perception, but at least the student using Rhetoric will be free of the debilitating effects of the threat of fumbling in a twilight world.

Young, Becker and Pike base their "new rhetoric" on six maxims which they claim are "the contributions of tagmemics to understanding and controlling" (p.xiii) the process of writing:

1. People conceive of the world in terms of repeatable units (p.26).

2. Units of experience are hierarchically structured systems (p.29).

3. A unit, at any level of focus, can be adequately understood only if three aspects of the unit are known: (1) its contrastive features, (2) its range of variation, and (3) its distribution in larger contexts (p.56).

4. A unit of experience can be viewed as a particle, or as a wave, or as a field (p.122).

5. Change between units can occur only over a bridge of shared features (p.172).

6. Linguistic choices are made in relation to a universe of discourse (p.301).

The first four of these maxims interact to form a heuristic

procedure which a writer can use to discover what he needs to know about his subject. This procedure is "a method of inquiry based on how we come to know something"; more specifically, it is based on "the procedures the linguist uses in analyzing and describing a language."[7] The claim that these maxims are the contributions of tagmemics is an ambiguous one, but it is not clarified in the textbook or in Cannon's review of it.

Does a specific grammatical analysis have exclusive possession of these maxims; that is, are the principles underlying them the unique property of tagmemics? Certainly not. Number five, for instance, has been stated in various ways for a long time; it underlies the traditional textbook admonition, "know your audience." Indeed, one can infer the five other maxims from the treatment of the traditional "methods of exposition" (identification, comparison and contrast, illustration, classification, definition, and analysis) given in <u>Modern Rhetoric</u>. Pike himself admits that they may have been "used informally or without reference to a specific theory of language" for some time by front-line composition teachers.[8] Any number of individuals may in some way employ any combination of the principles underlying these maxims. Nevertheless, it appears that this particular constellation of principles and these explicit formulations of them are to be found only in the discovery procedures underlying tagmemic analysis. Herein lies the contribution of tagmemics.

But are the maxims adequate from the point of view of improving the quality of student writing? First of all, are "the procedures the linguist uses in analyzing and describing a language" the procedures a competent writer uses at some point before polishing his final draft?[9] A glance at any essay written from a particular political orientation will provide a negative answer. Obviously, the heuristic procedure derived from the first four maxims is intended to lead the student to a "scientific" grasp of his subject; that is, it encourages him to see the "unit" from a variety of perspectives so that he can achieve an objective understanding of it. The multiple perspectives should bring into the foreground whatever facts might be lurking in the background and should cancel out, or at least modify, whatever bias the student brings to the investigation. Few writers follow such rigorous procedures.

Second, should the student follow such a procedure? It does not, as Pike and Longacre admit, automatically lead to the desired results even in linguistics, the field for which it was specifically designed.[10] Pike's procedure can be applied only to a "unit" whose relevant features are accessible. For example, unless the constraints on the press at Wounded Knee are removed, the procedure will not lead the

student to an understanding of events there. It is not clear how the procedure can be used to discover relationships (other than hierarchical ones) between "units." If the "effect unit," for example, contains traces of the "cause unit," the procedure may be adequate for discovering cause and effect relationships, but such traces are not always present. The student cannot discover the cause of the First Germanic Consonant Shift by exploring it as a "unit." It is even less clear how Pike's procedure can lead the student to understanding"units" whose existence he only dimly grasps, for the procedure is predicated on the assumption that the student already knows the "unit" well enough to be able to determine its contrastive features, range of variation, and so on. It does not encourage the student to seek out new "units"; if he is only dimly aware of institutional racism, the procedure will do nothing to make him more aware. There may be other things it will not do. A "unit" is, apparently, "a physical object, an event, or a concept" (p.128), but it is not clear just what is excluded from these categories. Is parental disapproval of modular scheduling in the public schools an event, a concept, both, or neither?

Nevertheless, for such categories, the procedure is invaluable. It should give the student a solid grasp of objects, events, and concepts and consequently provide him with a more substantial conceptual background than he usually has. The procedure should reveal to him, for example, that individualism or education--two of his favorite topics--is so slippery that narrowing it is an advance, not a retreat. The procedure should make clear to the student, now that he realizes that he did not know the "unit" so well before as after applying it, how in fact he came to know something and, by extension, how a reader can be led to know that same thing. Finally, if the student writes for a specific reader, the procedure can help him determine what he must include in his presentation; including everything he has discovered about the "unit" will result in a tedious presentation--discussion of the obvious, lack of discussion of what is controversial, and so on. What the reader knows and needs to know can be determined by considering him a "unit" and applying the procedure to him.

The six maxims, however, are not the only "modern linguistic principles" upon which _Rhetoric: Discovery and Change_ is based, but they are the only ones which can be ascribed to tagmemics. Also evident are a number of others, all of which appear to be based on a single principle--actually a fundamental article of faith--namely, that languages must be studied objectively, that statements about a language (or features of it) must be descriptive rather than evaluative or normative. The linguist maintains that any dialect or

dialectal feature is worthy of study for its own sake; although he recognizes that certain dialects of English, for example, lack social prestige, for the purpose of analysis he considers them equal to more prestigious ones. All dialects are legitimate; they are not the result of a decline from some earlier, "purer" state of the language. As the learned and unlearned reaction to Webster's Third New International Dictionary indicated, there are many who do not feel that this fundamental principle should be directly applied to the making of dictionaries or, apparently, anything else.

Brooks and Warren seem to belong to this group. For guidance on questions of usage, Brooks and Warren provide the student with a diagram of three overlapping "kinds of diction" (p.411):

1. Formal Literary English (found in "serious books")

2. Colloquial English ("the informal but polite conversation of cultivated people")

3. Illiterate English (the speech of the uneducated)

Yet because the overlap here is "so large that most of the words used in writing of the most formal style are to be found in writings at the other extreme" (p.412), because no diagram can possibly tell the student what expressions belong to what category,[11] and because the inadequacy of the classification[12] should have been clear to them, Brooks and Warren seem to have included it only as a justification for their pronouncements about what is "appropriate" and what is not. Because words have greater or lesser degrees of "dignity and social standing," they are "appropriately" used only in certain contexts:

> words like caboodle and gumption are good colloquial words and perfectly appropriate to the informal give-and-take of conversation. But they would be out of place in a dignified and formal utterance [p.410].

Conversely, "certain literary and rather highfalutin terms, in a colloquial context, sound just as absurd. We do not praise a friend for his 'dexterity' or for his 'erudition,'..." (p.411).[13] The student writer must mind his linguistic manners lest he offend a reader or look "absurd."

Usually such pronouncements are based on misinformation and simple prejudice. Although Brooks and Warren do not commit themselves on disputed cases, they do reveal some ignorance when discussing the "relative dignity" of bucket and pail: "for many modern Americans bucket is more likely to seem the ordinary word...whereas pail will seem a little more old-fashion-

ed..." (p.397). They are unaware of the geographical dimension here: pail is the "ordinary word" in the Northern dialect area, bucket in the Midland and the Southern.[14] Brooks and Warren also claim that slang (undefined) is an "abuse of language" (p.439), but it can only be so if we read "language" to mean something other than it ordinarily does (recall "competence in language"). By most definitions, highfalutin, if not slang, is clearly colloquial: does the sentence containing it (quoted from page 411) constitute a violation of their own injunction, or is the sentence informal because highfalutin appears in it?

Their injunction against mixing "kinds of diction" is violated in a paragraph quoted from D. C. Peattie's Flowering Earth (p.476), which they discuss at length and praise as an example of the sophisticated handling of tone. Peattie "does not hesitate to use colloquial expressions," they point out (p.478), but they neglect to point out that he also uses more formal ones: natal instead of native, whence instead of from where or which, thrive the more instead of thrive more, trod instead of stepped on, plebeian instead of common, odors instead of smells. Students soon conclude from such examples that mixing "kinds of diction" is permissible only if done by someone else. It has frequently been argued that the student should be advised not to mix his diction because he is not yet sufficiently aware of various subtleties to enable him to do it successfully. He probably is not. But textbooks like Modern Rhetoric do not make any systematic attempt to make him aware of such subtleties. Moreover, they do not make clear why they pronounce one kind of diction more "appropriate" to a subject than another. Peattie "accomodates his diction to the wholesome vulgarity of his subject" (p. 478)--weeds--but what kind of diction is "appropriate" to weeds? Any kind.

Any kind because weeds are not inherently comic, serious, tragic, or anything else independently of whoever talks about them. The student writer, Brooks and Warren claim, is likely to err in the direction of "an appropriately slangy colloquialism."[15] For a history instructor, he might write

> I think Andrew Johnson got a raw deal from Congress. He was a pretty cantankerous customer, I have to admit, and mighty stubborn. But lots of folks just didn't like his lingo, his accent, or where he came from, for that matter. I guess you could say that people just didn't like the cut of his jib--sort of instinctively. But I think he was honest as hell and it's a great pity that he got himself stuck with such a poor image. [p.412].

Certainly "slangy colloquialism," but "inappropriate" only if

we assume that student writers must always be relatively formal when writing about a historical figure for a historian. This alleged sample of student writing reveals something about the writer but very little about the knowledge of Andrew Johnson he is supposed to have acquired, and that, not the "slangy colloquialism," is why the writing is "inappropriate" for the occasion. What it reveals about the writer is that he does not hesitate to use colloquial expressions on what a historian might consider a serious occasion; the writer simply does not treat Johnson in the way a serious historian might. But then a student is not a serious historian.

These two related principles--do not mix "kinds of diction" and use the kind "appropriate" for the occasion--make Brooks and Warren's claim that "the style is the man" meaningless. "The man," the personality the writer wants to project, may be revealed in the way he does mix his diction or in the seriousness or lack of seriousness with which he treats his subject.[16] To many people, marijuana is a serious threat to American morality, mental health, etc.; consequently, when they or scholars hired by them discuss it, they adopt a correspondingly formal and serious tone. Others, who see marijuana as less dangerous than alcohol, adopt an informal and casual one. In Margolis and Clorfene's _A Child's Garden of Grass_,[17] the "slangy colloquialism" is part of the message: "grass ain't no big deal." To say that their diction is "inappropriate" is to say that marijuana is a serious threat, is to misread the book, is to deny a point of view different from your own, is to confuse grammatical-rhetorical judgments with judgments about the Truth of things. Certainly those who consider marijuana a threat will be offended and unpersuaded by _A Child's Garden of Grass_, but then Richard Nixon was unpersuaded, and perhaps offended, by the more formal Presidential Report on Marijuana.

In short, Brooks and Warren's advice on questions of usage is inconsistent and unsound; Young, Becker, and Pike manage to avoid similar blunders, but only by, in effect, ignoring usage. They devote a chapter to "dimensions of linguistic choice," reprint most of Charles V. Hartung's "Doctrines of English Usage," and mention the existence of "social and topical constraints" on linguistic choice, but they do not make any of this material useful to the student, who must make these choices. They point out that "the linguistic choices that we make vary in response to the social situation" and that "choice also varies with the topic under discussion" (p.299), but because they offer the student no further, more detailed information, he must fall back on what he already knows about social levels and functional varieties of English. The student knows a great deal. He frequently

but unconsciously shifts from one level or variety to another in his daily life; but his unconscious facility seldom manifests itself in his writing, and if it does, the result is often a confused and confusing mixture of levels or varieties. The student needs to have this facility brought to the level of conscious awareness so that it can be expanded and refined.

Young, Becker, and Pike should be capable of helping the student achieve such an expansion and refinement. They are, for example, well aware that "incongruities between the weight of the topic and the functional variety that is used to discuss it may produce shocking or humorous effects" (p.299) and that the notion of "appropriateness implies the existence of some kind of norm" (p.302), but they provide no material which could help the student exploit these insights. Perhaps the most astounding of their undeveloped, unexplained assertions about usage is "the stylistic norm of modern prose is educated conversation," tossed out as an aside (p.301). As linguists, Young, Becker, and Pike should be able to provide the student with a great deal of information about the facts of English usage, but they do not do so.

Brooks and Warren's treatment of definition is as inconsistent and unsound as their treatment of usage; and Young, Becker, and Pike's treatment of definition is as incomplete as their treatment of usage.

"A definition," write Brooks and Warren, "simply sets its subject in a limited scheme of classification" (p.104). Apparently "its subject" is a word, not what it ought to refer to: "the basic problem with a word such as democracy is that no commonly available short definition is sufficient to give an understanding of the full implications of the word" (p.115). In fact, they do not seem to be concerned about the distinction between defining "the full implications of the word" (the task of the lexicographer) and defining how the word will be used in a particular context (the task of the writer). Some of their illustrative definitions define the word; ar least one ("What is a Good Coach," p.120) stipulates how the writer intends to use the word. It is the perceptive, not the dull, student who will be confused here. The "ordinary student" is expected to know not only the etymology of a word but also some of its semantic history:

> the full mastery of a particular word frequently entails knowing its root meaning. By learning that meaning, we acquire a firm grasp on its various later meanings, for we can see them as extended and specialized meanings that have grown out of the original meaning [p.406].

Brooks and Warren point out that words "are not static,

changeless counters" (p.397) and that "the progress of growth and decay in language is so strong that many words in the course of generations have shifted not only their associations but their primary meanings as well" (p.398). Yet some of their own definitions, explicit and implied, suggest that these abstract principles, for Brooks and Warren, have remained merely abstract principles. "The word unsanitary means 'detrimental to health'"; therefore the assertion "The unsanitary condition of the slaughter pens is detrimental to health" is an instance of the fallacy of begging the question (p.221). "A dog cannot be said to be wicked" because a dog "does not belong to the class of morally reprehensible creatures" (p.71). Compare their use of sin in "The real sin in using slang..." (p.423). Does using slang belong to the class of morally reprehensible acts? "The word analysis actually means 'loosening into parts'"; therefore an "analysis cannot take place except in accordance with the principle of the structure of the thing to be analyzed" (p.130). Is an incorrect analysis then no analysis at all? Far-fetched in far-fetched comparisons "is awkward because it suggests that the terms of a good comparison are close together" (p.454).

All of these examples have been cited in order to illustrate that their principles and their practice do not coincide. Although Brooks and Warren recognize that the meaning of a word changes with time, they do not incorporate that recognition into their pronouncements about words and meanings. The abstract principles cited have not supplanted, in their minds, an older and more common principle, the principle that the meaning of a word is fixed and that that meaning is closely related to the etymology of the word. (The etymological fallacy is conspicuously absent from their list of fallacies.) The only principle consistent with their practice is something like "words mean what I was taught they meant when I learned them"; but this principle ignores change, when change is an observable, undeniable, and hence unignorable fact.

Young, Becker, and Pike's maxims are, in essence, ways of arriving at stipulative definitions; indeed their textbook implies that defining the "units" is far more important to the writer than defining words. As a result, their textbook says little more than the following about words themselves:

> Ultimately, the meaning of a term is not its dictionary definition, nor even the meaning that people agree to assign to the word in a particular situation. The meaning arises from the living context within which the word occurs in connected speech or writing [p.278].

This is certainly sound, but it is also, for the student, uninterpretable. Young, Becker, and Pike do not provide even one illustration to help the student grasp this important principle. They point out that "any definition is to some extent arbitrary" (p.278), but they make no attempt to clarify the ways in which it is arbitrary or the extent to which it may be arbitrary and still be acceptable. If I dissect a poem "incorrectly," may I call that dissection an analysis? Unfortunately, important information about words as words, information that the student needs, even simple advice like "if you mean the same thing, use the same word--if you mean something different, use a different word," never gets presented in Rhetoric.

Both textbooks consider style to be, to some extent, a matter of linguistic choice. Given the same basic "meaning" and the variety of ways English has for expressing it, one's choice among those ways is a stylistic one. Brooks and Warren briefly discuss (pp.371-72) the differences between grammar (the rules of correctness) and rhetoric (the rules of effectiveness) in order to point out some of the syntactic options available to the writer. Under the heading of "changes in the normal word order" (to achieve special emphasis), they discuss the passive voice, expletive constructions, and adjectival and adverbial modifiers. The "normal" order of "Muggs was so alarmed by the racket..." is "The racket so alarmed Muggs..." (p.374); but Brooks and Warren do not explain, here or elsewhere, that by "normal" they mean that the logical and grammatical subjects are the same. Expletive constructions too are "abnormal" in the (unexplained) sense that they delay the logical subject of a sentence, but the only nontrivial example cited (p.375) involves too many dimensions (expletive vs. nonexpletive, active vs. passive, periodic vs. loose, what is in focus vs. what is stressed) to be readily understood. Single-word adjectives may be placed after their nominal to achieve special emphasis, but adjectival phrases and clauses ("The house in the country was charming," p.377) are normally post-nominal. Their inclusion under the heading "changes in the normal word order" is unexceptional. Although most students, for a variety of reasons, need to be made aware of these options, they may be only confused by the presentation here.

Brooks and Warren's treatment of subordination is exceptional in two respects, standard in others. It is exceptional in that it implicitly regards pre- and post-nominal modifiers as subordinate (embedded) sentences (p.386). It is exceptional also in that it implicitly regards different kinds and degrees of subordination as components of "mature" (intelligent, sophisticated) prose style (pp.385-86); that is, it recognizes not only that patterns of subordination

contribute to one's style but also that a style with "light" subordination (Hemingway) may be as "mature" as one with "heavy" subordination (James). It would have been more exceptional if it had made these matters explicit. It is standard in that it insists that "the less important elements must be made subordinate to the more important" (p.385) because "grammatical subordination must conform to the rhetorical sense; it must not mislead by inverting it" (p.387). They correctly point out that "the pattern of subordination constitutes an interpretation," makes explicit "the relation of idea to idea" (p.386); yet problems arise in making sure that "subordination correctly expresses the relation" (p.386).

Unless one posits some realm of ideal "importances," there is no such thing as an inherent hierarchy of importance; propositions are more or less important only with respect to whoever asserts them. In the sentence, "I protest against your wretched policies," which is more important, the fact that I protest or what I'm protesting against?[18] Too often, in our roles as teachers, we tell a student he is guilty of "incorrect subordination" when we ought to tell him that we do not see the relation as he apparently sees it; in other words, when we say "This, rather than that, should have been subordinated," we often mean "You have missed part of the Truth of the matter," and, of course, the Truth is how we, not the student, see it. This is not to say that we ought to abandon efforts to lead students down the path to Truth, only that we ought to separate judgments about a student's command of grammatical-rhetorical matters from judgments about the truth of what he appears to be claiming.

It is a long-standing commonplace among teachers of composition that these two judgements must be separated, but our adherence to the principle that "language is tied to the process of thought" makes us confuse the two. Consider a rather common mistake in student writing: the student writes an argumentative paragraph in which the stated premises do not lead to the stated conclusion, which is introduced by _therefore_ or _thus_. We scribble in the margin "doesn't follow" or "unwarranted conclusion" or something similar, and conclude that the student cannot or will not think logically. There may be a number of reasons the student did not provide the necessary premises, including a naive sense of audience; but the relevent point here is that, while we read _therefore_ and _thus_ as logical indicators (what follows is a logical conclusion), the student reads them merely as transitional devices signaling the conclusion of the paragraph, not the argument. He has seen, perhaps, a list of "transitional words and phrases" in the class handbook, a list which in most handbooks is only a list, and used one without intending what follows as a logical conclusion from the stated premises.

Because his private language differs from ours in this respect, the class handbook has done more harm than good; yet we do not recognize the problem for what it is.

Judgments about a student's grammatical-rhetorical skills can be kept separate from judgments about the truth-value of his writing if we treat matters like subordination in the way we can treat near synonyms, active-passive options, and so on--as available resources. Instead of saying "This is the correct way to subordinate this proposition to this one," we ought to be saying "Here are the ways the language allows us to subordinate one proposition to another."

This is what Young, Becker, and Pike briefly attempt to do. They point out that "grammatical patterns" can be "loaded." A simple sentence can be expanded "by adding to it various optional constituents, by embedding within it one or more subordinate clauses, and by conjoining grammatically similar units" (p.348). Moreover, "the same basic 'meaning' can be represented in several different forms" (p.292); that is, the elements of a proposition (Agent, Act, Goal, etc.) may have various surface manifestations: "The police arrested my roommate" (Goal as object), or "My roommate was arrested by the police" (Goal as subject). However, not only is their discussion of these options sketchy, it also offers little useful advice for making intelligent choices; the student is to choose the option "that is most strategic with reference to his reader and to the larger verbal contexts of which the proposition is a part" (p.293). The only criterion of choice specified is the focus of the paragraph in which the sentence is to appear (p.346). Conspicuously absent are criteria such as what element is to be emphasized, which option provides the smoothest transition, which option will slow down, speed up, or maintain the pace of the paragraph, and so on. Nowhere do Young, Becker, and Pike discuss subordination as a means of making explicit the relation between propositions.

Brooks and Warren, in addition to the syntactic resources mentioned above, enumerate for the student (pp.390-93) several ways of varying the structure of his sentences. They discuss parallelism and balance, loose and periodic sentences, and other rhetorical types which, although they are traditionally associated with "elegant prose," are nevertheless resources which ought to be made available to the student writer because the stock of sentence structures he consciously uses in his writing is often pitifully small. Unfortunately, Young, Becker, and Pike provide no such enumeration.

Despite efforts to upgrade the quality of the teaching of English in the public schools, the student still enters

college-level composition courses handicapped by prescriptive attitudes toward the use of English: there is only one correct way to say something and that is the way the teacher or the textbook would say it. As we have seen, Brooks and Warren's _Modern Rhetoric_ perpetuates such attitudes. The extent to which such attitudes can be blamed for the typical student's narrow linguistic repertoire is uncertain, but it is certain that such attitudes are to blame for specific "rules," such as "never split an infinitive" or "never use slang," which tend to make the student avoid using constructions and expressions he frequently hears among his friends and often sees in respectable prose. There are undoubtedly many causes for his linguistic myopia, but it is clear that the student needs to have his knowledge of the resources of English expanded and refined if he is ever to become a competent writer.

Young, Becker, and Pike's _Rhetoric: Discovery and Change_, if used wisely, can disabuse the student of many of his prescriptive attitudes. It is a liberating text in that, unlike _Modern Rhetoric_, it frees the student from the debilitating effects of vague fears of violating some imaginary grammar. The student frequently asks, "Can I use _uptight_?" "Is _really_ a good word?" "Is it wrong to use _who_ after a verb?" Questions like these indicate not only the student's ignorance of the facts of modern English but also his high level of linguistic anxiety. Once that anxiety is overcome, teachers can get on to the business of expanding and refining student competence in English, and then on to the real business of a composition course: putting that competence to use. _Rhetoric_ is indeed based on "modern linguistic principles," some tagmemic, some much more general; yet it is embarassingly short on data. It is ironic that the textbook written by specialists in the study of language contains far less specific information about the resources of English than does the textbook written by nonspecialists. There is still a need for a textbook which applies "modern linguistic principles _and_ data" to composition.

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NOTES

[1]J. M. Williams, _The New English_ (1970).

[2]R. E. Young, A. L. Becker, and K. L. Pike, _Rhetoric: Discovery and Change_ (1970).

[3]G. Cannon, Review of Rhetoric: Discovery and Change, Lang, 48:751-55 (1972).

[4]C. Brooks and R. P. Warren, Modern Rhetoric (Third Ed., 1970).

[5]I am using "traditional" in the sense in which Fries (The Structure of English) uses it. Modern Rhetoric is "not entirely traditional" because it makes use of insights gained from structuralism (e.g., p.373).

[6]R. Quirk, in The Use of English (1962), p.65, discusses this distinction.

[7]R. E. Young and A. L. Becker, "Toward a Modern Theory of Rhetoric: A Tagmemic Contribution." Reprinted in Teaching Freshman Composition, ed. G. Tate and E. P. J. Corbett (1967), p.135.

[8]K. L. Pike, "A Linguistic Contribution to Composition," CCC, 15:82-88 (1964), p. 83.

[9]Young and Becker, loc. cit., claim they are.

[10]R. E. Longacre, Grammar Discovery Procedures (1968), p.11.

[11]Brooks and Warren admit this (p.412).

[12]The inadequacy of such classifications was pointed out long ago by J. S. Kenyon in "Cultural Levels and Functional Varieties of English," CE, 10:31-36 (1948).

[13]Yes we do, when we are mocking him.

[14]H. Kurath, A Word Geography for the Eastern United States (1949), p.56.

[15]Mine err in the direction of pretentious formality.

[16]W. Gibson, The Limits of Language (1962).

[17]J. S. Margolis and R. Clorfene, A Child's Garden of Grass (1969).

[18]J. H. Sledd, in "Coordination (Faulty) and Subordination (Upside-Down)," CCC, 7:181-87 (1956), denies the validity of traditional statements about subordination as a means of expressing relative importance, but he does so by defining "subordination" very broadly--in fact, any sentence containing a

prenominal adjective contains an example of "subordination"--and then by citing examples in which the stress falls on a "subordinate" clause. Many of the "main" clauses in his examples are dummies: "It was...," "There were...," thus putting a "subordinate" clause in emphatic position. The end of the sentence, where the "subordinate" clause in his examples usually appears, is an emphatic position--anything that appears there will seem important. This is supposed to prove that "subordinate" clauses can be just as or more important than main clauses.

REVIEW

Morton W. Bloomfield, ed. In Search of Literary Theory. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972. Pp.viii + 274. $9.75.

Strict constructionists would no doubt dismiss charges against a book that promises, in its title, to set off "In Search of X," even if little X is actually found--though some might require (as with Affirmative Action hiring) evidence of good-faith effort. Actually, it turns out to be not literary theory, but metatheory, that these distinguished inquirers are largely (though, on the whole, not ardently) in search of--which is not disappointing to me, since another name for metatheory is "philosophy."

I take it that a theory of literature is a set of general propositions that account for literary phenomena in a systematic way. There is room for debate about the scope we may demand of such a theory. Surely it should explain how there can be such characteristics and noteworthy features of language as metaphor and meter, how objects and events can take on a symbolic significance in a literary work, how (or whether) literary works can be true or false, how (or whether) one literary work can be better than another. But what of questions about the origins of literature, the underlying causes in literary history, the psychology of reading? Perhaps we need not feel that we lack a theory even if an insufficiency of empirical results from various social sciences leaves us still to account for all these phenomena. There is also room for debate about the constraints we think it proper to place on our literary theory: whether, for example, we insist that its basic concepts and principles be derived exclusively from linguistics or from psychology. Perhaps no such a priori limitations can be justified, but certainly considerations can be advanced, in this field of inquiry as they are in others (for example, the program of the behaviorist in psychology or of the behavioralist in political science).

Questions about theoretical scope and constraints are metatheoretical questions; they need to be faced up to from time to time, especially when our theories seem to be irreconcilable or unconnectible. So the enterprise at hand is welcome.

Not much can be said in general about these six essays, which tend to move in ways characteristic of their authors, with very little interaction or even overlapping of specific issues. If there is a dominant theme it is the rationality of literary criticism, its capacity, at least in principle, to provide reasonable answers to reasonable questions. But the underlying concepts of rationality evidently diverge, and the lines of defense vary, so that the essays are best commented on separately--with special emphasis on the opening essay, by M. H. Abrams, which is the most fully thought through and the most challenging in a philosophic way.

Abrams is concerned to defend the possibility of literary theory against the sort of neo-Wittgensteinian attack launched most notoriously by Morris Weitz, in his well-known essay of 1956, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," and further developed in later essays and in his book on Hamlet criticism (1964). Weitz rejects such hopelessly "essentialist" questions as "What is art?" "What is poetry?" "What is tragedy?" Since the key terms designate "open concepts," and have no fixed necessary conditions of application, any attempt to define them must be misguided. Abrams turns Weitz's argument against itself by suggesting that Weitz's claim "that all critical and aesthetic theory consists solely, or primarily, in the assertion and attempted proof of an essential definition of art" (p.48) itself commits the "essentialist fallacy," and does not accord with what we discover about the diversity of critical theories when we follow Wittgenstein's advice to "look and see." If we can't talk intelligibly about the "essence" of art or literature, how can we talk intelligibly about the "essence" of criticism or critical theory?

This tactic is rather neat, but I think it is a strategic error. It facilitates Abrams's main move, which is a defense not just of literary theory but of a plurality of literary theories. Of course, even if it is true that such terms as "art" and "literature" are "family-resemblance" terms, and encompass heterogeneous collections of individual entities that share no single property (which I strongly doubt, and which I believe Weitz has not shown), it does not follow that "literary theory" is a family-resemblance term and encompasses a heterogeneous collection of theories that not only have no common property but are not even logically incompatible with each other. There is a family resemblance between the two theses, however. Abrams accepts the first from Weitz and argues for the second--and here is where I respectfully part company with him.

There is a diversity of aesthetic and literary theories, says Abrams (p.23): Aristotle's imitation theory and its successors: "a work of art is a means to the end of teaching, or

pleasing, or both; or an expression of feelings; or a product of the creative imagination; or a distinctive form of communication; or a world of its own autonomous kind; or a variant form of an archetypal myth; and so on." Now, if we are after a literary theory, we must reconcile these theories: some pairs of them really answer distinct questions, and so can be logically combined; other pairs are incompatible, and we must choose between them, or at least abandon parts of one. Abrams argues for a third way, one that accepts genuinely alternative theories as equally "valid," and refuses to dispense with either. To "do theoretical justice to the full range of our experience of a work of art" (p.48), we must have recourse to a variety of different "languages," provided by diverse theories. We cannot have a single critical language "for no one set of premises and coherent mode of discourse suffices to say everything important, but only the kind of things, relative to selected human purposes, toward which that discourse is oriented" (p.48).

I believe this is a confusion; theories devised for different purposes are not necessarily uncombinable. But Abrams is really proposing a noncognitive, or semi-cognitive, view of literary theories. They are "speculative instruments" (p. 25), in Coleridge's tempting but unfortunate term; "to propose a definition of art, or of a form of art, though it is couched in a grammatical form indistinguishable from that of a universal assertion, is much like taking a stand" (p.24). "Once a concept or assertion is adopted as the basis of a critical theory, its origin and truth-claim, whether empirical or metaphysical, cease to matter" (p.29)--it is only "illumination" that counts. But this is to abandon the attempt to attain a theory of literature; it offers illumination without light, speculations and stances without knowledge. Of course new concepts and principles will deepen and enlarge our understanding of literature, but we should not be content to have on hand a plurality of irreconcilable literary theories, nor should we treat the adoption of a literary theory like the selection of one carving-knife or golf-club rather than another.

E. D. Hirsch is concerned in his essay to support the rationality of literary (and, generally, humanistic) inquiry and to counter the dissident academicians who are demanding that literary study be made more "relevant" to current social problems. His way of stating his thesis will provoke unmerited alarm, for he says that literary study is a species of "scientific inquiry"--but in a broad sense, as consisting in the formation and testing of hypotheses. I do object at the curious point where Hirsch blames the old "New Critics" for sowing the dragon's seed from which spring the recent mis-

placed demands for relevance (pp.60-61): the accusation apparently is that once the "New Critics" eschewed hard biographical data in their interpretations, they had no way of averting "a sense of futility, relativism, and skepticism," which invited a turn to "political and social action." I am afraid Hirsch's scientific method deserted him here.

Morton Bloomfield's short essay asserts that there are two ways of knowing, the objective (science) and the subjective (through "lived experience"), and that the humanities combine both in a way that puts them "in competition" with themselves "as a way of knowing" (p.84), though they must be "balanced" between the two modes of cognition (p.88). Epistemological dualisms face many well-known philosophical difficulties, which are not considered in this essay.

From Northrop Frye's essay--which takes up one-third of the volume--we learn his interesting opinions on a great range and variety of matters. I can extract two quite general theses, neither of which can be said to be argued for in any sustained or systematic way. The metatheoretical thesis is that literature is to be studied in a historical context, but with an approach that includes "a genuine history of literature" (p.101); but this is stated more as a personal desideratum than as a methodological principle. The theoretical thesis rests on a rather obscure concept of "myths of concern"--which are general myths essential to "hold society together, so far as words can help to do this" (p.105)--and it is that "literature, conceived as a total structure, is not in itself a myth of concern: what it presents is the _language_ of concern, the total range of its imaginative possibilities, the encyclopedia of visions of human life and destiny which forms the context of all belief" (p.167). From this Frye deduces that literature "has its own forms of statement, its own conventions, its own history" and is "autonomous in the sense in which any coherent human activity is autonomous" (pp.187-88). The concept of myth, when used in this sweeping way, is so baffling, and Frye's language so generic and declamatory, that it seems almost rude to ask such simple questions as (to take one) whether it is reasonable to suppose that the _total range_ of the imaginative possibilities of a society are _in fact_ presented in its literature (unless literature includes history, journalism, political theory, music, and everything else).

Geoffrey Hartman's essay promises a literary "theory linking the form of the medium to the form of the artist's historical consciousness" (p.210). The theory seems to be that every artist creates out of two conflicts, that between his own "genius" and the "Genius" of his predecessors, and that between his

"genius" and the circumstances of his time and place (the "*genius loci*"). These categories are given some content by *illustration* from Keats and Milton, but they are so near to exhausting the logical possibilities that the thesis verges on tautology. It also seems rather truistic, given the definitions, that "all literary judgment, insofar as it is historical, adjudicates the claims of Genius and *genius loci*" (p.222)--if "adjudicating the claims" means assigning comparative explanatory force.

Paul De Man's essay deals with the concept of modernity. We learn through extensive quotations from Nietzsche that "the authentic spirit of modernity" (p.245) consists in a desire to wipe out the past to affirm a "new departure" (p. 246). Thus we have a "paradox"--that "Modernity and history relate to each other in a curiously contradictory way that goes beyond antithesis or opposition" (p.249); the very concept of literature is "self-contradictory") p.264), since literature is given "historical existence" and sustained through modernity's "rejection of history." I'm afraid these paradoxes and contradictions are illusions generated by a murky dialectic and a pushing of the concept of modernity to a dramatic absurdity. Zeno showed how the concept of change itself can be given an air of paradox by analyzing it in a suitably muddled way; it was Hegel and the neo-Hegelians who tried to exhibit these fallacies as profound metaphysical truths. I don't think De Man is more successful in applying them to literary change, as though somehow a writer could not consistently have an ambivalent attitude toward his predecessors and his traditions. It is not that literature "steadily puts its own ontological status into question" (p.266), but that literary theory has trouble settling that ontological status.

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QUERY

Many discussions of the phenomenon we call "style" depend on an adequate description of the surface-structure components of a text, or sample from a text. Components often considered include phonemic regularities (like meter) and irregularities (like onomatopoeia), the repetitiousness of vocabulary, the results of a parsing apparatus which notes types of clauses and the function of words therein, the organization of content (especially of metaphor), and the explicit or implicit definition of the speech-act situation (including some notion of genre). Some of these components are defined by their absence or presence (e.g., either alliteration is there or it is not). Others are defined by their rarity. Still others become notable because of their relatively high frequency (e.g., an author uses longer sentences than any other of his era).

Statistical generalizations have been one answer to the problem of obtaining the best description. However, the statistical approach has a significant limitation because each component (or at least each linguistic level) has to be separated out, so that data on word-class distributions is isolated from data on sentence lengths. While the text is being read it is clear that the components often interact; when one component changes, the entire system is displaced. Further, as the reading goes on, what has gone before is constantly reassessed, and there is an intuitive prediction about what is to come next.

With the above as a preamble, I would like to inquire if any of the readers of Centrum has tried to work with a computer program which can analyze and merge continuous input from multiple, related sources. The example which comes immediately to mind is the monitoring of telemetry data about the vital signs of an astronaut or heart patient. This example may not, however, be the best, since most of the input for such a system is quite redundant, and has low informational content. Suggestions we welcome.

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