Also by Gérard Genette—

Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method
translated by Jane E. Lewin (1970)

Narrative Discourse Revisited
translated by Jane E. Lewin (1988)

ea Gérard Genette

FICTION & DICTION

TRANSLATED BY

CATHERINE PORTER

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

The four essays that follow deal in various ways with the question of *regimes, criteria,* and *modes* of literariness. According to Roman Jakobson's widely accepted definition, literariness is the aesthetic aspect of literature—which of course has many other aspects as well. Thus these essays attempt to spell out the conditions under which a text, oral or written, can be perceived as a "literary work," or, more broadly, as a (verbal) object with an aesthetic function—a genre whose *works* constitute a particular species defined by the fact, among others, that the aesthetic function is intentional in nature (and perceived as such).

This difference in scope corresponds more or less to the opposition between the two regimes of literariness: the *constitutive* regime, which is underwritten by a complex of intentions, generic conventions, and cultural traditions of all sorts; and the *conditional* regime, which arises from a subjective and always revocable aesthetic appreciation.

The quite theoretical (and often unnoticed) category of re-

gime intersects with another, more easily perceived category that is perpendicular to it, as it were: that of the empirical criterion on which a diagnosis of literariness is based, if only after the fact. This criterion may be either *thematic*, that is, relative to the content of the text (what the text is "about"), or formal, that is, more broadly speaking, *rhematic:* relative to the character of the text itself and to the type of discourse it exemplifies.

The encounter between these two categories determines a schema of modes of literariness. But these modes are not distributed in a balanced and symmetrical way. The thematic criterion that has been most frequently and legitimately invoked since Aristotle, the criterion of *fictionality*, always functions in the constitutive regime: a (verbal) work of fiction is almost inevitably received as literary, independent of any value judgment, perhaps because the approach to reading that such a work postulates (the well-known willing suspension of disbelief) is an aesthetic attitude, in the Kantian sense, of relative "disinterest" with respect to the real world. The rhematic criterion, for its part, may determine two modes of literariness by *diction*. One of them (poetry) belongs to the constitutive regime: no matter how poetic form is defined, a poem is always a literary work, for the (variable) formal features that mark it as a poem belong, no less obviously, to the aesthetic order. The other mode of diction, nonfictional prose, can be perceived as literary only in a conditional fashion, that is, by virtue of an individual attitude, such as Stendhal's view of the style in which the French Civil Code was written.

That is the overall postulate, then, of this book, and the object of its first chapter. The next two chapters deal more specifically with the discourse of fiction. The first of these, following the direction taken by John Searle, attempts to define the status of utterances of narrative fiction as speech acts.

These utterances, which institute the universe they claim to describe, consist, according to Searle, of "pretended" assertions, that is, assertions that present themselves as such without fulfilling the pragmatic conditions of validity for assertions. This definition is to my mind incontestable but incomplete: if fictional utterances are not authentic assertions, the category of speech act to which they belong still remains to be specified.

The third chapter begins with a historical remark. Narratology has focused almost exclusively on the forms of fictional narratives, as if what was observed in that domain could be automatically applied or transposed to nonfictional narrative forms such as history, autobiography, documentary, or the personal diary. Without undertaking the empirical investigation that remains eminently necessary in this arena, I attempt here, in a more deductive and schematic fashion, to indicate what predictable consequences the fictional or "factual" character of a narrative may have for its temporal rhythms, for its choice of distance and point of view, for narrative "voice," and even (and this is perhaps the most pertinent feature) for the relation maintained in the narrative between the two agencies known as narrator and author.

The final essay returns to the realm of diction, considered in its most conditional aspect, that of *style*. The definition bequeathed by linguists, that style is the expressive function of language, itself calls for interpretation in semiotic terms, at the risk of favoring a narrowly affectivist conception of "stylistic phenomena." The doubtful notion of *expression* launches us on a lengthy quest leading back and forth from Bally to Frege (meaning and denotation), from Frege to Sartre (meaning and signification), and from Sartre to Nelson Goodman, who, with his distinction between denotation and exemplification, provides the means for a clearer, broader, and more sober analy-

sis of the relation between language and style, that is, between the semantic function of discourse and its aspect of "perceptibility."

That these two apparently heterogeneous modes—on the one hand the fictional nature of a story, and on the other the way in which a text, beyond what it *says*, allows a reader to perceive and appreciate what it *is*—should converge in a single function may appear obscure or problematic. The common feature, I suspect, has to do with a disturbance in the transparency of discourse: in the one case (fiction) *because* its object is more or less explicitly posited as nonexistent; in the other (diction) *even though* this object is taken to be only somewhat less important than the intrinsic properties of the discourse itself.

As for the way in which that relative opacity, whatever its mode or cause, may constitute a properly aesthetic feature, that is a question that clearly calls for a broader investigation, one that would extend well beyond the field—a field we are beginning to perceive as excessively narrow—of poetics.[1]

G. G.

[1] Chapter 2 was published earlier as "Le statut pragmatique de la fiction narrative," *Poétique* 78 (April 1989), 237–49, and in English as "The Pragmatic Status of Narrative Fiction," trans. William Nelles and Corinne Bonnet, *Style* 24 (Spring 1990), 59–72. Chapter 3 appeared in English as "Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative," trans. Nitsa Ben-Ari with Brian McHale, *Poetics Today* 11 (Winter 1990), 755–74. I thank the journals in question for their kind permission to reprint.

FICTION & DICTION

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FICTION AND DICTION

Had I not anticipated ridicule, I might have adorned this essay with a title that has already been overused: "What Is Literature?" As we know, the celebrated text that takes that question as its title does not really answer it—a very prudent tack to take, as it happens. A foolish question does not require an answer; by the same token, true wisdom might consist in not asking it at all. Literature is undoubtedly *several* things at once, things that are connected, for example, by the rather loose bond of what Wittgenstein called "family resemblance," and are difficult, or perhaps—according to an uncertainty principle comparable to the ones invoked in physics—impossible to consider simultaneously. I shall thus restrict myself to a single aspect of literature, the one I consider most important: the aesthetic aspect. There is indeed a more or less universal though often forgotten consensus according to which literature is, among other things, an art, and there is no less widespread evidence that the raw material specific to this art is "language"—that is to say, of course, *languages* (since, as Mallarmé soberly noted, there are "several" of these).

The formula with the broadest currency, which I shall thus adopt as my point of departure, is this: literature is the art of language. A work is literary only if it uses the linguistic medium exclusively or essentially. But this necessary condition is obviously not sufficient. Of all the raw materials that humanity can use to artistic ends among others, language is perhaps the least specific, the least narrowly *reserved* for such a purpose, and thus the one whose use least suffices to designate as artistic the activity that utilizes it. It is not entirely certain that the use of sound or color suffices to define music or painting, but it *is* certain that the use of words and phrases does not suffice to define literature, still less literature as art. This negative characteristic was noted by Hegel, who saw literature—and even poetry, in fact—as an inherently indecisive and precarious practice "in which art itself begins at the same time to dissolve and acquire in the eyes of philosophy its point of transition to religious pictorial thinking as such, as well as to the prose of scientific thought."[1] I translate that last phrase of Hegel's freely and enlarge upon it thus: to the prose of ordinary language, not only religious or scientific but also utilitarian and pragmatic. And it is clearly with reference to this propensity of language to exceed its aesthetic investment in every direction that Roman Jakobson declared the object of poetics to be not literature as a raw or empirical phenomenon but *literariness,* understood as that which "makes a verbal message a work of art."[2]

I propose to accept, as a convention, the definition of literariness as the aesthetic aspect of literary practice, and I propose to accept, as a choice of method, the restriction of poetics

[1] G. W. F. Hegel, Introduction to *Poetry,* vol. 2 of *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art,* 2 vols., trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 968.
[2] Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," *Selected Writings,* 6 vols. (The Hague: Mouton, 1971–85), 3:18.

to the study of that aspect, setting aside the question of whether or not its other aspects—psychological or ideological, for example—fall outside the scope of poetics in fact or in theory. Let me recall nevertheless that for Jakobson, the question that constitutes the object of poetics ("What makes a verbal message a work of art?") touches on two "specific differences" at once: "The main subject of poetics is the *differentia specifica* of verbal art in relation to other arts and in relation to other kinds of verbal behavior."[3] And I shall once again set aside the first of these differences, which has to do with what Etienne Souriau called "comparative aesthetics," more precisely the comparative ontology of the various arts. The difference that concerns us here, and that has indeed preoccupied most poeticians from Aristotle on, is thus the one that, in making "a work of art" of "a verbal message," distinguishes the verbal message not from other works of art but from "other kinds of verbal [or linguistic] behavior."

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Let us begin by setting aside an initial, naive response that may come to mind (I should point out that, to my knowledge, it is one that poetics has never adopted). The specificity of literature as art, in this view, is the specificity of the written with respect to the oral, literature being linked, as the term's etymology suggests, with the scriptural state of language. The existence of countless nonartistic uses of literature and, conversely, of similarly countless artistic performances, improvised or not, in the regime of primary or secondary orality, suffices to dismiss such a response, whose naïveté doubtless has to do with the way it neglects a fundamental feature of language considered as a system, and of any verbal utterance

[3] Ibid.

considered as a message—namely, its ideality, which allows it for the most part to transcend the peculiarities of its diverse materializations: phonic, graphic, or other. I say "for the most part" because this transcendence in no way precludes its playing, around the edges, with certain of those material resources. The passage from one register to another does not entirely obliterate those resources, moreover. Thus, we do not fail to appreciate the sounds of a poem when we read it silently, in the same way that an accomplished musician can appreciate the sounds of a symphony simply by studying the score. As painting was for Leonardo, and even more so given the ideality of its products, literature is *cosa mentale*.

We can thus take up Jakobson's question again in a broader form, or rather in a form protected against unwarranted restrictions: What makes a text, whether oral or written, a work of art? Jakobson's answer to that question is well known (and I shall return to it), but, since his is only one of the possible—and even existing—answers, I should like first of all to linger over the question itself. It can be understood, it seems to me, in two rather different ways.

The first consists in taking the literariness of certain texts for granted, as it were, viewing it as definitive and universally perceptible, and then investigating the objective reasons for it, the reasons that are immanent or inherent in the text itself and that accompany the text under all circumstances. Jakobson's question then becomes: Which texts *are* works of art? I shall refer to theories that implicitly subtend such an interpretation as *constitutivist* or *essentialist* theories of literariness.

The other interpretation takes the question to mean something like: Under what conditions, or under what circumstances, can a text, with no internal modifications, *become* a work of art?—and thus no doubt conversely (though I shall come back to the modalities of this reciprocal proposition):

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Under what conditions, or under what circumstances, can a text, with no internal modifications, *cease* to be a work of art? I shall call the theory that subtends this second interpretation the *conditionalist* theory of literariness. It could also be illustrated by an application of Nelson Goodman's celebrated formula:[4] if we replace the question What is art? with When is art? we then replace the question What is literature? with When is literature? Since I have adopted Jakobson's position that a theory of literariness is a poetics, giving the term not the weak or neutral sense of "discipline" here but the strong and committed sense of "doctrine," or at least of "hypothesis," I shall call the first version an *essentialist* poetics and the second a *conditionalist* poetics. And I shall add that the first version is characteristic of a *closed* poetics, the second of an *open* poetics.

The first type is that of "classical" poetics, in a very broad sense, a sense that occasionally goes well beyond official classicism. It is based on the principle that certain texts are literary in their essence or by nature, and for all time, while others are not. But let me recall that the attitude I am describing in these terms still defines only one interpretation of the question, or, if one prefers, only one way of *asking* the question. This attitude itself is thus subject to variants depending on the way it *answers* its own question, that is, depending on the criterion it proposes for distinguishing texts that are literary from those that are not—in other words, depending on which criterion of constitutive literariness it chooses. The history of poetics, whether explicit or implicit, shows that poetics has been split between two possible criteria, which I shall crudely call *thematic* and *formal*. Let me add here and now, even though the project at hand is not historical in nature, that the history of

[4] Nelson Goodman, "When Is Art?" (1977), in *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), 57–70.

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essentialist poetics may be described as a long and arduous attempt to move from the thematic criterion to the formal criterion, or at least to give the second equal billing with the first.

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The most vigorous illustration of essentialist poetics in its thematic version is obviously Aristotle's, which—with a few adjustments along the way—has dominated Western literary consciousness, as we know, for more than twenty centuries. As I am not the first to observe,[5] it is in some respects as if Aristotle himself had noticed the difficulty described much later by Hegel—that is, the lack of specificity of literary practice—and had decided to resolve it, or at least to conjure it away, in the most radical fashion possible. The solution can be summed up in two words, of which one is finally just the gloss of the other: *poiesis* and *mimesis*.

Poiesis: let us recall that in Greek this term signifies not only "poetry" but, more broadly, "creation," and the very title *Poetics* indicates that the subject of the treatise is the way in which language can be, or can become, a means of creation, that is, a means of producing a work. It is thus as though Aristotle had set up a distinction between two functions of language: its ordinary function, which is to speak (*legein*) in order to inform, interrogate, persuade, order, promise, and so forth, and its artistic function, which is to produce works (*poiein*). The first function belongs to rhetoric (today we would be inclined to say pragmatics), the second to poetics. But how can language, which is ordinarily an instrument of communication and action, become a means of creation? Aristotle's response is clear: there can be no creation by way of language unless

[5] See Käte Hamburger's opinion, discussed later in this chapter.

language becomes a vehicle of *mimesis*, that is, of representation, or rather of the *simulation* of imaginary actions and events; unless language serves to invent stories, or at least to transmit stories that have already been invented. Language is creative when it places itself at the service of fiction; and I am not the first to propose translating *mimesis* as *fiction*.[6] For Aristotle, the poet's creativity manifests itself not at the level of verbal form but at the level of fiction, that is, the invention and arrangement of a story. "The poet," he tells us, "must be a 'maker' not of verses but of stories, since he is a poet in virtue of his 'representation,' and what he represents is action."[7] In other words, what the poet produces is not diction but fiction. This categorical position taking explains the banishment, or rather the absence from the field of poetics, of any nonfictional poetry, whether lyric, satiric, didactic, or other. Empedocles is not a poet but a naturalist, Aristotle declares; and if Herodotus had written in verse, that would in no way change his status as a historian or entitle him to be called a poet. Conversely, no doubt, we may infer that if the practice of prose fiction had existed in his day, Aristotle would not have objected in principle to recognizing it in his *Poetics*. This is what Pierre-Daniel Huet suggested twenty centuries later: "Following the maxim of *Aristotle*, (who teaches that a Poet is more a Poet by the Fictions he invents then [*sic*] by the Verse which he composes) Makers of *Romances* may be rancked among the Poets."[8] And we all know what use Fielding makes of that authorization to produce what he calls a "comic prose epic." The same thing applies, of course, to dramatic texts in

[6] See Käte Hamburger.
[7] Aristotle, *The Poetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press [Loeb Classical Library], 1973), 1451b, 37.
[8] Pierre-Daniel Huet, *A Treatise of Romances and Their Original* (London: S. Heyrick, 1672), 5.

prose, which do not present any greater difficulty for a poetics of the fictionalist type.

I shall take the description of the system of this poetics no further. Let me simply recall[9] that the field of fiction, which is thus coextensive with that of poetry as creation, is subdivided into two modes of representation, narrative and dramatic, and into two levels of dignity of the subjects represented, noble and vulgar: hence the four great genres of tragedy (noble subject, dramatic mode), epic (noble subject, narrative mode), comedy (vulgar subject, dramatic mode), and parody (vulgar subject, narrative mode), for which the modern novel has quite naturally become a substitute. It is not the system of genres that concerns us here but the criterion of literariness that presides over it, a criterion that can be formulated in terms combining the Hegelian problematics with the Aristotelian response: the surest way for poetry to escape the threat of dissolution in the ordinary use of language and to become a work of art lies in narrative or dramatic fiction. That is exactly what the most brilliant representative of neo-Aristotelian poetics of our time, Käte Hamburger, has written:

> If we may consider it sufficient to see the insights of great and original thinkers substantiated in the phenomena themselves (as little as it is fruitful to use such insights dogmatically as a point of departure), then we can regard as satisfactory confirmation the fact that Hegel's statement has its validity just at that point where Aristotle drew the dividing line between mimetic and elegiac art, where he separated ποιεῖν [poiein] from λέγειν [legein]. Hegel's statement does not, or not yet, hold true for that sphere of literature which is

the realm of ποιεῖν, of mimesis. Here the intransgressible boundary which separates fictional narration from reality statement, and therefore from the statement-system of language, makes it impossible for literature to revert to the "prose of scientific thought," that is, to the statement-system. For here the process of "making" is at work, in the sense of forming, shaping, fashioning; here is the workshop where the *poietes* or *mimetes* creates his figures, using language as his instrument and construction material just as the painter uses color and the sculptor stone.[10]

This thesis (if not its presuppositions) clearly attracts the assent, explicit or not, conscious or not, of all those—poeticians, critics, or mere readers—for whom fiction, and more precisely narrative fiction, and thus today, par excellence, the novel, represents literature itself. Majority opinion, including that of the least cultivated public, thus turns out to be decisively in favor of fictionalist poetics.

It is not so clear that this favorable judgment of fictionalist poetics depends on its theoretical value, which is the only thing of importance to us here. The theoretical value of fictionalist poetics for its part depends on the solidity of a position that is in some sense impregnable, or, as Hamburger suggests, it depends on the strength of a secure and well-guarded border. Whether it appears in verse or in prose, in the narrative mode or the dramatic mode, the exemplary and manifest characteristic of fiction lies in the fact that it offers the public a disinterested pleasure that bears—as we have better understood since Kant—the mark of aesthetic judgment. To enter into fiction is to exit from the ordinary sphere of lan-

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[9] See Gérard Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction* (1979), trans. Jane E. Lewin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

[10] Käte Hamburger, *The Logic of Literature* (1957), 2d ed. rev., trans. Marilynn J. Rose, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973, 233.

guage use, a sphere marked by the concerns for truth or persuasiveness that dictate the rules of communication and the deontology of discourse. As so many philosophers have repeated since Gottlob Frege, fictional utterances are neither true nor false (but only "possible," as Aristotle would have said), or else they are both true and false: they exceed or fall short of truth and falsity, and the paradoxical contract of reciprocal irresponsibility that such an utterance maintains with its receiver is a perfect emblem of the well-known posture of aesthetic disinterestedness. If there is a way, then, and only one way, for language to make a work of art of itself without fail, that way is indeed no doubt fiction.

The other side of the advantage of impregnability is obviously the intolerable narrowness of the position; or, alternatively, the price to be paid is the dismissal, which I mentioned earlier with respect to Aristotle, of too many texts and even genres whose artistic character may not be so automatically attested but is no less evident all the same. Despite its overall faithfulness to the fictionalist principle, classical poetics has not been able to hold out indefinitely against the pressure of that self-evidence, at least insofar as the nonfictional genres of poetry are concerned, genres that are conveniently federated under the suprageneric term lyric poetry. I shall not go into the details of this history, which I have recounted elsewhere[11] from a different perspective, and which leads, as early as the Italian and Spanish Renaissance, to the division of the poetic field into three major "types," two fictional (narrative, or "epic," and dramatic) and one nonfictional (lyric). The integration of the lyric genre occasionally occurs in a purely empirical and somewhat surreptitious way, in countless *artes poeticae* that propose countless more or less patchwork lists of

[11] See Genette, *Architext*.

genres, some fictional, others nonfictional (but this disparity is glossed over discreetly). It sometimes occurs in a more or less explicit and carefully argued way that tends to spread the Aristotelian banner over merchandise that is not Aristotelian in the least—for example, by presenting the lyric mode as one of the three fundamental modes of enunciation (the one in which the poet expresses himself consistently in his own name without ever allowing a character to speak), whereas for Aristotle, as for Plato before him, there are only modes of mimetic representation, and thus of fiction. Or else, as we can easily see in the case of the Abbé Batteux, the last great classical poetician strictly speaking, one can maintain with considerable sophistry that lyric poetry is itself also mimetic in the old sense, since it can express "feigned" sentiments—and thus that it too is fictional. The day Batteux's German translator, Johann Adolf Schlegel, wrote a footnote challenging that somewhat fraudulent annexation by observing that the sentiments expressed by the lyric poet may also, as Aristotle implied, *not* be feigned was the day fiction's monopoly over literature ended—unless, of course, one were to go back to excluding the lyric. But for such a step backward it was already too late.[12]

The new system, illustrated by countless variations on the epic-dramatic-lyric triad, thus consists in rejecting the monopoly of fiction in favor of a kind of more or less explicit duopoly: on the one hand there is fiction (dramatic or narrative), on the other lyric poetry, which is more and more often designated *poetry* pure and simple.

The most elaborate and original version of this distribution, despite the faithfully Aristotelian character (as I have noted) of its initial problematics, is no doubt Käte Hamburger's *Logic of*

[12] On that controversy, see ibid., 36–38.

Literature. This text recognizes, in the field of *Dichtung,* only two basic "genres": the *fictional,* or *mimetic,* and the *lyric,* both marked—each in its own way—by a rupture with the ordinary regime of language, which consists in what Hamburger calls "reality statement," authentic speech acts accomplished with respect to reality by a real and determined "I-Origo." In fiction, we encounter not utterances of reality but fictional utterances whose true "I-Origo" is not the author or the narrator but the fictitious characters, whose viewpoint and spatiotemporal situation control the entire enunciation of the narrative, down to the grammatical details of its sentences. This is all the more true of dramatic texts. In lyric poetry, utterances of reality—thus authentic speech acts—do occur, but these are acts whose source remains indeterminate, for the lyric "I" is inherently incapable of being positively identified either with the poet in person or with any other determined subject. The putative enunciator of a literary text is thus never a real person, but either (in fiction) a fictitious character or else (in lyric poetry) an indeterminate "I"—thus constituting, in a way, an attenuated form of fictionality.[13] We may not be so far removed from Batteux's stratagems for integrating lyricism with fiction.

But as I have noted in passing, this bipartition (like some others) does not entail an opposition between the essentially thematic character of the fictional criterion (the representation of imaginary events) and the symmetrically *formal* character of the poetic criterion. Like the subscribers to the classico-romantic triad, Hamburger defines the lyric genre through an attitude of enunciation rather than through a state of language. For the properly formal criterion, which I introduced

[13] See Jean-Marie Schaeffer, "Fiction, feinte et narration," *Critique* 43 (June–July 1987), 555–76.

earlier as the symmetrical counterpart of the thematic criterion of the Aristotelian tradition, we shall have to look to a different tradition. This one, which goes back to German romanticism, is particularly well illustrated, starting with Mallarmé and continuing through Russian formalism, in the idea of a "poetic language" that is distinct from prosaic or ordinary language owing to formal characteristics that are connected superficially with the use of verse, but more fundamentally with a change in language use. Language is no longer treated as a transparent means of communication but as a perceptible, autonomous, and noninterchangeable raw material in which some mysterious formal alchemy, reshaping "from several vocal elements a complete new word, foreign to the language and somehow incantatory," would "compensate for the deficiency of languages" and operate the "indissociable union of sound and sense." I have just stitched together in a single sentence several fragments taken from formulas proposed by Mallarmé and Valéry, whose views on this subject were indeed quite similar. But it is undoubtedly to Valéry that we owe the most vivid image of this theory of poetic language, though the image is derived at a distance from Malherbe: poetry is to prose, or ordinary language, as dance is to walking; that is, the same resources are used, but "differently coordinated and differently stimulated," in a system of "acts that [henceforth] have their end in themselves." In consideration of which, unlike the ordinary message, whose function is to efface itself in favor of its comprehension and its effect, the poetic text is not effaced in favor of anything but itself. Its signification does not obliterate its form or consign it to oblivion; the two are indissociable, for the poetic text does not give rise to any knowledge usable for any act that would be forgetful of its cause. Indestructible because irreplaceable, "the poem does not die for having lived; it is expressly made to be reborn from its own

ashes and to become over and over, indefinitely, what it has just been. Poetry can be recognized by the property of tending to be reproduced in its form: it incites us to reconstitute it identically."[14]

The logical theoretical outcome of this tradition is clearly the Jakobsonian notion of "poetic function," defined as the emphasis placed on a text in its verbal form—a form thereby rendered more perceptible and in some sense intransitive. In poetry, as Jakobson wrote as early as 1919, "the communicative function, essential to both practical language and emotional language," is reduced to "minimal importance," in favor of a function that can henceforth no longer be called anything but aesthetic, and by which the message is immobilized in the self-sufficient existence of the work of art. To the question I have taken as my starting point—What makes certain texts works of art?—Jakobson's reply, like Mallarmé's and Valéry's in their own terms, is quite clearly "the poetic function." The densest formulation of this new criterion can also be found in the 1919 text, which Jakobson later simply—on this level—justified and made more explicit: "Poetry is language in its aesthetic function."[15] If we recall that in the classical tradition the formula was, just as abruptly and exclusively, something like "The aesthetic function of language is fiction," we can measure how far we have come, and can understand why Tzvetan Todorov claimed a few years ago that poetics (although for my part I specify *essentialist* poetics) had at its

[14] Stéphane Mallarmé, "Variations sur un sujet," in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard [Pléaide], 1945), 364–68; Paul Valéry, *Oeuvres*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard [Pléaide], 1957–60), 1:1324–31.

[15] Roman Jakobson, "Modern Russian Poetry: Velimir Khlebnikov [Excerpts]," in *Major Soviet Writers: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Edward J. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 62.

disposal two competing definitions of literariness: one in terms of fiction, the other in terms of poetry.[16]

Each definition in its own way can legitimately claim to address Hegel's concern about how the specificity of the literary art is guaranteed. And yet it is fairly obvious that neither of the two can legitimately claim to cover the entire field. I shall not go back over the specious character of Batteux's arguments in favor of a hegemony of fictionalist poetics over the lyric genres. And we must recall that "poeticist" poetics has never seriously attempted to annex the field of fiction as such; at most it affects a posture of negligence or disdain toward that form of literature by relegating it to the amorphous limbo of vulgar prose lacking in constraints (see Valéry on the novel), as Aristotle relegated all nonfictional poetry to the limbo of more or less didactic discourse. The wisest course is thus apparently, and provisionally, to attribute to each definition its portion of truth, that is, a portion of the literary field. The empire of prose fiction falls under the thematic definition, while the empire of the poetic in the strong sense falls under the formal definition, the two together being obviously applicable to the vast empire in the middle comprising poetic fiction in the form of epic, classical tragedy, and comedy, romantic drama, or verse novel along the lines of *Jocelyn* or *Eugene Onegin*. In passing, I note that Aristotle's domain moves entirely into condominium status, but I am not to blame if the *Iliad* is in verse.

What is most serious, moreover, does not lie in this rivalry or in this partial dual categorization, which may even be for the best. Since two precautions are better than one, it is doubt-

[16] Tzvetan Todorov, "The Notion of Literature," in *Genres in Discourse*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1–12.

less not a bad thing for a text to have to satisfy two criteria of literariness at once, that of fictional content and that of poetic form. What is most serious is the inability of our two essentialist poetics, even if they are unified—although by force—to cover the whole of the literary field between them, since a very considerable domain escapes their joint reach. I shall provisionally call this domain that of nonfictional prose literature: history, oratory, the essay, and autobiography, for instance, not to mention the idiosyncratic texts whose extreme singularity keeps them from belonging to any genre at all. It is perhaps clearer now why I said before that essentialist poetics are closed poetics: in their terms, only those texts that are marked a priori with the generic, or rather the suprageneric, seal of fictionality and/or poeticity belong to literature. Thus, essentialist poetics prove incapable of accommodating texts that do not belong to this canonical list and are therefore apt to move into the literary field or out of it according to circumstances and, if I may say so, subject to certain conditions of heat and pressure. This is obviously the point where it becomes necessary to turn to that other poetics I have called *conditionalist*.

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Unlike constitutive poetics, conditionalist poetics has been given very little attention in doctrinal or demonstrative texts, for the simple reason that it is more intuitive and essayistic than theoretical; it relies on judgments of taste, which everyone knows to be subjective and unmotivated, for the criterion of all literariness. Its underlying principle is roughly: "I deem literary any text that gives me aesthetic satisfaction." Its only relation to universality is, as Kant showed, of the order of desire or pretension: when I find something beautiful, I want everyone else to judge it the same way, and I find it hard to

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understand that they do not. But as we have made great progress (deplored by some) toward cultural relativism over the last couple of centuries, it often happens, indeed it happens more and more, that this claim to universality is left in the vestibule of "classical" humanism, in favor of a more casual egocentric appreciation: "Literature is what I say it is. What *I* say, that's right, and that's enough, or, if you insist, what my friends and I say, my self-proclaimed 'modernity' and I." As an illustration of this overt subjectivism, I can invoke, for example, Roland Barthes's *Plaisir du texte*; but it is clear that the poetics in question unconsciously inspires a great number of our literary attitudes. This new vulgate, elitist in its very principle, is no doubt the property of a narrower and more enlightened cultural group than the one that finds in fiction an automatic and comfortable criterion of literariness. But as it happens, the two sometimes coexist, if only incoherently, and at least in a form in which the descriptive yields to the evaluative, in judgments in which the diagnosis of literariness is equivalent to a seal of approval: for example, when a partisan of the criterion of fictionality nevertheless refuses to attribute it to a supermarket novel, judging the text too "badly written" to be "literature"—which comes down finally to considering fictionality as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for literariness. My own conviction is exactly the opposite, and I shall return to this point.

At bottom, it seems to me that this conditionalist poetics proceeds, in fact if not in principle, from a subjectivizing interpretation, enlarged to include poetry, of the Valéry-Jakobson criterion: a text is literary (and no longer simply poetic) for someone who is more concerned with its form than with its content—for someone, for example, who appreciates the way it is written even while rejecting or ignoring its meaning. We need to recall, moreover, that this extension to prose of the

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criterion of intransitivity had been allowed in advance by Mallarmé in the name of the omnipresence of Verse well beyond what he called "official verse": "Verse is everywhere in language where there is rhythm. . . . Every time there is an effort toward style, there is versification."[17] The term *style*, with or without effort, is obviously, for us, the key to this poetic or literary capacity of every sort of text, the key to the transcendence of the "poetic function" with respect to the canonical limits of metric form, limits which are moreover quite blurred—or displaced—today.

What is in question here is thus the ability of any text whose original, or originally dominating, function was not aesthetic but rather, for example, didactic or polemical to transcend or submerge that function by virtue of an individual or collective judgment of taste that foregrounds the text's aesthetic qualities. Thus a page of history or memoirs may outlive its scientific value or its documentary interest; thus a letter or a speech may find admirers beyond its original destination and the practical occasion for which it was produced; thus a proverb, a maxim, or an aphorism can touch or seduce readers who are not at all prepared to acknowledge its truth value. An Italian proverb even provides a formula for the attitude in question: "Se non è vero, è ben trovato"—freely translated, "I don't agree, but it's well put." And it would be tempting to establish a relation of incompatibility between the aesthetic attitude and theoretical or practical adherence, the first being in some way liberated by the weakening or the disappearance of the second, as if the mind could not be both wholly convinced and wholly seduced. But we must doubtless resist this temptation: as Mikel Dufrenne has aptly put it, "A church can be

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[17] Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, 867.

beautiful without being deconsecrated."[18] It remains the case that over the centuries the field of conditional literariness has been continually extended through the effect of an apparently constant, or perhaps a growing, tendency to aesthetic recuperation, which functions here as elsewhere and which chalks up to art much of what the action of time takes away from truth or usefulness: thus it is easier for a text to enter the literary field than to leave it.

But if conditionalist poetics by definition has the power to account for conditional literariness in the name of an aesthetic judgment, this power, no matter what its partisans may be inclined to think, cannot be extended to the realm of constitutive literariness. If a given epic, tragedy, sonnet, or novel is a literary work, it is not by virtue of an aesthetic evaluation, even if there is universal consensus, but rather by virtue of some inherent feature, such as fictionality or poetic form. If *Britannicus* is a literary work, it is not because I like that play, or even because everyone likes it (which I doubt), but because it is a play, just as, if Opus 106 is a musical work and *View of Delft* is a pictorial work, it is not because that sonata or that painting has seduced one, ten, or a hundred million admirers, but because they are a sonata and a painting. The worst painting, the worst sonata, the worst sonnet are still examples of painting, music, or poetry, for the simple reason that they can be nothing else, except in addition. And what is sometimes called a dead genre—let us say, arbitrarily, the sonnet or the epic—is simply a form that has become sterile and unproductive, definitively or temporarily, but one whose past productions retain their stamp of literariness, even if the literariness in question is academic or antiquated. Even if no one ever

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[18] Mikel Dufrenne, *Esthétique et philosophie* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1980), 1:29.

wrote another sonnet, and even if no one ever *read* another sonnet, it would remain the case that the sonnet is a literary genre, and thus that a given sonnet, good, bad, or indifferent, is a literary work. The constitutive literariness of works of fiction or poetry—like the equally constitutive "artisticness" of most of the other arts—is in some sense, within the limits of the cultural history of humanity, inalienable and independent of any evaluation. The judgments and attitudes of conditionalist poetics with regard to such works are either impertinent, because they are superfluous, when they are positive ("This tragedy is literary because I like it"), or else inoperative, when they are negative ("This tragedy is not literary because I don't like it"). Any hypothetical claim on the part of conditionalist poetics to govern the field as a whole would thus be excessive and literally illegitimate, exorbitant with respect to its rights.

And yet, we have seen that conditionalist poetics alone can account for conditional literariness, the literariness that stems neither from fictional content nor from poetic form. The consequence is thus self-evident: we must not substitute conditionalist poetics for the various versions of essentialist poetics, but rather make room for the former alongside the latter, with each one having exclusive rights of governance over its own legitimate—that is, relevant—domain. The mistake made by every poetics from Aristotle's day to ours has doubtless been to hypostatize the sector of the literary art to which its own criterion applied, and with respect to which it had been conceived, into "literature par excellence," or even into the only literature "worthy of the name." Taken literally in its claim to universality, none of these poetics is valid; but each of them is valid in its own domain, and at all events each can be credited with having brought to light and prominence one of the multiple criteria of literariness. Literariness, being a plural phenomenon, requires a pluralist theory that takes into account

the various means at the disposal of language for escaping and outliving its practical function and for producing texts capable of being received and appreciated as aesthetic objects.

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This requirement results in a distribution that I shall schematize thus. Human language possesses two regimes of literariness, the constitutive and the conditional. According to the traditional categories, the constitutive governs two broad types, or sets, of literary practices—fiction (narrative or dramatic) and poetry—without excluding their potential collusion in fiction that is poetic in form. Since no language, to my knowledge, provides us with a convenient positive word (that is, apart from the very awkward term *nonfiction*) to designate the third type, and because this terminological gap is a constant problem, I propose to christen this third type *diction*, a choice that at least has the advantage, assuming it is an advantage, of symmetry. The literature of fiction is literature that imposes itself essentially through the imaginary character of its objects. The literature of diction is literature that imposes itself essentially through its formal characteristics—once again, without excluding amalgams and blends. But it seems useful to me to maintain the distinction on the level of essences, and the theoretical possibility of pure states. Let us take the case, for example, of a story that moves us whatever its mode of representation (we know that the story of Oedipus played this role for Aristotle and continues to do so for others even today), or the symmetrical case of a formula that fascinates us apart from all discernible meaning: according to Valéry, this is true of many fine poems, which "act on us without telling us much of anything" and which "may teach us that they have nothing to teach."[19]

[19] Valéry, *Oeuvres*, 1:1333.

The reader will surely have noticed that I have annexed poetry, in passing, to my new category of diction, so that this category is in second place, not third. This is because in fact, and as Mallarmé knew very well, poetry is only a particularly marked and codified form—and thus, in its traditional states (I shall return to these), properly constitutive—of literature by way of diction. Thus, there are dictions of constitutive literariness and dictions of conditional literariness, whereas fiction for its part is always constitutively literary.[20] I represent this asymmetrical situation, then, with this schema:

Régime Criterion	Constitutive	Conditional
Thematic	FICTION	
Rhematic	DICTION POETRY	PROSE

This deliberately lopsided chart calls for several remarks. The first is terminological in nature: without warning I have replaced the term *formal*, which everyone can (or thinks he or she can) understand, with the adjective *rhematic*, which requires some clarification. As I have already done elsewhere,[21] I am borrowing the term *rheme* quite freely from linguistics to designate, in opposition to the *theme* of a discourse, the discourse considered in and of itself (a title such as *Petits poèmes en prose* is rhematic because it specifies not the object of the collection, like *Le spleen de Paris*, but what it *is*). Now, for rea-

[20] Verbal fiction, that is. The other forms of fiction (plastic, cinematographic, and so on) belong to other arts, even if Käte Hamburger's arguments for considering cinema more closely related to narrative fiction cannot be taken lightly.

[21] See Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 75.

sons that will seem clearer in the final chapter, it appears to me that diction, whatever its regime, can be defined by what a text is, as distinguished—although the two are inseparable—from what it says. In Goodmanian terms (as we shall see later on), diction can be defined by its capacity for *exemplification*, as opposed to its *denotative* function. *Rhematic* is, in my sense, a broader term than *formal* because form (whether a vowel is bright or dark, whether a sentence is short or long, whether a poem is written in octosyllables or alexandrines) is only one aspect of a text's being, or of one of its elements. The word *nuit* denotes (among other things) "night," and exemplifies, or may exemplify, all the "formal"—that is, presumably, material and perceptible—properties of its signifier, but also some others, such as, for example, the fact of being a French word of the feminine gender. This last is not a formal property, since the homonym *nuit*, from the verb *nuire*, "to harm," has no gender, and thus no sexual connotations. The capacities for exemplification of a word, a sentence, or a text thus exceed its purely formal properties. And if diction is the way in which these capacities manifest themselves and act on the reader, its criterion of literariness will be more correctly, because more completely, designated by the term *rhematic* than by the term *formal*. I am completely discounting the advantage—which is, as it happens, a formal advantage (and again, assuming it is an advantage)—of symmetry.

A second remark has to do with the relation between the two regimes of literariness by way of diction, which are not separated by any impenetrable boundary. It has indeed become increasingly obvious, over the last century, that the distinction between prose and poetry may be based on other, less categorical criteria than that of versification, and that these criteria, which are moreover heterogeneous and more or less cumulative (for example, privileged themes, tenor in "im-

ages," graphic arrangement),[22] leave room, under the heading of "prose poem," "poetic prose," or some other rubric, for intermediate states that make their opposition not categorical but polar, a matter of degree.

A third remark: to say that (verbal) fiction is always constitutively *literary* does not mean that a text of fiction is always constitutively *fictional*. Just as a sentence whose meaning leaves us perplexed, disgusted, or indifferent may seduce us by its form, in the same way, perhaps, a story that others take to be true may leave us wholly incredulous while appealing to us as a kind of fiction: here there is indeed a sort of conditional fictionality, a true story for some and a fiction for others. This is more or less the case with what is commonly called myth— a type of narrative manifestly situated on an unsettled and shifting frontier of fiction.[23] But that must not incite us to add the word *myth* to the chart in the box that remains empty, for that box is reserved not for conditionally fictional texts but for conditionally literary fictions—a notion that strikes me as passably contradictory. To accept a religious narrative as a myth is to accept it more or less by the same token as a literary text, as is abundantly demonstrated by the use our culture has made of Greek "mythology."[24] The box must thus remain empty, unless we concede that a conditionally fictional text is *by that token and in that (derivative) sense* conditionally literary.

[22] See Charles L. Stevenson, "On 'What Is a Poem?'" *Philosophical Review* 66 (July 1957), 328–62.

[23] See Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination*, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), and Thomas Pavel, *Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

[24] This sufficient condition is obviously not a *necessary* condition: one may accept a religious narrative as being both truthful and literary, in which case its literariness owes nothing at all to fictionality. One may also, no doubt—and to move beyond these overly simple categories—accept it both as myth and as truth: witness Northrop Frye and the Bible.

The fourth remark is a question. Even if their criteria are different (the one thematic, the other rhematic), do the two modes of literariness we call fiction and diction have nothing in common? In other words, are the ways in which these two modes determine a judgment of literariness radically heterogeneous in principle? If this were the case, the very notion of literature would be at serious risk of being heterogeneous itself, and of encompassing two different aesthetic functions, each of which is absolutely incapable of being reduced to the other. But I do not believe this to be the case. The common feature seems to me to consist in the character of *intransitivity* that formalist poetics reserves to poetic discourse (and, ultimately, to effects of style). Poetic discourse is intransitive because its signification is inseparable from its verbal form; it cannot be translated into other terms, and thus it is destined to find itself constantly "reproduced in its form."[25]

The fictional text for its part is also intransitive, in a way that depends not on the unmodifiable character of its form but on the fictional character of its object, which determines a paradoxical function of pseudoreference, or of denotation without denotata. This function is described by speech act theory in terms of *pretended assertions*, by narratology as a dissociation between author (the real enunciator) and narrator (the fictitious enunciator),[26] and by still others, such as Käte Hamburger, as a substitution, the "I-Origo" of the author be-

[25] These (ritual) formulas may seem more metaphoric than rigorous. They are metaphoric especially in that they describe the phenomenon by its psychological effects. To define it in more literally semiotic terms it will doubtless be necessary—and I do this in Chapter 4 with respect to style— to invoke the Goodmanian notion of exemplification. A text is rhematically "intransitive" when (or rather to the extent that) its exemplificatory properties take precedence over its denotative function.

[26] I return to these two relatively interchangeable descriptions in the two chapters that follow.

ing replaced by the "I-Origo" of the characters. Nelson Goodman characterizes this same function, in logical terms, as consisting of monadic or "unbreakable one-place predicates":[27] a description of Pickwick is nothing but a description-of-Pickwick, indivisible in the sense that it relates to nothing outside itself.[28] If "Napoleon" designates an actual member of the human race, "Sherlock Holmes" and "Gilberte Swann" designate no one outside Doyle's text or Proust's; these are designations that turn back on themselves and do not leave their own sphere. The text of fiction does not *lead* to any extratextual reality; everything it borrows (and it is constantly borrowing) from reality ("Sherlock Holmes lived at 221B Baker Street," "Gilberte Swann had dark eyes," and so on) is transformed into an element of fiction, like Napoleon in *War and Peace* or Rouen in *Madame Bovary*. The fictional text is thus intransitive in its own way, not because its utterances are perceived as intangible (they may be, but these are cases of collusion between fiction and diction), but because the beings to which they apply have no extratextual existence, and the beings refer us back to the utterances in a movement of infinite circularity. In both cases, owing to thematic absence or rhematic opacity, this intransitivity constitutes the text as an autonomous object and its relation to the reader as an aesthetic

[27] Nelson Goodman, "Fictions," in *The Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), sec. 1, chap. 5, quotations from 21–26.

[28] This obviously applies to Dickens's description of Pickwick, which serves in fact to *constitute* Pickwick by pretending to "describe" him. Later descriptions (or depictions) produced by commentators or illustrators are for their part transitive and verifiable inasmuch as they are paraphrases of Dickens's own description. On these questions, which have been abundantly debated in modern philosophy, see Thomas Pavel, "Fictional Beings," in *Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), chap. 2, and the texts to which he refers.

relation, in which meaning is perceived as inseparable from form.

The fifth remark is an objection. Nothing guarantees, a priori, that the criterion of conditional literariness, even if we exclude fiction from this category, will inevitably be rhematic. A nonfictional prose text may very well provoke an aesthetic reaction that depends not on its form but on its content: for example, a real action or event reported by a historian or an autobiographer (let us take at random Michelet's account of the torture of the Princesse de Lamballe, or the episode of the cherries in Rousseau's *Confessions*, but the same thing would obviously hold true for the story of Oedipus if it were viewed as authentic) may, like any other element of reality, be received and appreciated as an aesthetic object independently of the way it is recounted. But, beyond the fact that an aesthetic object is not the same thing as a work (I shall come back to this point), it seems to me that in cases like these, if the authenticity of the fact is firmly established and clearly perceived, and even if it is illusory, moreover, the potential aesthetic judgment will bear not upon the text but upon a fact that is external, or thought to be external, to the text, and whose aesthetic merit, to put it naively, cannot be credited to its author, any more than the beauty of the model depends on the painter's talent. Such an analysis obviously presupposes the possibility of separating story from narrative, the authentic from the fictional, a separation that is purely theoretical: every narrative introduces into its story an "emplotting" which is already a "fictionalizing" and/or a "dictionalizing." But that is precisely my point: the aesthetic value of an event, apart from any narration or dramatic representation, cannot be assigned to any text, and that of a narrative, or a drama, always stems from fiction, diction, or (most often) some cooperation be-

tween the two, whose overall roles and respective contributions are virtually impossible to untangle.

The sixth and final remark is more fundamental. It concerns the very notion of conditional literariness and its relation to our initial question, inherited from Jakobson (or Hegel): What makes a text a work of art? We have seen that Jakobson's response goes something like this: What makes a text a work of art is the poetic function, as determined, if not by metric forms alone, then at least by formal features that are clearly defined by the well-known "principle of equivalence." The fictionalist response is just as clear and categorical, and once again these two responses circumscribe the field of constitutive literariness without remainder. Texts that satisfy one or the other (or both) of these criteria can unhesitatingly be viewed as *works*, that is, as productions manifesting an intentional aesthetic character: they belong, then, not only to the aesthetic category but also (more narrowly) to the artistic category. But the texts whose literariness is conditional do not belong beyond all doubt to this latter category, for their intentionally aesthetic character is not guaranteed: a page by Michelet or Demosthenes is distinguished from a page by some noted historian or orator only by some aesthetic (in essence, stylistic) "quality" that is a matter of free judgment on the reader's part, and that is not marked as having been intended or even perceived by its author. Such a text is, for *certain* readers, an incontestable aesthetic object, but the term *work of art*, whose definition implies an aesthetic intention as well, cannot be applied literally in this case; it can be used only in a broad and somewhat metaphorical sense,[29] as when

[29] The expression "become (or cease to be) a work of art," used earlier, must thus be taken in the broad sense. In the strict sense, a text can become (or cease to be) only an aesthetic object.

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one says of a threshing machine or an anvil, an artifact whose original function was not aesthetic, that it is a "veritable work of art." Conditional literariness does not literally answer Jakobson's question, since it determines not intentional works but only (verbal) aesthetic objects. But this is perhaps because the question was, in a sense, badly put. In what sense? In the sense that the intentional (and thus, strictly speaking, artistic) character of a text matters less than its aesthetic character.

The question returns us to a secular opposition between those who subscribe, as Hegel did, to a constitutive aestheticity (that of art)—those for whom nothing is beautiful that was not intended to be beautiful and produced as such by the mind[30]—and those for whom, like Kant, the aesthetic object par excellence is a natural object, or an object that seems natural, when art conceals art. This is not the place to debate that issue, for the terrain of literariness is doubtless too narrow to allow us to deal in any valid way with the relations between the aesthetic and the artistic. Let us simply remember that Jakobson's question (which, as we recall, aims to define the object of poetics) may be advantageously enlarged to: "What makes a text an aesthetic object?" and that, to this question, "Being a work of art" is perhaps just one response among others.

[30] For example, when Monroe Beardsley writes: "Artworks in general, because of their specialized function, are richer sources of aesthetic value and provide it in a higher order." Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics* (1958), 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), xx.

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ACTS OF FICTION

By *acts of fiction* I mean utterances of narrative fiction considered as speech acts. I am thus reopening the question of the illocutionary status of narrative fiction, which John Searle appears to settle—in the negative—somewhat too quickly in an article that is conclusive in many other respects.[1] Let me stress that I am dealing with narrative fiction and not with fiction in general, still less with literature in general. The question of literature and its relation to speech acts has been addressed, in a period or spirit I would be inclined to call pre-Searlean, with a certain amount of confusion: the relation between fiction and literature has remained implicit or unspecified, as if the one were self-evidently coextensive with the other, so that it has never been entirely clear whether the speech act to be defined was chosen for its fictionality or for its

[1] John Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse" (1975), in *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 58–75.

literariness. For the moment I shall set aside this relationship, which Searle describes more prudently as one of intersection (not all literature is fiction, not all fiction is literature),[2] and deal with literary fiction without asking whether or not its potential description in pragmatic terms should be extended to the much larger field of literature as a whole.

I shall also set aside the case of dramatic fiction, for it seems to me that its mode of presentation is, from the point of view that concerns us, of an entirely different order. So as to situate it very rapidly, on the sidelines, let me simply recall that in its pure state—the one advocated by Aristotle and more or less illustrated by classical French theater—it consists exclusively of discourse uttered by (that is, attributed to) fictional characters. The fictionality of this discourse is in some sense tacitly posited by the context of scenic representation, whether real or imagined, and its pragmatic status, within the diegesis thus constituted, is that of any ordinary exchange of words among ordinary people. The characters assert ("Oui, Prince, je languis, je brûle pour Thésée" ["Yes, Sire, I pine, I burn for Theseus"]), promise ("Vous y serez, ma fille" ["You shall be there, my daughter"]), order ("Sortez!" ["Go!"]), question

[2] Ibid., 58–60. The second proposition is justified by two arguments of unequal value. First, "Most comic books and jokes are examples of fiction but not literature" (58). Comic books are indeed, at least in part, examples of nonliterary (because nonverbal) fiction, like silent films or certain works of plastic art. (As for jokes, I am inclined to see them as constituting a literary genre of their own.) Second, "The Sherlock Holmes stories of Conan Doyle are clearly works of fiction, but it is a matter of judgment whether they should be regarded as a part of English literature" (59–60). Here, exclusion is contemplated in the name of a potential value judgment that strikes me as irrelevant. As Nelson Goodman comes close to saying, if all bad works are excluded from the field of works of art, the risk is that there will be very little left, for the vast majority of works of art (but not, for me, those of Conan Doyle) are bad ones—which by no means keeps them from being works of art.

("Qui te l'a dit?" ["Who told you that?"]), and so on, as people do elsewhere, under the same conditions and with the same intentions and consequences as in real life, with the single difference that the characters' speech acts occur in a fictional universe that is completely separate from the real world inhabited by the audience—except in the case of the deliberate and paradoxical metalepses that have been particularly fashionable in the twentieth century (and in the baroque period: the play within the play); their "special" effects deserve to be studied in and of themselves. As for stage directions, the only part of the dramatic text directly assumed by the author (and in relation to the dramatic text proper, stage directions range from virtually nonexistent, in classical theater, to the Beckettian infinite),[3] Searle views them as having a purely "directive" illocutionary status ("instructions for how to do something, namely, how to perform the play").[4] This is undoubtedly the way they are understood by actors and directors, but not necessarily by ordinary readers (as for the audience, it sees only the way the directions are executed); the reader is just as likely to see them as a description of what is going on onstage (in the fictional diegesis). A direction such as "Hernani removes his coat and drapes it over the king's shoulders" simultaneously describes the character's behavior and tells the performer what to do. The author's intention is thus undecidable, here; it oscillates between description on the one hand and prescription, or direction, on the other, according to whether the author is primarily addressing a reader (as in the case of Musset) or a theatrical company (as in the case of Brecht).

In passing, I should note that "dialogues" in dramatic fic-

tion have the same status as "dialogue" scenes in narrative fiction, a status that is almost always—as we have known at least since Plato—of a "mixed" mode, that is, blended, or rather *larded*, with dramatic elements (Käte Hamburger terms this mode "fluctuating"). The words exchanged among the characters of a novel are clearly serious speech acts carried out within the fictional universe of that novel: a promise made by Vautrin to Rastignac is not binding on Balzac, but it is as seriously binding on Vautrin as it would be on me if I had uttered it. Except for the fictionality of their context, the speech acts of fictional characters, whether the fiction is dramatic or narrative, are authentic acts, fully endowed with the locutionary characteristics of such acts, with their "point" and their illocutionary force, and with their potential perlocutionary effects, intended or not. The acts that are problematic, the ones whose status still remains to be defined if possible, are the speech acts that constitute that context, that is, the narrative discourse itself: that of the author.[5]

With these last words I have implicitly introduced a new restriction of the field that should unquestionably be made explicit: in the type of narrative called personal,[6] or first-person (or, in more narratological terms, narrative with a *homodiegetic* narrator), the enunciator of the narrative, herself a character in the story (this is the only relevant sense of the expression "in the first person"), is herself fictional, and therefore the speech acts she performs as narrator are as fictionally serious as those of the other characters in her narrative and as

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[3] The limit is reached, of course, in Beckett's *Actes sans paroles*, where the text consists entirely of instructions for staging.

[4] Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 70.

[5] The status of certain utterances of narrative fiction, in particular those generally identified as free indirect discourse, is uncertain and even undecidable, since readers do not know whether to attribute them to a character or to the narrator-author. But these complex occurrences do not invalidate the definition of simple states.

[6] See Marie-Laure Ryan, "The Pragmatics of Personal and Impersonal Fiction," *Poetics* 10 (1981), 517–39.

the speech acts she performs as a character in her story. "Marcel," the narrator of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, addresses his prospective reader as seriously as Marcel the character addresses the Duchess of Guermantes.[7] The person whose "seriousness"—that is, whose illocutionary engagement—could be problematic is not Marcel the narrator but rather Proust the author. But I say *"could* be problematic," in the conditional, for in fact here (in the text of *A la recherche du temps perdu*) *no* speech acts belong to Marcel Proust, for the good reason that Marcel Proust never takes the floor; he is always "pretending," as Plato had already put it, to be Marcel or someone else, no matter how the narrative content may happen to relate to the biography, the life and opinions, of its author. Thus, from the point of view that concerns us here, we are just as entitled to set aside the discourse of first-person fictional narrative as to set aside that of fictional characters themselves; and there are sound reasons for doing so.

The only task that remains, then, is to describe the pragmatic status of *impersonal* or third-person narrative, which narratologists for various good reasons call *heterodiegetic* (the narrator is not one of the characters)—provided, however, that we are dealing with an *extradiegetic* narrative, that is, a first-degree narrative produced by a narrator-author who is not herself, like the narrator-authors of the *Arabian Nights*, in-

cluded in a narrative in which she would be a character.[8] In short, we are dealing with a fictional narrative produced in the world labeled "real" by an author of the same nature, for instance Iris Murdoch, whom Searle cites in order to show that her pretended narrative assertions are not authentic speech acts.

A final precaution will doubtless be of some use before we embark on this discussion. The question before us is not precisely to determine whether utterances constitutive of a fictional narrative *are* or *are not* illocutionary acts, as we might ask whether Titan *is* or *is not* a satellite of Saturn; the question is rather whether describing them as such produces a more efficient, more economical, and more profitable description than some other, or even than all others, of which our description would perhaps be simply a more judicious formulation. If it is the case that the other literary disciplines raise questions of fact ("Who is the author of *Le Père Goriot?*"), poetics unfailingly raises questions of *method*—for example, what is the most satisfactory, or the least unsatisfactory, way of *saying* what the author of *Le Père Goriot does?*[9]

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Comparing a fragment of an Iris Murdoch novel, then, with a fragment of a factual (journalistic) narrative, Searle readily

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[7] Searle declares somewhat ambiguously that Conan Doyle "is not simply pretending to make assertions, but he is *pretending to be* John Watson . . . making assertions" (*Expression and Meaning*, 69), which might imply that there is a *double* pretense here: Doyle pretending to be Watson, and Watson pretending to make assertions. I think it may be more accurate to say that there is only one pretense: Doyle's (or Proust's), and that Watson's assertions (or Marcel's) are (fictionally) serious. I presume that this is what Searle in fact thinks, for his phrase "is not simply" indicates rather that the second pretense (pretending to be someone else) is stronger than the third-person pretense (simply pretending to assert).

[8] I am not denying that the pragmatic status of a fictional (intradiegetic) author-narrator like Albert Savarus, the author of *Ambitions through Love*, may reproduce *en abyme* the status of an extradiegetic author-narrator like Balzac, the author of *Albert Savarus*. I shall simply set aside such cases here; their special features may well be irrelevant.

[9] A question like this might be criticized for its irrelevance in attributing the character of speech act to a written practice. Such an objection does not stand up against the mass of illocutionary acts that are carried out in writing, from declarations of love to divorce decrees. As Searle aptly remarks: "Speaking *or writing* in a language consists in performing speech acts" (*Expression and Meaning*, 58; emphasis added).

shows that fictional utterances in the form of assertions meet none of the conditions (sincerity, commitment, verifiability) that characterize authentic assertions. He also demonstrates—in my opinion beyond doubt—that these utterances cannot be taken as *literal* illocutionary acts of some type other than assertion. From this twofold negative observation he draws two conclusions that he views as linked but that I should like to separate: first, that fictional utterances, which take the form of assertions but which do not fulfill the conditions of assertions, are pretended assertions; second, that to produce a fiction (to "write a novel") is not a specific illocutionary act. The first conclusion seems to me beyond question: an utterance that presents all the formal features of assertions but does not fulfill their pragmatic conditions can only be a pretended assertion. Although the meaning of the ambiguous expression "can only be" still has to be specified, I personally take it to mean "cannot help being," or, still more precisely, "cannot fail to be," but I shall not hasten to infer that it cannot be *at the same time* something else; I shall come back to this point, needless to say, for in fact it sums up the entire issue. Searle's second conclusion (that fiction is not an illocutionary act *sui generis*) seems to be reinforced by two supplementary considerations: one is that the description of fiction as pretended assertions is preferable, adequate, and presumably exclusive; the other is that fictional utterances have no meaning other than their literal meaning since (?) the words used (for example, "red" in "Little Red Riding Hood") mean the same thing as in ordinary utterances.[10] These are the two closely related considerations I should like to challenge simultaneously.

I am contending, then, that to call fictional utterances pretended assertions does not preclude, as Searle claims it does,

[10] Searle, *Expression and Meaning,* 64, 58.

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their being something else at the same time. On another level, moreover, Searle himself acknowledges the possibility of such indirect accomplishments: on the one hand, when he argues that the simulated speech acts of fiction can convey "messages" and even serious "speech acts," as a fable can transmit a moral (this example does not appear in his text, but I do not believe it is unfaithful to his argument); and on the other hand, when he asserts that "by pretending to refer to (and recount the adventures of) a person, [the novelist] creates a fictional character." These two propositions seem indisputable to me, even though the verb "create" has a somewhat metaphorical tinge here.[11] I do not believe I am straying far from the second proposition by saying, in a more literal fashion, that by pretending to make assertions (about fictional beings), the novelist is doing something else, namely, creating a *work* of fiction. The possibility of such a concurrence does not seem to me to exceed human capabilities, and it is after all part of the definition of pretense that while pretending to do one thing, we are in reality doing another.[12] To produce pretended

[11] Ibid., 74, 71. Metaphorical, because the only thing an artist can literally "create" and add to the real world is his work. Joseph Margolis raises a pertinent objection to Searle in arguing that one cannot say both that fictional beings do not exist and that the author creates them, for one can only create something that has existence: "What *is* relevantly created are stories and the like, *using* which in the appropriate (conventional) way we (both authors and readers) imagine a certain non-existent world to exist." Joseph Margolis, "The Logic and Structures of Fictional Narrative," *Philosophy and Literature* 7 (October 1983), 169. This was Gilbert Ryle's position as early as 1933: "While it is correct enough to describe Dickens' activity as 'creative,' when the *story* is considered as the product of his creation, it is wholly erroneous to speak as if Dickens created a Mr. Pickwick." Gilbert Ryle, "Imaginary Objects," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* suppl. vol. 12 (1933), 32.

[12] It seems to me that Searle's idea of simulation is generally too *subtractive,* as if the act of simulation were always of a "lower order or less complex" than the simulated act (*Expression and Meaning,* 67–68). The

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assertions (or to pretend to produce assertions) thus cannot exclude, a priori, the possibility that while producing them (or pretending to produce them), one is really accomplishing a different act, that of producing a fiction. The only question, no doubt somewhat rhetorical, is whether that act is not a "speech act" in the technical sense, or, more precisely, whether the relation between those two acts (producing a fiction while pretending to make assertions) is not typically illocutionary in nature. In still other words, the question is whether fictional utterances should not be included among "nonliterary" utterances, either *figurative*, as when, saying "You're a lion," I signify metaphorically "You're a hero" (or perhaps, ironically, "You're a coward"), or *indirect*, as when, asking if you can pass me the salt, I express my wish for you to pass me the salt.

The difference between figures and indirect speech acts is not a trivial one—and I shall come back to it—but, since in both hypotheses the act of fiction is presented in a more or less disguised manner (as an assertion), it is no doubt appropriate to begin by considering that act in what would be its *undisguised*, or naked, or, as Searle sometimes calls it, "primary" state: I use the conditional here because it seems to me

that we never in fact encounter such nakedness, since (narrative) fiction always prefers, for various reasons, to cloak itself in the mantle of assertion.

This state could take the form of an invitation to enter the fictional universe, and therefore, in illocutionary terms, the form of a suggestion, a request, a plea, a proposition—all "exercitive" acts[13] with the same illocutionary "point," distinguished only by their relative "force." In this sense, the sentence in the form of an assertion—"Once upon a time there was a little girl who lived with her mother at the edge of a forest"—would in reality signify something like: "Please imagine with me that once upon a time there was a little girl . . . " This primary, or declared, state of the fictional act could easily be described in the terms proposed by Searle in *Speech Acts*,[14] under the heading of request, and schematized in the way that the same author advocates in *Expression and Meaning*,[15] namely, here: ! ↑ V (A imagines p)—that is to say that the enunciator formulates a request destined to bring about some accommodation of reality to the discourse and expressing a sincere desire that the hearer (or reader) A should imagine a state of affairs expressed by the proposition p, to wit: "Once upon a time . . . "

This is one possible description of the (declared) act of (declared) fiction. But it seems to me possible to propose another description that is just as adequate, and doubtless more appropriate for the states of fiction that P. F. Strawson calls "sophisticated,"[16] in which the appeal to the reader's imaginative

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emphatic art of the actor tends rather to prove the contrary and, in "life" itself, to simulate consists more often in "piling it on," like Sartre's café waiter who plays at being a waiter (in *Being and Nothingness*), or Charlus at Balbec making "the perfunctory gesture of annoyance by which people mean to shew that they have waited long enough, although they never make it when they are really waiting." Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 2 vols., trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff (New York: Random House, 1934), 1:569. I am well aware that reality is sometimes "stranger than fiction," but it seems to me that this phenomenon is observable because the opposite is the rule: fiction is often only an exaggerated reality. When, as a child, I used to exaggerate and tell tall tales, my father, an unwitting positivist and subscriber to Ockham's rule, would comment soberly: "It's a good thing words are free."

13 See John Searle, "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts," in *Expression and Meaning*, 1–29.
14 See John Searle, "The Structure of Illocutionary Acts," in *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978 [1969]), 54–71.
15 Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 53.
16 P. F. Strawson, "On Referring," in *Logico-Linguistic Papers* (London: Methuen, 1971), 13.

cooperation is less explicit. In this case the reader's cooperation is presupposed, or taken for granted, so that the author can proceed more expeditiously and as if by decree: here the act of fiction is thus no longer a request but rather what Searle calls "declaration." Declarations are speech acts by means of which the utterer, by virtue of the power invested in him or her, acts on reality. The utterer's power is generally of the institutional type—like that of a president ("The meeting is in session"), an employer ("You're fired"), or a minister ("I baptize you Peter").[17] Searle himself, however, recognizes other types of power, such as supernatural power ("Let there be light!"),[18] or power that bears on language itself, as when an orator says, "I summarize," or a philosopher says, "I define." The direction this argument is taking is probably obvious, for we are there already: the fiat of the author of fiction is lodged somewhere between the fiat of the worldmaker and that of the wordmaker. The author's power, like the latter's, presupposes the more or less tacit consent of a public that, in Coleridge's durable expression, willingly suspends its disbelief.

[17] The form known since J. L. Austin as "performative" falls within this category; but I do not share the prevailing opinion that the performative is necessarily tied to this category. It consists in the explicit assertive description (I admit that the notion of "implicit performative" leaves me perplexed) of any illocutionary act whatever: declarative, of course ("I declare the meeting in session"), but also expressive ("I express my regrets"), directive ("I order you to leave"), promissory ("I promise you I'll come"), and even assertive ("I point out," "I call to your attention," "I note," and so on), without counting the intrusive expletive ("I would say that . . . ," or "Let's say that . . ."). The rare impossible cases (we do not say "I threaten you") might be rhetorical in nature; it is not in the interest of threats to make themselves explicit as such, but rather to be disguised, for example, as advice: "I advise you to leave" (implication: "otherwise . . ."). Conversely, a declarative act may take a nonperformative form, for example, assertive: "This meeting is in session."

[18] This sentence actually seems to me to belong to the category of directives rather than declaratives, but the borderline is very porous here.

This convention allows the author to posit her fictional objects without explicitly soliciting her audience through a "declarative" form in the Searlean sense; the preliminary condition for her "declaration," one that goes without saying, is simply that she has the right to make it, and its operator might be borrowed from the language of mathematics ("Let there be a triangle ABC"): "Let there be a little girl living with her mother . . . " The pseudo-Searlean formula would be $D \updownarrow \varnothing (p)$— which can be glossed here roughly as: "I, the author, decide fictionally by these presents, by adapting both the words to the world and the world to the words, and without fulfilling any condition of sincerity (without believing it myself and without asking you to believe it), that p (that a little girl . . .)." The difference between a declaration like this and ordinary declarations is clearly the imaginary character of the "declared" event, that is, of the content of p, which it is not in the author's power to bring about in reality, in the way a demiurge can bring about a physical event, and a simple (qualified) mortal can bring about an institutional event. It is at least in the author's power to bring about the consideration of p in the mind of her audience, if only fleetingly and precariously— and that, after all, is a full-fledged event.

The difference between the directive formula ("Imagine that . . .") and the declaration ("Let it be the case that . . .") is that the second takes for granted (consists in taking for granted) its own perlocutionary effect: "By these presents, I induce you to imagine . . ." Now this effect is indeed always guaranteed, for the mere fact of hearing or reading that a little girl once lived at the edge of a forest inevitably brings to my mind, if only long enough for me to reject it as fictional or idle, the thought of a little girl at the edge of a forest. The declarative formulation, although more presumptuous—because more presumptuous—thus seems to me more correct.

Narrative fiction, like mathematical fiction and doubtless some others, can thus be reasonably described, in its primary and serious state, as a declaration in the Searlean sense, and so as an illocutionary act *sui generis,* or at least *sui speciei,* within the broader genre of declarative illocutions whose function is to inaugurate a new state of affairs.

The passage to the *nondeclared* state—and thus nondirective (or no longer directive), not even declarative, but pseudo-assertive, which is the ordinary state of the narrative act of fiction—may be compared with certain assertive formulations of institutional declarations, formulations that also consist in taking their own perlocutionary effect for granted. The statement "The meeting is in session," or "You're fired," describes the institutional state of affairs brought about by its very enunciation; the statement "Once upon a time there was a little girl . . ." describes the mental state of affairs brought about in the mind of its hearer by its very enunciation, and the difference is finally quite small, for institutional states of affairs are collective mental states—as are, frequently, the mental states provoked by fictional utterances. Taken to an extreme, these assertive forms might be described as literal formulations and true assertions: fictional utterances would simply be descriptions of their own mental effect. But the disadvantage of such a definition is self-evident: the definition is far too broad, since it applies to all utterances, fictional or not: The statements "Napoleon died at St. Helena" and "Water boils at 100°C" describe equally well (or equally badly) the state of consciousness of their speakers and their hearers. The specific feature of fictional utterances is that, contrary to utterances of reality, which describe in addition (!) an objective state of affairs, the fictional utterance describes nothing but a mental

state. The complete assertive formulation of an utterance of reality might be something like this: "It is a fact that water boils at 100°C, and by saying so I am informing you or reminding you of that fact." The complete assertive formulation of a fictional utterance would be, rather: "It is not a fact that once upon a time there was a little girl, and so on, but by pretending that it is a fact, I am getting you to think of it as an imaginary state of affairs." Obviously one cannot say that the sentence "Once upon a time there was a little girl . . . " is by itself a literal translation of that utterance, nor, a fortiori, of its directive or declarative counterparts. It is thus more accurate to consider that nonserious assertion the nonliteral (but customary) expression of one of the literal (but noncustomary) formulations mentioned earlier.

By saying "nonliteral," I have avoided choosing up to now between two more precise designations: *figurative utterance* and *indirect speech act.* Searle himself appears to provide a way of distinguishing between the two—without supposing, however, that either one might be applied to fictional utterances. He deals with the first category especially in the chapter of *Expression and Meaning* devoted to metaphor; the second is the primary object of the chapter titled "Indirect Speech Acts." The difference between these two types of nonliteral expression seems to be, according to Searle, that in figurative expression, the literal interpretation is impossible—or, if one prefers, the literal meaning is manifestly unacceptable. "You're a lion" is literally false: the hearer knows that the speaker, unless he is insane, also knows that it is false, and it is this manifest literal falsity that obliges the hearer to seek a figurative meaning such as "You're a hero." But in the indirect speech act, the primary meaning comes as a supplement[19] to

[19] Searle, *Expression and Meaning,* 42–43.

an acceptable literal meaning: "You're the one with the salt" is a true assertion, acceptable as such, and it suggests *in addition* the request "Pass the salt," even if this "supplementary" meaning is in fact the real illocutionary point of the sentence.

On the theoretical level, and in terms of the examples chosen (by me), the distinction is clear-cut and incontestable. I am not sure that this is always the case in practice. Certain figures of speech have an acceptable literal meaning, even though they are more strongly oriented toward their figurative meaning: "I work in the White House" is literally true coming from a colleague of the president of the United States, since his workplace is located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, even if the metonymic meaning intended is rather "I work with the president of the United States"; and, conversely, the canonical utterance of an indirect speech act, "Could you pass me the salt?" (a request in the form of a question)[20] is hardly acceptable in its literal form, for, most of the time, the answer is manifestly (for everyone) known in advance, which means that the question does not meet the condition of sincerity. It is a false question, then, and very close to the figure—recognized as such—of the rhetorical question ("Est-elle en marbre ou non, la *Vénus de Milo?*" [Verlaine, "Epilogue": "Is the Venus de Milo made of marble or not?"]). In short, the

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[20] Let us note that the description of the indirect acts studied in this chapter as requests in the form of questions ignores Searle's annexation of questions to requests in chapter 1 of *Expression and Meaning* (a very discreet annexation, moreover, consisting in a single sentence: "Questions are a subclass of directives, since they are attempts by S to get H to answer, i.e., to perform a speech act"; 14). If we want to take this into account, we have to reformulate the description in the logically bizarre form: "requests in the form of the subclass of requests consisting of questions"—as we might speak of "an officer disguised as a captain." There may be, as is often the case, more disadvantages than advantages to annexation here. But we need to keep in mind that indirect acts are not all requests in the form of questions; far from it.

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difference between a figure of speech and an indirect speech act—or, to put it more accurately, between an indirect speech act with an unacceptable literal meaning and an indirect speech act with an acceptable literal meaning—is quite secondary with respect to their common feature, which is that each carries out one illocutionary act in the form of another illocutionary act, whether of a different type (a request in the form of a question, an assertion, a promise, an assertion in the form of a demand—"Know that . . ."—and so on) or of the same type (a question in the form of a different question, as in "Do you have the time?" and so on).

I do not know what Searle would think of this semi-assimilation, but let me recall that he never proposes to apply the category of indirect speech acts to the discourse of fiction, and he explicitly refuses to apply the category of figures of speech to indirect speech acts—in the name of a distinction, in my view a fragile one, between "nonserious" and "non-literal."[21] "Hegel is a dead horse on the philosophical market" may be a serious assertion in its figurative sense (Hegel is outmoded); it clearly is not a serious assertion in its literal sense. Conversely, "Once upon a time there was a little girl . . . ," which Searle simply calls a nonserious utterance, may be analyzed (this is obviously what I am proposing to do) as an indirect illocutionary act (in my broad sense), and thus as a complex act whose vehicle is a pretended or nonserious assertion, and whose tenor is *ad libitum* a request ("Imagine

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[21] Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 60. In her preface to the French translation (*Sens et expression* [Paris: Minuit, 1982]), Joëlle Proust offers a good illustration of a literal utterance with the formula "He means what he says." The emphasis is obviously on "what," but the same formula with the emphasis on "means" could illustrate the serious utterance: "I mean it" means precisely "I am speaking seriously." The difference in meaning is minor, and it is usually quite difficult, or pointless, to decide, for example, whether a joke should be taken as nonliteral or as nonserious.

that . . ."), a declaration ("I decree fictionally that . . ."), or even another assertion, obviously serious, such as "By these presents, I wish to arouse in your mind the fictional story of a little girl . . ."[22] Such a description is in no way intended to *replace* Searle's ("Fictional texts are pretended assertions") but is meant rather to *complete* it more or less this way: "that dissimulate, in their capacity as indirect speech acts, fictional speech acts that are themselves illocutionary acts *sui speciei*, by definition serious acts."

From this point on, the question of whether the indirection we are dealing with is that of figures of speech (with an unacceptable literal meaning and a substitutive primary meaning) or that of Searlean indirect speech acts (with an acceptable literal meaning and a supplementary primary meaning) seems to me once again a secondary issue. We might contemplate categorizing indirect speech acts as implausible (or fantastic) fictions and plausible (or realistic) fictions. We would thus label as figurative an utterance such as: "One day the oak tree said to the reed . . ." Such an utterance is manifestly fictional and can therefore only mask a request or a fictional declaration. And we would simply call indirect an utterance such as: "Le 15 septembre 1840, vers six heures du matin, la *Ville-de-Montereau*, près de partir, fumait à gros tourbillons devant le quai Saint-Bernard" [Flaubert, *L'education sentimentale:* "At about 6:00 in the morning on September 15, 1840, the *Ville-de-Montereau*, ready to sail, was spouting great clouds of smoke near the Saint-Bernard wharf"], an utterance whose literal meaning is perfectly acceptable, and doubtless faithful to

some empirical reality, and whose fictionality is by no means logically or semantically self-evident but rather a cultural probability,[23] induced by a certain number of conventional particulars of the textual, contextual, and paratextual orders. Pretended assertions would thus be figures of speech when they cloak illocutionary acts of logical fiction (for example, fables) and Searlean indirect speech acts when they cloak only acts of cultural fiction (for example, realist novels). But this distinction seems quite artificial to me, and not very easy to apply to specific cases, for fictional practice constantly mixes the two types: fairy tales themselves borrow countless details from reality, and the most realistic novel cannot pass itself off as a true story for long.

Above all, I find the distinction too cumbersome and too heavily freighted with presuppositions to be applied to the variants, or nuances, of what is after all only a thin disguise: the disguising of fictional declarations as pretended assertions. Thus, I prefer to leave the choice between these two species (as I see them) of indirect acts open, and to define the ordinary utterances of fiction more broadly as pretended assertions that mask, in a more or less self-evident and transparent way,[24] entirely serious declarations (or requests) that have

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[22] I do not think this free translation can offer grounds for objections to my analysis: the same uncertainty characterizes most figures of speech, and also indirect speech acts. "Can you pass me the salt?" may just as well mask a piece of information ("I should like you to pass me the salt") as a request ("Pass me the salt"), and so forth.

[23] J. O. Urmson, "Fiction," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 13 (April 1976), 153–57, points out quite convincingly that the opening passage of "Little Red Riding Hood" is very likely to correspond to some past or present empirical truth—which in no way rules out its having a fictional status.

[24] The degree of transparency depends not only on the more or less manifestly fictional character of the content, but also on the degree of presupposition of the assertive formula itself, which may be naive ("Once upon a time . . .") or sophisticated ("La première fois qu'Aurélien vit Bérénice" [Louis Aragon, *Aurélien:* "The first time Aurélien saw Bérénice . . ."]), or else on the presence or absence of the "indexes of fictionality" (Käte Hamburger) that are supplied by a feature such as direct access to a character's subjectivity (" . . . il la trouva franchement laide"

to be taken as illocutionary acts. As for the intended perlocutionary effect, it is obviously aesthetic in nature, and it belongs more specifically to the artistic order of the Aristotelian *poiein:* the production of a *work* of fiction.

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All this, of course, has to do with "fictional discourse" presumed to be such through and through, as if a text of narrative fiction were integrally constituted of a series of sentences of the type "Once upon a time . . . ," all of whose referents would be as manifestly fictional as Little Red Riding Hood. Such is clearly not the case. Searle himself mentions the status, in his view totally extrafictional, of certain gnomic utterances, such as the opening sentence of *Anna Karenina,* where Tolstoi appears to be setting forth his own opinions about the happiness and unhappiness of family life in all seriousness and in all sincerity. I am not convinced that the situation is so clear-cut, in the case of *Anna Karenina,* and a fortiori for other examples, and I do not see why a novelist should refrain from pronouncing ad hoc maxims that are no more "sincere" than his narrative and descriptive utterances,[25] to serve his fictional purposes; but it is clear that this type of

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["... he found her decidedly unattractive"]). Without counting, of course, the paratextual genre markers signaling "novel," "tale," or "short story." It may seem unreasonable to keep basing arguments on introductory formulas, as if one never read beyond opening lines. Their function is crucial, however, and properly inaugurational: once the universe they impose, in one way or another, has been accepted, what follows functions in the quasi-serious mode of the fictional consensus.

[25] See Käte Hamburger, *The Logic of Literature* (1957), trans. Marilynn J. Rose (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 163–74, and Gérard Genette, "Vraisemblance et motivation," in *Figures II* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 71–99.

proposition can at least introduce nonfictional or undecidable islets into texts of fiction, for example, the celebrated opening passage of *Pride and Prejudice:* "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." The same holds true for countless utterances of the historical or geographical type that are not necessarily deprived of their truth value by being inserted into a fictional context and subordinated to fictional ends; consider the opening passage of *La Princesse de Clèves:* "La magnificence et la galanterie n'ont jamais paru en France avec tant d'éclat que dans les dernières années du règne de Henry second" ["Magnificence and gallantry shone more brightly in France than ever before during the closing years of the reign of Henri II"]. Finally, the most typically fictional referents, Anna Karenina or Sherlock Holmes, may well have been substituted for real "models" who "posed" for them, as Hendrijke did for Rembrandt's Bathsheba (thus, for example, George Sand would be the "model" for Camille Maupin and Illiers for Combray), in such a way that the fictionality of the propositions concerning them depends solely on a referential duplicity, the text denoting a fictional *X* while it is depicting a real *Y*.

We cannot enter here into the infinitely complex detail of these devices, but we must at least keep in mind that the "discourse of fiction" is in fact a patchwork, or a more or less homogenized amalgam, of heterogeneous elements borrowed for the most part from reality. Just as a lion amounts to little more, according to Valéry, than digested mutton, so fiction is little more than fictionalized reality, and the definition of its discourse in illocutionary terms can only be fluctuating, or global and synthetic: its assertions are clearly not all pretended in the same degree, and it may be that none of them is

rigorously and wholly pretended—any more than a siren or a centaur is a wholly imaginary being. What is true of fiction as entity or image is doubtless also true of fiction as discourse: the whole is more fictional than any of its parts.

Finally, we need to specify that an illocutionary definition of the discourse of fiction can in principle reach only the *intentional* aspect of that discourse, and its felicitous outcome, which consists at least in achieving recognition of its fictional intent. Now, just as a figure of speech or an indirect speech act may fail because its receiver is unable to decode it ("Me, a lion? You're crazy!"; "Yes, I can pass you the salt; what a stupid question!"), in the same way an act of fiction may fail as such because its hearer does not perceive its fictionality, like Don Quixote getting up on Master Peter's stage to do in the bad guys and rescue the good guys. Wholesale recourse to the resources of the paratext is sometimes welcome if it wards off such misunderstandings. But it also happens, as we know, that a single story may change status according to its cultural context: produced by (and for) one group as truth, it is received by others as a false belief and reinterpreted, "recycled," as fiction. Myths thus illustrate an *involuntary* state of fiction, whose illocutionary formula is not the same at the two ends of the chain. And this sort of quid pro quo can affect not only "representation" but reality itself, taken as fiction, as when one pinches oneself to wake up while being all too wide awake already. The opposite of Don Quixote's error is rather nicely illustrated by Robert Day in an old *New Yorker* cartoon. A car has broken down in a driving rain. The driver, soaked to the bone, is struggling to change a flat tire. His two children, inside the car, are watching him impatiently and no doubt incredulously, if we are to judge by the unfortunate father's response: "Don't you understand? This is

life, this is what is happening. We *can't* switch to another channel."[26]

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Let us recapitulate. It seems to me that intentionally fictional utterances can reasonably be described as nonserious (or nonliteral) assertions that mask, in the mode of indirect speech acts (or figures of speech), explicit fictional declarations (or requests). Such a description strikes me as more economical than Searle's, which requires recourse to mysterious "horizontal conventions," "extralinguistic, nonsemantic conventions that break the connection between words and the world" and "suspend the normal operation of the rules relating illocutionary acts and the world."[27] My description requires nothing other than the recognition—which Searle himself offers in a different context—of the manifest capacity (and a capacity widely exploited outside of fiction) of ordinary language to imply something more, something less, or something other than what it says.

I have deliberately left the other forms (fictional and nonfictional) of literary discourse outside the scope of this analysis, and I am not sure I have much left to say about them from the point of view that interests us here. I have defined, in passing, the illocutionary status of the discourse of characters in the theater and in "mixed" narratives, and by the same token that of first-person narrative fiction. For me, all these discourses in fact boil down to the dramatic mode (a character speaks) and consist in serious illocutions that are more or less tacitly pos-

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[26] *The "New Yorker" Album of Drawings, 1925–1975* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), n.p.
[27] Searle, *Expression and Meaning,* 66–67.

ited[28] as *intrafictional:* the pretense here constitutes, as Plato and Searle indicate, a simulation, or substitution of identity (Homer pretends to be Chryses, Doyle pretends to be Watson, as Sophocles pretends to be Oedipus or Creon), which overhangs and determines the discourse of a character who for his part is entirely serious, within his fictional universe[29]—except when that character is himself, like Scheherazade or Savarus, a producer of fiction in the second degree. This description, as I see it, is exhaustive. As for the discourse of nonfictional literature, whether it is narrative (history, autobiography, diary) or not (essays, aphorisms, and so on), it obviously consists in what Käte Hamburger calls "utterances of reality"— serious illocutions (truthful or not) whose pragmatic status seems to me unproblematic, and essentially uninteresting. What is problematic is their *literariness,* intentional or not, that is to say, once again, their potential aesthetic function. But this, again, is another story—and it doubtless has little to do with the intentional logic of illocution.[30]

The only type of literary discourse with a specific illocutionary status is thus "impersonal" narrative fiction. The other types can be distinguished by formal features, and by functional features (they can move, distract, seduce, and so on)

[28] The most tacit position is the one practiced by "pure" theater, without any introduction by way of didascalia or narrator; the most explicit position is that of the discourse of characters in narrative fiction, introduced by a narration that "lets them do the talking."

[29] To designate these serious illocutions attributed to fictional characters, Marcia Eaton proposes the very felicitous term "translocutionary acts." Marcia Eaton, "Liars, Ranters, and Dramatic Speakers," in *Language and Aesthetics: Contributions to the Philosophy of Art,* ed. B. R. Tilghman (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1973), 43–63.

[30] Here again, a diagnosis based on simple states does not preclude the existence of complex intermediate forms located along the spectrum between fictional and nonfictional, as when Hamburger defines the lyric text by the indeterminacy of its speaker.

which might more properly be called *perlocutionary*—subject to an inventory, and without prejudice to cases of unintentional literariness, such as, for example (more or less), the literariness that Stendhal attributed to the Civil Code. For it may be the case, most fortunately, and contrary to the rules of illocution, that "whether or not a [text] is literature is for the readers to decide."[31]

[31] Searle, *Expression and Meaning,* 59. I am substituting "text" for "work," since this remark does not have precisely the same meaning for me that it has for Searle. For him, once again, the judgment of literariness seems to be a matter of the *value* attributed to what would be in any event a work of art; for me it is a matter of the aesthetic *function* attributed to a text that was not necessarily produced with that intent.

3

FICTIONAL NARRATIVE,

FACTUAL NARRATIVE

If words have meaning (and even if they have multiple meanings), narratology—in its rhematic variant, as the study of narrative discourse, as well as in its thematic variant, as the analysis of the sequences of events and actions recounted by that discourse—ought to be concerned with all sorts of narratives, fictional or not. It is quite clear, however, that both branches of narratology have concentrated almost exclusively up to now on the features and objects of fictional narrative alone.[1] They have not done this by making a simple empirical choice that avoided prejudging the aspects that were to be temporarily and explicitly neglected; instead, they have pro-

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[1] This observation has already been made by Paul Ricoeur, in *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols., trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellaver (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–88), 2:4, n. 4. A striking illustration of this state of affairs is offered by two of Roland Barthes's texts, written at roughly the same time: "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" (1966), in *The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), 95–135, and "The Discourse of History" (1967), in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill

ceeded as if by virtue of an implicit privilege that hypostatizes fictional narrative into narrative par excellence, or into a model for all narratives. The rare scholars—Paul Ricoeur, Hayden White, and Paul Veyne, for example—who have been interested in the figures or plots of historical narrative have approached the texts from the vantage point of some other discipline: the philosophy of temporality, or rhetoric, or epistemology; and when Jean-François Lyotard applied the categories of *Narrative Discourse* to a newspaper story about the death of a militant,[2] he was actually attempting to abolish the boundaries of fiction. Now, whatever strengths and weaknesses narratology may have in its current state, it is unlikely to exempt us from having to undertake a specific study of factual narrative.[3] It is certain in any event that narratology cannot indefinitely postpone examining the applicability of its results, and even of its methods, to a domain that it never really explored before annexing it silently, without investigation or justification.

In saying this I am obviously proclaiming my own guilt, having once chosen the title *Narrative Discourse* for a study that was manifestly limited to fictional narrative, and having re-

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and Wang, 1986), 127–40. The first of these texts, despite its very general title, deals only with fictional narratives, and the second, despite an initial antithesis between "historical" and "fictional" narrative, completely ignores the narrative aspects of historical discourse, rejecting these in the end as a deviation specific to the nineteenth century (Augustin Thierry) and devalorizing them in the name of the anti-"event" principles of the French school.

[2] Jean-François Lyotard, "Petite économie libidinale d'un dispositif narratif" (1973), in *Des dispositifs pulsionnels* (Paris: Bourgois, 1980), 179–224.

[3] For want of a better term, I use the adjective *factual* here, though it is not an ideal choice (for fiction, too, consists in sequences of *facts*), so as to avoid depending systematically on negative expressions (*nonfiction, nonfictional*) which reflect and perpetuate the very privilege that I want to call into question.

peated the offense in *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, despite a theoretical protest against this excessively one-sided practice of what really should be called a *restricted narratology*.[4] I have neither the intention nor the means here, however, to undertake a more or less parallel study of the characteristic features of the discourse of factual narrative. Such a study would require a large-scale inquiry into discursive practices such as those of history, biography, personal diaries, newspaper accounts, police reports, judicial narratives, everyday gossip, and other forms of what Mallarmé called "l'universel reportage" (universal reporting), or at the very least the systematic analysis of some major text deemed typical, such as Rousseau's *Confessions* or Michelet's *History of the French Revolution*.[5] I prefer, provisionally, and in a more theoretical or at least a more a priori fashion, to examine the reasons that might lead factual narrative and fictional narrative[6] to behave differently with respect to the story that they "report," simply

[4] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1983), trans. Jane Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 13.

[5] On the latter text, see Ann Rigney, "Du récit historique," *Poétique* 75 (September 1988), 267–78. Pursuing the direction taken by Hayden White, the author is less concerned with narrative techniques than with the means of "production of meaning" in a narrative defined as essentially (and authentically) retrospective, and thus constantly oriented by anticipation. Among particular or generic studies I must also mention Philippe Lejeune's observations in "The Order of Narrative in Sartre's *Les Mots*," in *On Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 70–107, and Daniel Madelénat's observations on the choices of mood, order, and tempo in biography, *La biographie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 149–58.

[6] For obvious reasons I shall not consider nonnarrative forms (e.g., drama) or nonverbal forms of fiction (e.g., silent film); nonverbal forms are nonliterary by definition, that is, by choice of medium. And yet the distinction between written and oral forms of narrative fiction strikes me as irrelevant here, and the distinction between literary forms (canonical) and nonliterary forms (popular, familiar, and so on) seems too uncertain to be taken into account.

because that story is in one case (supposed to be) "true" and in the other fictitious, that is, invented by the person who is telling it at present, or by some author from whom that person inherited it. I specify "supposed to be" because it does sometimes happen that a historian will invent a detail or orchestrate a "plot," or that a novelist will be inspired by a news item. What counts here is the official status of the text and its reading horizon.

The validity of such an attempt would be contested by John Searle, among others; for Searle, there is a priori "no textual property, syntactical, or semantic [or, consequently, narratological], that will identify a text as a work of fiction,"[7] because the fictional narrative is purely and simply a pretense or a simulation of factual narrative. The novelist, for example, plainly pretends to be telling a true story without seriously attempting to make the reader believe it, but also without leaving the slightest textual trace of that character of nonserious simulation. The least we can say, however, is that Searle's opinion is not universally shared. It is countered, for example, by Käte Hamburger,[8] who restricts the field of "pretense" (*Fingiertheit*) to the first-person novel alone—a simula-

[7] John Searle, *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 65.

[8] Käte Hamburger, "Special Forms," in *The Logic of Literature* (1957), 2d ed. rev., trans. Marilynn J. Rose (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), chap. 5. For a comparison between the theses Hamburger advances in this work and the methodological postulates of narratology, see Jean-Marie Schaeffer, "Fiction, feinte et narration," *Critique* 43 (June–July 1987), 555–76. Without taking a position, as Searle does, on fiction in general, in 1971 Philippe Lejeune, like Hamburger, observes "no difference" between autobiography and the autobiographical novel, "if one remains at the level of internal analysis of the text." Philippe Lejeune, *L'autobiographie en France* (Paris: Colin, 1971), 24. The differences that Lejeune introduces in 1972, in *Le pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975, esp. 26), and that we shall encounter in turn, are of the paratextual order, and thus not properly narratological.

tion indistinguishable from the authentic autobiographical account—and who on the contrary finds incontestable textual "indexes" (*Symptome*) of fictionality in true (that is, third-person) fiction. From one standpoint, the summarial investigation that follows is an attempt to choose between these two theses. For convenience, and perhaps owing to an inability to imagine another way of going about it, I shall follow the procedure adopted in *Narrative Discourse*, taking up in turn the questions of order, pace, frequency, mood, and voice.

Order

I wrote somewhat too hastily in 1972 that folkloric narrative follows an order more respectful of the chronology of events than that of the literary tradition inaugurated by the *Iliad*, with its beginning in medias res and its concluding analepsis. I backed off somewhat, in one direction, in *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, observing that the use of anachrony is actually inaugurated in the *Odyssey*, and is perpetuated more in the novelistic genre than in the epic tradition. Meanwhile, in a very interesting article that I discovered only later, Barbara Herrnstein Smith invites me to back off in the other direction, arguing

> not only that absolute chronological order is as *rare* in folkloric narrative as it is in any literary tradition but that it is virtually *impossible* for any narrator to sustain it in an utterance of more than minimal length. In other words, by virtue of the very nature of discourse, nonlinearity is the rule rather than the exception in narrative accounts. Indeed, for that reason, historical "progression" is probably closer to being the reverse of what Genette implies: that is, to the

extent that *perfect* chronological order may be said to occur at all, it is likely to be found only in acutely self-conscious, "artful," or "literary" texts."[9]

This anti-Lessingian reversal may be as excessive as the hypothesis it counters, and of course my own intention was not at all to establish a historical "progression" by opposing Homeric anachrony to the supposed linearity of the folktales collected by Perrault or Grimm! In any event, this confrontation still contrasts only two or three genres (the folktale and the epic as opposed to the novel) within the field of fiction. But from Herrnstein Smith's critique I retain the idea that no narrators, including narrators outside of fiction and narrators outside of literature, oral or written, can naturally and effortlessly adopt a rigorous respect for chronology. If, as I assume, consensus on this proposition is easy to reach, it will lead a fortiori to another concerning the proposition that nothing *prohibits* the use of analepses or prolepses in factual narrative. I shall limit myself to this theoretical position, beyond which a more precise comparison can only be a matter of statistics—and such a comparison would be likely to reveal quite diverse features depending on the epoch, the author, and the individual work, but also on the genre, fictional or factual; thus it would bring to light, from this standpoint, a lesser degree of kinship among all the fictional types on the one hand and all the factual types on the other than between a given fictional type and a given factual type—let me say, at

[9] Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (Autumn 1980), 227. This critique is directed both at works of "classical" narratology, including Seymour Chatman's and my own, and at Nelson Goodman's "Twisted Tales." Responses by Goodman and Chatman appeared in the summer 1981 issue of the same journal (799–809).

random, between a diary-novel and a genuine diary. My "random" choice is not entirely unpremeditated, and this example hints, I hope, at a major reservation that I prefer to keep for later.

But in another, more radical way, Herrnstein Smith's article raises the question of the differences between fiction and nonfiction in their approach to chronology. The author wonders whether and when the comparison (which is in effect postulated by narratology) between the order of history and the order of narrative is possible, and she replies that it is possible only when an independent source of information about the temporal succession of the "reported" events, a source *outside* the narrative itself, is available to the critic; in the absence of such a source, the critic can only note these events and register them, without discussion, in the order in which the narrative presents them. According to Herrnstein Smith, such a source is available in only two cases: the case of a fictional work derived from an earlier work—for example, the most recent version of "Cinderella"—and the case of nonfictional works such as historical narratives. In these cases alone, she argues, "it makes some sense to speak of the narrative in question as having rearranged the sequence of some given set of events or the events of some given story."[10] In other words, we have, or may have, at our disposal, in these two cases alone, at least *two* narratives, the first of which may be considered the source of the second, and its chronological order the *order of history,* allowing us to measure the eventual distortions presented, in comparison, by the order of the (second) narrative.

Herrnstein Smith is so fully convinced of the impossibility of any other procedure that she does not hesitate to add:

[10] Herrnstein Smith, "Narrative Versions," 228.

"Indeed, one suspects that these two types of narrative (that is, historical reports and twice-told tales) serve as unconscious paradigms for the narratologist, which may, in turn, help explain his need to posit underlying plot structures or basic stories to account for the sequential features of those rather different narratives that he *does* study most closely, namely, works of literary fiction."[11] The hypothesis is wholly gratuitous, and is in no way corroborated by the history of the discipline, for the narratologists who have been working, in Vladimir Propp's wake, on traditional narratives—such as the folktale—have paid very little attention to their chronological aspect (or, more generally speaking, to their narrative *form*), and conversely, specialists in formal narratology, beginning with Percy Lubbock and E. M. Forster, have shown very little interest (unless their interest is highly "unconscious"!) in this type of fictional narrative, and still less in historical narrative—a negligence for which I have just been reproaching us.

But above all, Herrnstein Smith's criticism (narratologists speak of anachrony with respect to texts of original fiction in which the comparison between the order of the narrative and the order of the story is impossible by definition) overlooks or neglects an essential fact, one that I have recalled in *Narrative Discourse Revisited*[12] and that Nelson Goodman underscores in order to defend his own use of the notion of (if not the term) "anachrony." This fact is that most analepses and prolepses, in original fiction and elsewhere, are either explicit—that is, marked as such by the text itself through various verbal signs ("La comtesse ne survécut que fort peu de temps à Fabrice, qu'elle adorait, et qui ne passa qu'une année dans sa Chartreuse" ["The countess did not live much longer than Fabrice,

[11] Ibid.
[12] Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited,* 24.

whom she adored, and who spent only one year in his Charterhouse"])—or else *implicit* but self-evident by virtue of our own knowledge "of the causal process in general" (chapter N: the countess dies of grief; chapter N + 1: Fabrice dies in his Charterhouse).[13] In both cases, Goodman insists, "the twisting is with respect not to an absolute order of events independent of all versions but to what this version *says* is the order of events."[14] And in the exceptional situation (such as Robbe-Grillet presents, for example) in which the text does not indicate the order of events either directly (through some verbal notation) or indirectly (through inference), the narratologist can obviously do no more than note, without any other hypothesis, the "achronic" character of the narrative and bow to its organization.[15] Thus, one cannot oppose factual narrative, in which the order of events would be given by other sources, to fictional narrative, in which the order of events would be unknowable in principle, and in which instances of anachrony would consequently be undecidable: except in unusual cases of reticence, instances of anachrony in fictional narrative are simply declared or suggested by the

[13] I am substituting these examples for Goodman's; only the second, of course, is imaginary. The *History of the French Revolution* offers (at least) one whose readability owes nothing to the factual and verifiable character of the historical narrative. In his account of what happened on July 14, 1789, Michelet first describes a meeting at the Hôtel de Ville with the dean of the merchants' guild. The meeting is interrupted by the arrival of a delegation announcing that the Bastille has been taken, and brandishing the keys to the prison. The author then goes on: "The Bastille was not taken, it must be said; it gave itself up." The account of the fall of the prison follows, in analepsis.

[14] Nelson Goodman, "The Telling and the Told," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (Summer 1981), 799.

[15] Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 115. In *Figures I* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), I had already had occasion, moreover, countering Bruce Morrissette, to deny the possibility of "reestablishing" the chronological order of Robbe-Grillet's narratives (77).

story itself—just as are those of factual narrative, moreover. In other words, and to mark both a point of agreement and a point of disagreement with Barbara Herrnstein Smith, fictional narratives and factual narratives cannot be broadly distinguished either by their use of anachrony or by the way in which they mark instances of anachrony.[16]

Pace

I should be glad to extend to the discussion of narrative pace the principle Herrnstein Smith posits with regard to order: no narrative, fictional or not, literary or not, whether oral or written, has either the power or (consequently) the obligation to adhere to a pace that would be rigorously synchronous with that of its story. The accelerations, decelerations, ellipses, or pauses that can be observed, in quite variable doses, in fictional narratives are just as characteristic of factual narratives, and in both cases they are governed by laws of efficiency and economy and by the narrator's judgments regarding the relative importance of the story's phases and episodes. Here again, then, there is no a priori differentiation between the two types. Still, Käte Hamburger rightly categorizes the pres-

[16] More generally, I find it hard to see the import of Herrnstein Smith's critique of what she calls the "dualism" of narratology. The formula, deliberately pragmatic in tone, that she counterproposes—"verbal acts consisting of *someone telling someone else that something happened*" (Herrnstein Smith, "Narrative Versions," 232)—does not strike me as at all incompatible with the postulates of narratology, and I am inclined to see it rather as completely self-evident. The system of *Narrative Discourse* (story, narrative, narrating) is moreover manifestly not dualist but rather trinitarian, and I am not aware that it has met with objections among my narratologist colleagues. I am well aware that Herrnstein Smith herself is militating in favor of a *monist* position, but it is not clear to me how the formula I have cited illustrates that position.

ence of detailed scenes, dialogues reported literally and *in extenso*, and lengthy descriptions as indexes of fictionality.[17] Nothing in all this is impossible or prohibited (by whom?), properly speaking, in the case of historical narratives, but the presence of such devices tends to exceed the bounds of plausibility ("How do you know that?") and thereby (I shall return to this point) gives the reader an impression (a justified impression) of "fictionalization."

Frequency

The use of iterative narration—which is, in the strict sense, a phenomenon of frequency—is in broader terms a way of accelerating the narrative: acceleration by means of an identifying syllepsis of events posited as relatively similar ("Every Sunday . . ."). By this token, it goes without saying that there is no more reason for factual narrative to rule out the use of this device than for fictional narrative to do so, and the way factual genres such as biography—including autobiography—use it has been noted by specialists.[18] Unless we follow Philippe Lejeune's advice and consider Proust's massive recourse to iteration, especially in *Combray*, as an indication that he is imitating the characteristic features of autobiography, that is, as a case in which fictional narrative is borrowing from factual narrative—or perhaps more precisely in which *one* type of fictional narrative (the pseudo-autobiographical novel) is borrowing from *one* type of factual narrative (authentic auto-

[17] Whether in dialogue form or not, scenes slow the pace, and descriptions constitute narrative pauses, unless they are attributed to a character's perceptions, and such attribution also counts, for Hamburger, as an index of fictionality.

[18] See Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, 114.

biography). But this hypothesis, which is highly plausible, brings us back to a phenomenon of exchange between the two types whose examination I prefer once again to postpone.

Mode

Most of the textual indices that characterize narrative fiction, according to Hamburger, are quite naturally concentrated in the category of mode, since all of these "symptoms" refer to a single specific feature, namely, direct access to the characters' subjectivity. This relation, incidentally, does away with the paradox of a poetics that rejoins the Aristotelian tradition (defining literature essentially through the thematic feature of fictionality), but from the standpoint of an apparently formalist definition of fiction: the features of the fictional narrative are indeed of the morphological order, but these features are only *effects* produced by the fictional nature of the narrative, that is, by the imaginary nature of the characters that constitute its "I-Origo." If narrative fiction alone gives us direct access to the subjectivity of another person, this is not by virtue of some miraculous privilege; it is because that other person is a fictitious being (or *treated* as fictitious, in the case of a historical figure such as Napoleon in *War and Peace*). That person's thoughts are *imagined* by the author while he is pretending to report them: one's guesses are unerring only in the case of something that one is in the process of *inventing*. Hence the presence of "indexes" such as verbs attributing thoughts and feelings to third parties with no requirement that the attribution be justified ("What do you know about it?"); the internal monologue; and, most characteristic and most effective of all, for in the extreme case it permeates the discourse in its entirety, referring it insidiously to the con-

sciousness of the character, *free indirect style*, which accounts among other things for the coexistence of past tenses and temporal and spatial deictics in sentences such as "M——parcourait pour la dernière fois le port européen, car *demain* son bateau *partait* pour l'Amérique" (M—— was crossing the European port for the last time, since tomorrow his boat *was to leave* for America).

As has often been remarked, this description of fictional narrative hypostatizes one particular type of narrative: the nineteenth- or twentieth-century novel, in which systematic recourse to the techniques I have outlined contributes to focusing on a small number of characters or even on a single one; from such a narrative the narrator, and a fortiori the author, appear to be totally absent, in keeping with Flaubert's dictate. The degree to which these subjectivizing constructions are present in nonfictional—or even nonliterary—narratives can be argued endlessly; nevertheless, they are unquestionably more natural in fictional narratives, and we can certainly view them as distinctive features of the difference between the two types, even if the judgment needs to be somewhat nuanced. But (unlike Hamburger, who does not take up this issue), I would say the same thing about the opposite narrative attitude, which I have called *external focalization*, and which consists in abstaining from *any* intrusion into the characters' subjectivity, reporting only their acts and gestures as seen from the outside with no attempt at explanation. From Hemingway to Robbe-Grillet, this type of "objective" narrative seems to me as typically fictional as the preceding one, and the two symmetrical forms of focalization together characterize fictional narrative in contrast with the ordinary attitude of factual narrative. Factual narrative does not rule out psychological explanation a priori, but it has to

justify every such explanation by an indication of its source ("We know from the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* that Napoleon believed that Kutuzov . . ."), or else it has to attenuate and indeed *modalize* the explanation with a cautious note of uncertainty or supposition ("Napoleon *no doubt* believed that Kutuzov . . ."), whereas the novelist, in fictionalizing his character, can get away with a peremptory "Napoleon believed that Kutuzov . . ."

I am not overlooking the fact that these two types of focalization are characteristic of relatively recent forms of fictional narrative and that the classic forms—epic or novelistic—belong rather to a nonfocalized mode, or to a mode of "zero focalization," in which the narrative seems to privilege no single "point of view" and enters in turn, at will, into the minds of all its characters. But such an attitude, generally known as omniscient, is no less disrespectful than the other two toward the factual narrative's requirement of truthfulness: the obligation to report only what one knows—but at the same time everything that one knows, to provide all the relevant information—and to state how one has come by that knowledge. The "omniscient" attitude is even more disrespectful, logically speaking, since in quantitative terms it is less likely that an author would know the thoughts of all the characters than those of a single one (but it suffices to have invented them all). We shall thus hold onto the idea that mode is indeed in principle (in principle, I am saying) an index betraying the factual or fictional nature of a narrative, and thus a locus of narrative divergence between the two types.

For Käte Hamburger, who excludes first-person novels from the field of fiction, this divergence can occur, of course, only between two types of impersonal narratives. But Dorrit Cohn has succeeded in showing how the first-person novel may

freely shift the emphasis between the "narrator-*I*" and the "hero-*I*"[19] (the fluctuation is manifest in *A la recherche du temps perdu*). Philippe Lejeune, who has been refining his initial diagnosis of indiscernibility from one book to the next, now views this alternative as at least a possible index ("It is only a matter of a dominant tendency"), pointing to a distinction between authentic autobiography, which further accentuates the "voice of a narrator" (example: "Je suis né à l'extrême fin du XIXᵉ siècle, le dernier de huit garçons" [Edouard Bred, *Mes Écoles*, 1977: "I was born at the tail end of the nineteenth century, the last of eight boys"]), and pseudo-autobiographical fiction, which tends to "focus on the experience of a character" (example: "Le ciel s'était éloigné d'au moins dix mètres. Je restais assise, pas pressée" [Albertine Sarrazin, *Astragale*, 1965: "The sky had lifted at least thirty feet. I sat there, not moving"]).[20] Here we have a quite legitimate extension to personal narrative of the internal focalization that is a typical criterion of fictionality.

Voice

The characteristics of narrative voice boil down essentially to distinctions of time, "person," and level. It does not seem to me that the temporal situation of the narrative act necessarily differs in fiction from its manifestations elsewhere: retrospective narration is also common in factual narrative (it is the

[19] Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

[20] Philippe Lejeune, "Le pacte autobiographique (bis)" (1981), in *Moi aussi* (Paris: Seuil, 1986); Albertine Sarrazin, *Astragal*, trans. Patsy Southgate (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 5.

form most frequently encountered), but we also find prospective (prophetic or anticipatory) narration, simultaneous narration (reporting), and even interspersed narration, for example in the diary form. The distinction of "person," that is, the opposition between heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narratives, runs through factual narrative (history, memoirs) as well as fictional narrative. The distinction of level is doubtless the most relevant one here, for the concern with verisimilitude or with simplicity generally orients factual narrative away from excessive reliance on second-degree narrations. It is hard to imagine a historian or a memorialist letting one of his "characters" take responsibility for a major part of his narrative, and we have known since Thucydides what problems the historian faces in simply transmitting a speech of any length. The presence of the metadiegetic narrative is thus a fairly plausible index of fictionality—even if its absence indicates nothing at all.

I am not sure that I remain within the bounds of narratology itself in evoking, under the heading of questions of voice ("Who is speaking?"), the always thorny topic of the relations between narrator and author. Philippe Lejeune has convincingly demonstrated that the canonical form of autobiography is characterized by the equation author = narrator = character, and he reserves the formula author = character ≠ narrator for the special case of "third-person" autobiography.[21]

It is somewhat tempting to go further in exploiting the possibilities opened up by this triangular relation. The dissociation between character and narrator ($N \neq C$) obviously (and even tautologically) defines the heterodiegetic (narrative) regime in fiction and elsewhere, just as their identification ($N = C$)

[21] Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, and *Je est un autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1980). The form proposed here, however, is my own.

defines the homodiegetic regime. The dissociation between author and *character* ($A \neq C$) defines the (thematic) regime of allobiography, whether fictional (heterodiegetic as in *Tom Jones* or homodiegetic as in *Gil Blas*) or factual (generally hetero-diegetic as in history or biography, for here the homodiegetic regime would suppose that the author attributes the narrative to his "character," the way Marguerite Yourcenar does to Hadrian, an attribution that inevitably induces an effect of fiction, a point to which I shall return), just as their identifica-tion ($A = C$) defines that of autobiography (homo- or hetero-diegetic). The relation between author and narrator remains to be considered. It seems to me that their rigorous identification ($A = N$), insofar as it can be established, defines factual narrative—in which, in Searle's terms, the author assumes full responsibility for the assertions of his narrative, and conse-quently grants no shred of autonomy to any narrator what-soever. Conversely, their dissociation ($A \neq N$) defines fiction, that is, a type of narrative whose veracity is not seriously assumed by the author.[22] Here again, the relation strikes me as tautological: to say, as Searle does, that the author (for example, Balzac) does not answer seriously for the assertions of his narrative (for example, the existence of Eugène Rasti-

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[22] To the extent, of course, that this narrative is presented as the true description of an actual state of affairs. A narrative that betrayed its own fictionality in every sentence by an expression of the sort "Let us imagine that . . . ," or by the use of the present progressive, the way children do when they play house ("You're going to be the daddy and I'm going to be the mommy"), or by some other device that may exist in given languages, would be perfectly "serious" in enunciation and would be covered by the formula $A = N$. Certain medieval novels provide very ambiguous indica-tions ("It is said that . . .") which can be read either as the lineaments of a hypertextual alibi ("I am reporting a narrative that I have not invented"), or else as a jokingly hypocritical disavowal ("I'm not the one talking, it's my narrative"), as when someone says today, "It's not me speaking, it's my unconscious."

gnac), or to say that we have to relate them to some implicit function or agency distinct from the author (the narrator of *Le Père Goriot*), is to say the same thing in two different ways; the choice between them is made on the basis of the principle of economy alone, according to the needs of the moment.

It follows from this formula that "third-person autobiogra-phy" ought to be related to fiction rather than to factual narra-tive, especially if we grant, along with Barbara Herrnstein Smith, that fictionality is defined as much (or more) by the fictional character of the narration as by the fictional character of the story.[23] But here we can easily see the methodological awkwardness of the notion of "person," which leads us to include in a single category, according to a narrowly gram-matical criterion, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and Cae-sar's *Commentaries*, or *The Education of Henry Adams*. The nar-ratorial function of *The Gallic Wars* is so transparently vacant that it would doubtless be more accurate to say that this narra-tive is assumed by Caesar speaking conventionally (figu-ratively) of himself in the third person—and thus that here we have a homodiegetic and factual narrative of the type $A = N = C$. In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, by contrast, the narra-tor is as manifestly distinct from the author as in Yourcenar's *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, since she bears a different name, and since we are dealing with a person whose historical existence is confirmed. And because Gertrude Stein's life and the narra-tor's own are inevitably mingled in the narrative, we may just as well say that the title is (fictionally) veridical, and that we

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[23] "The essential fictiveness of novels . . . is not to be discovered in the unreality of the characters, objects, and events alluded to, but in the unreality of the *alludings* themselves. In other words, in a novel or tale, it is the *act* of reporting events, the *act* of describing characters and referring to places, that is fictive." Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *On the Margins of Discourse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 29.

are indeed dealing here not with a biography of Stein ficti-
tiously credited by herself to Toklas, but more simply (!) with
an autobiography of Toklas written by Stein;[24] this formula-
tion in effect makes the narratological situation of *The Auto-
biography of Alice B. Toklas* comparable to that of *Mémoires
d'Hadrien*. What remains to be found is a truly pure case of
heterodiegetic autobiography in which an author attributes the
narration of his life story to a biographer who was not a wit-
ness, and, to clinch the matter, one who was born several
centuries later. Borges, always obliging when it comes to
teratological hypotheses, seems to have written an article
about himself in this spirit destined for a so-called encyclope-
dia to come.[25] Even without errors or invented facts, and sim-
ply by virtue of a well-established dissociation between author
and narrator (although anonymous), such a text clearly be-
longs to narrative fiction.

To make things clearer, I shall represent the foregoing array
of choices in a series of triangular schemas. For reasons that
can presumably be attributed to the axioms "If $A = B$ and $B =
C$, then $A = C$," and "If $A = B$ and $A \neq C$, then $B \neq C$," I find
only five logically coherent figures. The (relative) interest of
this battery of schemas for the issue that concerns us here has
to do with the double formula $A = N \rightarrow$ factual narrative, and
$A \neq N \rightarrow$ fictional narrative,[26] and this is the case whatever

[24] See Lejeune, *Je est un autre*, 53ff.

[25] Jorge Luis Borges, "Epílogo," in *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires:
Emece, 1974), 1143. The technique, of which Borges's text is surely not the
earliest illustration, has been used more recently by some of Jérôme Gar-
cin's collaborators in *Le dictionnaire: Littérature française contemporaine*
(Paris: François Bourin, 1989), a collection of preemptive autonecrologies.

[26] "In a novel the author is different from the narrator. . . . Why is the
author not the narrator? Because the author invents, while the narrator
tells what happened. . . . The author *invents* the narrator and the style of
the narrative that the narrator narrates." Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'idiot de la*

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the tenor of the narrative (veridical or not), or, if one prefers,
whatever the character of the story, fictitious or not.

$$A$$
$$// \quad \backslash\backslash \quad \rightarrow \text{autobiography}$$
$$N = C$$

$$A$$
$$// \quad \text{⤡} \quad \rightarrow \text{historical narrative (including biography)}$$
$$N \neq C$$

$$A$$
$$\text{✕} \quad \text{⤡} \quad \rightarrow \text{homodiegetic fiction}$$
$$N = C$$

$$A$$
$$\text{✕} \quad \backslash\backslash \quad \rightarrow \text{heterodiegetic autobiography}$$
$$N \neq C$$

$$A$$
$$\text{✕} \quad \text{⤡} \quad \rightarrow \text{heterodiegetic fiction}$$
$$N \neq C$$

Thus when $A \neq N$, the potential veracity of the narrative does
not preclude the diagnosis of fictionality either for $N = C$
(*Mémoires d'Hadrien*) or for $N \neq C$: see the life of Napoleon
recounted by Goguelat, a (fictitious) character in Balzac's
Médecin de campagne. I recognize that I owe this example to the
special resources of the metadiegetic narrative, but this fea-
ture does not change the facts, and if one is determined to

famille (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 3:773–74. Of course, the idea of a dissocia-
tion (for me, a purely functional one) between author and narrator would
not meet with the approval of Käte Hamburger, for whom the "I-Origo"
of the character necessarily rules out any narratorial presence. This rela-
tion of incompatibility seems to me to arise from a quite rigidly monologic
conception of enunciation, which is wonderfully undermined by the *dual
voice* of free indirect discourse.

reject that example, it suffices (!) to imagine Balzac (or your humble servant, or any anonymous counterfeiter) attributing to Chateaubriand (or to any supposed biographer) a rigorously faithful biography of Louis XIV (or any other historical figure): faithful to my principle, borrowed from Herrnstein Smith, I maintain that such a narrative would be fictional.[27]

The other side of the formula ($A = N \rightarrow$ factual narrative) may appear more dubious, for nothing prevents a narrator who is duly and deliberately identified with the author by an onomastic feature (Chariton d'Aphrodise at the opening of *Chéréas et Callirhoé*, Dante in *The Divine Comedy*, Borges in "El Aleph") or a biographical feature (the narrator of *Tom Jones* evoking his late lamented Charlotte and his friend Hogarth, the narrator of *Facino Cane* his home on the rue de Lesdiguières) from telling a manifestly fictional story, whether within a heterodiegetic relation (Chariton, Fielding) or a homodiegetic one, as is the case with all the other examples mentioned, in which the author-narrator is a character in the story, a simple witness or confidant (Balzac) or protagonist (Dante, Borges). The first variant seems to contradict the formula

$$A$$
$$/\!/ \;\; \text{\textbackslash\!\textbackslash} \quad \rightarrow \text{historical narrative}$$
$$N \neq C$$

since in this case a narrator identified with the author produces a narrative of heterodiegetic fiction, and the second seems to contradict the formula

[27] The formula $A \neq N \rightarrow$ fictional narrative has since been illustrated by Catherine Clément, in *Adrienne Lecouvreur ou le coeur transporté* (Paris: Laffont, 1991). It is true that the author was unsparing in introducing factors of fictionality: this biography supposedly consists of an oral narrative addressed by George Sand to Sarah Bernhardt.

$$A$$
$$/\!/ \;\; \text{\textbackslash\!\textbackslash} \quad \rightarrow \text{autobiography}$$
$$N = C$$

since in this case a narrator identified with the author produces a narrative of homodiegetic fiction, which in recent years has come to be called autofiction. In both cases, there seems to be a contradiction between the fictional character of the story and the formula $A = N \rightarrow$ factual narrative.

My response is that that formula does not apply to these situations, despite the onomastic or biographical identity of author and narrator. For let us recall that what defines narrative identity is not numerical identity in the eyes of the state, but the author's serious adherence to a narrative whose veracity he assumes. In this sense, which we may call Searlean, it is clear that Chariton and Fielding no more answer for the historical veracity of the assertions of their narratives than does the Balzac of *Le Père Goriot* or the Kafka of *The Metamorphosis*; thus, they clearly do not identify themselves with the homonymous narrator who is supposed to be producing the narrative, any more than I identify myself in my capacity as honest citizen, good family man, and free thinker with the voice that, through my mouth, produces an ironic or joking utterance such as: "And I'm the pope!" As Oswald Ducrot has shown,[28] the functional dissociation between author and narrator (even if they are juridically identical) proper to fictional narrative is a special case of the "polyphonic" utterance that is characteristic of all "nonserious" utterances, or, to go back to Austin's controversial term, "parasitical" utterances. The Borges who is an author, an Argentine citizen, a man widely viewed as deserving a Nobel Prize, the Borges who signs his name to "El Aleph," is not functionally identical with the

[28] Oswald Ducrot, "Esquisse d'une théorie polyphonique de l'énonciation," in *Le dire et le dit* (Paris: Minuit, 1984), chap. 8.

Borges who is the narrator and hero of "El Aleph,"[29] even if they share many (not all) biographical features, just as Fielding-the-author-of-*Tom-Jones* is not functionally (enunciatively) Fielding-the-narrator, even if the same Hogarth is the friend and Charlotte the deceased wife of both. The formula characterizing these narratives is thus in fact in the second case

$$A$$
$$\cancel{X} \; \cancel{\nwarrow}$$
$$N \neq C$$

heterodiegetic fiction, and in the first case

$$A$$
$$\cancel{X} \; \cancel{\nwarrow}$$
$$N = C$$

homodiegetic fiction. For the latter, I acknowledge that the reduction to common law does not account very well for the paradoxical status, or, better, for the intentional contradictory pact characteristic of autofiction ("I, the author, am going to tell you a story of which I am the hero but which never happened to me"). In this case we could no doubt adapt the formula for autobiography, $A = N = C$, an awkward prosthesis in which C would be dissociated into two components, an authentic personality and a fictional destiny, but I admit

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[29] Or of "The Other," or of "Zahir"; on these effects of Borgesian autofiction, see Jean-Pierre Mourey, "Borges chez Borges," *Poétique* 63 (September 1985), 313–24. To these narratives whose narrator, called Borges, is the protagonist, we may add (at least) "The Form of the Sword," in which "Borges" is the hero's confidant, and "Streetcorner Man," in which he turns out in the end to be the listener to whom an oral narration is addressed. On autofiction in general, see Vincent Colonna, "L'autofiction: Essai sur la fictionalisation de soi en littérature" (thesis, Ecole de Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1989).

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that I am reluctant to perform this sort of surgery—which supposes that one can change one's destiny without changing one's personality[30]—and I am even more reluctant to resort to this means to salvage a formula that suggests serious adherence on the author's part when such adherence is manifestly absent,[31] as if Dante believed he had really visited the underworld, or Borges believed he had seen the Aleph. I should much prefer to adopt, here, a logically contradictory formula

$$A$$
$$\cancel{X} \; \backslash\!\backslash$$
$$N = C$$

Contradictory,[32] to be sure, but no more nor less so than the term it illustrates (autofiction) and the proposition it designates: "It is I and it is not I."

One of the lessons of this state of affairs is that the equals sign, used here in an obviously metaphorical way, does not have precisely the same value on all three sides of the triangle.

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[30] But one can change one's *identity* without changing one's personality, given the way (pro)nouns work as rigid designators: "If I had been born a Rothschild . . ."

[31] I am speaking of *true* autofictions—whose narrative content is, if I may say so, authentically fictional, as in the case (I suppose) of *The Divine Comedy*—and not of false autofictions, which are "fictions" only for legal purposes: in other words, veiled autobiographies. The original paratext of these latter is obviously autofictional, but let us be patient: the paratext is characterized by its tendency to evolve, and literary history is on the lookout.

[32] The two other contradictory formulas

$$A \qquad\qquad A$$
$$/\!/ \; \cancel{\nwarrow} \quad \text{and} \quad /\!/ \; \backslash\!\backslash$$
$$N = C \qquad\qquad N \neq C$$

seem to me truly impossible, because one cannot *seriously* $(A = N)$ propose an incoherent contract.

Between A and C, it denotes a juridical identity, in the sense of the registry office, which can, for example, hold an author responsible for the acts of his hero (Jean-Jacques abandoning Rousseau's children). Between N and C it designates a linguistic identity between the enunciating subject and the subject of the utterance, an identity marked by the use of the first-person singular ("I"), except in the case of a conventional *énallage* (the royal "we" or the self-effacing "we," the official Caesar-style "he," the auto-allocutionary "you" in Apollinaire's "Zone"). Between A and N it symbolizes the author's serious commitment with regard to her narrative assertions,[33] and for us it suggests quite insistently the dismissal of N as a useless agency: when $A = N$, N disappears, for it is quite simply the author who is narrating. What sense does it make to speak of the "narrator" of the *Confessions* or the *Histoire de la Révolution française?* With reference to the general regime of signs, we might also label these relations semantic (A-C), syntactic (N-C), and pragmatic (A-N), respectively. Only the third one concerns the difference between factual narratives and fictional narratives; I would not say, however, that there is an *index* here allowing us to distinguish fiction from nonfiction, for the relation A-N is not always as manifest as the relation N-C, which is grammatically self-evident, or as the relation A-C, which is onomastically self-evident.[34] Far from always

being a manifest signal ("I, Chariton"), the relation A-C is most often inferred from the (other) characteristics of the narrative taken as a whole. It is no doubt the most difficult relation to pin down (thus providing a bone to pick for narratologists), and it is sometimes the most ambiguous, as is, after all, the relation between truth and fiction: who would dare rule on the status of Nerval's *Aurélia,* or Breton's *Nadja?*

Borrowings and Exchanges

I have admittedly been arguing here, on the one hand, as if all the features distinguishing fictionality and factuality were narratological in nature and, on the other hand, as if the two fields were separated by a watertight barrier that would prevent any exchange or reciprocal imitation. It seems appropriate to conclude by relativizing these two methodological hypotheses.

The "indexes" of fiction are not all narratological in nature, first because they are not all textual in nature. Most often, and perhaps more and more often, a fictional text declares itself to be such by *paratextual* marks that protect the reader from any misunderstanding; the generic indication "a novel" on a title page or cover is one example among others. Then, because certain of fiction's textual indexes are, for example, thematic in nature (an implausible utterance such as "One day the oak tree said to the reed . . ." can only be fictional), or stylistic: free indirect discourse, which I am counting as a feature of narrative, is often considered to be an effect of style. Characters' names, after the fashion of classical theater, sometimes

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[33] This engagement obviously does not guarantee the veracity of the text, for the author-narrator of a factual narrative may at least make mistakes, and she generally makes a good number of them. She may also lie, and this case poses something of a challenge to the solidity of our formula. Let us say provisionally that, here, the relation is *supposed* to be $A = N$, or that it is $A = N$ for the credulous reader, and $A \neq N$ for the dishonest author (and for the perspicacious reader, as the lie is not always felicitous). Let us bequeath this problem to a pragmatics of lies that, to my knowledge, does not yet exist.

[34] These two self-evident relations are not, of course, themselves always guaranteed: *énallages* of grammatical person, like all figures of

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speech, are a matter of interpretation, and the hero's name may be left out (there are countless examples) or questionable ("Marcel," in *A la recherche du temps perdu*).

have the value of novelistic signs. Certain traditional opening lines ("Once upon a time," "Il était une fois," or, in the formula of the Majorca storytellers quoted by Jakobson, "Aixo era y non era" ["It was and it was not"])[35] function as generic markers, and I am not sure that the so-called etic[36] openers of the modern novel ("La première fois qu'Aurélien vit Bérénice, il la trouva franchement laide") do not constitute markers that are just as effective, if not more so: they are definitely more emancipated,[37] in the way they presuppose the characters' existence and exhibit their familiarity, and thus their "transparency," than the "emic" beginnings of folktales or classical novels. But we are doubtless not very far removed here from the narratological index of internal focalization.

The chief reservation has to do with the interaction between the fictional and factual regimes of narrative. Käte Hamburger has shown convincingly the "pretended" character of the first-person novel, which proceeds largely by borrowing or simulating the narrative features of the authentic autobiographical novel, as retrospective narration (memoirs) or interspersed narration (diary, correspondence). The observation probably does not suffice, as Hamburger would have it, to exclude this

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[35] Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," *Selected Writings*, 6 vols. (The Hague: Mouton, 1971–85), 3:42.

[36] See Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 68–71.

[37] This was already P. F. Strawson's opinion, in "On Referring" (1950), in *Logico-Linguistic Papers* (London: Methuen, 1971), 13. He contrasted the "unsophisticated" fictionality of the folktale with the more advanced fictionality of the modern novel, which does without *positing* the existence of its objects and settles for presupposing their existence—an approach that is at once more discreet and more effective, for the presupposition is exempt from discussion, and nonnegotiable. Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics* (1958), 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), 414, illustrates this opposition with two imaginary openers: the naive ("Once upon a time the United States had a Prime Minister who was very fat") and the sophisticated ("The Prime Minister of the United States said good morning to his secre-

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type of novel from the field of fiction, for such an exclusion ought to be extended by contagion to all forms of "formal mimesis."[38] Now, to a large extent the heterodiegetic fictional narrative is a mimesis of factual forms such as history, chronicles, newspaper accounts—a simulation in which the markers of fictionality are only optional licenses that it can just as well do without. Wolfgang Hildesheimer manages this quite spectacularly, for example, in *Marbot*,[39] the fictitious biography of an imaginary writer who purports to take on all the constraints (and all the ruses) of the most "veridical" historiography. And, conversely, the techniques of "fictionalization" enumerated by Hamburger have been extended over the last several decades to certain forms of factual narrative, such as newspaper reporting or journalistic investigation (the so-called new journalism), and other derivative genres such as the "nonfiction novel."

Here, for example, is the beginning of an article that appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1988 about the sale at auction of Van Gogh's *Irises:* "John Whitney Payson, the owner of van Gogh's "Irises," had not seen the painting for some time. He was unprepared for the effect it would have on him when he

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taries as he squeezed through the doorway of his office"). The presupposition of existence can also be read in the example so dear to the analytic philosophers: "Sherlock Holmes lived at 221B Baker Street." In a naive type of regression, this statement would be subject to a Russell-style rewriting: "Once upon a time there was a man, and only one, named Sherlock Holmes . . ." We can also say that the naive ("emic") type posits its objects, and that the "etic" type imposes them with predicates: someone who lives at 221B Baker Street cannot help but exist.

[38] It should be clear that I am borrowing this term from Michal Glowinski, "Sur le roman à la première personne" (1977), *Poétique* 72 (November 1987), 104–14. But Glowinski, like Hamburger, limits the notion of formal mimesis to the homodiegetic regime.

[39] Wolfgang Hildesheimer, *Marbot: A Biography,* trans. Patricia Crampton (New York: George Braziller, 1983).

confronted it again, at Sotheby's New York offices last fall, shortly before the start of the press conference that had been called to announce its forthcoming sale. Payson, a friendly, cheerful-looking man in his late forties, with reddish hair and a neatly trimmed fringe of beard . . . "[40]

There is presumably no need to underscore the way these few lines illustrate Hamburger's indexes of fictionality.

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These reciprocal exchanges thus lead us to attenuate considerably the hypothesis that there is an a priori difference of narrative regime between fiction and nonfiction. If we limit ourselves to pure forms, free of all contamination, which doubtless exist nowhere outside the poetician's test tubes, the sharpest differences seem to affect primarily those modal features that are most closely bound up with the opposition between the historian's relative, indirect, and partial knowledge and the elastic omniscience enjoyed by definition by someone who is inventing what she is recounting. If we consider actual practices, we have to admit that there is no such thing as pure fiction and no such thing as history so rigorous that it abjures any "emplotting" and any use of novelistic techniques; we have to admit, then, that the two regimes are not as far apart—and not, each in its own domain, as homogeneous—as might be supposed from a distance; and we have to admit that there might well be more narratological differences, for example (as Hamburger shows), between a folktale and a novel in diary form than between the latter and an authentic diary, or (as Hamburger does not acknowledge) between a classical novel and a modern novel, than between the latter and a somewhat freewheeling journalistic account. Or, to put it dif-

ferently, we have to admit that Searle is right in principle (and Hamburger is wrong) when he posits that all fictions, and not only first-person novels, are nonserious simulations of nonfictional assertions,[41] or, as Hamburger says, of utterances of reality; and that Hamburger is right (and Searle is wrong) to find in fiction (especially modern fiction) indexes (optional ones) of fictionality[42]; but she is wrong to believe, or to suggest, that they are obligatory and constant, and so exclusive that nonfiction cannot borrow them. What she would no doubt reply is that by borrowing them, nonfiction fictionalizes itself, and that by abandoning them, fiction defictionalizes itself. But that is precisely what I want to show as a possibility, legitimate or not, and it is the proof that genres can perfectly well change norms—norms that after all (if I may be allowed to use such anthropomorphic terms) were imposed on them by no one but themselves, and by the respect for an eminently variable and typically historical verisimilitude or "legitimacy."[43]

This wholly provisional conclusion in the form of a Solo-

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[40] *New Yorker*, April 4, 1988, 37.

[41] We should recall, however, that according to Searle, the first-person novel has a stronger tone of pretense, since the author "is not simply pretending to make assertions, but he is *pretending to be* . . . someone else making assertions" (*Expression and Meaning*, 69).

[42] It seems to me that quite characteristic indexes are found in the fictional example Searle takes from Iris Murdoch: "Ten more glorious days without horses! So thought Second Lieutenant Andrew Chase-White recently commissioned in the distinguished regiment of King Edward's Horse, as he pottered contentedly in a garden on the outskirts of Dublin on a sunny Sunday afternoon in April nineteen-sixteen" (*Expression and Meaning*, 61). Käte Hamburger herself could hardly have done better.

[43] In "Fictional *versus* Historical Lives: Borderlines and Borderline Cases," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 19 (Winter 1989), 3–24, Dorrit Cohn, faithful to a position that she herself calls "separatist," considers some of these borderline cases in order to minimize their importance: "Far from erasing the borderline between biography and fiction, [they] bring the line that separates them more clearly into view" (11). The observation is

monic judgment does not invalidate our problematics, how-
ever: whatever the answer may be, the question was worth
asking. Indeed, the question ought to be all the less discour-
aging to empirical inquiry, for even—or especially—if narra-
tive forms readily cross the borderline between fiction and
nonfiction, it is no less urgent, or rather it is all the more
urgent, for narratology to follow their example.[44]

accurate *hic et nunc*, but we would have to wait several decades to find out
what will become of it in the long run. The first occurrences of free
indirect style, the first narratives in internal monologue, the first quasi-
fictions of the "new journalism," and so on, may have been surprising
and disconcerting; today they are scarcely noticed. Nothing erodes faster
than the feeling of transgression. On the narratological level as on the
thematic level, gradualist or, as Thomas Pavel says, "integrationist" atti-
tudes seem to me more realistic than any form of segregation.

[44] For a different approach to the question, see Michel Mathieu-Colas,
"Récit et vérité," *Poétique* 80 (November 1989), 387–403.

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STYLE AND SIGNIFICATION

The classic work by A. J. Greimas and Joseph Courtès,
Semiotics and Language: An Analytical Dictionary, includes this
declaration in the chapter titled "Style": "The term *style* be-
longs to the realm of literary criticism, and it is difficult, if not
impossible, to define it semiotically."[1] Spurred by this chal-
lenge, I shall try to sketch out a semiotic definition of style
here. But since the semioticians have referred us to literary
scholars, I hurry off to find the recent *Vocabulaire de la stylisti-
que* by Jean Mazaleyrat and Georges Molinié, where I read the
definition: "*Style:* the object of stylistics."[2] I then rush ahead
to find the definition of "Stylistics": there is none.

This presumably intentional abstention is not in itself a
problem for critical practice; quite the contrary: from Sainte-

[1] A. J. Greimas and Joseph Courtès, *Semiotics and Language: An Analyti-
cal Dictionary*, trans. Larry Crist et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University
Press, 1982), 318.
[2] Jean Mazaleyrat and Georges Molinié, *Vocabulaire de la stylistique*
(Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989), 340.

Beuve to Thibaudet, from Proust to Richard, critics have manifestly considered style too serious a matter to be entrusted, as an autonomous object, to the monopoly of stylisticians—and a theory of style that had the goal, or the result, of constituting it as such would surely be making a mistake. But this does not imply that *every* theory of style is useless and objectless: on the contrary, nothing seems to be needed more in this field than a definition that—among its other functions—would keep us from making such a mistake by clarifying the nature of the relations between style and the other aspects of discourse and signification.

The theory of style is not stylistics,[3] and especially not literary stylistics—a field that takes some pains, as we have just seen, to avoid defining its object. But its premises can be found in a different scholarly tradition, inspired by Saussurean linguistics and illustrated early in this century by Charles Bally. Its object, as we know, is not so much individual originality or innovation as the potential resources of the common language,[4] but the important thing, so far as we are concerned, lies not in that difference of field, which may have been overestimated, but in the effort at conceptualization, however relative, that this tradition manifests.

[3] "Spitzer is more a practitioner than a theoretician—and in that respect he is a stylistician in the deepest sense." Georges Molinié, *La stylistique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989), 29.

[4] The distinction between the "two stylistics" has been well established since Pierre Guiraud published *La stylistique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954). Guiraud calls the first one "genetic stylistics, or stylistics of the individual," and the second "descriptive stylistics," or stylistics of expression. The antithesis is awkward, to be sure, for the first is also descriptive, and it also considers style as a phenomenon of expression. The essential theme of the opposition lies, in fact, between the individual investment in literary works (Spitzer) and the collective potentialities of language (Bally). But the existence of this intermediate state constituted by collective styles does relativize that opposition.

Stylistics, as Bally wrote in 1909, "studies the expressive phenomena of language from the viewpoint of their affective content, that is, the expression of affective phenomena by language and the action of linguistic phenomena on feelings."[5] The definition is somewhat confused, to be sure, for it is hard to see how an expression of an affective phenomenon such as "I am suffering" would possess more style, a priori, than an objective utterance such as "Water boils at 100°C." The critical element doubtless lies not in that distinction of content, which is moreover incomplete (affective as opposed to what?), but in a distinction of means presumably designated by the phrase "phenomena of linguistic expression." Style would consist in the *expressive* aspects of language—as opposed to nonexpressive aspects which remain to be described. For lack of a clearly formulated theoretical definition, Bally's descriptive practice shows quite well what is going on here, and it is what everyone has suspected all along: it is an opposition not between "I am suffering" and "Water boils at 100°C," utterances that are equally inexpressive—and thus, according to this doctrine, equally "unstylistic"—but between, for example, the proposition "I am suffering" and the interjection "Ow!," two utterances whose contents are equivalent but whose means differ. The second type of utterance is then designated by the word *expression*, in its common acceptation (interjections *express* pain); the first remains unnamed, an unmarked term that—still according to this doctrine—does not concern stylistics. Provisionally and almost arbitrarily, let us call the first type of utterance *description*. We shall then say, continuing the effort to paraphrase Bally by filling in the gaps in his terminology, that the interjection "Ow!" expresses what the sentence "I am suffering" describes. The phenomenon of

[5] Charles Bally, *Traité de stylistique française* (Stuttgart: Winter, 1909), 16.

style would consist exclusively in the first type of utterance: there would be style when and only when there is expression, inasmuch as expression is opposed to description.

Let us note that these last two terms have not been defined in any way for the time being, except perhaps as poetry and prose in *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, through reciprocal opposition, and inasmuch as they are supposed to divide up the field of the resources of language with nothing left over. To go a little further without anticipating too much, but already at the risk of imprecision, let us say that "I am suffering" communicates a piece of information voluntarily by means of a pure linguistic convention, and that "Ow!" produces more or less the same effect, voluntarily or not, by means of a cry mechanically provoked by a painful sensation. (The imprecision consists at a minimum in the fact that such an interjection, highly lexicalized, changes form from language to language, and thus never has the painful sensation as its *sole* cause. Other, more "natural" cries would be more difficult to translate linguistically, especially in writing. But it is fair enough to say, from this perspective, that style is a compromise between nature and culture.)

These successive rephrasings of, and complements to, Bally's definition bring us closer to another canonical formulation, one proposed in 1955 by Pierre Guiraud: "Stylistics is the study of the extranotional values of affective or sociocontextual origin that color meaning. It is the study of the expressive function of language as opposed to its cognitive or semantic function."[6] If we temporarily set aside Guiraud's introduction

[6] Pierre Guiraud, *La sémantique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), 116. We are obviously still dealing here with the stylistics of language.

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of a sociocontextual determination (which Bally had already studied under the name of "effects by evocation"), and if we keep in mind that this difference in function contrasts means with contents, we see that Guiraud, while retaining the term *expressive* to designate the means characteristic of style, proposes three different labels for the other type, offering them as equivalent terms that can be harmlessly substituted for our *descriptive: notional, cognitive,* and *semantic.* There are doubtless two too many here to allow us to pin down the concept, but perhaps it is not a good idea to be too specific too soon. For the time being, let us keep in mind his definition, which I have altered somewhat: "Style is the expressive function of language, as opposed to its notional, cognitive, or semantic function." Everything I say from here on is aimed in a way at substituting a fourth adjective, presumed to be more solid, for the last three, and at substituting a fifth, presumed to be more adequate, for the first. Before embarking on this lengthy quest, let us note the prudent way our two linguists use the apparently less precise term *langage* instead of the expected word *langue.* Unless they are being careless, the choice seems to me to do justice (even with a "stylistician of language [*langue*]" like Bally) to the fact that the resources of the language are never invested in anything but a *discourse,* oral or written, literary or not.

🞜

Whatever the other term of the antithesis may be, up to this point the marked term that defines style has remained *expression.* To begin to unsettle that stability, I shall borrow a suggested possible alternative from the aesthetician Mikel Dufrenne: "How does the work of art reveal the artist? We have proposed to call that meaning of the aesthetic object *expres-*

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sion. . . . This expression is what linguistics calls *connotation.*"[7] Dufrenne is thus proposing an equivalence between *expression* and *connotation:* as the context indicates, he uses both terms to define style. We should note right away that this equivalence has been widely accepted for several decades, by logicians among others. Thus, for example, Hans Reichenbach takes the expressive value of signs as the polar opposite of their cognitive value and defines expression through the failure of denotation. "We shall say," he declares, "that a term is expressive when it is not used as a denotative term."[8] Inevitably, the substitution of *connotation* for *expression* opens the way to *denotation* to designate the antithetical term. The definition derived from Guiraud then becomes: "Style is the connotative function of discourse, as opposed to its denotative function." In the temporary absence of a definition of these two new terms, the advantage of such a transformation may seem doubtful. I do not see it as negligible, however: not because these new paired terms would have more obvious meanings, but rather by virtue of the questions they raise.

The semiologic definition of the paired terms *denotation/connotation,* proposed by Louis Hjelmslev and popularized by Roland Barthes, is well known and widely accepted, at least in the simplified form that will serve our purposes for now: connotation is a secondary, or derived, meaning, made available by the way a primary signification is designated (or denoted); in French the familiar word *patate* (spud) denotes a potato and connotes (its own) familiarity. Less widespread although, or because, it is older is the logical acceptation of the pair, an acceptation that goes back at least as far as John Stuart Mill

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[7] Mikel Dufrenne, *Esthétique et philosophie* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1980), 1:106–7.

[8] Hans Reichenbach, *Elements of Symbolic Logic* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 319.

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and that makes it the equivalent of the classic opposition between a concept's *extension* and its *comprehension,* as Edmond Goblot attests: "Every noun *denotes* a subject or subjects and *connotes* the qualities belonging to those subjects."[9] Thus, the word *dog* denotes the canine species and each of its members (extension), and connotes the properties characteristic of that species (comprehension).

The relation between these two pairs may seem to be one of pure homonymy, for it is not obvious (although the opinion can be defended) that comprehension has to be taken as secondary to extension, and it is less obvious still that comprehension must be tied to the way extension is designated; conversely, it is even harder to see how the familiar word *patate,* which indeed has as its extension the species "potatoes," could have as its comprehension the familiarity of its own use. It seems to me that a pertinent relation unites these two oppositions, however, and that this relation is rather well suggested by the distinction, in some sense an intermediary one, that Gottlob Frege establishes between meaning (*Sinn*) and denotation, or reference (*Bedeutung*), of a given sign (*Zeichen*).[10]

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Frege considers a pair of signs (logical proper names)[11] that have a common denotatum, or referent; in other words, they designate the same singular object, but from the standpoint of two distinct aspects, or "modes of donation." *Morgenstern* and

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[9] Edmond Goblot, *Traité de logique* (1918) (Paris: Colin, 1925), 102.

[10] Gottlob Frege, "Sens et dénotation" (1892), in *Ecrits logiques et philosophiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1971).

[11] In German, Morgenstern (morning star) and Abendstern (evening star) are both proper names in the grammatical sense. In French, *étoile du matin* and *étoile du soir* are more analytical, but that does not change their status as logical proper names, each designating a single object.

Abendstern both designate the planet Venus, one as morning star and the other as evening star; the two modes of appearance are so different that some people never learn that they have the same cause. The meaning here is clearly contained entirely (analytically) in the sign, whereas the denotatum for its part is linked to it synthetically; nonetheless, we could easily come up with cases in which the meaning is less immediately self-evident and tautological, that is, in which the form of the sign is not dictated by the meaning. Thus, Henri Beyle and Stendhal are two equally conventional names (even though the second was *chosen*) which designate the same person, in the first instance in his capacity as French citizen and diplomat, in the second as the author of *Le Rouge et le Noir;* Louis XVI is a sovereign, Louis Capet a person accused of crimes; and so on. And nothing prevents us, with or without Frege's posthumous benediction,[12] from extending the demonstration to common nouns: *triangle* and *trilateral* are two concurrent terms for designating the same geometrical figure in terms of two different properties.

In all these cases we can obviously assimilate Fregean *meaning* to comprehension and its denotatum to logical extension. But in other situations of co-reference,[13] *Sinn* will be translated more spontaneously, and more legitimately, as "connotation." Thus, to designate a single function, say that of meter maid, in French, the use of *contractuelle* connotes an administrative viewpoint, whereas the use of *pervenche* (indicating the

[12] Frege himself moves directly from proper names to propositions.
[13] I am using this term in order to avoid the term *synonymy*, which it is preferable to reserve, as Rudolf Carnap advises, for cases—if any—where there is not only identity of reference but also identity of comprehension, or *intension*. Rudolf Carnap, "Meaning and Synonymy in Natural Languages," in *Meaning and Necessity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 233–47.

periwinkle blue color of the uniform) connotes a more "aesthetic" point of view. The choice between *comprehension* and *connotation* (in the semiological sense) is thus often open. It may be that the first term refers more to an aspect inherent in the designatum, the second to the speaker's point of view; but it is clear that aspect and point of view are as closely linked as the front and back of a sheet of paper. The aspect determines or reveals the point of view, while the point of view selects and illuminates the aspect. Comprehension and connotation are thus two sides of a single phenomenon: "mode of donation," or of definition, and mode of designation at the same time, happily blended in the Fregean *meaning,* which can thus be used as a bridge between the logical and the semiotic acceptations of the denotation/connotation pair.

But we can doubtless come even closer to a subjective characterization of connotation. If, to designate the custodian of my apartment building in Paris, I use the slang word *pipelette* or *bignole* instead of the traditional word *concierge,* the characterization of my choice will be quite perceptibly displaced from the aspect, or mode of donation, of the employee in question toward a mode of *locution*—the mode, precisely, of slang. And, in certain speech situations, this choice may in the extreme case no longer evoke anything but the vulgarity of my language, or even of my person, for my interlocutor, just as the innovations in Albertine's vocabulary evoke for Marcel only the girl's moral evolution. Along the spectrum of possible values of Fregean meaning, we are now at the opposite pole from the triangle/trilateral pairing. That purely (gnoseo)logical choice between two geometrical definitions stands in opposition to a choice between two registers of discourse. Between these two poles runs a whole gamut of intermediate values, depending on whether the aspect of the des-

ignated object predominates, or rather the linguistic attitude or categorization of the designator; and what is true of a word is manifestly true for the totality of a discourse. I have not yet characterized the choice between *concierge* and *bignole*, but my point is made: we have come up with a typical example of what is called a *stylistic* choice.

The word *choice* is actually not very felicitous here, for it seems to imply a conscious and deliberate decision, which is not always the case: one does not always choose one's words, and certain crude folk may not know that a *bignole* is a *concierge*, just as well-bred folk do not know that a *concierge* is a *bignole*—or just as late sleepers do not know that the evening star also appears in the morning. Thus I shall restrict the word *choice* here to this objective meaning: among the various French words that designate a building custodian, someone has used the word *bignole*. If the speaker used the word deliberately, the use connotes an intention; otherwise, it connotes a situation. Of course it is possible, and even necessary, to say the same thing about the use of *concierge:* in the absolute, that is, out of context, one style is not *more a style* than another. But let us not get ahead of ourselves. I think it is possible, moreover, to come closer to a state of connotation that would no longer have, as it were, any bearing on logical comprehension. If, given two individuals in the presence of a certain animal, one of them cries "*Cheval!*" and the other "Horse!," the difference, no longer stylistic but linguistic, between the two exclamations will not (I suppose) include any difference in comprehension, and yet one exclamation will perceptibly connote the fact that the person who is uttering it speaks French, the other that the person who is uttering it speaks English (a connotator is in many respects a kind of *index*). In this way the notion of connotation may have a

broader reach than the notion of style. This is not a disadvantage for our purposes, since the act of defining consists first of all in relating a particular species to a broader genus.

We can thus take it for granted that an element of discourse simultaneously designates its object in the mode of denotation and something else in the mode of connotation. The nature of the latter may range from logical comprehension to simple linguistic belonging, though in most cases these two aspects are merged: after all, Morgenstern connotes not only Venus's property of appearing on certain mornings but also the fact that its morning observer is using the German language. And if we take Venus as a more directly and soberly denotative name than Morgenstern or Abendstern because it avoids the detour of morning or evening appearance, we shall still be obliged to acknowledge that the choice of this name to designate the planet in question is not exactly free of any evocative value: "Dis-moi, Vénus . . ." ("Tell me, Venus . . .").

But what cannot be taken for granted is the difference that obtains not between the denotatum (Venus or the superintendent) and the connotatum (morning appearance for Morgenstern, vulgarity for *bignole*) but between the two *modes* of signification constituted by the act of denoting and the act of connoting. I want to underscore this point: the fact that the same sign evokes both a meaning and a denotatum does not necessarily imply that it evokes them in two different ways. If this is not logically necessary, it must be empirically self-evident: the relation of Morgenstern to Venus's morning appearance is manifestly not of the same order as its relation to Venus as the second planet in the solar system; moreover, it is presumably not of the same order as its relation to the German language, either; and the relation of the term *bignole* to my concierge is not of the same order as its relation to my own

real or affected vulgarity. All these relations, and no doubt some others, remain to be defined. A new detour may help us in this task.

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In a well-known passage from *Saint Genet,* Sartre proposes another distinction, one whose relation to those we have been considering is not entirely simple. This distinction again opposes two modes of "signifying," or *significatio,* which are now *meaning* and *signification:*

> Things signify nothing. Yet each of them has a meaning. By *signification* I mean a certain conventional relationship which makes a present object the substitute of an absent object; by *meaning* [*sens*] I denote the participation of the being of a present reality in the being of other realities, whether present or absent, visible or invisible, and, eventually, in the universe. Signification is conferred upon the object from without by a signifying intention; meaning is a natural quality of things. The former is a transcendent relationship between one object and another; the latter, a transcendence that has fallen into immanence. The first can prepare for an intuition, can orient it, but cannot furnish it since the object signified is, in essence, external to the sign; the second is by nature intuitive; it is the odor that permeates a handkerchief, the perfume that issues from an empty open bottle. The siglum "XVII" *signifies* a certain century, but in museums that entire period clings like a veil, like a spider's web, to the curls of a wig, escapes in whiffs from a sedan chair.[14]

14 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint Genet, Actor and Martyr,* trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Braziller, 1963), 304.

In itself, the Sartrean distinction is quite clear: certain objects, such as "the siglum XVII," have a conventional and thus a *transcendent,* or extrinsic, signification. Others, such as the sedan chair, have an *immanent* meaning because they are linked in a necessary way to the nature of the objects in question. The necessary, or "natural," relation here is historical in origin: the sedan chair was produced or invented during the period which, by virtue of that fact, it suggests. Sartre obviously chose these two examples so that the two signs would converge on a single object, the Grand Siècle. The siglum XVII *signifies* that century; as for the sedan chair, since the French noun *sens* does not allow us to derive a distinct verb (and the English verb "means" would not do), let us say provisionally, and not very originally, that it *evokes* the century in question.

The convergence on a single *Bedeutung* suggests an analogy between Sartre's undertaking and Frege's: in each case there are two signs for a single referent. This parallel is deceptive, for although they convey two different meanings, Frege's two signs are of the same nature, namely, linguistic, whereas Sartre's are different in nature: one is a linguistic sign and the other a material object, or, as Sartre says simply, a *thing,* whose primary function is not to signify. But Sartre's use of the word *sens* to designate one of these two modes of signifying prevents us from dismissing the comparison with Frege too quickly. The word *Morgenstern* designates a certain planet through one of its aspects, somewhat the way the Sartrean sedan chair evokes the Grand Siècle through its place in history. The word *Venus,* or better yet some more conventional or more neutral designation such as a code number, designates the same planet without any detours, or by way of a less perceptible detour, just as the siglum XVII designates the Grand Siècle. Certain instances of signifying (XVII, Venus)

may thus be said to be more direct, or more transparent, than others (chair, Morgenstern), inasmuch as they are more conventional and less charged with meaning. These differences are obviously all relative, and eminently reversible (I shall return to this point), but they doubtless suffice to allow us to say that in ordinary situations the first type is more denotative, and thus that the second is more connotative, or, if one prefers the equivalence posited by Dufrenne, more expressive.[15]

The opposition has to do with the mode of signifying, and not with the (identical) nature of the signified or with that of the signifier, even if Sartre's analysis, in *Saint Genet,* suggests a difference in nature between "words," which signify, and "things," which mean. Let us note in passing that, if this were the case, a definition of style through the connotative use of language would have no application, because language would be always and only denotative, with no aptitude whatsoever to convey a Sartrean *meaning,* that is, a connotation. But all the evidence weighs against such a hypothesis, and Sartre himself devotes a few equally well known pages of *Situations* to the (poetic) capacity of language to function at once as sign and as thing, that is, as a means of signification and as a conveyor of meaning.[16] The difference in signifying potential thus depends not on the nature of the signs used but on the function with which they are charged. A word (for example, the word *nuit*) can sparkle or resound like a thing, and, reciprocally, a thing can function as a conventional sign in a code of the linguistic type. And, to take up Sartre's examples one last

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[15] But Sartre himself rejects the verb *exprimer* (express) as too closely tied to linguistic modes of signifying. Jean-Paul Sartre, "What Is Literature" (1949), in *"What Is Literature?" and Other Essays* (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1988), 26.

[16] Ibid., 6off.

time, but in reverse, the notation XVII (as opposed to 17) may connote a certain classical Latinity through historical evocation (this is its Sartrean meaning), and a sedan chair may play a part in a code that endows it with an arbitrary signification: for instance, the presence of a wheelbarrow at a strategic spot, in the absence of other signals, may indicate that the enemy is coming from the east, while the presence of a sedan chair shows that the enemy is coming from the west, or vice versa.

From this double detour by way of Frege's analysis and Sartre's we can derive two propositions, and perhaps even a third.

1. Two signs may designate the same object, one by conventional denotation and the other by a more natural, or at least a more motivated, mode of evocation; thus

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{the siglum XVII denotes} \\ \searrow \\ \text{the Grand Siècle} \\ \nearrow \\ \text{the sedan chair evokes} \end{array}$$
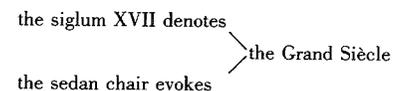
2. The same sign may denote one object and evoke another; thus

$$\text{Morgenstern} \begin{cases} \nearrow \text{denotes Venus} \\ \searrow \text{evokes morning} \end{cases}$$

$$\text{bignole} \begin{cases} \nearrow \text{denotes my concierge} \\ \searrow \text{evokes my vulgarity} \end{cases}$$
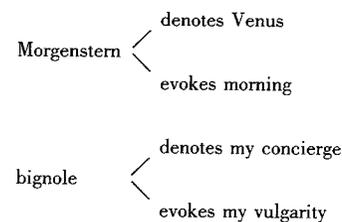
3. It may happen, by chance or by calculation, that a single sign at once denotes and evokes the same object; thus, because the word *bref* (brief) is itself short,

$$bref \underset{evokes}{\overset{denotes}{\diagdown \diagup}} brevity$$
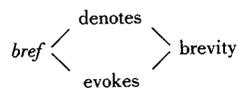
which obviously cannot be said about its synonym *monosyllabe* (monosyllabic) or its antonym *long*, neither of which evokes what it denotes.

We shall come back to these various types of signifying relations; let us note in passing that stylisticians generally call the last of these *expressivity*. In presenting my three propositions, however, I have carefully avoided the words *expression* and *connotation*, which I had employed too confidently before: their use needs to be restricted from now on by more rigorous definitions (that of *evocation*, used up to now to replace the other two, will also take on a more specific application). Let me say at once that the equation Dufrenne proposed is likely to be undermined by the two redefinitions that follow.

The first requires a final detour, by way of what I shall call, in a rather un-Goodmanian fashion, Goodmanian semiotics. In the second chapter of *The Languages of Art*, as well as in other, more recent texts,[17] Nelson Goodman proposes a general classification of signs, distinguished most notably by its break with Peirce's classification, which has been almost universally adopted (and somewhat vulgarized in the process) for a century or more. Let me recall, simplifying somewhat, that this vulgate identifies three distinct sorts of signs: *symbols*, which are purely conventional (the street sign indicating "Do Not Enter"); *indexes*, which are motivated by a causal relation (smoke as a sign of fire); and *icons* (scales as an emblem of justice), which are motivated by a relation of analogy or, in Charles Morris's more abstract formulation, by a sharing

[17] See especially Nelson Goodman, *Of Mind and Other Matters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

of properties between signifier and signified.[18] Goodman apparently dismisses the second category entirely,[19] and he subjects the third to a radical critique[20] whose argument can be paraphrased, in essence, like this: one cannot define the relation of analogy in terms of shared properties without being more specific. In fact, any two things always share at least one property (that of being things); thus a *single* shared property does not suffice, unless we acknowledge that everything resembles everything else and vice versa, which deprives the relation of analogy of any specificity. Do things then have to share *all* their properties? In that case they would be quite simply identical, and even numerically identical (for to share all properties entails occupying the same position in time and space), and one thing would be unable to signify another, since they would be one and the same. But if neither *one* nor *all* properties, how many? Exit analogy.

The Goodmanian classification, however, is not reduced to the single (Peircean) category of conventional symbols (if that were the case, it would have nothing to distinguish). The totality of its field is covered by the category of *symbolization*, or *reference*, which encompasses all cases of "standing for," in which something takes the place of something else, in terms of any relation whatever. Here we have the entire empire of signs, which Goodman is more apt to call *symbols*. But this empire has its provinces. The Goodmanian category that corresponds more or less to the Peircean category of symbols is

[18] "A sign is iconic to the extent to which it itself has the properties of its denotata." Charles Morris, *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (New York: Braziller, 1955 [1946]), glossary, 349.

[19] This does not prevent him from making (decisive) use elsewhere of the notion of "symptoms of the aesthetic"; see, e.g., Nelson Goodman, *The Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), sec. 6, chap. 5.

[20] Nelson Goodman, "Seven Strictures on Similarity," in *Problems and Projects* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972), 437–46.

that of *denotation*, defined as the "simple application of a [verbal or other] label to one or more things."[21] But denotation is not the only mode of reference. There is at least one other,[22] which in certain respects is more or less the inverse of denotation; Goodman calls it *exemplification*. For Goodman this category essentially fulfills the function Peirce and Morris attributed to iconic signs; it is defined, however, not in terms of analogy but in terms of belonging to a category or (and this amounts to the same thing) in terms of possession of properties: "Whereas almost anything can denote or even represent almost anything else, a thing can [exemplify] only what belongs . . . to it"[23]—that is, a specific property (among others), which it shares with all the other things that also possess that property. "For a word, say, to denote red things requires nothing more than letting it refer to them; but for my green sweater to exemplify a predicate, letting the sweater refer to that predicate is not enough. The sweater must also be denoted by that predicate; that is, I must also let the predicate refer to the sweater."[24] Put more naively, in order to exemplify "greenness," my sweater has to *be* green. As its name indicates, exemplification is a (motivated) mode of symbolization, which, for an object (which may be a word), consists in symbolizing a category to which it belongs, and whose predicate in turn applies to that object[25]—in other words, denotes it.

This sort of reciprocity, or converse relation, is summed up by a simple theorem: "If x exemplifies y, then y denotes x."[26] If my sweater exemplifies the color green, then *green* denotes the color of my sweater; if it exemplifies the form sleeveless, then *sleeveless* denotes its form; and so on, since an object can always exemplify several properties.

Here again, the difference between denoting and exemplifying lies not in the *nature* of the signs used but in their *function*: a given gesture on the part of an orchestra conductor will have (more or less) the value of a conventional denotant, while on the part of a gymnastics instructor it will have the value of example or model[27]—and one imagines the consequences that would ensue if the former were interpreted in terms appropriate to the latter, even though the gestures may be physically identical. The same word, *bref*, can be used as denoting brevity, as an example of a monosyllable, as an example of a French word, and so on.

Exemplification may be either *literal*, as in the cases considered up to this point, or figurative, that is—for Goodman, who seems not to imagine any other sort of figure—*metaphorical*. I shall not go into detail as to how he manages to avoid defining metaphor in terms of analogy, at least in the popular sense of the term, which implies resemblance or "similarity." Metaphor, for him, is nothing but the transfer of a predicate from one "domain" to another, by virtue of a homology (this is the Aristotelian analogy) positing that x is to the domain A as y is to the domain B. If we posit, for example,

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[21] Goodman, *Of Mind*, 61. The expression "one or more things" discreetly covers the cases of application of a term to a class. There are countless such cases, but they are not easily reconciled with Goodman's nominalist bias.

[22] "At least" because Goodman left the list open on several occasions, and also because the mode of *citation* seems to vacillate between having an autonomous status and being annexed to exemplification.

[23] Goodman, *Languages*, 89.

[24] Ibid., 59.

[25] A single object obviously always belongs to several classes, except in scientific taxonomies of the naturalist type. My green sweater belongs simultaneously to the class of sweaters and to the class of green objects.

Exemplification is thus an ad lib reference, which must be made specific by the context. The nature and means of that specification often pose problems, which Goodman tends to sidestep by saying that denotation is not any easier to specify. It seems to me, however, that it *is* easier, because it relies on a more stable convention.

[26] Goodman, *Languages*, 59, note.

[27] Ibid., 63.

that C major is to the domain of tonalities as majesty is to the domain of moral properties, we can deduce that the *Jupiter* Symphony, which is in the key of C major, metaphorically exemplifies majesty: hence its title. If we posit that gray is to colors as sadness is to feelings, we can say that *Guernica* metaphorically exemplifies desolation. If we posit that front vowels are to speech sounds as bright colors are to the visual spectrum, we can say, with Mallarmé, that the word *nuit* metaphorically (and inappropriately?) exemplifies clarity.[28] But metaphoric exemplification is nothing other than what is commonly called expression. In this sense, the *Jupiter* Symphony *expresses* majesty, *Guernica* sadness, and *nuit* clarity. The theorem just cited then becomes: "If *x* expresses *y*, then *y* metaphorically denotes *x*." If *nuit* expresses clarity, then *clair* (clear) metaphorically denotes *nuit*. Let us say, more simply, that *nuit* is metaphorically clear, as *bref* is literally brief. That is roughly what Mallarmé says, and it is probably what Flaubert meant when he called *Madame Bovary* a gray (or puce) novel, and *Salammbô* a purple novel.

Thus we find ourselves, thanks to Goodman, provided with a definition of expression that is at once more precise and broader than the one stylistics has to offer: more precise because it applies to *nuit*, which is metaphorically clear, but not to *bref*, which is literally brief and which therefore does not *express* brevity but simply *exemplifies* it; yet broader than the definition that implicitly establishes the stylistic use of the word *expressivity*. For if *bref* at once denotes and exempli-

[28] What is the basis for this type of exemplification? Goodman dismisses this sometimes embarrassing question in the same terms he uses for literal exemplification: semiotics is charged not with *establishing* relations of signification but only with describing them as they function in fact or in theory. If the sadness of gray or the majesty of C major is only an illusion or a received idea, or even a reverse effect of titles like *Guernica* and *Jupiter*, that does not prevent these values from prevailing.

fies brevity,[29] by contrast *long*—"contradictorily," Mallarmé would say—denotes length but exemplifies brevity. These two words are equally "exemplary," but in one case the exemplification parallels and confirms the denotation, and in the other the exemplification contradicts the denotation. Similarly, on the metaphoric level, if the expression of *nuit* contradicts its denotation, that of *ombre* (shadow), with its darker shading, matches (still according to Mallarmé) its denotation. The stylisticians' *expressivity* covers only cases of matching (or redundancy) of the *bref* or *ombre* type. It is therefore only a particular case of expression or exemplification—a case that Goodman for his part calls "self-reference."[30] We shall take another look later on at the disadvantages of the Cratylist privilege that stylistics has granted this particular case.

And we find ourselves by the same token provided with three types of signification. One of them (denotation) has remained constant so far, while the two others, both of which occupy the same pole as our earlier terms *expression, evocation*, and *connotation*, can be reduced to a single one, since Goodmanian expression is only a metaphorical variant of exemplification. If we recall Guiraud's formula, which I have already subjected to alteration, we can readily translate it into these terms: "Style is the exemplificatory function of discourse, as opposed to its denotative function."

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But now we need to adjust the term *connotation*[31] to our new conceptual field, for it can no longer be viewed as coextensive with the term *exemplification*. A first reduction is dictated, in a

[29] That is a quality I earlier, and provisionally, called *evoking*. It is easy to see how *exemplify* is more pertinent—if not more elegant.

[30] Goodman, *Language*, p. 59, note.

[31] This notion is obviously foreign to Goodman's system.

manner of speaking, by etymology: the term *connotation* can be reasonably applied only to a supplementary signification, one that is *added* to a denotation; now this is manifestly not the case for all references by exemplification. If my green sweater denotes nothing, one can hardly say that it *connotes* what it exemplifies.[32] An ideogram whose meaning I do not know may exemplify Chinese writing for me, but it would be going too far to say that it connotes Chinese writing for me, since (for me) it denotes nothing. Thus, not every exemplification is a connotation. Connotation is only a particular case of exemplification: an exemplification that is added to a denotation.

But it is no doubt appropriate to adopt an even more restrictive approach, as we are invited to do by the Hjelmslevian definition of connotation as signification in the second degree.[33] Up to this point, I have treated the denotation-connotation relationship as if it were always symmetrical and balanced. This is obviously true in many cases, as when the word *long* denotes length on the one hand and exemplifies brevity on the other. But it is not true if I say that the word *long* on the one hand denotes length and on the other hand exemplifies the French language. Why not? An anecdote will perhaps help clarify this point, to which Goodman pays no atten-

tion. The scene is the Second World War. Two German spies, who know no English, parachute into Great Britain (such things happened). Very thirsty, they go into a bar, after diligently practicing the phrase "two martinis, please." The more gifted of the two places the order. Unfortunately, the barman responds with an unanticipated—although predictable—question: "Dry?" The less gifted spy then replies, oh so fatally: "Nein, zwei!" Now you know why Germany lost the war.

What does this fable show? That (roughly) the same sequence of sounds[34] can be one word in one language and another word in another language, and thus that words (and their linguistic categorization) are defined not by their form alone but rather by their function as "total sign," that is, by the connection between form and meaning. The sound [draï] is not a German word or an English word: it is German when it means "three," English when it means "dry." The sound [lõ] is not a French word; what is a French word, and can thus connote the French language, is the connection between the sound [lõ] and the meaning "long." In other words, its connotation of Frenchness is not simply *added* to its denotative function; it *depends* on it, in the second degree, through the phenomenon of unhooking illustrated by Hjelmslev's formula (ERC) R C and Barthes's asymmetrical chart. Thus, the (total) word *long* here conveys not just two but at least four significations: its denotation (length), the exemplifying value of its physical character (brevity), and the two connotative values of the relation established between the first two significations—its belonging to the French language, and its "antiexpressive"

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[32] The word *connotation* might nevertheless be applied, in a broadened sense, to a signification that is added not to a denotation but to a practical function: thus one might say that my green sweater, in addition to its function as clothing, has a social connotation, if green is in fashion, and perhaps also if that is not the case. This use is frequent in semiology, but also in extraliterary aesthetics: in addition to its practical function, which is (I trust) to hold up the pediment, the colonnade of the Pantheon fairly clearly connotes a neoclassical aesthetics.

[33] Louis Hjelmslev, "Connotative Semiotics and Metasemiotics," in *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1953 [1943]), 73–80; Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, in *Writing Degree Zero and Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970 [1964]).

[34] Or sequence of letters: the graphic signifier *chat* is a word meaning "cat" in French and a word meaning "to talk idly" in English (Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences* [London: Routledge, 1988], 58), or, on both levels at once, *arm*, meaning "poor" in German and "upper limb" in English.

character. All of which goes to show that we must be careful not to lump together, the way everyday language does under the label *sign*, the signifier [lõ] and the total sign ([lõ] = "long," or, in shorthand, *long*). The simply exemplificatory values are attached to the first ([lõ] is short), the connotative values to the second (*long* is French). It will perhaps not be overdoing it to hammer in this nail with two additional examples. The word *patate* in its capacity as a simple signifier ([patat]) does not necessarily belong to the familiar register, for it can quite properly denote an exotic vegetable; what is familiar is the use of *patate* for "potato." Similarly, the word *coursier* (steed) is not noble in itself, for it can designate, quite banally, an errand boy; what is noble is the use of *coursier* for "horse." The connotation joins the denotation not as a simple added value, or as a supplement of meaning, but as a *derived* value, entirely premised on the manner of denoting. It is thus only *one* aspect of exemplification—which for its part takes on *all* the extradenotative values, and therefore all the effects of style.

Thus, among the exemplificatory capacities of a verbal element we have to distinguish those that are attached to the signifier in its phonic or graphic materiality[35] from those that depend on its semantic function. Let us take the French word *nuit*, which we have already encountered, and which lends itself to a fairly representative analysis. At the first level, that

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[35] Materiality is to be understood here in the sense of *potential* materiality: the word *nuit*, as a *type*, has nothing material about it; only its phonic and graphic occurrences (*tokens*) present some physical characteristic or other. But these characteristics are brought to mind by the very mention of the type, and moreover the mention itself is a token. And yet, by virtue of our cultural competences, graphic presentations transmit phonic characteristics: I can "hear" the sound [nɥi] simply by reading the word *nuit* silently. The converse is less obvious, and moreover it is not accessible to illiterates.

of the signifier [nɥi], it denotes "night" by linguistic convention. At the same level, in its phonic aspect, it exemplifies of its own phonic properties: being a monosyllable in the absence of diaeresis, beginning with the nasal consonant [n], ending with the rising diphthong [ɥi] (composed of a semi-consonant and a front vowel), therefore capable of rhyming with *luit*, and so forth. In its graphic aspect, it exemplifies all its own graphic properties, including the presence of a certain number of vertical "downstrokes" capable of accentuating (I am free-associating here) a potential effect of lightness; indeed, still at the same level but now through metaphoric transposition, by virtue of a commonly acknowledged homology between front vowels and clarity (I am inclined to add: lightness and freshness), it expresses, for some, the famous and paradoxical clarity that Mallarmé affected to complain about, and that the rhyme with *luit* can reinforce. At the second level, that of the "total word" [nɥi] = *nuit*, it exemplifies a class of French words (substantives), and the class of inanimate feminine nouns, with all the affective values linked to that sexualization—which is providentially reinforced by the masculine gender of its antonym *jour* (day). These sexual connotations, which exist only in languages that lack a neuter gender (like French) or that have a capricious neuter gender (like German), present considerable stylistic potential, which Gaston Bachelard evokes superbly in a chapter of *La poétique de la rêverie*.[36]

Is this all? I do not think so, for a given word, which literally exemplifies all the classes to which it belongs, may also evoke, through association by contiguity (or indirect belonging), many other sets to which it is connected in some characteristic

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[36] Gaston Bachelard, "Le rêveur de mots," in *La poétique de la rêverie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965). On the *jour/nuit* pair, see Gérard Genette *Figures II* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 101–22.

way. Thus, without too much effort or artifice, we may find *nuit* typically Racinean, or Mallarméan, and so on, to the extent of seeing in its relative frequency a sort of stylistic index, just as we might say that the frequency of *hypallages* is an index of Proust's style, and just as Proust himself saw in Flaubert's use of the imperfect tense a characteristic feature of that writer's style. This sort of effect seems to me capable of illustrating a category of figurative exemplification that Goodman failed to note, namely, *metonymic* exemplification. Thus, I propose to add this category to the two Goodmanian notions of *exemplification* (literal) and *expression* (metaphorical) under the heading—which seems to me to fit in quite naturally (in a broadened Ballyan sense)—of *evocation*. If *nuit* is, let us say, Racinean—that is, if it evokes, for some people, (especially) Racine—it is not because it possesses that property literally the way [lō] possesses the property of being brief, nor that it possesses the property metaphorically the way *nuit* possesses the property of being clear; it possesses the property metonymically through a privileged association (let us suppose) with Racine's work. But that is not to say that metaphorical exemplification is entirely inconceivable at this level. There is undoubtedly a touch of metaphorical exemplification in the effects of stylistic *imitation*, which are not limited to borrowing from an author (for example) one of his stylistic features, but which go to the extreme of inventorying these features, and which are thus ideally typical without being materially present in the corpus imitated. Thus, as we know, Proust was particularly proud of having included the adjective *aberrant* in his pastiche of Renan, for he judged the term "extremely Renanian," even though to his knowledge Renan had never used it: "Finding it in his work would take away from my pleasure in having invented it"—the invention being an example of a Renanian adjective. If Renan had actually used it,

it would merely be a *Renaneme*, whereas Proust's invention constitutes a genuine theoretical *Renanism*.[37]

I call these imitations that do not involve borrowing *metaphorical*, this time in a decidedly un-Goodmanian sense, by virtue of a typically analogic relation: the word *aberrant* is (for Proust) "like" Renan's writing without belonging to the corpus. The stylistic importance of such an effect is transparently clear: one cannot identify a style without bringing to light its *-emes*, and one cannot imitate it creatively—that is, bring it to life and make it productive—without moving beyond such competence to performance; one has to be able to invent its *-isms*. Every living tradition, and thus, to a large extent, all artistic evolution, goes through this process.

I say *artistic* in general because the categories used here are valid for all the arts, mutatis mutandis—and even if there are a lot of *mutanda* to *mutare*. The *Jupiter* Symphony exemplifies (among other things) the classical style, and expresses (among other things) majesty; Reims cathedral exemplifies Gothic art, evokes the Middle Ages, expresses (according to Michelet) the "breath of the spirit"; and so on. And the effects of imitation without borrowing[38] are omnipresent: we need only see how Debussy or Ravel invents Spanish music, or how Cézanne (to take his own word for it) paints "like Poussin out of the studio."

These relativizing parentheses are intended not to express a

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[37] See Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), chap. 14. Proust made the remark in a letter to Robert Dreyfus dated March 21, 1908. Marcel Proust, *Correspondance*, ed. Philip Kolb, 20 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1970–92), 8:67.

[38] The borderline between the two techniques is less clear-cut than this formula suggests: one cannot imitate a style (even creatively) without borrowing its schemas so as to apply them to new cases, and one can say equally well that Ravel imitates Spanish music or that he borrows melodic rhythmic schemas from it.

principled skepticism but to recall the *ad libitum* character of the symbolizations in question. An object denotes what a convention makes it denote, and it may exemplify, express, or evoke, to the first or the second degree, for each of us, the predicates that we apply to the object literally, metaphorically, or metonymically—rightly or wrongly. The fact that an application is accurate or erroneous does not change the way it works, and the tribunal that passes judgment on it is scarcely distinguishable from popular opinion. To describe *Guernica* as "sinister" is no doubt more accurate, but no less figurative (metaphorical), than to describe it as "elegant," and to declare the word *nuit* Racinean is perhaps more accurate, but no less figurative (metonymical), than to declare it Molièresque or Balzacian.

I have suggested that we need to reserve the term *connotation*, as Hjelmslev recommended, for the effects of exemplification produced in the second degree by the relation of denotation—which excludes its use in the strict sense from the domain of arts that have no denotative function, like music, architecture, or abstract painting. But, again, one cannot rule out the broadening of its use to designate the adventitious significations that are produced by the way Mozart arranges sounds, the way Bramante arranges columns, or the way Pollock splashes his canvases. Especially since each symbolic relation inevitably produces its own symbolic value, one degree higher, that has to be called connotative, or even metaconnotative. Thus, the fact that the signifer [lõ] exemplifies brevity in the first degree entails the fact that the word *long* exemplifies, in the second degree, and thus connotes, as I have said, its own antiexpressive character. In the same way, of course, the word *bref* connotes its own expressive character, and so on. The exemplificatory values of signifiers, which are *not* in themselves connotative, *determine* connotative values. Now, any verbal element—and by extension any verbal

sequence—may always be considered expressive, or antiexpressive, or neutral, and this fact alone suffices to confer on even the blandest discourse an exemplificatory potential at every moment, a potential that is the basis for its style. To put it more simply: in addition to what it *says* (denotes), discourse *is* at every moment this or that (for example, dull as dishwater). Sartre would say quite rightly, in his own terms, that words, and thus sentences, and thus texts, are always both signs and things. Style is nothing else but the aspect—let us call it *perceptible*—that constitutes what Jakobson called a text's "perceptibility."

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But this description, however elementary (in the literal sense)[39] it may seek to be, still has to consider another key aspect of the stylistic potential of discourse. Let us return to our word *nuit*, clearly an inexhaustible resource. Up to now we have considered it according to its literal denotative function, that is, its simple or direct function, which is to designate "night." But everyone will agree that it has at least one other use, illustrated, for example, by these lines from Hugo's *Contemplations*:

> O, Seigneur! ouvrez-moi les portes de la nuit,
> Afin que je m'en aille et que je disparaisse!
>
> [Ah, Lord, open up for me the gates of night,
> So I may depart and disappear!]

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[39] In the literal sense in that, in the interest of brevity, I have based my argument up to this point on verbal elements (essentially words), charged with illustrating the stylistic capacities of discourse in general on that level; my methodological postulate is that what is true of individual elements is equally true of larger units.

or, with a play (syllepsis) on the two meanings, these lines from Racine's *Andromaque:*

> Songe, songe, Céphise, à cette nuit cruelle
> Qui fut pour tout un peuple une nuit éternelle.

> [Think, think, Céphise, of that cruel night
> That was for an entire people an endless night.]

The second meaning, which is obviously death, functions through what is commonly called a figure of speech, in this case a metaphor, typically definable in terms of an Aristotelian analogy: death is to life as night is to day.[40] Once this figurative value has been conveyed, we may say that "night," in Hugo's first line and Racine's second, *denotes* death. But, contrary to Goodman's customary postulates, and in keeping with the Fregean schema, this denotation is not *direct*. It relates a denoting sign, "night" with a denotatum, "death," through the intermediary of a first denotatum, "night," which plays the role here of Fregean meaning (*sens*), since it constitutes the "mode of donation" of the object "death," just as *étoile du matin*, "morning star" (which is more often than not a kind of figure of speech, a periphrasis), is the "mode of donation" of Venus. The detour of the figure of speech by way of the literal denotatum is fully comparable to the Fregean detour by way of the *Sinn,*

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              morning star
            /              \
étoile du matin            Venus

                night
            /          \
      nuit                death
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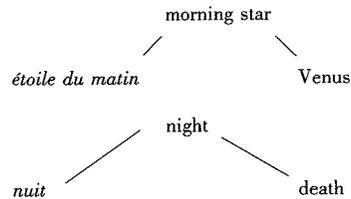
[40] Metaphors as figures of speech, which are indirect denotations (*nuit* for "death"), are not to be confused with metaphor as the principle of Goodmanian expression (*nuit* metaphorically exemplifying clarity).

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and the specific character of each figure is defined by the logical relation between the two denotata, according to the analyses of classical tropology: analogy in metaphor; contiguity in metonymy (*jupon*, "skirt," for "woman"); physical inclusion (*voile*, "sail," for "ship") or logical inclusion (*mortel*, "mortal," for "man") in synecdoche[41] and its predicative variants; litotes and hyperbole;[42] contrariness for irony.

These tropes, or "figures of meaning in a single word" (to quote Pierre Fontanier), obviously do not exhaust the field of figures, or indirect denotations, but they can supply the model for it by a process of extension whose principle I borrow here from *A General Rhetoric.*[43]

Scope / Level	≤word	>word
Meaning	metasememes (tropes)	metalogisms (figures of style and thought)
Form	metaplasms (figures of diction)	metataxes (figures of construction and elocution)

[41] On the heterogeneous character of this class, determined by the ambiguous character of the notion of inclusion, and on the two modes, generalizing (*mortel* for "man") and particularizing (Harpagon for "miser"), see Michel Le Guern, *Sémantique de la métaphore et de la métonymie* (Paris: Larousse, 1973), chap. 3.

[42] Predicative variants, in the sense that litotes can be described as a generalizing synecdoche of the predicative degree: "I do not hate you" generalizes "I love you," since "to love" (strong degree) is included in "not to hate" (weak degree). Conversely, hyperbole is, in the same terms, a particularizing synecdoche. "You are brilliant" particularizes "You are not stupid," since brilliance is a particular case of absence of stupidity.

[43] Group μ, *A General Rhetoric*, trans. Paul B. Burrell and Edgar M. Slotkin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), "General Table

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This chart brings out clearly, I hope, the two directions in which the particular case of tropes is generalized to the broad case of figures of speech. The horizontal extension (from the scale of the word, or word segment, to that of the more or less vast group of words)[44] presents essentially no difficulty, for the fact that a figurative detour bears on a single word or several words is only a secondary issue which rarely needs to be settled: the antiphrasis "You're a real hero" may be glossed equally well as "You're a *coward*," "You're *not* a hero," or even "You probably *think* you're a hero"—and in each of these cases the ironic accent is displaced from one word to another, or bears on the entire phrase, without detriment to the figurative meaning. Similarly, many traditional metaphors consist in a complete sentence: it would be pointless to look for "the" metaphorical term in a proverb such as "Don't put the cart before the horse." In a case like this one, and in conformity with Frege's views, the proposition as a whole presents its figurative denotation (its "truth value"), "You have to do things in the proper order," via the detour of its literal denotation.

As for "figures of thought," Fontanier succeeds in showing that their figurative status, which is sometimes contested, depends on the character of pretense that is or is not attributed to them by their receiver: a rhetorical *interrogation* ("Who told you that?") is a figure of speech only insofar as it is interpreted as disguising a negation; a *deliberation* is a figure because in it can be read the expression of a decision that has already been made (like Dido's, in book 4 of the *Aeneid*); but a sincere *dubitation* (like Hermione's in the fifth act of *Andromaque*) is not a figure. Now this ad lib character of figurativeness is not a property of figures of thought. As André Breton did with the

periphrases of Saint-Pol-Roux, one can always *reject* the figure and take an utterance in its literal sense, whatever logical or semantic incongruity may ensue; and Breton clearly fosters such incongruity when he literalizes the "mamelle de cristal" (crystal breast) or the "lendemain de chenille en tenue de bal" (a caterpillar's morning after in evening dress), utterances that will only be "surrealistic" before their time if their figurative interpretation as "carafe" or "butterfly" is challenged: "Rentrez votre papillon dans votre carafe. Ce que Saint-Pol-Roux a voulu dire, soyez certain qu'il l'a dit" ("Put your butterfly back in your carafe. You can be sure Saint-Pol-Roux said just what he meant").[45] The figure in fact lends itself (more or less) to three approaches on the reader's part: the one that Breton condemns so as to advance his own, and which in fact no one takes, would consist in substituting the figurative denotatum without taking the literal denotatum into account: to say that "une mamelle de cristal" must denote a carafe, as *nuit* sometimes denotes death, is not to say that the effect produced is the same as if the author said "carafe" or "death." But the diagnosis of figurativeness is never inevitable, and it is sometimes much more questionable than this. In the case of catachresis (the "leg" of a table), we can, in the absence of a "proper" term, take the metaphor as an extended literal meaning; negative metaphors ("Life is not a bed of roses") are metaphoric only if we suppose an implicit context that is also metaphoric (". . . but rather a bed of thorns"), and not literal (". . . but rather the period of time that separates birth from death");[46] a great number of metonymies and synecdoches

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[45] André Breton, *Point du jour* (Paris: Gallimard, 1934), 26.

[46] On negative metaphors, or negations of metaphors, see Timothy Binkley, "On the Truth and Probity of Metaphor," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 22 (1974), 171–80; Ted Cohen, "Notes on Metaphor," ibid., 34 (1979), 250–59; Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics* (1958), 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), xxv; and Goodman, *Of Mind*, 74–75.

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of Metaboles, or the Figures of Rhetoric," 45; I have altered the table considerably to suit my own purposes.

[44] Thus, according to Borges, his tale "Funes el memorioso" is in its entirety nothing but a vast metaphor for insomnia.

("courir le jupon" [to chase after skirts] "l'or tombe sous le fer" [gold yields to iron]) can be read literally; and so on. Figurativeness is thus never an objective property of discourse but always a phenomenon of reading and interpretation, even when the interpretation is in manifest conformity with the author's intentions.

The vertical extension of metasememes toward metaplasms (of which metataxes, like ellipses and inversions, are only extensions on the level of the sentence) functions in a way that is harder to analyze, because these figures of "form"—an abbreviation such as *prof* (professor), an expansion such as *sourdingue* (deaf), a simple inversion such as *meuf* (woman) or a complex one such as *louchébem* (butcher), a partial substitution such as Paname (Paris)—in principle include no literal signifier that would serve to relay their figural denotatum; the Fregean detour thus seems to be missing. In fact there is a detour here, but it involves form instead of meaning: the "correct" form *professeur, sourd, femme, boucher,* or *Paris,* which the metaplasmic deformation evokes almost[47] as necessarily as *nuit* for "death" evoked the literal "night." The same description clearly holds true for metataxes: the inverted sentence of *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* ("D'amour, belle marquise . . .") achieves its denotation via the implicit detour of its conventional order. Denotation by metaplasma or metataxis thus remains indirect, and figures of form correspond

[47] *Almost:* we can in fact imagine speakers for whom the detour by way of form would not take place because knowledge of the correct form does not fall within their sphere of knowledge—for example, *un zonard* (a ghetto dweller) who does not know that *une meuf* is also *une femme* (a woman). Many people have doubtless already reached this point for the abbreviations *vélo* or *moto.* But these lexicalizations parallel those that figures of meaning sometimes undergo, as when the familiar Latin *testa,* meaning roughly "flask," becomes the French word *tête* (head), which is no longer a figure at all.

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just as well as figures of meaning to this definition.[48] In all these cases of indirect denotation (via detours of meaning or form), indirection itself, like any accident encountered on the path of the initial signifier (*nuit, prof*) toward the ultimate denotatum[49] (*mort, professeur*), exemplifies in the second degree, and thus connotes its own properties. Thus, when *nuit* denotes death metaphorically, this way of denoting connotes its own metaphoricity, more generally its own figurativeness, and more generally still a certain "poetic language," just as the use of *flamme* (flame) for *amour* (love), a classical metaphor, connotes both its own metaphoricity and classical diction (while the use of *flamme* for "flame" does not); *patate* used for "potato" (but not for "patate"), a popular metaphor, connotes both its own metaphoricity and the popular register; *sourdingue,* a familiar metaplasma, connotes both its own metaplasmic character and the familiar register; and so on. In their own very specific but, as we know, omnipresent, way, figures of speech are also (like the perceptible properties of the

[48] Indirect denotation and connotation must thus not be confused (even if indirect denotations, like other denotations, sometimes have connotations). It seems to me this is what Umberto Eco does, in *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 57; cf. 87 and 127: for Eco, there is connotation when the signified of a first system becomes the signifier of a second. This is true of figures (the signified "night" becomes the signifier of "death"), but not of connotations, where it is the first system as a whole that has a second signified (it is the relation *bref*-for-"bref" that connotes expressivity).

[49] Perhaps I ought to say, more rigorously, "toward the ultimate signified, which is the denotatum." The simplest semiotic path goes from a signifier to a signified, and from the signified ("concept," according to Saussure; "meaning" [*Sinn*] according to Frege) to the denotatum or referent, which is the application, or extension, of that concept: from the signifier Morgenstern to the concept of morning star, and from that concept to the planet Venus. The difference between signified and referent does not, it seems to me, have the ontological and absolute character that is sometimes attributed to it; it is rather a question of relative positions on

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phonic or graphic signifier, like the effects of linguistic evoca-
tion, and so on) a disturbance in denotative transparency, one
of those effects of relative opacification that contribute to the
"perceptibility" of discourse.[50]

Figures of speech are all the more omnipresent in that the
relative character of the diagnosis of figurativeness allows it to
be applied to any expression whatever. In a field as saturated
as this one, abstention may function as an effect *a contrario*,
and one may just as well identify a given feature as a given
figure of speech (as an asyndeton, for example, where a liai-
son was expected), or as its opposite (as a liaison where there
could have been an asyndeton). The classical schools of rheto-
ric admired this passage as a magnificent hypotyposis:

> Mon arc, mon javelot, mon char, tout m'importune,
> Je ne reconnais plus les leçons de Neptune,
> Mes seuls gémissements font retentir les bois,
> Et mes coursiers oisifs ont oublié ma voix

> [My bow, my javelin, my chariot, everything vexes me,
> I no longer recognize Neptune's teaching,
> My sighs alone make the woods resound,
> And my idle steeds have forgotten my voice.]

In these four lines, Racine's Hippolytus develops what
Prado's character says drily in just one (I am quoting from
memory): "Since I last saw you I have given up hunting."

But, aesthetic considerations aside, we could just as well
read Racine's verses as a faithful and literal portrayal of the
hero's idleness, and we could read Prado's as an audacious
condensation that might be called, for example, a *laconicism*.
More simply, when classical discourse happens to use the
word *amour* (and not *flamme*) or *cheval* (instead of *coursier*), we
can view the remarkable absence of figures as a powerful
literalism—which makes a rather fine name for a figure of
speech. This does not exactly mean that every element of
discourse is figurative, but rather that any element of dis-
course may be taken, according to the contexts and types of its
reception, as either literal or figurative. The largely condition-
al, or *attentional*, character of figurativeness[51] makes it—as
people have always known—a perfect emblem of style.

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Style consists, then, in the entire set of rhematic properties
exemplified by discourse, at the "formal" (that is, in fact, the

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a path that can always be shortened (if one settles for "morning star"
without wondering what heavenly body in our galaxy is involved) or
lengthened (if the planet Venus functions in turn as a symbol for some-
thing else). In relation to the signified, the referent does not have the
privilege of (material) "reality," for there are imaginary referents: the
signifier Fisdepélé has as its signified "Fils de Pélée," which has as its
referent Achilles. Barthes said, in his own terminology, that denotation is
the "*last*" of the connotations." Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller
(New York: Hill and Wang, 1974 [1970]), 9.

[50] I do not claim, moreover, to have come up with an exhaustive inven-
tory of these effects here. We would need to add to the list at least the

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intertextual allusions (Riffaterre) that invite the reader to perceive both
the text he has before his eyes and the text from which the present text
borrows a turn of phrase or some other element. Here again, the detour is
more or less obligatory. When Diderot writes, "The shroud doesn't make
the corpse," it is not indispensable to bring the underlying proverb to
mind (in French, "L'habit ne fait pas le moine" ["Clothes don't make the
man"]) to grasp Diderot's meaning (even if the allusion makes it possible
to appreciate the sentence's full flavor). But could anyone unfamiliar with
La Fontaine's fable understand a judgment such as "So-and-so is as much
a grasshopper as his father is an ant?" Let me recall that classical rhetoric
included allusion among the figures of speech.

[51] One cannot say the same thing of *all* aspects of discourse, however
inclined toward relativism one may be: *long* is unconditionally mono-
syllabic, and *ombre* rhymes undeniably with *sombre*.

physical) level of the phonic or graphic raw material, at the linguistic level of the relation of direct denotation, and at the figurative level of indirect denotation. Such a definition, whether it is adequate or not, has an advantage over the Bally tradition in that it reduces the exorbitant privilege that tradition grants on the one hand to mimetic "expressivity" (which is reduced here to the very special case—and a case no more and no less pertinent than the inverse case—of "self-reference"), and on the other hand to the supposedly "affective" character of stylistic phenomena. The exemplificatory aspect of discourse (what it *is*) is not in itself more affective or emotional than its denotative aspect (what it *says*) but simply more *immanent*, and thus presumably characterized by a less abstract and more "noticeable" perceptibility: the way in which *bref* is brief is unquestionably more natural and more concrete than the way in which it designates brevity. Although we still should avoid extrapolating too quickly: the connotations of linguistic register or figurative indirection are sometimes just as conventional as denotative values, and they have to be learned in the same way. In order to perceive that *patate* belongs to the familiar register or that *nuit* applies to death, we have to have learned this by usage, and this is how we can come to savor the fact that the first "evokes" a milieu or that the second "constitutes an image." An exemplificatory definition of style thus offers the advantage, it seems to me, of stripping style of its affectivist finery and of restoring greater sobriety to the concept.

But the traditional definition had another disadvantage clearly connected to the first and illustrated by the practice of literary stylistics (implicitly, since literary stylistics does not bother much with definitions): that of a *discontinuous* conception of style, as constituted by a series of punctual accidents

spread out over a long linguistic *continuum* (that of the text), like Thumbkin's pebbles—which then are to be detected, identified, and interpreted as so many "stylistic phenomena" or "stylistic features"[52] that are in some sense autonomous. Whatever the (considerable) distance that separates their interpretations of style[53] and also their methods of detection,[54] the Leo Spitzer of *Stilstudien* and the Michael Riffaterre of

[52] The terms *phenomenon* and *feature*, referring to style (or even, as in Georges Molinié's case, *styleme*) are often used synonymously. Yet it seems to me that it would be useful to distinguish between the stylistic *phenomenon* (*fait*), which is an event, recurrent or not, in the syntagmatic chain (for example, an image), and the stylistic *feature*, which is a paradigmatic property capable of characterizing a style (for example, to be imagistic). Only the former is "encountered"; the latter is constructed on the basis of the former's occurrences (similarly, an outburst of anger is a phenomenon, while being bad-tempered is a feature). The conception of style that I am criticizing defines style through a discontinuous series of stylistic phenomena between each occurrence of which there would be nothing stylistic. As for the characterization of a style through a collection or bundle of features, this is sufficiently obvious to have been unanimously agreed on from time immemorial.

[53] In the main, the Spitzerian interpretation is causalist: for Spitzer, the entire set of stylistic features characteristic of an individual, a group, or an epoch stand in relation as a generally unconscious symptom to a psychological *etymon* which finds its confirmation in certain thematic features. The Riffaterrean interpretation is finalist, or even voluntarist: the stylistic phenomenon is always conscious and organized, an instrument that imposes *constraint* on the receiver's attention. For Spitzer, style is a revealing *effect*; for Riffaterre, an intentional *function*. And even though Riffaterre's object and method have evolved considerably since he began, we can still find in his most recent work a confirmation such as: "It is useful to distinguish idiolect from style since the former does not depend on intention nor can it be the basis of esthetic evaluation as style can." Michael Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 128.

[54] Spitzer's method is purely intuitive: the initial "click" is corroborated later on by a back-and-forth movement between the details and the whole. Riffaterre's comes equipped with more technical assurances: each

Essais de stylistique structurale,[55] for example, converge in a common atomist vision that pulverizes style into a collection of significant *details* (Spitzer) or marked *elements* (Riffaterre) contrasting with an "unmarked" context, a banally linguistic background against which stylistic effects that are in some way exceptional stand out. The interpretation then takes on the task of connecting them *to one another* in a psychological (Spitzer) or pragmatic (Riffaterre) convergence, which, far from attenuating their autonomy with respect to the discursive continuum, further accentuates that autonomy.

Such a conception seems to me unfortunate for a reason that we glimpsed with respect to the reversibility of the intuition that one is dealing with a figure, and which has to do with the signifying value of the zero degree. The perceptibility of the exemplificatory aspect of a text varies, to be sure, depending on a text's readers and its "points" (Riffaterre), and it is undeniable that, even statistically, certain elements are more marked than others—especially with respect to a cultural community that has been trained over several generations to accept the idea that style is a matter of marks and elements. But the atomist, or punctualist, conception of style runs a serious risk, on the one hand, of having difficulty determining the marked elements, and on the other hand, and above all, of privileging, even if involuntarily, a mannerist aesthetic for which the most remarkable (in both senses of the word) style will be the one that is the most highly charged with features.

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stylistic "stimulus" is revealed by the statistical response of a collective "superreader."

[55] Leo Spitzer, *Stilstudien* (Munich: M. Hueber, 1928); Michael Riffaterre, *Essais de stylistique structurale* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971). These two authors are invoked here to illustrate the two extremes of a spectrum whose intermediate positions are occupied by practices that are often less coherent, or more eclectic.

This critique has been articulated by Henri Meschonnic, for whom such a stylistics ends up "making Jean Lorrain the greatest writer," valorizing "artistic writing," identifying "the beautiful with the strange and the bizarre."[56]

In his preface to Riffaterre's *Essais de stylistique structurale*, Daniel Delas replies that such is not at all the case, since saturation suppresses contrast, and thus an excess of style kills style. But this means recognizing at the same time that style thus defined is like a condiment to be added in a carefully determined dosage, or conceivably even to be omitted; its absence lays bare the purely denotative function of the discourse. This idea presupposes a separability between language and style that is for me entirely inconceivable, just as Saussure could not conceive of separating the two sides of a sheet of paper. Style is the perceptible surface of discourse, the surface that by definition accompanies it at every point without interruption or fluctuation. What is subject to fluctuation is the perceptual attention of readers, and their sensitivity to one mode of perceptibility or another. Unquestionably, a very short or a very long sentence will attract more immediate attention than a sentence of average length; a neologism will attract more attention than a conventional term, a bold metaphor more than a banal description. But the sentence of average length, the conventional term, the banal description are no less "stylistic" than the others; *average, conventional, banal*, as predicates, are no less stylistic than others; and the neutral or insipid style, the "white writing" cherished by the Barthes of *Writing Degree Zero*, is a style like any other. Insipidity is a flavor, just as white is a color. No words or sentences in a text are more stylistic than others; there are no doubt more "striking" moments (the Spitzerian "click"), which of course are not

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[56] Henri Meschonnic, *Pour la poétique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 21.

the same for everyone, but the other moments are striking *a contrario* by their remarkable absence of strikingness, for the notion of contrast, or deviation, is eminently reversible. Thus, we cannot speak of discourse plus style; discourse does not come without style any more than style comes without discourse. Style is the aspect of discourse, any discourse at all, and the absence of aspect is a notion manifestly devoid of meaning.

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From the fact that every text has "style," it clearly follows that the proposition "This text has style" is an uninteresting tautology. There is no point in talking about style except to describe it: "This text has *such-and-such* a style" (and, of course, the tautology "This text has style" always in fact masks the judgment "I like [or detest] the style of this text"). But we cannot describe anything at all except by applying to the object in question one or more predicates that it necessarily shares with other things: to describe is to categorize. To say of a text that its style is sublime, or graceful, or undefinable, or disconcertingly banal is to classify it in the category of texts whose style is sublime, or graceful, and so on. Even the most radically original style cannot be identified without the construction of a more or less common model (this is the case with the Spitzerian *etymon*) that encompasses all of its characteristic features: "Without recurrence of reading, that is, without memorization of parallelisms and contrasts, there can be no perception of the originality of [someone's] writing."[57] Stylistic characterizations are thus never purely immanent but always transcendent and *typical*. However limited the corpus under consideration may be, if we should judge, for example,

[57] Daniel Delas, preface to Riffaterre, *Essais*, 16.

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that there is a style proper not to Flaubert in general, not to the *Trois contes* in general, but to one of those three tales in particular, the identification and characterization of this style determine a model of competence capable of giving rise to an indefinite number of pages that conform to this model. The possibility of imitation proves, as it were, that every idiosyncracy is subject to generalization. Stylistic singularity is not the numerical identity of an individual but the specific identity of a type—a type that may lack antecedents but that is subject to an infinite number of subsequent applications. To describe a singularity is in a way to abolish it by multiplying it.

It is this inevitable transcendency of description that Nelson Goodman institutes as a defining feature of style in general when he writes, for example: "A stylistic feature, in my view, is a feature that is exemplified by the work and that contributes to the placing of the work in one among certain significant bodies of work."[58] This definition has a couple of disadvantages, one of which is corrected by Goodman himself: in order for the entire body of work to be "significant," the feature exemplified has to be significant as well, as a properly aesthetic feature, that is, a feature participating in the "symbolic functioning" of the work. The fact, for example, that there is a higher-than-average proportion of words in the second position in each sentence that begin with a consonant no doubt lets us assign a text to a class (the class of texts in which the proportion . . .), but the class is not "significant" because the feature is not aesthetically significant, and thus is

[58] Goodman, *Of Mind*, 131. The core of Goodman's reflections on style (beyond what one can extrapolate, as I have done, from *The Languages of Art*) is found in "The Status of Style," in Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), 23–40, and in "On Being in Style," in *Of Mind*, 130–34; the latter text responds to criticisms of the previous work. The term *feature* is used here in the sense I advocated earlier.

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not stylistic.[59] But the borderline is not always so easy to define, and the productions of the Oulipo group tend to show to the contrary that no type of constraint is aesthetically insignificant a priori. This distinction, like the others, is relative and depends, at the very least, on the cultural context.

That a style is always potentially typical of a "body of works" does not indicate in advance *what* body, or even what *sort* of body, it may typify. As we know, literary stylistics, at least since the nineteenth century, has privileged reference to the author's individual person, style being in this way identified with an idiolect. Barthes made this reference the motif of an opposition between *style* and *writing*, leaving the latter term charged with all transindividual references.[60] Furthermore, he took the (Spitzerian) causalist interpretation of style to the extreme, viewing it as the raw product "of a thrust, not an intention," as a germinative phenomenon," as the "transmutation of a Humour," in short as a phenomenon of the biological order: style is no longer the Spitzerian soul; it is the body. In symmetrical fashion, Barthes depicted writing as essentially intentional, the effect of choice and commitment, the place of a social and ethical function. These forced antitheses are no doubt subject to challenge: there is also choice, effort, and sometimes posturing in the most mindless aspects of style, and no doubt there are on the contrary many involuntary determinations in the traces of belonging to one sociolect or another: the style of a period, a class, a group, a gender, and so on.

For obvious reasons, just as modern criticism has accentuated individual and sometimes sociohistorical aspects of style, classical criticism was much more interested in generic constraints: from Horace to Boileau or Chénier, treatises on poetry

give these constraints a major role, and not without justification, if we recall the simple fact that Greek poetry made properly linguistic distinctions among the registers respectively known as lyric (devolving upon the Doric dialect), dramatic (Attic), and epic (the so-called Homeric mixture of Ionian and Aeolian). The most characteristic model for centuries was the famous "Virgilian wheel" developed in the Middle Ages on the basis of commentaries by Servius and Donatius, and which divided up a whole repertory of proper names and characteristic terms among the three styles (noble, middle, and familiar) illustrated by the three genres practiced by that poet (epic in the *Aeneid*, didactic in the *Georgics*, bucolic in the collection of the same name). I have converted that schema from the form of a target[61] into a more demonstrative (as I see it) double-entry table:

Level \ Feature	Humilis (Bucolics)	Mediocris (Georgics)	Gravis (Aeneid)
Tree	*fagus*	*pomus*	*laurus*
Place	*pascua*	*ager*	*castrum*
Tool	*baculus*	*aratrum*	*gladius*
Animal	*ovis*	*bos*	*equus*
Name	Tityrus	Triptolemus	Hector
Trade	*pastor otiosus*	*agricola*	*miles dominans*

[61] See Guiraud, *La stylistique*, 17. I have retained the Latin words in this table, since they are words. The three trees are beech, apple, and bay laurel; the three places are meadows, fields, and camp; the three tools are a stick, a plow, and a sword; the three animals are the sheep, the cow, and the horse; the three trades are idle shepherd, farmer, and conquering soldier.

[59] Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, 36.
[60] Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*.

However schematic it may be in principle, the Virgilian wheel (transformed into a grid) has the advantage of referring simultaneously to a generic category (the three genres) and to an individual determination (Virgil), thus illustrating the inevitably multiple character of the transcendence of stylistic qualifications. As Goodman rightly observes: "Most works are in many styles, varying in specificity and intersecting in various ways: a given painting may be at once in Picasso's style, in his Blue Period style, in the French style, in the twentieth-century style, in Western style, and so on."[62] Each of these designations can be challenged, and the distributions are relative. Didn't the Douanier Rousseau say to Picasso: "We are the two greatest living painters, I in the modern genre and you in the Egyptian genre"? But what is incontestable is that a work always illustrates several styles at once, because it always refers to more than one "significant body": its author, its epoch, its genre or its absence of genre, and so on. And certain of these bodies transcend the frontiers of the art under consideration: qualifiers such as *classical, baroque, romantic, modern, postmodern* clearly have a transartistic field of application. Minds resistant to taxonomies of all sorts will perhaps find consolation in this multiplicity, and this relativity. To invert a famous statement by Lévi-Strauss, we always categorize, but we all categorize as best we can, and sometimes just as we like—and "somewhere" there must be something Egyptian about Picasso.

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It has probably not escaped notice that the table adapted from the Virgilian wheel distributes features among the three "styles" that could equally well be described as *thematic.*

[62] Goodman, *Of Mind*, 131.

Equus, ovis, bos are not three different words designating the same animal (like *horse* and *steed*) but rather the names of three different animals, each of which is emblematic of a genre. This very broad application of the concept of style illustrates in advance one tendency, which we have neglected up to now, of the Goodmanian definition of style. For Nelson Goodman, let us recall, a stylistic feature is "a feature that is exemplified by the work and that contributes to the placing of the work in one among certain significant bodies of work." Even once the requisite aesthetic character of this feature has been specified, nothing in this definition excludes from style elements that we usually view as thematic. Let us take, for example, the fact that a historian is interested more in armed conflicts than in social changes,[63] or that a novelist is more inclined to recount love stories than financial difficulties. I shall not follow Goodman in his sometimes specious argument against the idea that style depends on the *manner* of denoting.[64] For example, the argument that there is style in arts that do not denote, like music or architecture, seems to me to prove only, as I said earlier, that style lies more generally in the manner of doing what one does—and what one does is not always limited, thank God, to denoting but may also include, for example, holding a paintbrush, a bow, a racket, or a loved one. But it so happens that, in the art of language, what one does is denote. And Goodman's quarrel with the notion of manner prevents him from seeing, or recognizing, that recounting battles and recounting economic crises are indeed after all two *manners* of dealing with a historical period. It is as if he wanted to clear the ground at any price for his own opinion (an opinion that is in my view correct, but excessively general) that style is al-

[63] Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, 25.
[64] Ibid., 24–27.

ways typical. Thus, swept along by his own enthusiasm, he moves on to the idea that everything typical is stylistic, as if that necessary condition were sufficient.

This definition seems to me somewhat too broad to be efficient. It would be more useful to consider that, among the typical features that contribute "to the placing of the work in one among certain significant bodies," the properly stylistic features are those that depend more on the properties of discourse than on those of its object. Moreover, Goodman seems less to believe in this position than to yield to it; arguing against the notion of synonymy and the idea that style might depend on the possibility of saying the same thing in various ways, he observes, on the contrary, that "very different things may be said *in much the same way*—not, of course, by the same text but by texts that have in common certain characteristics that constitute a style."[65] Here we are in full agreement.

It is true, nevertheless, that many "properties of discourse" can be considered in one way as thematic, in another as stylistic, according to whether they are treated as ends or as means. If a musician or a painter shows a lifelong predilection for composing cantatas or for painting landscapes, we can view that phenomenon as stylistic inasmuch as it constitutes a way of practicing the art in question. But if a competition, for example for the Prix de Rome, requires the composition of a cantata or the painting of a landscape, this feature can no longer be taken as typical (except perhaps of the Prix de Rome itself), thus as stylistic, and it will be necessary to look exclusively to the formal properties of the cantata or painting (for example, serial technique, cubist technique) to identify the style of the musician or painter. And if, conversely, the condition imposed were serial or cubist technique, the choice of applying it to a cantata or a landscape rather than to a sonata

65 Ibid., 25; emphasis added.

or a still life would become a stylistic choice once again. The same reversals can obviously occur in the literary arena: the choice, for a historian, of describing battles rather than analyzing economic crises can scarcely be taken as a stylistic choice once the subject imposed (for example, by a university program or by a collection of texts) is military history. In the chain of means and ends, the notion of style is thus attached, always in a relative way, to what is a means with respect to an end, a manner with respect to an object—the object of a manner always being capable of becoming the manner of a new object. And one can also suppose that the artist's ultimate goal is to impose his or her own style.

Contrary to Goodman's principle (rather than to his practice, which is more empirical), the criterion of manner seems to me very useful for the determination of style, by virtue of its very relativity and its reversibility. But to all evidence we need, in literature as elsewhere, alongside or within this broad definition ("properties of discourse"), a more restricted definition, which distinguishes what is stylistic from what is thematic, and even from many other rhematic features, such as narrative techniques, metric forms, or chapter length. In this restricted sense of a concept with variable dimensions, I shall thus reserve the term *style* for the formal properties of discourse that are manifested on the level of properly linguistic microstructures—that is, on the level of the sentence and its elements—or, as Monroe Beardsley puts it in a distinction applicable to all the arts, on the level of *texture* rather than that of *structure*.[66] The broader forms of diction belong to a more stable and, doubtless (I shall return to this point), more consti-

66 Beardsley, *Aesthetics*, 168–81. Molinié's formula (see Guiraud, *La stylistique*, 3) defining stylistics as the "study of the formal, verbal conditions of literariness" likewise seems to me too broad: certain of these formal conditions, like metric or narrative forms, do not have to do with style, for me, at least in the strict sense.

tutive and less attentional mode of organization. To put it in classical terms, style is exercised in the most specific way at a level that is neither that of thematic *invention* nor that of the *arrangement* of the whole, but rather that of *elocution:* in other words, of linguistic functioning.[67]

Moreover, this specification of level, which is quite commonly accepted, leads, it seems to me, to a broadening of the field of application with respect to what is designated, in Goodman's formula and elsewhere, by the word *work*. Furthermore, this broadening is explicitly contemplated by Goodman himself, at least in the realm of the plastic arts: "Throughout, I have been speaking of style of works of art. But need style, as conceived here, be confined to works, or might the term 'work' in our definition be as well replaced by 'object' or by 'anything'? Unlike some other definitions, ours does not rest upon an artist's intentions. What counts are properties symbolized, whether or not the artist chose or is even aware of them; and many things other than works of art symbolize."[68]

Now, the same remark holds true for verbal objects, with the one reservation that the latter can never be natural objects through and through, like a "classical" mountain or a "romantic" sunset, since lexical elements and grammatical structures are in their own way artifacts. But chance can take on the task, or be assigned the task, as in the surrealist and Oulipean games, of choosing among elements and filling in structures,

and we all know that "un cadavre exquis" (an exquisite corpse) or an "*n* + 7" may fortuitously exemplify a style, preexisting or not: the truth is that it *inevitably* exemplifies a style, like any verbal utterance. More simply and more frequently, a text written for nonliterary purposes also exemplifies, and just as inevitably, stylistic properties that may be the object of a positive or negative aesthetic evaluation. I have already recalled that Stendhal admired the Civil Code for its exemplary sobriety (for the sobriety that it exemplifies), to such an extent that he read a few pages from it every morning as a model while he was writing *La Chartreuse de Parme*. This may not make the Code a "literary work"—a concept whose definition, it seems to me, appeals to an artistic intention that is doubtful in this instance[69]—but it at least makes it a (verbal) aesthetic object. A sentence such as "Tout condamné à mort aura la tête tranchée" ("Every person condemned to death will have his head cut off")[70] may be chosen as a paragon of concise style, or criticized, as Malherbe criticized certain of Desportes's verses, for the cacophonous juxtaposition of the sequence "mort aura." In either case, and apart from any moral judgment, it is considered from a stylistic viewpoint that categorizes it as belonging to the "significant body" of *concise sentences*, or *cacophonic sentences*. In each case, of course, a stylistic, and thus an aesthetic, predicate is applied to a text that is not, strictly speaking, a literary work, and this judgment confers on it at least a literariness, whether positive or

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[67] The distinction in principle between these three levels does not preclude countless cases of interference: between the thematic and the stylistic levels, as illustrated by the typical words of the Virgilian wheel; between arrangement and elocution, as manifested by the verbal forms connected with narrative choices; or, more mechanically, by the words imposed by the rhyme scheme.

[68] Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking,* 35–36.

[69] "Doubtful" does not mean out of the question: I am merely supposing that we are not aware of that aspect of the writers' intentions. In fact, the question cannot be resolved: the writers were seeking at least to write as correctly and as clearly as they could, and the borderline between that concern and the aesthetic concern is eminently porous.

[70] This sentence appears, of course, not in the Civil Code but in the old Penal Code, bk. 1, chap. 11, art. 12.

negative, that its author probably did not seek or even antici-
pate.[71]

This possibility of a posteriori literarization poses at least
one practical, or methodological, problem, one that is illus-
trated by endless controversies over the "validity" of inter-
pretation. This is the problem of the legitimacy of the reader's
initiatives, or simply the reader's reactions, when these reac-
tions are not secured by authorial intention. Such excesses, let
us note, are neither more nor less damaging than the count-
less cases of "aesthetic recuperation" undertaken on natural
objects, or on artifacts whose initial and intentional function
was of a completely different order—as when someone places
a stone or an anvil on his mantel for its decorative value (at
least). But stylistic impositions sometimes proceed from a mis-
understanding, voluntary or otherwise, of the original mean-
ings, one that sometimes approaches abusive interpretation.
When a modern reader finds in a classical text the phrase
"heureux succès" (fortunate success)[72] and interprets it as a
pleonasm (whether awkward or felicitous), this reading is un-
deniably unfaithful to the significations of a period in which
the word succès had no positive value but only the sense of
"result." Similarly, purists militate in favor of a rigorously his-
torical reading, purged of all anachronistic investment: the
ancient texts should be received as they would have been by a

[71] The idea that an effect of style may be involuntary is obviously
foreign to an intentionalist stylistics such as Riffaterre's. It is more com-
patible with the causalist conception, for which the determinations that
govern style may be unconscious; this position is often accompanied by a
valorization of the involuntary effects—of what Sainte-Beuve called "those
chance strokes of a pen that belong to no one else" (*Port-Royal* [Paris:
Gallimard (Pléiade), 1953], 1:639), and that define true talent for him (but I
suspect that he calculated his own effects very carefully). This is one of
the particular cases of the discussion evoked at the end of Chapter 1.

[72] See Riffaterre, *Essais*, 51.

contemporary reader, a reader as cultivated and as well-
informed as possible about the author's intentions. Such a
position seems to me excessive, even utopian, for a number of
reasons, and as little respectful of history as the opposite posi-
tion, since it fails to take into account (among other things) the
unforeseen stylistic effects brought about by the evolution of
the language, effects which are to ancient texts what patina is
to ancient monuments: a trace of time that shares in the life of
the work, and that it would be inappropriate to efface by
overly energetic restoration, for it is not in conformity with
historical truth that the old should appear new. The most
fitting approach would be, it seems to me, to give credit both
to the original (denotative) signifying intention and to the
(connotative) stylistic value added by history: to know that
"heureux succès" signifies simply "success," and to recognize
the stylistic value that this a posteriori redundancy takes on
for us, contributing to the aesthetic flavor of the text. The
watchword, admittedly easier to articulate than to respect,
would be, in short: purism in matters of denotation, governed
by authorial intention; leniency in matters of exemplification,
which the author can never totally control and which are gov-
erned rather by the reader's attention.

But history destroys as much as, if not more than, it contrib-
utes, and stylistic effects also undergo the erosion of time:
thus the word *réussite* ("success"), an everyday word for us,
was a pronounced Italianism, and somewhat indiscreet, in the
seventeenth century. In such cases stylistic perception de-
pends on an effort at restoration that belongs to historical
information, as does, in the inverse case, the preservation of
meaning. The complexity of these maneuvers shows that in
literature as elsewhere the "reception" of works is not a
simple matter, to be entrusted to habit or whim, but a matter
of active and sensitive management requiring as much pru-

dence as initiative, and in which the aesthetic relation is reinforced by a maximum of knowledge: "pas de saveur sans quelque savoir."

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Style is thus the place par excellence of conditional literariness: literariness that is not automatically conferred by a constitutive criterion such as fictionality or poetic form. But *place*, precisely, does not mean "criterion" or "sufficient condition": since every text has its style, it follows that every text should be in fact literary, whereas every text is only *potentially* literary. *Place* merely signifies "terrain": style is an aspect on which an aesthetic judgment, by definition subjective, may bear, a judgment that determines an entirely relative literariness (that is: dependent on a relation) and that cannot lay claim to any universality. The constitutive literariness of a novel or a poem is the object of a logically inevitable assent (since novels and poems are "literary genres"), unless what is in reality a value judgment ("This novel is vulgar") is disguised as a judgment of fact ("This novel is not a literary work"). The literariness of a page by Michelet, Buffon, or Saint-Simon (if history, natural history, and memoirs are not considered constitutively literary genres), or that of a sentence from the Civil Code, depends on the contrary—among other things[73]—on an aesthetic appreciation of its style.

Since style accompanies language everywhere as its exemplificatory aspect, it goes without saying that this dimension cannot be absent from constitutive literariness itself: to put it

[73] This remark is precautionary: there are perhaps other occasions for conditional literariness, for example, certain narrative devices in the non-fictional account (see Chapter 3, pp. 81–82). But if *style* is taken in its broad sense, it obviously encompasses all that, and with good reason.

naively, there is "as much" style in Flaubert or Baudelaire as in Michelet or Saint-Simon. But in these cases style does not determine in such an exclusive way the judgment of literariness, and in these cases, *from this viewpoint*, style is, as it were, a supplementary argument and a bonus of aesthetic pleasure. A novel does not need to be "well written" to belong to literature, good or bad: in order to belong to literature, a status that entails no particular merit (or rather, that does not belong to the order of merit), it is enough for it to be a novel, that is, a fiction, just as it suffices for a poem to correspond to the historically and culturally variable criteria of poetic diction.

Style thus defines in some sense a *minimal* degree of literariness, not in the sense that the literariness it can determine would be weaker than the others, but in the sense that this literariness is less reinforced by other criteria (fictionality, poeticity) and that it depends entirely on the reader's appreciation. And yet, this minimal state, however aleatory its aesthetic investment may be, is in itself materially irreducible, since it consists in the text's *being*, as inseparable but distinct from its *saying*. There is not, because there cannot be, any such thing as transparent and imperceptible discourse. There are no doubt receptively opaque states, functioning the way the words and phrases of an unknown language function for everyone. The most common state is the intermediate or rather the *mixed* state in which language simultaneously effaces itself as sign and allows itself to be perceived as form. Language is neither totally conductive nor totally resistant; it is always semiconductive, or semiopaque, and thus always at once intelligible, as denotative, and perceptible, as exemplificatory. "For the ambiguity of the sign," as Sartre also said, "implies that one can penetrate it at will like a pane of glass and pursue the thing signified, or turn one's gaze towards its *reality* and

consider it as an object."[74] But what Sartre reserved for poetic language is true of all discourse.

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As the reader will no doubt have understood, my intention here has not been to establish a new practice of stylistic analysis on the basis of a new definition of style. In a sense, the existing practice, among stylisticians such as Spitzer, and even more among critics when they apply themselves to the study of style, seems to me more faithful to the reality of style than are the principles of method or the theoretical declarations we have inherited from the discipline. And the only advantage of the definition proposed seems to me to be, in sum, that it is more applicable than others to the way in which Proust, for example, analyzed Flaubert's style: by asking not *where* and *when* "stylistic phenomena" appeared in his novels, but *what* style is constituted by the consistencies in his language use and what singular and coherent world view is expressed and transmitted by that very particular use of tenses, pronouns, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions. Such a "deforming syntax" cannot be a matter of isolated "details" whose identification would require the deployment of a sophisticated apparatus: it is indissociable from a linguistic tissue that constitutes the text's very being. I recall an exchange, in certain respects emblematic of this debate, between a stylistician and a critic at the Cerisy conference center. In a paper on the state of his discipline, Gérard Antoine had cited the celebrated formula of Aby Warburg, one that stylisticians might well take as their motto: "The good Lord is in the details." "I should say,

[74] Sartre, "What Is Literature?" 29. This obviously holds true for any representation, and above all for artistic representation: see Jean-Marie Schaeffer, preface to Arthur Danto, *La transfiguration du banal* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 17.

rather," replied Jean-Pierre Richard in the voice of a true structuralist, "that the good Lord is in *between* the details."[75] If we agree that the good Lord represents style here, and that in between the details there are still other details as well as the entire network of their relations, the conclusion is obvious: style is indeed in the details, but in *all* the details, and in all their relations. The "phenomenon of style" is discourse itself.

[75] See Gérard Antoine, "Stylistique des formes et stylistique des thèmes, ou le stylisticien face à l'ancienne et à la nouvelle critique," in *Les chemins actuels de la critique,* ed. Georges Poulet (Paris: Plon, 1967), 296, 310.

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