Stylistics

Although there is a vast body of material professing to be stylistic analysis, there is, as yet, no general agreement about the aims and scope of this paradiscipline. In recent years, perhaps reinforced by the New Critical dichotomy of poetry and prose, stylistics seems to have fallen into two divisions: (1) the analysis of literary style, which has its peculiar aesthetic or poetic values, and (2) the analysis of a general or linguistic style, which has its rhetorical or prosaic values. This bifurcation reinforces the division (real or imagined) between literary criticism and linguistics. In this part my interest is in whether one may legitimately define a "literary style," and this involves a close look at what Leo Spitzer called stylistics: the measuring of minute surface details of a literary text against our intuitive grasp of the text as a whole, and beyond that against the historical milieu of author and work. Yet the focus on surface qualities does not relegate style to mere "decoration" as many classical rhetorical theories would have it. Style is more substantive than "figures of speech" that simply embellish the presentation of an argument to make it more pleasing and, hence, convincing. Style is a matter of technique, but it is not only technique.

Clearly, I have raised again the dilemma of the form-content dichotomy. The trend in linguistically oriented approaches to stylistics is either to ignore or openly to affirm the dichotomy. Michael Riffaterre says, "style is understood as an emphasis (expressive, affective, or aesthetic) added to the information conveyed by the linguistic structure, without alteration of meaning." Richard Ohmann is somewhat more perceptive than Riffaterre, although finally of the same opinion.
What is content and what is form, or style? The attack on a dichotomy of form and content has been persistent in modern criticism; to change so much as a word, the argument runs, is to change the meaning as well. This austere doctrine has a certain theoretical appeal, given the supposed impossibility of finding exact synonyms, and the ontological queerness of disembodied content . . . divorced from any verbal expression. Yet at the same time this doctrine leads to the altogether counterintuitive conclusion that there can be no such thing as style, or that style is simply a part of content.

Louis T. Milic borrows an analogy from information theory to demonstrate the function of style in sending a message. In a simple code consisting of only two symbols, A and B, and rules that restrict expression to two messages encoded as AAA and BBB (the redundancy a safeguard against transmission errors), stylistic variations can be seen as messages written AAB or BBA. The message AAB is recognized immediately as carrying the same cognitive content as the message AAA; the variation may be a mistake, insignificant because it does not distort the message, or it may be a stylistic choice of the author, also insignificant because it does not alter the information content. At best, it can function to add "emphasis" or "local color." Ohmann, Riffaterre, and Milic represent an extreme view of the separability of style (form) and content, a view that eventuates, whatever the efforts to avoid it, in a version of the "decoration" theory. They see style, correctly, as manifesting itself in a surface quality, but, ironically, they rob it of any real value by reducing its influence over content. Ohmann, Riffaterre, and Milic reflect their debt to what Gerald Bruns has defined as the "rhetorical" tradition of stylistic theory. The message, or informational content of a text, they argue, is fixed; it is unchanged by stylistic variations, but this too leads to an "altogether counterintuitive conclusion": because style is an isolable element of any text, it is finally insignificant or trivial.

Conversely, under the pressure of New Critical aesthetics, literary style is seen to be fused (to reuse the Coleridgean term) with content. It has an undeniable surface quality that can be grasped immediately by any sensitive reader; but the surface, as Spitzer argued, is wedded to content, and the organic wholeness of the text is, finally, irreducible. Here style is raised to its most
concrete level; the embodiment of the creative act of mind gives the text its privileged functionality, or what John Crowe Ransom called "texture." It is not, therefore, in the theory of fused content and form that style disappears; rather it is in Ohmann's, Riffaterre's, and Milic's decoration theory that style almost evaporates in its triviality. Style is never so transparent.

All language use is marked by style, and therefore, the terms literary and linguistic are misleading. We would, perhaps, be better served by Karl Uitti's distinction between "individual" and "interpersonal" style. Interpersonal style belongs to the realm of communication theory, where style must be as nearly separable from content as possible in order to avoid distortion of the message. The function of style here is for emphasis or clarification, but at its extreme it has little aesthetic value. Interpersonal style adheres to conventional formulae, to communal and historically relevant devices or "figures"; but it is not superfluous, even if it tends toward the trivial, for without it the disembodied content would never find its way to the intended reader or listener. The ideal would be a kind of "white writing," or what Roland Barthes has described as "degree zero.

On the other extreme, individual style pushes toward the level of pure poetry, where the symbolic function of language takes on the mysterious existence that Cassirer characterized as a transcendental relationship between perceiver and perceived. Here our attention is shifted away from primary concern with the "what" of the message to the "how" of the expression. The symbol is not merely a name for a thing, but is, in the poetic function of language use, at one with the thing it names. The separation of form and content, therefore, is more problematical. At an ideal (or idealistic) level of poetic consciousness, style is wholly individual, the opposite of "degree zero." This is pure metaphor, the romantic dream of immediacy or presence, "that is, equivalence of the author's literary intention and carnal structure. . . . So that style is always secret; but the occult aspect of its implications does not arise from the mobile and ever-provisional nature of language; its secret is recollection locked within the body of the writer." At this extreme, Barthes claims, it is improper to speak of a style, for there are many styles, each of which raises the "writer above History as the freshness of Innocence." Purely individual, purely metaphoric, and
completely personal style would mark a free moment in duration, the expression of the writer's identity as incorporeal "voice."

Two major concerns, then, define my interest in style as I move toward the construction of a literary hermeneutics. First, style manifests itself in its surface qualities, what might better be called the physical or sensual characteristics of language. Consequently, it is the most available (though sometimes the least observed) characteristic of any literary text; as Spitzer suggested, it is the starting point for interpretation. Second, style fluctuates between the discrete and the conventional. Behind style, in the realm of human cognitive processes, are affective meanings characterized by their position along a line leading from metaphor to metonymy; but on the sensually apprehendable surface, stylistic techniques are characterized by positions along a line leading from the individual to the interpersonal.

Since no text, wherever it might lie along these continuous lines between extremes, ever becomes wholly individual (to be so would be to be totally obscure) or wholly conventional (a negation of the author's or speaker's identity), there is always a combination of individual and interpersonal qualities in its style. This is the essence of the text's communicative powers; there must be a context of the conventional as well as an individual expression. A study of style, then, encompasses the traditional divisions of interest in all literary criticism: the author, the work, and the reader. From this basis, returning to the preliminary observations with which I began my discussion of language in part 2, I can describe the following triad of issues to be discussed in part 3.

1. Style is the individual existential projection of an author's perception of his world. This perception is ordered (structured) in the cognitive-expressive transaction that takes place between the author and the cultural-historical and linguistic conventions of his day involving his conscious or unconscious "collective individuality."

2. Style is the dynamic meaning-structure of the work itself, its surface or aesthetic qualities as work.
3. Style is the affective structure of meaning that sets up controlled responses in the reader. This phase of the communicative transaction enables the reader to enter the world of the work and finally to step through time and across space to enter the author's world as he saw it.

STYLE AS EXISTENTIAL PROJECTION: THE AUTHOR

Interest in the relationship between the individuality of an act of language usage and the general, cultural system of language has led to what many linguists call the "deviation theory." Simply stated, this theory explains the individual aspects of any linguistic utterance as deviations from the general linguistic norm. The relationship is vaguely parallel to Saussure's distinction between parole and langue; in communication theory it is like the relationship between message and code. For the literary theorist, however, there is an unavoidable trap in deviation theory because it is impossible to differentiate poetic deviations from all other deviations. Of course, the trap operates only if one wishes to articulate a theory of special (aesthetic) language usage, a poetics.

The term poetics in itself is troublesome. Merely to use it is to raise the specter of the entire tradition of aesthetic theory, which originated with Aristotle and has as yet found no culmination. Does the term imply a theory of language usage (creativity) radically deviant from normal communication? Is the difference one of kind or degree, the former, of course, too radical to be designated "deviation"? Coming at these issues from a linguist's point of view, Jonathan Culler has bravely undertaken to sort out the primary questions and to offer tentative conclusions to some of these ancient problems. He is not altogether successful, but his struggle is instructive.

In defining what he calls "structuralist poetics" Culler engages in a broadly sweeping critique of structuralism (with its linguistic or Saussurean biases), and he also promotes his own theory of literary reading, which he sees in terms of what he calls "naturalization." Naturalization is a mode of making a text intelligible; it assumes a motivation toward meaningfulness, the desire to make sense. Naturalization, moreover, can be aestheticized by viewing
it within the limits of a general, literary intertextuality; literary intelligibility is a function of cross-referencing between texts and general categories of texts. Culler borrows from Todorov the term *vraisemblance*, which implies both our ability to perceive connections, resemblances, and a kind of statistical sense of probability (i.e., that a text we are reading is likely to echo other texts of a particular tradition). I will quote at length from Culler to illustrate the scope of his sense of intertextuality.

One might distinguish five levels of *vraisemblance*, five ways in which a text may be brought into contact with and defined in relation to another text which helps to make it intelligible. First there is the socially given text, that which is taken as the "real world." Second, but in some cases difficult to distinguish from the first, is a general cultural text: shared knowledge which would be recognized by participants as part of culture and hence subject to correction or modification but which none the less serves as a kind of "nature." Third, there are the texts or conventions of a genre, a specifically literary and artificial *vraisemblance*. Fourth, comes what might be called the natural attitude to the artificial, where the text explicitly cites and exposes *vraisemblance* of the third kind so as to reinforce its own authority. And finally, there is the complex *vraisemblance* of specific intertextualities, where one work takes another as its basis or point of departure and must be assimilated in relation to it. At each level there are ways in which the artifice of forms is motivated or justified by being given a meaning.12

What Culler argues here and elsewhere is that intelligibility depends on recognition, on conventional knowledge of a special kind. Motivation (as borrowed from Saussure) implies cultural stipulation; the intelligibility of any text arises from its bound relationship to a somewhat vaguely conceived literary *langue*. Motivation and intelligibility are the production and recognition of certain conventional strategies for making sense, strategies of cultural referentiality, formal integrity, generic type, and self-conscious literariness (artificiality), all of which express society's aesthetic value system. Such conventions are empty and superficial, finally; they are, I would claim, matters of surface style, and Culler's poetics is itself little more than a conventional theory of stylistic conventions, consciously cut off from anything resembling a true interpretive procedure.
Leaning heavily on the recent theory of Roland Barthes, Culler follows the trend of structuralism in collapsing all content into form ("stylistic surface"). "To read is to participate in the play of the text, to locate zones of resistance and transparency, to isolate forms and determine their content and then to treat content in turn as a form with its own content, to follow, in short, the interplay of surface and envelope."¹³ Use of the term "play" here, however, is specifically differentiated from Derrida's concept of "freeplay" (which Culler sees as a kind of logical trick),¹⁴ and this raises several problems. One cannot play Culler's reading game without knowing the rules, and such knowledge implies a kind of literary competence that has a limiting function like the cultural function of Saussure's langue. Literary competence is cultural and artificial (unlike the implications of an innate linguistic competence in Chomsky's universal grammar, for example, or the innate reasoning capacities in Lévi-Strauss's binary theory). Culler's literary langue is a holding action against the anarchic freeplay of langage; and, aware of the ideological implications of this theory, he attempts to defend it simply by anticipating the attacks of ideological opponents.¹⁵ But the issue here is not whether Culler's concept of competency or langue implies political and psychological repression; it does imply that. The issue is to what degree is Culler's theory useful for understanding literary texts?

Thus several implications of Culler's approach are of particular importance to our investigation here of the concept of style. The langue of competence for Culler functions in much the same way as Frye's literary myth, as a closed system of possible conventions available to any intelligent (competent) reader in his struggles to understand a particular text. But whereas Frye attempts to give his closed system both historical and psychological justification, thereby breeching the system to locate a meaningfulness that is both cultural/historical and a reflection of individual desire, Culler carefully wards off any such extraneous projection. As a result, "meaning" is trivialized; one is bound within a system merely to recognize the possible givens of that system. The repressive nature of Culler's competency is (1) historically insensitive, unlike Saussure's langue, which is in a state of continual readjustment, and (2) hopelessly superficial
because meaning is not in any sense content or experience, but merely empty form, a set of algebraic counters organized into patterns (like the linguist’s grammar rules). The suggestion of cultural referentiality is severely limited by the idea of artificiality. For Culler, style and content are not merely separate; contentless form is all the meaning we have.

Culler’s theory emphasizes in part his reading of the narrative theory of Frank Kermode onto the “readerly-text” theory of Barthes. The key is closure on all levels. Competency is a closed set of possible intelligible forms; langue is a closed system of conventions (conventionalizing even the functions of social/historical referentiality), and the individual text is marked by its own drive toward closure, its “sense of an ending.” Without this interrelated set of closures, intelligibility is at hazard. The style of literature, its essential “literariness,” is to resolve (naturalize) all openness according to conventional wisdom. Meaning is a term we should drop, as Culler does, in favor of the information theory jargon, intelligibility. Culler’s structuralist poetics, therefore, results in the most radical of all decoration theories, for literariness can only be seen as manifest on the stylistic surface of a text and as readily available to any competent reader whether or not that reader can detect meaning in the text.

It seems that we must, with regard to style as well as to general language functioning as discussed in part 2, break through the limits of closed literary systems if interpretation and understanding of literary texts can ever eventuate in meaning. To this purpose I have broadened the functioning of motivation by introducing into it the concepts of “intentionality” and “articulation to experience”; that is, by introducing the idea of the author. As a consequence, it is impossible to speak of any determining system or langue, or of the process of naturalization as Culler defines it, without confronting a profound ambiguity. Any individual text (parole) both is situated in a cultural system (langue) and also creates or situates that system. A single parole, moreover, may situate (and be situated in) many systems at once. Competency, as Culler defines it, is too limiting (if comforting) a concept; as the “system” that “makes literary effects possible,” it trivializes the function of the author in making both conscious and unconscious choices. Like many linguistically oriented structuralists, Culler’s expressed interest in the idea of authorial
control is illusory, perhaps contradictory. Limiting conventions provide a context for the author to write against, Culler claims, and the author may even "attempt to subvert" those conventions. But, alas, the context is ultimately "the context within which [even the author's subversive?] activity takes place." Subversion is a hollow word, and the limiting literary context precedes and determines all literary expressiveness.

Borrowing from both the structuralists and, perhaps less willingly, from the Anglo-American New Critics, Culler extends his theory of naturalization to the lyric, and in so doing he expresses a very traditional attitude toward the authorial function in literary composition. A naturalized lyric reveals unambiguously its reflection of conventional surface qualities like popular verse forms and rhyme patterns, general patterns of metrical and phonetic organization. "We naturalize such patterns in a very formal and abstract way by showing how various features contribute to patterns which help to assert the monumentality and impersonality of poetry..." The only "value" of this assertion, Culler says, borrowing from the aesthetic humanism of Wallace Stevens (hence, also from the lingering romanticism of Kermode), is that it convinces us "that the making of fictions is a worthy activity." The radical "impersonality" of the theory (which belongs to both the New Criticism and structuralism in their different ways) removes poetry (all literature) from the realm of the real and locates it irrevocably in the realm of the artificial. However one may struggle to relate fiction to life and human experience, the former always seems to contain its own justification for being.

There is an unfortunate and undeniable aestheticism in such a fiction theory; the removal of the authorial function, and consequently the denial of nonconventional or empirical referentiality, leaves us only with the surface of stylistic play. The impersonality theory takes two different forms under the different influences of structuralism and New Critical contextualism, but the effects on literary hermeneutics are similar just as the superficial operations of their interpretive procedures often appear to be alike. In Culler's structuralist poetics, for example, the first person implications of the lyric poem are conventionalized; the pronoun I functions as a "shifter" (like "here" and "there"), as an empty orientation
term. When the "I" calls attention to itself as so functioning, literary naturalization has occurred, and we are aware that we are reading poetry. Given Culler's emphasis on fictionality and textual closure (the poem's "monumentality," he calls it), this particular antireferentiality in his theory can be as New Critical as it is structuralist. Given his borrowing from linguistics the idea of literary competency, his antiempirical bias, and emphasis on cultural conventionality, Culler's theory seems more comfortably in the structuralist camp. In either case, impersonality virtually contradicts the issue of style. For the structuralist critic, impersonality emphasizes the play of language reflecting its general diacritical nature as opposed to language's expressive capacities. It emphasizes language's medium-as-message function as opposed to its content-carrying function. It emphasizes its systematic and nonempirical powers to generate endless meanings as opposed to its subservience to human experience. From the New Critical point of view, impersonality emphasizes the immediate, experiential (aesthetic) nature of the act of reading as opposed to mediated communication. It emphasizes the ineffable mystery of the human spirit (man's "fictionalizing" capacities) as opposed to man's conventional and articulate wisdom. It emphasizes the density of language, its self-justifying, self-referential opaqueness as opposed to language's transparent referentiality. In both traditions style is radically dehumanized, dispersed into the systematic freplay of language tempered by the conventional, interpersonal limits of langue on the one hand, or apotheosized into the eternal, inexpressible, and sacred on the other hand.

Culler's efforts are not consciously directed toward a union of these two traditions, but his desire to define a truly special sense of literariness (surely a legacy of Anglo-American aesthetics) within the boundaries of a structuralist philosophy makes his discussion usefully revelatory of the problems that modern literary theory faces in discussing literary style. Culler's positing of a conventional system of literary competency may, in fact, be the only solution to the dilemma, but it must not be seen as a trivial sort of deviation theory: the playfulness of fiction as opposed to the play of meaningful signification. Moreover, Culler's approach founders on internal contradictions, yet it is nonetheless considerably more convincing than traditional deviationist ideas. Samuel R. Levin is representative of a
statistically oriented version of deviation theory; he argues that "a given linguistic element produces a stylistic effect because its occurrence has zero or near zero probability of occurring where it does." A high degree of probability defines the norm, the basis, of course, for improbable deviations. There are several obvious problems in this theory, particularly when it is applied to literary texts. Primary among them is how to determine the norm (as it is a problem for Culler in defining conventional literary competency). Any norm is abstract; no individual utterance embodies a norm, nor is the norm simply a sum of all individual utterances. For the most part, a major thrust of modern linguistics has been toward the formulation of a general linguistic norm. This is, fundamentally, a descriptive effort, championed by men like Leonard Bloomfield and Chomsky, as opposed to prescriptive stylistics like that of Strunk and White's handbook, *The Elements of Style*. But the focus here is on language in general, and there is no room for even a special literary competency like that promoted by Culler.

The dilemma faced by Levin, therefore, is that either literary style is a special form of all stylistic deviations or literary style must be considered outside the realm of the normalizing system altogether. Levin argues bafflingly that "all deviations, poetic or otherwise, are ungrammatical, and ungrammatical sequences are deviant. But not all ungrammatical sequences are poetically deviant." This distinction is of no help at all; it merely removes the question to another level requiring that a distinction be made between poetic and nonpoetic ungrammaticalness (which has an even more absurd implication in the distinction between meaningful and nonmeaningful deviations). Levin "solves" the problem on this level rather weakly by positing what he calls a distinction in the "degrees of ungrammaticalness" between poetic and nonpoetic deviation.

It is perhaps better, although still not wholly satisfactory, to distinguish between deviations that are ungrammatical (or "agrammatical"), and therefore outside the system, and deviations that are, to borrow Roman Jakobson's term, "anti-grammatical." Agrammatical deviations can be cast off as meaningless, but antigrammatical deviations exist both within and outside the general system. The result of this terminological shift is to emphasize both the individual act of language use
(parole) and the normalizing structures of langue. In this way we might better understand what Barthes means by the argument that beyond the level of style there is implied "a vision which is eventually moral . . ." or "sociological." 24 The literary artist in some way finds his identity as artist in the struggle between his personal style and the normal style of his language system; he also finds himself embroiled in the tension between his private moral responsibilities and commitments and the system of morality imposed upon him by his society. The two levels are intimately related if we take seriously Wittgenstein's claim that "the limits of our language mean the limits of our world." To challenge the fixities and definites of language is to challenge the moral norms and restrictions of society. To be always somewhat in contention with society is, perhaps, the human condition, but I italicize somewhat because this is always a matter of degree. 25

Such a schematic sense of oppositions, of course, is too easy; even in the realm of art it is too reductive. But the complexity of being a "good" member of a society, which involves neither the surrender to a programmatic political determinism nor the assertion of inviolable personal freedom, is surely intensified for the inviolable personal freedom, is surely intensified for the literary artist. If language gives us our world, the use of language involves agonizing moral commitments; and it is this moral content, reflecting the artist's identifying voice, that underlies all serious literary productions. In his fine article, "Literature as Act," Richard Ohmann makes this point by expanding the terminology of "speech act theory" to define the expressive action of the literary artist as a peculiar kind of illocutionary performance. "Illocutionary action is action on a social plane. It relies for success on those things that make up a society: for instance, definitions of role and relation, stable distribution of power, conventions of intimacy and distance, manners." 26 The artist, alone in his study, cut off from the daily humdrum activities of familiar experience, can hardly avoid the tension between himself and his society as he engages the interpersonal norms of cultural language use with his own personal style. The degree to which he challenges the norms can only be known after the fact; that he will confront them is assured by the human condition, for no individual is so in touch with the abstract
structure (the surplus of explanatory power) of the general system of language that he can write in the wholly impersonal anonymity of Derrida's "freeplay." To write "situates" langue, cultural values, and meanings, as it activates the infinite potentials of language. The writer's moral commitment may issue as more or less positive or negative, for himself or for the reader, but his commitment will be made, and the necessity of this commitment, a fall from innocence and purity, reflects an essential historicism on both the cultural and stylistic levels.

This historical dimension of literary style is not, as Karl Uitti claims, a new phenomenon in language theory. Through men like Condillac and Humboldt, he sees it eventuating in the very influential work of Edward Sapir. "His analysis of poetic creation as the creative deployment of resources involving two layers of an inner form versus the outer restrictions of the specific linguistic system . . . remains faithful to the most profitable dualisms modern thought has produced."²⁷ That dualism has its source in Cartesian "mentalism" and the dichotomy of mind and body. It has pervaded my discussion from the beginning, surfacing in the form/content dichotomy and the poetry/prose or individual style/interpersonal style distinctions, as well as in the philosophical argument of part 2 describing the mutuality of inner and outer worlds. Transformed into the historical perspective of the interplay of individual moment and continuous pattern it is, indeed, a profitable dualism, and clearly it works profitably for Sapir.

Language is itself the collective art of expression, a summary of thousands upon thousands of individual intuitions. The individual goes lost in the collective creation, but his personal expression has left some trace in a certain give and flexibility that are inherent in all collective works of the human spirit. The language is ready, or can be quickly made ready, to define the artist's individuality. If no literary artist appears, it is not essentially because the language is too weak an instrument; it is because the culture of the people is not favorable to the growth of such personality as seeks a truly individual verbal expression.²⁸

The give and take between individual expression and social restrictions quickly becomes historical for Sapir, defining what he called linguistic "drift."²⁹
This idealistic position is remarkably similar to that of the Prague Linguistic Circle. From a more positivistic point of view, with its emphasis on the study of the synchronic system, the Prague theorists do not reduce the importance of the individual creative act.

Le langage poétique [the poetic use of language] tend à mettre en relief la valeur autonome du signe... tous les plans d'un système linguistique, qui n'ont dans le langage de communication qu'un rôle de service, prennent, dans le langage poétique, des valeurs autonomes plus ou moins considérables.

In the matter of the dialectic of poetry and general language, the Prague theorists are again at pains to define the importance of both terms.

Le langage poétique a, du point de vue synchronique, la forme de la parole, c'est-à-dire d'un acte créateur individuel, qui prend sa valeur d'une part sur la fond de la tradition poétique actuelle (langue poétique) et d'autre part sur le fond de la langue communicative contemporaine.30

The Prague theorists are less concerned than Sapir with the individualism of language usage, but they are also well aware that a literary langue (langue poétique) cannot operate wholly apart from the general pattern of social communication (as Culler proposes) and, therefore, no conventional system can wholly trivialize the role of the author in the communicative transaction.

I would argue that the personality of the artist is never unimportant, not because we can read from his biography directly into his individual works, or vice versa, but because on the level of his own cognitive awareness we find the structuring principle of those works. This is why literary criticism has turned more and more to the philosophy and psychology of human consciousness for its principles of interpretation. It is crucial to remember, however, that consciousness and linguistic capacities are structurally related, and that to map from the structuring power of the mind to the structure of the work, a modified version of Coleridge's identification of poetry and the poet in the poetic imagination, is less than an exact, one-to-one transfer. The innate grammar of the human mind posited by Chomsky has, theoretically, the explanatory power to justify his effort to isolate and describe it, but because there are dimensions to language
beyond the local systems of communal utterances, much of the
descriptive effort is speculative projection. In this sense these
innate structures, and this is particularly true of Lévi-Strauss's
theory, do not explain anything. They are no more than logically
perceived "potentials" for cognition; they are rules that become
meaningful only when they enter into the communicative
transaction between subject and object, only when articulated to
local or individual experience. Lévi-Strauss's theory of binary
oppositions is simply a principle of juxtaposition; meaning arises
when the mind juxtaposes two or more perceived objects—an act
that is at once a "situating" of the objects (as in Wittgenstein's
states of affairs) and the implication of a desire or motivation or
attitude toward that situation.

There are, of course, many forms of this activity. The
existential-phenomenologist philosopher Maurice Merleau-
Ponty has made us aware of an act of juxtaposition that takes the
form of bringing certain objects in the perceptual field into
primary focus—or foreground—while relegating the rest to an
undifferentiated background. This is, perhaps, the most funda­
mental version of cognitive attention, a separation and identifica­
tion of the world of things analogous to the literary act of
"defamiliarization." There is also a temporal juxtaposition of
items, a relationship established across time and thereby
involving memory, and there is a more complex exclusive/
inclusive juxtaposition, the sorting out of items into groups or
categories. No doubt there are more, reflecting Kant's theory of
the fundamental categories of the understanding as well as
supporting Piaget's thesis that there are many logics.

Below this system of logics we find the rudimentary conscious­
ness that is the focus of Cassirer's philosophy, his projection of a
first "violent act of individuation." Here is the most funda­
mental assertion of the ego, the awareness of the self as distinct
from the other. Yet we need not overemphasize either the egoistic
or the hierarchic/developmentalist aspects of Cassirer's theory.
As Heidegger claims: "The origin of language is in essence
mysterious. And this means that language can only have arisen
from the overpowering, the strange and terrible, through man's
departure into being. In this departure language was being,
embodied in the word: poetry. Language is the primordial poetry
in which a people speaks being." It is not merely a primitive
activity; it is an enduring condition. The emergence of the ego is also a situating of the collective context, and therein language and consciousness gain the power to manage and participate in the undifferentiated otherness. The end of this projection of order is what Piaget called "reflective abstraction" and the programmatic and communal function of language as thought. Moreover, this communal level is that which is most available to Chomsky’s linguistic study—and to Chomskyan stylistic analysis. Here language, at its most “instrumental,” disguises much of its creative or poetic power; "originally an act of violence that discloses being, the word sinks from this height to become a mere sign..." But again the instrumentalist eclipse of poetry is never total. The world of literary art, we remember, divides two extremes. To borrow from Heidegger once more, this is "the great poetry by which a people enters into history" and that "initiates the molding of language."

The poet’s impulse is to open *langue* by an appeal to the freeplay of *langage* in order to activate what we will have to call language’s "poetic function," and this may explain why society, conservative of its operational systems, treats its artists as children, resists the poet’s challenges that would seemingly repeat the socially repressed trauma of the violent birth of consciousness or being. One of the forms of this repression is to declare the poet a nonbeing by means of a theory of literary impersonality. The poet is always a radical when he challenges the conventional in language and general culture. Yet his is an essential function and, as I have presented it, a broadly conceived form of deviation that never allows language and society to become static, that asserts our historical being by situating both *langue* and *parole*. His articulation to experience, his language, gives us his identifying style as well as society’s conventions and cultural style. There is, of course, nothing of the mystically visionary or prophetic in this function. The poet’s relation to his culture’s norms is an extremely complex arrangement; his challenge to those norms must not be seen simply as ideological or as always a conscious activity. The literary artist may reveal himself to be the most revolutionary at the very moment he feels himself to be most in tune with his culture. The poet’s act of articulation to experience is an act of critical interpretation; he reveals the limits
of culture's norms, often exposing the contradictions that reside deep within, at the base of, cultural ideology. As always, the poet's identity, his style, is as much given to him as it is created by him.

STYLE AS DYNAMIC MEANING STRUCTURE: THE TEXT

In general, there are two significant questions that must be answered in the development of a viable literary hermeneutics: (1) how do we interpret a text and (2) how do we evaluate it? But the latter is an extremely complicated activity involving both interpretation and the individual and cultural value systems that can be brought to bear on the text. Value judgments are intimately and unavoidably a part of literary interpretation, yet they are less objective (partly because they are subject to historical variations) and less easily methodized. My focus so far in this essay has been more or less on interpretive methodology, and I have, I hope, allowed the evaluative dimension of literary criticism to emerge as it will. Now, however, it is no longer possible to ignore it.

In discussing the stylistic structure of the individual text, I will start, once more, with the relatively value-free methodology spawned by Noam Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar. Samuel R. Levin has attempted to differentiate between poetic style and "casual" language use by extending Chomsky's transformational models. He also borrows from Roman Jakobson the idea that "the poetic function [of language] projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination."\(^37\) This very important observation by Jakobson will occupy us in more detail below, but for the moment it can be simplistically stated that Levin takes the "principle of equivalence" as it is applied to the structure or arrangement of structures within an individual text as the basis for his own stylistic principle of "coupling."\(^38\) Coupling describes how, in syntagmatic units of an individual text, the positional arrangement of one syntagm parallels the positional arrangement of another (or others) thereby structurally establishing equivalence between the two. More simply, the poetic arrangement of words, what in the past we have euphemistically called "poetic license," tends to force the reader to see certain
groups of words as equivalent—sometimes in contradiction to their conventional semantic import.

Richard Ohmann, also defending the use of transformational grammar in stylistic analysis, lists three major "characteristics of transformational rules" that are valuable to the literary critic.

1. "A large number of transformations are optional" and will allow the critic to identify typical patterns used by individual writers.
2. "A transformation works changes on structure, but normally leaves part of the structure unchanged." Hence "sets of sentences which are transformational alternatives seem to be different renderings of the same proposition." Again this aids in the intuitive recognition of the stylistic variation which is simply a surface quality added to the informational content.
3. "A third value of a transformational grammar . . . is its power to explain how complex sentences are generated . . . Writers differ noticeably in the amounts and kinds of syntactic complexity they habitually allow themselves. . . ."39

The approaches of both Levin and Ohmann are interesting and valuable, but they are also limited by the nature of the transformational principle itself. Levin admits that his idea of "coupling" ignores "features like meaning, metaphor, imagery, etc.,"40 a rather casual dismissal of what has traditionally been regarded as the very essence of poetry. His problem, basically, is in his rendering of Jakobson's "principle of equivalence." Two groups of words arranged in parallel are not necessarily equivalent in poetic discourse—at least they are not mathematically (or logically) equivalent as Levin suggests. The syntactic parallelism results in a semantic modification of meaning; neither element means quite what it meant in isolation. It is not easy to ignore meaning.

How to read a poetic text must be analogous to how to write one. Levin wants to explain poetic "unity," that "contextual" unity which extends beyond the limits of the individual sentence (or the limits of a syntagm). But this unity is achieved in the writing by a process of continual readjustments between the parts, not by establishing a simple series of parallel structures. The poet begins by arranging a group of words in a meaningful order, perhaps several lines, a single line, or even part of a line. As he writes, adding to and developing the intuitive thought that
set him at his composition, he must go back to rewrite what he first set down. Throughout the process of selection, arrangement, and limitation there is a forward and backward movement, the old being rearranged to accommodate the new, while the limits of the new are refined by what has already been written. Is there not always a lingering trace of this process inscribed in all texts? Does this not indicate a very fundamental openness at the heart of even the most tightly constructed text? Levin's concept of equivalence, however, seems to describe a mere string of parallel structures. Rather than a tensional relationship between closure and openness, Levin's approach reduces organization to the idea of unrestricted addition. His method is purely statistical and value free. There is little or no way to distinguish between parallel structures or groups of such structures; they simply follow one another in linear fashion; their only measure is quantitative.

As a result, style has come to mean nothing more than an intuitively recognizable pattern of optional transformations. The stylistician's job is to catalogue the choices made by an individual writer. Ohmann's list of the advantages of a transformational stylistics emphasizes this rather mechanical type of analysis, and it does not satisfy the analyst of style who intuitively distinguishes between highly individual and conventionally interpersonal styles. The catalogue of choices must also reflect the frequency with which the options are normally exercised. This would give us a statistical accounting for the difference between individual and interpersonal styles. But it also forces us to admit that certain transforms are "more normal" than others, and this results in the same problems we encountered above in establishing a statistical norm that will be sufficiently stable to explain why certain transforms are unusual.

Michael Riffaterre, trying to avoid the tyranny of the general norm, sees style as a deliberate breaking of established and predictable syntactic patterns in the individual text. The reader, having been led to expect a certain pattern, is "surprised" by a "stylistic device" that alters that pattern. This requires a sense, not simply of a string of equivalent structures, but rather of some contextual interplay between small segments of the text and the text as a whole. The notion is vaguely New Critical in its emphasis on contextual unity at the expense of the norms of
general language, but there are crucial differences. First, there is no way to distinguish between radical and mild breaks in the textual pattern; all stylistic devices are the same. Second, the text is fragmented into the predictable pattern and the individual stylistic devices that break that pattern; there is, then, no real textual unity in the New Critical sense. Finally, without the norm of general language use there is only one way to identify stylistic devices: by charting the response of native speakers, graphically marking in the text their "surprise" points. This affective analysis will occupy our attention more completely below; for the moment I will claim only that this too gives us no way to distinguish between stylistic devices. The measure is again wholly quantitative, for apparently the more surprises a text contains, the more individualistic is its style.

Riffaterre also effectively cancels out the realm of conventional stylistics, and surely this is counterintuitive. Conventional stylistic devices, those special uses of language that have an assigned stylistic value, certainly exist. They change, even disappear, as society changes, but they are important to any culture for interpersonal communication. They range from the conventional, and significant, stylistic opening of a fairy tale, "Once upon a time," to "bankrupt expressions" like "in the last analysis," which Strunk and White have rather unsuccessfully (and, in the last analysis, unnecessarily) attempted to excise from the English language. There is nothing in either of these stylistic devices that would cause surprise in the native speaker. As conventional devices, they are easily recognizable, essentially transparent phrases used either as an identifying marker ("Once upon a time" characterizes what is to follow as a particular kind of literature: a fairy tale) or simply for emphasis ("In the last analysis man is doomed to suffer ecological disaster!").

On the level of such conventionality poetry cannot exist, yet the poet will, and it is a favorite device of modern poets, use conventional stylistic devices in a context that "deconventionalizes" them. At this point the quantitative aspect of such devices is transformed into a qualitative value. T. S. Eliot takes the most common and familiar elements of linguistic use, conventional greetings, and works them to his larger and "defamiliarized" purpose in The Waste Land:
You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.
(And her only thirty-one.)
I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,
It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.
(Shes had five already, and nearly died of young George.)
The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been the same.
You are a proper fool, I said!
Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,
What you get married for if you don't want children?
Hurry up please its time
Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,
And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—
Hurry up please its time
Hurry up please its time
Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.
Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

Once again I am led to conclude that, even on the stylistic surface, poetry struggles against prosaic linearity. The metaphor/metonym paradigm I used to describe the distinction between poetry and prose applies to my analogous distinction between individual and interpersonal style. The metaphoric nature of poetic language asserts semantic overlap, not mere logical equivalence, between the structural elements of the text. This is the deeper implication of Jakobson's theory, one that is beyond the explanatory power of transformational grammar. Instead of linearity, in poetry we have circularity, a somewhat metaphorical notion supported by a long tradition of poetic theory from Lessing's Laocoön to Joseph Frank's "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" and Murray Krieger's "The Ekphrastic Principle and the Still Movement of Poetry."42

The organic, self-sufficient poem promoted by New Critical aesthetics is also, however, a very limited concept of poetry. It has traditionally been most adequate as a description of those short lyric poems that are structured around the elaboration of a single metaphor. It fails, particularly in longer works like novels
and narrative poems, to explain the crucial relationship between poetic language and ordinary discourse. On the other hand, the transformational approach to stylistics cannot effectively describe the short, metaphorically centered, lyric. The norm-deviation theory is reductive in its consideration of the truly qualitative use of language in poetry. Consequently the two extremes may be brought together only through the paradigmatic relationship of metaphor and metonymy. This forces us to focus our interpretive attentions on the text, wherein the structuring principles are manifest on the level of style, but also insists that we not cut our interpretations free from the important dimensions of author and audience in the aesthetic experience of literature.

**STYLE AS THE "AFFECTIVE" STRUCTURE OF MEANING: THE READER**

In turning to the third of the triad of issues that I defined as the central interests of stylistics, we will become more aware than ever of the indissoluble relationship among all three. The affective level of style, which in terms of literary criticism involves the reader's act of interpretation, is perhaps the key to a general literary hermeneutics, but our discussion will take us back to the level of expressive language, to the author's projection of an encoded message and the form of the message itself. The affective dimension of style is the most often ignored, a victim in literary theory of New Critical fallacy hunting (the "affective fallacy") and in linguistics of antibehaviorism. Admittedly, the affective approach is dangerous, running the risk of turning literary interpretation, to say nothing of evaluation, into pure impressionism. On the other hand, it seems unavoidable, and it does not necessarily lead to such pitfalls.

Riffaterre, among the linguists, has moved most boldly into this area. Reviewing many of the problems in traditional stylistic investigation that we have encountered in our discussion above, problems of establishing norms, of identifying and analyzing devices that are truly stylistic and not simply aberrant usage, Riffaterre claims that only by studying the responses of a large number of native language users (or by defining an "average reader") can the analyst know what style is. "If linguistic analysis
cannot discriminate these [stylistic] elements from irrelevant ones, it is because their potential is not realized in the physical body of the message, but in the receiver. . . ." This theory is not mere impressionism, however, for Riffaterre sees it as part of the transaction between author and reader that is mediated by a structured text. "The author's consciousness is his preoccupation with the way he wants his message to be decoded, so that not only its meaning but his attitude towards it is conveyed to the reader, and the reader is forced to understand, naturally, but also to share the author's view of what is or is not important in his message."

The concept of "shared" attitudes emphasizes the dynamic relationship that exists between author and reader; it is a relationship wherein the author, through his style, is able to compel the reader's attention—to "force" the reader to participate in the original mental activity that molded the text. Here Riffaterre seems to be echoing that very intense communication between author and reader described by Poulet as the reader's mind occupied by the thoughts of another.

Traditional norm-deviation theories of style are inadequate to explain this transaction. In something like a New Critical narrowing of focus, Riffaterre proposes that the stylistician "substitute" the text of the message (or the poem) for the linguistic norm. A stylistic device is identified as "the insertion of an unexpected element." Style is a textual pattern suddenly "broken by an element which was unpredictable," unanticipated. One must presume that such a "breaking" is purposeful and that all breaks in the pattern are not the same; they can be distinguished by what Riffaterre calls their "degree of unpredictability." The more unanticipated the break, the more impressive is the stylistic device.

Riffaterre, therefore, is not proposing a New Critical explication de texte. True to his affective approach, he identifies textual deviations, or stylistic devices, by studying the reader's responses. His aim is to avoid what he calls Spitzer's impressionism, the analytic approach of the "philological circle," which begins with the isolation of a single important or outstanding detail of the stylistic surface of the text but then constructs a general hypothesis of the meaning of the text based on this detail and the critic's general intuitive sense of the work as a whole. Finally, the critic, according to Spitzer, refines his
general hypothesis in a series of "to and fro" movements that test it against all of the other details of the text. He knows he has reached the right interpretation, Spitzer claims, by intuition—an "inner click." For Riffaterre, there are no value judgments involved in the selection of outstanding stylistic details, and there is no intuitive perception of the text as a whole. Only the fact of noticing a detail is important. The stylistician has only to chart the "responses" (noting where they occur most frequently) of native speakers as they read the text. As a result he achieves a statistical portrait of the "average reader."

In this effort to avoid value judgments, however, Riffaterre seriously restricts his theory. He resorts to a rather empty behaviorism, a stimulus-response theory not far removed from Bloomfield. Moreover, both Riffaterre and Bloomfield were anticipated by the behaviorist criticism of I. A. Richards. Richards, too, would ignore content; he argues that what a poet thought or believed is unimportant to the experience of readers. What really counts is the organization of his text and the intensity of response elicited by it. The greatest works for Richards are those which hold in balance the greatest number of potentials for action, or impulses, in the reader. Richards also posits an average, or "right," reader statistically created from the various responses of all actual readers, but he goes beyond Riffaterre, finally, by tying the "right" reader’s response to a "standard" that is more or less equivalent to the author’s response to his own work.

The average reader and standard response of Richards and Riffaterre, however, seem to offer little improvement over the norm-deviation theory; the problem of distinguishing between stylistic devices remains. Still trying to keep their methodologies value free, Richards and Riffaterre claim that some responses are more intense than others, but is intensity alone a significant distinction? Is intensity a matter of textual structure, or is it simply an impressionistic measurement of the kind Riffaterre sought to avoid?

In addition, is it possible to claim that reader response is wholly free from semantic influence—and more importantly, from value judgments? Is a "surprising" stylistic shift surprisingly good, or bad? If good it would enhance the content; if bad it would confuse or contradict it. At the base of this
problem is Riffaterre's form-content separation. "Style is understood as an emphasis . . . added to the information conveyed . . . without alteration of meaning." Yet style as mere emphasis, it would seem, depends heavily upon the information conveyed for its surprise value.

Riffaterre's rejection of the norm-deviation theory, even though his arguments against such a theory have merit, leads him farther away from the epistemological and aesthetic interests of the literary critic. The pseudoscientific objectivity of his analytic approach also robs his theory of any high-level interpretive power, and he has ignored the poetic context/prosaic code relationship that is central to the study of literature. The entire distinction between individual and interpersonal style has been transformed, by the stimulus-response theory, into a distinction between unpredictable and predictable structures or surprising and commonplace language usage.

Roman Jakobson suggests a slightly revised version of the poetry/prose distinction that will return us to this most basic question. Furthermore, Jakobson's approach emphasizes the broader aspects of stylistic analysis involving the author-work-reader triad. "The principle of similarity underlies poetry; the metrical parallelism of lines, or the phonic equivalence of rhyming words prompts the question of semantic similarity and contrast. . . . Prose, on the contrary, is forwarded essentially by contiguity. Thus, for poetry, metaphor, and for prose, metonymy is the line of least resistance." There is nothing in this distinction that recalls the absolute separation of poetry and prose demanded by New Critical organicism. Poetry, what Jakobson would call the "poetic function" of language, can occur in contexts that are, by common agreement, not poems. These might be called little poems in the midst of prose, but because poetry differs from prose only on the level of function, there is no absolute distinction. The difference between poetry and prose is a matter of structure, although this involves, necessarily, the semantic dimension as well.

The distinction between metaphor and metonymy, to which I have frequently referred, was developed by Jakobson from his analysis of clinical studies of certain speech disorders known as aphasia. Concentrating on aphasia in the "encoder" (the speaker who formulates the message to be transmitted to a listener or
“decoder”), he classifies disorders into two categories, paralleling each of the two phases of the encoding process. The first phase is “selection,” where the encoder, using the principle of “similarity,” chooses from categories of more or less equivalent verbal elements those elements that will be combined into the speech chain or statement he wishes to transmit. The second phase is “combination,” where the selected elements are arranged by “contiguity” into the statement. (For the decoder the process is reversed. He receives the message fully arranged and must break it down into its elements.) The first phase is metaphorical, based on the principle of “equivalence” (in the broad sense that includes the poles of synonym and antonym), and the second is metonymic, based on sequential arrangement that emphasizes progression through a series of its parts (or associational parts). Unlike metaphor, which emphasizes the immediate and atemporal identity of elements, metonymy derives from a chain of logical extensions moving from the categorical to the particular.

These phases of communication are ordered temporally and logically; aphasic disorders of the second phase may leave the operations of the first phase relatively unimpaired. The encoder is still able to make selections, but his speech is reduced to single units or childlike fragments. An aphasic disorder of the first phase, if extreme (*aphasia universalis*), can wholly block the encoder’s linguistic operations. If the disorder is only partial, the speech may be reduced to single words or morphemes that seem to function metaphorically. These words have meaning only in the immediate presence of the perceived object; the word is so closely identified with what it represents that it ceases to exist if the object is removed. This two-step operation can also be observed in the speech development of children. The selection stage appears earliest and consists of small metaphoric units. The combination stage follows (under the guidance of developing logical capacities as well as training) moving the child into the area of metonymy.

Jakobson’s insights have exciting implications for literary theory when viewed in the broader perspective of the philosophy of language and the prose-poetry distinction I have been attempting to develop. The metaphorical function of language, with the principle of equivalence as its basic structure, echoes to some extent Cassirer’s conjecture on the primitive genesis of
The "violent act of individuation" that is accompanied by the first efforts at language use is, for Cassirer, a poetic expression that opens the way to multiple linguistic functions. First, it is language as a personal projection from the individual toward the newly recognized other, perhaps nothing more than sound—but meaningful sound, like the child’s cry for its mother. This is a fundamentally individuating action even if the communication involved is rudimentary. As Jakobson says, it is the "first verbal function acquired by infants; they are prone to communicate before being able to send or receive informative communications." When this prelinguistic form of assertion enters the realm of language usage it bifurcates into two very distinct but interrelated functions. These are represented by the poles of metaphor and metonym and reflect the interdependence of two linguistic and cognitive functions that Piaget, we should remember, characterized as logical as well as developmental in his "genetic epistemology."

The realm of what we traditionally call lyric poetry, above the rudimentary assertion of self yet below the logical and systematic structure of prose, seems always driving toward the violent individuation that forms the heart of romantic aesthetics; it is accompanied by an all-absorbing engagement with the particularities of nature, a fascination with the primitive and the untutored, and a rejection of the conventional and static. The romantic emphasis is on the immediacy of lived experience (its individuality), which in part defines the idealist’s stance as opposed to the positivist’s philosophy of language. The former, represented in part 2 by Cassirer, keeps an eye on the miraculous fusion of diversity into unity and situates metaphor at the basis of the lyrical experience and at the origin of language in general. This philosophy, however, articulates not the achievement of the ideal of the individual as much as the enduring desire for such an ideal. The positivist viewpoint, as in the theories of Wittgenstein and to some extent Chomsky, fastens the philosophy of language to metonymic functions, to the structure of arrangements of states of affairs. Here romantic desire is transformed into functional management, into group identity, games and rules, into the positivistic ideal of "belonging" to the world. It is not impossible, as I have argued from the beginning, to see these two very different approaches as mutually corrective, one of the
other, rather than as mutually exclusive. The temporal and logical relationship that exists between metaphor and metonymy here reflects the Lacanian theory of metaphor as the violent eruption of language as signifying system, an eruption that situates the "bar" of repression (cultural, linguistic, psychological) depicting the inevitable degeneration of metaphor into metonymy and, paradoxically, the necessary presupposition of metonymy for the emergence of metaphor. This functioning is particularly obvious on the level of stylistic analysis, where the interplay of metaphor and metonymy is seen to deny either a position of privilege.

Many unanswered questions still remain, and in confronting these Jakobson further develops his insights into the nature of metaphor. "The set (Einstellung) toward the message as such, the focus on the message for its own sake, is the poetic function of language." This is another, more descriptive, way of saying what has often been claimed, that metaphor (and, a fortiori, poetry) is always about itself. Because metaphor embodies the fundamental cognitive operations of the mind (in itself and in its tension with metonymy), it preserves in its articulate and articulated structure these operations in potentia. As the essence of poetry, we may recall, it is energia not ergon. Poetry about poetry no longer need be seen simplistically as autobiography or the poem that recounts the ardor and joy of its own composition. To be sure, poetry (metaphor) calls our attention not simply to poems but to the full range and capacities of language itself. In this sense, poetic communication is at once more direct, more intense, and more rare than that of prose. George Henrick von Wright, quoting Peter Winch, describes this basic and profound communication as "empathic understanding," which is "not a 'feeling'; it is an ability to participate in a 'form of life.'" I would extend this claim even further, for such a communicative transaction may be participatory life itself, the communal and self-conscious act of critical awareness that exposes the power of language (langage) to situate man in the midst of "meaning."

To conceive of metaphor as a form of cognitive organization solves one of the principal dilemmas of modern aesthetics. The New Critics, we should remember, were forced by their doctrine of organicism to consider the short lyric poem, structured
around an extended metaphor, as the purest form of poetry. Yet according to Jakobson, poetry exists only in the broader context of prose. "[Metaphoric] selection is produced on the basis of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymity and antonymity, while [metonymic] combination, the build-up of the sequence, is based on contiguity. The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination. Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of sequence." Poetry, with its basis in the "principle of equivalence," arises only through the "principle of projection," through the violence of metaphoric intrusion into the realm of metonymic prose. Poetry, however, is not simply metaphoric; a poem is not simply a metaphor, extended or otherwise. Pure metaphor, like the New Critics' "pure poetry," is an ideal projection; for a romantic philosophy like Cassirer's it is the expression of a nostalgic desire in the sense that Schiller called "sentimental." Remarkably, such longing presumes a nonmetaphoric (metonymic, prosaic?) context as a ground for idealistic projection. We are returned once more to Derrida's paradox: one must project the priority of prose ("writing," the metonymic function) in order to define the originating force of poetry as located in prose. Therefore, there is no need to speculate about origins, certainly not on the level of style, and this explains why Jakobson sees a continual "competition" between metaphor and metonymy. "Similarity superimposed on contiguity imparts to poetry its thoroughgoing symbolic, multiplex, polysemantic essence. . . . In poetry where similarity is superinduced upon contiguity, any metonymy is slightly metaphorical and any metaphor has a metonymical tint." The importance of this "principle of impurity" cannot be understated, for because of it Jakobson's "projection theory" of poetry never results in the radical disparity between poetry and prose, "literariness" and nonliterariness, that so restricts the New Criticism. Nor does Jakobson privilege any specific genre, as the romantic theorists privileged the lyric.

Nevertheless, Jakobson's approach is not without troublesome ambiguities. When the "projection theory" is read in combination with his general communication chart, there is implied, as Mary Louise Pratt astutely notes, some sort of special "poetical-
ness” about the poetic function; if nothing else it is the dependence of poetry on surface, stylistic devices such as “versification.”

The referential, emotive, and metalingual functions seem to be distinguished from each other in terms of subject matter. Utterances with these functions carry information about the “context,” the addresser’s inner state, or the code, respectively. The phatic function, on the other hand, is defined contextually by the speaker’s intention to “establish, prolong or discontinue communication.” To define conative utterances Jakobson proposes a logical criterion, that imperatives lack truth value, in addition to the criteria of grammatical surface structure and referent.57

As Pratt argues, the poetic function is of a wholly different nature, “a focus on the message for its own sake.” The dominance of this function makes any utterance poetic, but does the dominance of this function “exclude” the others, which are not marked by focus on themselves for their own sake? The radical nature of this self-reflexiveness would seem to close out the other functions, but can this be so if poetry expresses a desire to communicate that surely involves phatic and emotive functions and perhaps others?
Pratt's narrow reading of Jakobson emphasizes the radical isolation of the poetic function rather than what I have called Jakobson’s “principle of impurity,” but our differences here are finally minimal. Seeing Jakobson caught in the traditional (romantic, New Critical) trap of dividing literary and non-literary style, Pratt suggests that the poetic function fails to distinguish between truly poetic functions and cheap imitations like advertising jingles; both, she rightly notes, are prone to the self-conscious use of stylistic devices such as versification. She further suggests that the projection theory, so narrowly drawn, would profit from an extension that would include cultural/historical context, as well as considerations of intention and affective response. Through my emphasis on the principle of impurity in Jakobson’s theory, I am merely suggesting that Jakobson himself anticipated the inevitability of such an extension.

The essential fact is that literary style cannot be seen as radically removed from the general system of communication. It is not at all clear that we can even define a special literary style other than through a concept like that proposed by Culler as “poetic competency.” Such competency is nothing more than a subclass of values within the general cultural langue and is barely distinguishable as a subsystem. Literary style is at the service of the collective will, on the most functional level operating as a system of models for “good writing” (interpersonal style) and at the other extreme as “touchstones” of sublime expressiveness (personal style). We might borrow here a term from eighteenth-century literary criticism and define literary style in this sense as a reflection of cultural “taste,” but we should not be fooled by simplistic arguments that literary taste is nothing more than the result of a self-serving elitism of an academic fraternity. The line of demarcation between “highbrow” and “lowbrow” is anything but clear; moreover, the elitist academy is itself an indulgence of society, a projection of socioeconomic wishes and even the expression of society's high ideals. That the academy rarely fully satisfies these wishes and never lives up to these ideals is a problem that, although it is vitally significant, is too complex to consider here. What is significant is that with regard to literary taste the academy performs (or attempts to perform) the very tasks that society charges it to accomplish: it engages in the
codification of the aesthetic values that best seem to serve the interests and needs of the culture.

In the revolutionary zeal of literary theory in the 1970s, the romantic ideal of literariness as "high seriousness," as marked by an "innately" and "mystically" human experience, has been overthrown. Perhaps we have been too hasty here, failing to cull from that which had grown too rigid in its ascendency and needed rethinking the more interesting and still significant concepts of basic human wishes and desires. Ironically, what replaces the romantic ideal is a concept of literariness defined by its special adherence to cultural expectations. Taste is, therefore, acquired and not innate, but the difference is ultimately a slight one since both continue to reflect some more basic human need to project or intuit a humanistic capacity to create and respond to art. The acquired taste theory is more complex than the innate taste theory, the former actually subsuming the latter. The determination of literariness in the former projects an elaborate storehouse of linguistic devices stipulated as literary, ranging from lists of stylistic techniques to broader cultural signs that allow us to make preliminary judgments of value on the basis of such factors as jacket designs or even where books are sold (outdoor stalls, bus terminals, or college bookstores, for example). The elaborateness of this acquired system not only argues against the relative simplicity of romantic aesthetic taste but also disallows even the possibility of an ideal or "right" reader whose "competency" is complete, without blind spots.

Jakobson's projection theory, expanded beyond the idea of mere self-reflexive literary texts, reveals the ever-receding boundaries of literary style and, more than that, exposes literariness as a characteristic of mind and cultural context. The projection theory must not be allowed to narrow to the purity of Kantian aesthetic contemplation. Involved in the surprise of metaphor's disruptive stylistic surface is the "projection" of a desire to communicate, what I have above termed motivation. There is a sense in which the disruptive poetic function is in itself a special sort of phatic device—a signal that "poetry" is being articulated! Two aspects of this motivation are seen in relation to the idea of "literariness" and the concept of literary style as an identifying mark. The first involves what many theorists in various terms have defined as the intention to produce art. Eliot
sees it as a struggle to enter the Tradition, Bloom as the "anxiety of influence," Said as a "beginning intention." In all, it is a seeking of a confirmation of an identity as artist, what on one level is "to be known by one's style." This confirmation is an extraordinary process involving extraordinary personal risk, and that calls attention to the second aspect of what I have called motivation: cultural ratification. Pratt discusses a similar twofold interrelatedness in terms of the interplay of "illocutionary" and "perlocutionary" activities. The intention to produce art necessitates an audience's willingness to read the work as art. Such willingness exposes the power invested in the audience to grant or not to grant the artist an identity as artist. Artistic confirmation, therefore, is a special, cultural activity that hints at something like the indistinct range of literary competency or the fluctuating boundaries of a literariness within cultural langue.

The risk involved is in part the one that has obsessed Bloom as a form of anxiety. To be granted identity as artist ambiguously involves entry into the Tradition and yet resistance to all the models contained in the Tradition. The movement is partly mimetic (to write in the literary style of others) and partly revolutionary (to articulate one's own style). The risk is personal and cultural. The artist challenges the cultural subsystem of literariness by disrupting cultural expectations, but on either side of success lies "anonymity." To submit too much to the dictates of the system makes one a mere imitator; to unleash too much freeplay into the bound play of the system may result in a total failure to communicate. Therefore, it is not so much the assertion of an inventive new style that marks one's entry into the system (this is the point of view of the artist); rather, one is assured of a place among the artists only when one has been imitated (this is the point of view of the critic). Bloom's anxiety theory perhaps puts too much emphasis on the former whereas it is the function of the latter, as critical confirmation, that is most important. Umberto Eco speaks directly to this point. "When only one person in the world is able to falsify a mode of invention (i.e., not to copy a given painting, but to paint according to the same type of inventive procedure) the code proposed by that painting has not yet been accepted by a culture; when it becomes possible to paint à la manière de, then the invention (as a code-making proposal) has succeeded semiotically; a new convention
exists.”58 Somewhat contrary to the tradition of “inimitable” style as the mark of genius, here it is the very effort to imitate (successfully or unsuccessfully is of no matter), the recognition of the possibility of imitation, that establishes a convention, a “new” convention, by the way, that typically would bear the artist’s name, as in “Faulknerian style.” This process of confirmation is also profoundly historical. Pratt’s use of speech act theory leads her to liken it to the contractual relationship between audience and storyteller,59 what I spoke of in part 1 as the “occasion” for myth singing. We might note that because of the problems of distribution, written forms of literature and plastic art forms often must wait for cultural ratification resulting in a lag in the communication arc; but the procedures are the same: the identifying confirmation situates the artist at a time and place, within a shifting tradition of artistic values and general cultural expectations.

Ironically, this identifying confirmation carries with it a negative implication. To be designated as an artist with a style worthy of imitation is tantamount to being put to death. Such identity conferring is fixating, stereotyping, a condition eagerly sought but almost always vigorously resisted when achieved. To be named an artist, to be interred in one’s identifying style (Faulknerian) is to be deprived of life. If my language here seems excessive, take it as a counterreaction that urges that we be careful not to overinterpret the fact of “poetic projection” even as we see it revealing the very dramatic desire for identity. The naming of the artist as artist is itself nothing more than a metaphor—a metaphor for “authentic” historical being, and the achievement of named identity, as a deadening act of confirmation, disguises at its heart (below the stylistic surface) a profound struggle that defies naming. That struggle, never named or only falsely named, is an essential absence that makes metaphor possible, only now we must not see it as a simple stylistic device (like the interplay of proper names, stereotypes, and metaphoric tensions in “Pantaloon in Black” or the metaphoric functioning of Lucas Beauchamp’s family icon discussed in part 1). Stylistic “deviations,” as revolutionary or even anarchistic, are foremost the expressions of the need for metaphor, the desire for identity that is endlessly repeatable and defiant of stereotyping; the opening of the space for emergence into identity can only show
its authenticity through deadening metaphorical superficialities.

Who, then, is the author we "name" so easily and dismiss with such cavalier impersonality? Gerald Bruns notes that Barthes's answer to this question contains its own essential mystery. Barthes focuses on what he calls the "diathetical analysis of the modern verb to write," which reveals a grammatical functioning in that verb not unlike that found in the sentence, "It is raining." The "subject" here "is neither active nor passive but is rather the purely grammatical agent of a self-motivating activity"; the sentence, as all literary sentences metaphorized by the self-conscious use of the verb to write, "possesses a phantom or mythical subject." Bruns interprets: "we no longer think of the speaker in a poem or the narrator in the novel as the author who exists outside the work as a transcendent originator of meanings; we think of him instead as a nameless and departed god, an irrelevance, and in his stead we attend to the figure whose identity is found precisely in the activity by which the poem or novel unfolds." Actually, the issue is even more complicated, for we make a series of designations with regard to authors that are complexly interrelated. In part this series is characterized by the now famous critical distinction between "énonciation" and "énoncé," between the act of articulation and the fact of the articulation that contains a vestigial or repressive "I" as a mere grammatical marker. There is, therefore, an "I who writes" and an "I who (apparently) speaks" in the text. But there is more, for our ability to distinguish between a grammatical "I" (which functions like a first person narrator/character in a story) and an "implied" author (on whom we confer the deadening identity of the name of the artist) reveals to us the emptiness at the heart of all articulation, the unnamed and unnameable "authentic" self of an "I who lives," and who is more than the artist as stylist. Here we see the openness at the heart of intentionality both on the level of style (as the intention to produce art) and on the ontological level (as the intention to speak being, to enter the world of language, culture, the symbolic order). The whole concept of literary style and the identity of the artist reveals, reflects, and opens for us the more profound (and vital) question of emerging being discussed in part 2 as forming the basis of the philosophy of language in general. It is our only contact with "authentic being," not as a
determinate subjectivity nor as a "biographical individual" but as the lack or need for being that is both the primordial motivation for the generative movement of language and the gift of language to man.

The importance of our awareness of this tertiary level of authenticity is that it introduces into the theory of literary interpretation an idea of authorship, a humanistic dimension that is, finally, not distorted by solipsism or egoism. The authentic self is, paradoxically, an absence at the heart of expression, but the negativity of such an idea is only a matter of logical procedure. One can arrive at a sense of such being only by inverting the logic of noncontradiction, the very method Derrida gleefully, playfully took from Heidegger. What results is a vision of being not as ego-isolate but as active, emerging-into, as ekstatic. Many would call this "ego-loss," but it is more significant to see it as a motivating assertion of the human, which situates the nonhuman. There is a danger in this, the danger that we will come to believe our metaphors and claim dominion over all that we survey, but the corrective for this may well be the essence of literature's cultural functionality (its "fictionality"). It is in literary activity that attention is called to the limits of metaphor, to metaphor's disruptive, stylistic, identity-conferring function that reveals a vital emptiness, a desire below the surface. This is the "force" of metaphor, which also "proves" the historical extensiveness (as opposed to intensiveness) of humanism. I am reminded of Jorge Luis Borges's wonderful story, "The Library of Babel," wherein the universe (all the universe man knows) is allegorized as an infinite library containing all possible expressions of human knowledge in the form of innumerable texts that exhaust the logical possibilities of linguistic utterances. Borges's library functions in a way similar to the functioning of what I have called langage, as a potential for meaningfulness vastly more powerful than man himself. But despite the paranoiac worries of the story's narrator, the library does not wholly dispense with the human. "Perhaps my old age and fearfulness deceive me, but I suspect that the human species—the unique species—is about to be extinguished, but the Library will endure: illuminated, solitary, infinite, perfectly motionless, equipped with precious volumes, useless, incorruptible, secret." Man always fears his extinction, the possibility that he will, for a variety of reasons,
disappear from the universe. The verbal universe of Borges's story, however, makes such extinction inexpressible, for a "perfectly motionless" and "useless" verbal universe is essentially flawed, dumb, inarticulate. It would in no way exist or endure without motion and use, without man to assert his own authentic being and at the same time situate the Library as powerful, signifying system. It is man's activity driven by his need to achieve being, that creates (corrupts) the perfectly still universe in which he lives. That universe, of course, is not the physical world, which does very well without man, but the "intelligible" universe, which is, logically, the only context within which man can be defined. Man cannot, even so clever a man as Borges, articulate his own nonbeing; he cannot "speak" his own "silence." He can articulate his own emergence as historical being, for his metaphors disclose the vitality of his motivating (and motivated) force. Less than the "unique" being that his romantic dreams promised, man, nevertheless, is a necessary power within the powerful structure of any system of articulation.64

We have here gone far beyond the efforts of Samuel Levin to employ Jokobson's insights in the explanation of poetic unity. Levin saw the projection theory only as a series of parallel structures coupled in linear fashion. But Jakobson's "principle of equivalence projected into the axis of contiguity" suggests much more. To move beyond the unifying structure of a single metaphor inevitably risks the influx of some metonymic qualities; the extension of metaphors over a long sequence defines temporality. There is, therefore, no reason to insist on the ideal of a pure poem (a single metaphor) promoted by the imagists and adopted by the New Critics as the measure of creativity and the identifying function of artistic naming. We can, however, understand the New Critical emphasis on the poet's drive toward purity, on the struggle to activate language's poetic functionality. The ideal will never be achieved, but the poetic use of language makes this failure the key to both the cultural and personal dimensions of "creative" writing. I am describing here an extended version of what Murray Krieger calls poetry's "ekphrastic principle." Krieger redefines the traditional prosodic term ekphrasis to mean not simply a poem that imitates plastic art
but one that achieves a sort of "archetypal" status by denying the linear nature of language in a metaphoric drive toward unity. In my extension "ekphrasis" becomes the metaphor that "belie" its own "ek-stasis," which in its failure to fix, name, and "presence" opens for us the being-there of the author as an "I who lives."

Michael Riffaterre’s observations on style are also useful on this point. The breaking of patterns established in the text serves the vital function of calling attention to the text as (literary) text. The "anticipations" of the reader are linear; the pattern once established promises to continue, but to shatter this pattern forces the reader out of his linear mental set and back to a reassessment of the recalcitrance of the particular, discrete moment that defies and demystifies the whole. Stylistic devices, therefore, are not mere decoration; and Riffaterre’s theory pales beside the implications that poetic style has a profound meaning all its own, that poetry connects us with the author’s and our own essential being-there. By jarring our cultural mental set, by threatening our logical (metonymic) structures of language (inverting the principle of noncontradiction), it makes us aware of our existential condition as men. Therefore, the stylistic breaks themselves must be more than merely disruptive; they assert a deeper meaningfulness in the metaphoric/metonymic tensions of the text.

On the cultural level, a poem that merely jars us for the demonic pleasure of disrupting our sensibilities would be viciously anarchistic. There are such poems, but this is the dialectics of poet and society carried to its extreme. In fact this violates the very nature of metaphor, the essence of which is unity, albeit a "new" unity. On the level of linguistics, the anarchistic poem would be simply agrammatical, totally divorced from the cultural system of language that defines the communal world. It runs the risk of being "meaningless"; at its worst it is wholly personal and psychotic. Metaphor, as we know it in our literature, revitalizes language; it does not destroy it. It challenges culture; it may even replace it, but it does not negate it. This is the force that moves diachronically across the synchronic structure of culture, the force of the individual moment that resists the dehumanization of fixities and definites and gives them new life. My analysis, therefore, has worked its way outward...
again to the original question of poetry's relationship to general language use. Here we confront the puzzling problem of history, but without the historical dimension literary interpretation remains incomplete.

HISTORY AS EXISTENTIAL

Literary criticism necessarily involves a historical perspective. It is something more than the formalist absolutism of the New Critics, which relates the individual work to history by mere analogy, and less than reductive sociological historicism, which explodes the boundaries of the literary context into the blur and flux of the work's temporal milieu. Traditional literary history has struggled between these extremes for centuries, but with little success. The varieties of historical perspective seem to be stymied by a dilemma, repeated by Barthes: we are permitted to have either literary criticism or literary history but not both. Yet no one can deny the absurdity of such a theoretical separation. Literature, like man himself, is bound off in time; the creation of literature is temporal, for (1) it is itself a process that ultimately activates a corresponding process of thought in the reader, and (2) it is, in its epistemological dimension, existential, an individual moment of articulation within a general context.

The historical perspective that underlies my arguments in this text has its origins in Hegel and is refined under the influence of Heidegger; it is born of dialectical thinking only to necessarily transcend that logic. The recalcitrant individual moment never evaporates into the universality of Time. Nor is it ever fully free from it. Historiography is essentially a metonymic intellectual activity; it demands that the individual moment be given a context—one that "makes sense." But the life of the mind refuses the easy lure of metonymy, and it is this realization that enabled Croce, Dewey, and many others to claim that history must always be rewritten. The historian, if he is sensitive to the uniqueness of moments of consciousness, stands at what Eliot calls the limitations of human understanding. Only the "saint" can easily occupy this most essential of paradoxical junctures. The historian, bound by his temporal, logical, and metonymic language, must force his historical point of view to admit the timeless. His only option is to rewrite continually, and his
narrative must never deny the discrete moment in its rush to make systematic and self-regulating the general structure or pattern.

The historian and the critic, therefore, are partners in a joint enterprise, for the critic brings to the historian’s metonymic abstractions the constant reminder that the unique moment “corrupts” the universal. Both retreat from the rebellious questioning of the artist, and neither should be confused with the artist, yet neither must fall into the logician’s or philosopher’s abstractionist methodology. The dilemma of the historian and critic, or that ideal hybrid creature, the historical critic, is that he must dwell between poetry and prose, metaphor and metonym, between the structure of individual human consciousness and the structure of cultural systems. Perhaps he does so at the risk of resigning the glory of either.

In this context Geoffrey Hartman’s claim that modern formalists have simply failed to be formalist enough is very instructive. The New Critics were apparently content to confine their interests to the structures of individual works. The possibility that behind these works were deeper structures that derived from the interplay of individual consciousness and social systems was largely ignored. Such a backward movement was condemned as radically idealist, leading to Crocean historicography and the diminution of the work’s importance. Yet it need not go so far in this direction; Crocean historicism runs the risk of becoming ahistorical. Again, history demands the balance between the individual and the universal.

The poetic drive toward metaphor gives us the necessary dialectic for historical movement, for metaphor dissolves into its own genesis, even to the suggestion of its rudimentary sources in the primitive act of individuation. It is, in this very movement, the essence of history, being-there, with all its spatiotemporal implications of the place and moment where being shows itself. For the true primitive (ancient or modern), whose awakening self-consciousness drives him to seek unity with the outer world, metaphor functions as existential projection, not as a transcendent ego but as an escape from the ego. As egoist, man is doomed; the diversity of experience demands a never-ending series of unrelated momentary projections, each asserting a self and an other and eventuating in a discontinuous series of
apocalyptic moments much like those of Faulkner’s romantic egoist, Ike McCaslin. For the egoist this is a devastating pattern of repetition (fate) and fragmentation. Yet from another point of view, it is the uniqueness of the individual moment metaphorized on the stylistic surface of the literary text that enables us to say with the New Critics that the poem is whole and self-sufficient. This can no longer be interpreted as cutting the text free from time; rather it emphasizes the text’s temporal existence: the humanistic struggle for self-consciousness within the pattern of all human consciousness. The moment of consciousness can happen only as it does, when and where it does.

Herein lies the value of poetic communication. It is not simply that author and reader share a common linguistic code that enables the one to understand the message of the other. That there is such a shared code is self-evident. True communication lies beneath the code; what is shared is the existential condition of man, the “concern” for the human. On the level of this existential awareness is founded a communication between author and reader that invites the latter to enter the world of the former, to live through the details of the author’s world, which becomes a simulacrum of the reader’s own human condition. The reader’s and author’s worlds are different, separated by time and space, but in the work the two worlds meet in a communion of souls. The metaphoric text draws its life from the critical, self-conscious interpenetration of author and culture, but once full born it breathes on its own, surviving the fading consciousness, the “authentic” being, that bore it. This metaphoric status tends to disguise the text’s origins-as-emergence because the text seems to speak out of its time to readers in other lands and in other cultures. It thrusts itself into the future of readers yet to come. It defies our metonymic reductions and continually asserts its own being as text, yet it also inexorably draws its readers back to its own time and place, to the emptiness beneath its shining surface, to the force of articulation to experience that marks the limits and the possibilities of being-there for all humankind.