Language & Style
V XIII, #1 (1980)

THE NOTION OF STYLE

William O. Hendricks

Part of the confusion surrounding stylistics could be dispelled if there were universal assent to maintain a distinction between *stylistics* and *poetics*. The two terms are all too often used interchangeably to refer to any linguistically oriented approach to the theory and description of literature. But a literary work has many aspects, only one of which is style. The study of style is properly called stylistics, and stylistics is properly regarded as part of poetics.

The major problem with stylistics is the term *style* itself. No one definition of style enjoys universal acceptance—but the heart of the problem is that existing conceptions of style have not always been thought through. One consequence is that a stylistician may simultaneously hold two or more different conceptions of style. A striking instance is the work of Richard Ohmann. Most of the major conceptions of style crop up, either explicitly or implicitly, in the course of his argument for the relevance of transformational grammar for stylistics.[1] Essentially these same conceptions reappear in the course of his later arguments for the utilization of Austin's speech-act theory in stylistics.

Before stylistics can advance, there must be a clear differentiation of the varying conceptions of style and a recognition of their deficiencies. Because Ohmann's work is a veritable encyclopedia of the major conceptions, it will offer a convenient basis for this necessary act of scrutiny. The ultimate aim, of course, is to clear the way for the tentative formulation of a conception of style that would avoid the deficiencies of existing conceptions.

Let us take as our point of departure what Ohmann in "Generative Grammars" terms the "common sense notion" of style: "In general that notion applies to human action that is partly invariant and partly variable. A style is a *way* of doing *it*" (426). The term *way* in this context means "the manner of doing something." The variant ways can be expressed as adverbials of manner modifying a fixed verb (the "it"); for example:

John ran {slowly / fast / in a loping fashion / etc.}

Ohmann's initial discussion of this notion is confined to the nonverbal sphere, specifically the actions of playing the piano and playing tennis. These examples are not as straightforward as Ohmann assumes. Note first that, despite the identity in linguistic form, playing tennis and playing the piano are two distinct types of activity. The piano is a concrete object, a musical instrument; *play* in this context has the sense "to perform on (an instrument); to cause to give out musical sounds." Tennis, in contrast, is not a concrete object—it is a game; and the relevant sense of *play* in this context is "to take part in (a game or sport)."

The situation becomes more complex when we realize that a distinction between two types of action is equally applicable to tennis and to music. Ohmann himself goes on to refer to the example of a pianist "performing" a Mozart concerto. He could have also used the verb *play* in this context: one can speak of "playing Mozart," in the sense of performing his music. The distinction between these two senses of *play* is implicit in the following remarks from a review of recordings of Beethoven piano sonatas: "Brendel's tone is admirably transparent. . . . If Brendel's tone often apears incongruous with the prevailing Romanticism of his approach, Maurizio Pollini's purposeful bleakness and icy linearity . . . are in perfect harmony with his direct, modernistic style."[2] On the one hand we have pianistic technique, a way of playing the instrument; and on the other, we have a way of playing or "interpreting" the music (Modernistic, Romantic, etc.).

There is an analogue to the former sense of *play* that is clearly applicable to tennis: in order to play the game, one has to manipulate certain pieces of equipment (ball, racket, etc.). But, just as clearly, playing the game of tennis does not reduce to the physical execution, any more than playing Mozart reduces to physical execution of the notes. Corresponding to performance styles in music would be, say, offensive and defensive "styles" of play in tennis.

Ohmann defines style as "a way of doing it"; but we have just seen that there are two distinct "its"—two invariant actions—in the nonverbal domains of music and sport. There is the action of execution, and there is the action of interpretation/performance, the exact nature of each varying with the domain. Hence there could be two distinct notions of style. In the record review previously quoted, the reviewer reserves the term *style* for interpretation/performance of the music. This usage is perhaps the most typical, though the action of execution does fit the definition of style: musical sounds can be produced in a "transparent"

manner, in a "purposefully bleak" manner, etc. And, in fact, Ohmann's own discussion of styles of tennis playing pertains only to execution: "the tennis player . . . chooses from a repertory of strokes, shots, and possible placements. . . . The tennis player's use of these options, in so far as it is habitual or recurrent, constitutes his style" (427). Of the two distinct types of activity, Ohmann opts for the one less often referred to as "style," apparently without realizing that he has made a choice.

So much for stylistic variation in the non-verbal domain. Our primary concern here is with verbal style, and literary style in particular. If we transfer the definition of style as "a way of doing it" to the verbal domain, we must ask ourselves if the above distinction between two types of activity is applicable to language. Without question, there is an executable dimension to language, comparable to *play* in the sense "to cause to give out musical sounds"; this is the physical activity of phonation. It clearly has its variable aspects—one can speak slowly or fast; in a monotone or with expressiveness, etc.—but such variability has nothing to do with literary style. Likewise, there is an interpretative/performative analogue—the activity known as the "oral interpretation" of literature, e.g., the recitation of poetry. Different ways of reciting one and the same poem have been studied, and one might refer to this as a type of stylistic analysis; but it does not correspond to any of the accepted notions of literary style.

Literary style is generally seen as being "a way of writing" (cf. Ohmann, 423); but the executory notion of style remains just as unacceptable if we substitute the production of orthographic symbols for speech sounds. *Writing*, however, can refer to "the activity, art, or occupation of a writer." The physical activity of writing as an occupation can be carried out in many ways; for example, some writers prefer to work early in the morning, others late at night; some prefer using the typewriter, others write longhand; etc. But, again, such variant "ways of writing" are still far removed from any pertinent notion of literary style. We have to conclude that style is not "a way of doing it" in the executory sense—and it is immaterial whether the execution produces sounds or their graphic equivalents.

Another possible interpretation of "a way of writing" is as "a way of saying it," where *say* means "to express in words." This notion of style is extremely widespread, though it is more typically formulated as "different ways of expressing the same concept" (cf. Ohmann, 427, 431). It is important to stress that this notion is not to be construed as a variant of "different ways of doing it." The verb *express* does not denote the physical act of phonation or its orthographic equivalent; and *way* does not imply an adverbial of manner. Rather, this notion should be interpreted in light of the basic Saussurian conception of the linguistic sign as a correlation of the planes of expression and content (*signifiant* and *signifié*).

That the term *expression* does not necessarily refer either to the articulatory act or to its product is evident from an expansion of the Saussurian model (due to Hjelmslev):

CONTENT	$\frac{\text{Substance}}{\text{Form}}$
EXPRESSION	$\frac{\text{Form}}{\text{Substance}}$

In terms of this model, "expression" of content refers to the correlation of content-form with expression-form, without implying physical manifestation in phonetic or graphic substance. There is stylistic variation insofar as the same content-form can be correlated with different expression-forms. In referring to this as "different ways of expressing the same content," the word *way* has a sense that is an extension of the basic meaning "a course affording passage from one place to another." A better term would be *mode*, in the sense "a particular form or variety of something." This notion of style could thus be more adequately formulated as "different modes of expression of the same content."

It goes without saying that unless the form of expression is actualized in substance, we have no physical evidence of the correlation, hence no way of apprehending the stylistic variation. The point that is being made, however, is that the *locus* of the stylistic variation is not in the physical actualization. Literary style is *not* "a way of doing it."

Let us take a closer look at the notion of style as "different modes of expression of the same content." A major problem with this conception is that of being certain that the same content actually underlies two different linguistic forms. Consider this pair of sentences:

(a) The baby arrived prematurely.
(b) The baby came too soon.

Premature can mean "too soon," but in the context of (a) it refers to a premature baby, one born after less than the normal gestation time. Consider a second pair of sentences:

(c) He consulted an ophthalmologist.
(d) He went to see an eye doctor.

Unlike the first pair, these sentences seem to be genuinely synonymous. Nevertheless, it could still be argued that they do convey different information: (c) suggests that the speaker is educated, at least more educated than the speaker of (d). Another possibility is that the information conveyed pertains to the formality of the situation; both sentences could be uttered by the same person, but on different occasions. This type of variation could be labeled "stylistic"; but, if so, it is a type of style different from literary style, the object of our investigation. It may be termed "functional style" or "sociolinguistic style." It is unlike literary style in that focus is on differences in the situational context, instead of on differences in writers that are more or less independent of the contexts in

which writing and eventual reading take place.

The above problems with the notion of style as different modes of expression of the same content have been rather widely discussed—so much so that a fundamental difficulty with the notion itself has been overlooked, a difficulty that would persist even if we excluded functional variation and could overcome the problem of synonymity. In a nutshell, the difficulty is that people with different styles do not write exactly the same thing; hence, it would be impossible to compare a passage from Hemingway, say, with a passage from Faulkner that was synonymous.

The difficulty, if not impossibility, of finding passages by stylists that are in a relation of paraphrase is further evidence that the notion of literary style cannot be assimilated to the common sense notion of style as "different ways of doing it," even in the non-executory sense. In the case of literature, there is no invariant "it."[3] The situation is quite different in the case of the performance/interpretation of music. The score of, say, Mozart's Piano Concerto in D Minor constitutes an invariant "it," and there exist different recorded performances, by Ashkenazy, Brendel, Serkin, etc.

Incidentally, the fact that literary style cannot be assimilated to the general domain of human action does not necessarily preclude the possibility of setting verbal style within the larger domain of semiotics. Music has not only a performative dimension, but also a compositional one. Mozart's style of composing piano concertos can be compared, say, with Beethoven's, just as Faulkner's style of verbal composition can be compared with Hemingway's. In the case of musical compositions, however, there appears to be no plane of content, at least not one comparable to the plane of content of language. The idea of music composition style, to paraphrase Ohmann, implies that notes on a page might have been different, or differently arranged—but with no need to add the proviso that Ohmann does with reference to verbal style: "without a corresponding difference in substance [i.e., content]" (427).

If the conception of literary style as "different modes of expression of the same content" cannot be put into practice, it might seem remarkable that it ever gained the widespread acceptance it enjoys today. One explanation is that, as suggested earlier, this conception is workable with respect to sociolinguistic variation. It is not at all unusual for two or more expressions with the same cognitive content to occur. Furthermore, the existence of connotative differences between the expressions is not a problem. Such connotations in fact reflect the communicative context, which is the focus of real interest in sociolinguistic stylistics.

As for the persistent application of this notion to literary style, there are a couple of explanations. For one, the criterion for same content can be rather loose; e.g., it can be interpreted as a matter of "global" paraphrase rather than "local." The latter exists at the level of the sentence; the former, at the level of the paragraph or beyond. A global paraphrase relation exists between passages on the same broad "topic," e.g., the description of a room.[4]

Another possibility is for the stylistician himself to generate stylistic alternatives that have the same meaning. This, in fact, is the position Ohmann shifts to in his paper on the transformational analysis of style. He states that

> A generative grammar with a transformational component provides apparatus for breaking down a sentence . . . into underlying kernel sentences . . . and for specifying the grammatical operations that have been performed upon them. It also permits the analyst to construct, from the same set of kernel sentences, other non-kernel sentences. These may reasonably be thought of as *alternatives* to the original sentence, in that they are simply different constructs out of the identical elementary grammatical units. Thus the idea of alternative phrasings, which is crucial to the notion of style, has a clear analogue within the framework of transformational grammar. (430-31)

The above remarks constitute Ohmann's program. When it comes to implementation, the actual analysis of representative passages, Ohmann fails to put the program into practice. In not one of his four sample analyses does he utilize transformational grammar to "generate" bona fide stylistic alternatives. Perhaps the major reason for this divergence between theory and practice is that the version of Chomsky's transformational grammar that Ohmann draws upon, the pre-*Aspects* model, did not encompass semantics and the paraphrase relation. Later versions of Chomsky's theory, in fact, are not up to Ohmann's requirements.

In the case of a short passage from Faulkner's "The Bear," Ohmann's analytic practice is as follows. He reverses the effects of some grammatical transformations, though stopping short of a complete reduction of the passage to kernels because "Further reduction . . . would not change the . . . style nearly as much as has already been done" (433).

Ohmann himself clearly does not regard the kernel version as a stylistic alternative to the Faulkner original. He refers to it as a "denaturing," and he admits that his procedure has destroyed the style of the passage (433, 434). However, he does not take the kernels as the starting point from which to construct, by means of other transformations, a true stylistic alternative to the passage. Instead, he characterizes the style by specifying the grammatical transformations that he had reversed, pointing out that "the style of the original passage leans heavily on a very small amount of grammatical apparatus" (433).

Ohmann's analytic practice is based on a conception of style different from any he explicitly formulated in his preliminary theoretical remarks. This new notion he explicitly formulates as "a characteristic way of deploying the transformational apparatus of a language" (431). This concept may seem close to that of "different ways of expressing the same content," and in fact Ohmann lumps both together in one equivocal statement: "such a grammar [i.e., transformational] . . . alone is powerful enough to set forth stylistic *alternatives* to a given passage or a given set of linguistic habits" (438). However, an alternative to a given passage is another one with the same content, whereas an alternative to a given set

of "linguistic habits" is another set. That is to say, the new conception can reduce to "ways of saying," with no appeal to an invariant "it" (content).

The implication is that writers with different styles will utilize different subsets of the transformations of the language. The only reason for comparing passages by different stylists would be to demonstrate that the same set of transformations is not, in fact, regularly utilized by all writers. Passages do not have to say the same thing in order to be so compared. Ohmann, to demonstrate that Faulkner's use of transformations is distinctive, effects a transformational analysis of a passage from Hemingway which does not overlap at all in content with the Faulkner passage.[5]

While Ohmann's appeal to transformational grammar may represent an innovation in stylistics, the conception of style that lies at the foundation of this application is one of the major conceptions of style in the tradition of stylistics. The notion of style as a characteristic deployment of the transformational apparatus is simply a special case of the general notion of style as a characteristic use of the language system.

Our primary concern is with this notion itself, and not with the peripheral question of the adequacy of various theoretical models of the language system, of which transformational grammar is only one.[6] From our earlier discussion it should be obvious that the "use" of the language system is not to be confused with the physical act of producing a stream of speech sounds or their orthographic equivalents. Nor should the "use" be seen as the correlation of formal units from the plan of content with formal units from the plane of expression. Rather, "use" can be seen as the actualization, in syntagmatic chains, of the potentialities of the (paradigmatic) system of higher-level expression units (i.e., morphemes). This conception of language use is the counterpart to a conception of grammar as "autonomous and independent of meaning."[7]

Language use, in the above sense, results in the production of discourse, a chain of sentences. A conception of style as such a use of language that is characteristic of given writers is vulnerable to the following major objections. The language of a literary text has multiple functional components. For one, the language serves to manifest the underlying structures of plot and character; hence some features of the language pertain to literary structure and not to style. Secondly, sentences are, first and foremost, a manifestation of grammatical structures, as specified by the underlying language system. Hence, a grammatical analysis of the sentences constituting a stylistic corpus would seem to yield only information about the language system and not about style pure and simple.

It may seem out of the question to object that a gap exists between the description of syntactic structures and the description of style, given that style is regarded as the use of the grammatical resources of a language. However, this definition, in effect, equates style with the stylistic corpus, and that poses a number of problems. If the stylist under investigation is still actively writing, then the corpus remains incomplete, and

the style cannot be definitively described. In the case of a stylist whose work is complete, the corpus would be unmanageably large. A description of the style of Faulkner, say, would entail the Herculean task of grammatically describing every sentence he ever wrote. The task *could* be done, but the result would be a mass of detail that would bury Faulkner's style. Style is like the proverbial forest that cannot be seen because of all the trees.

The typical procedure in stylistic analysis is for the stylistician to work with a highly selective sample of sentences, a sample that is representative of the writer's style. This is a legitimate procedure, but its legitimacy cannot be explained in terms of the notion of style as the use of the language system. No two sentences in the corpus will be exactly alike in terms of their grammatical structure; and the notion of language use does not itself provide a criterion of representativeness.

The stylistician has an intuitive sense of what sentences are representative. The criterion can remain intuitive, i.e., not be explicitly formulated, but the generalized description of the corpus of representative sentences cannot. A stylistic description must transcend the particular sentences that result from the author's use of the language system.

Note, incidentally, that the necessity of generalizing from the data might seem to provide one argument in favor of transformational analysis. The number of transformations is much smaller than the number of different syntactic constructions. Ohmann in his analysis of a passage by Faulkner claims that primarily three transformations—the relative clause, the conjunction, and the comparative—account for the style of Faulkner. However, Ohmann's analysis is open to both specific and general objections. One specific objection is that it is vague or inexact to refer simply to a "conjunction" transformation. There are different types of conjunction. Both the Faulkner and the Hemingway passages that Ohmann cites contain conjoined structures, differing only in the elements that are conjoined. Furthermore, the few transformations that Ohmann cites as characteristic of Faulkner determine only a very few sentence types, only a fraction of the sentence patterns that could be said to be representative of Faulkner.

Even if these few transformations specified all the sentence types that are representative of Faulkner, Ohmann's description would still remain a description of language and not a characterization of Faulkner's style itself. This point becomes clearer if we shift our perspective from the description of one writer's style to the specification of the system of styles in the language. If the description of Faulkner's style is a specification of a subset of the transformational apparatus of English, then a description of all the styles in English would equal the description of the transformational apparatus of English as a whole, i.e., would equal a transformational grammar of English.

Ohmann himself gives tacit recognition to the need to transcend the purely grammatical in order to characterize Faulkner's style (and this is equivalent to the recognition that style cannot simply be equated with the

use of the language system to generate discourse). Ohmann's first step in this direction is to offer a semantic characterization of the cluster of transformations he posits as characteristic of Faulkner's use of language. They are said to "offer methods of adding information about a single 'thing' with a minimum of repetition" (434). The second step is to assert that use of this semantically related cluster "demonstrates . . . a certain conceptual orientation, a preferred way of organizing experience" (434). However, this is a description of the author rather than the style; and furthermore it is a description not really open to empirical verification.

More recent work of Ohmann's applies a different sense of "language use" to stylistics, one that does transcend the purely grammatical. I am referring to Ohmann's application to stylistics of Austin's theory of speech acts, as reflected in his paper on what he terms "instrumental style."[8] We will consider this article in some detail, since it has not provoked as extensive commentary as his earlier paper on transformational analysis and style.

Ohmann sees speech act theory as filling a gap that exists between the concerns of grammar and rhetoric,

> where the language system (the linguist's subject) is put to use by a speaker, to cast meanings as actions with the intent of influencing a hearer (the rhetorician's subject). The participants in a linguistic transaction have an important body of intuitive knowledge (competence, that is) besides what linguists and rhetoricians investigate: knowledge of the socially significant acts that can be performed *in* the act of speaking, and quite apart from the ultimate effect of speech on the hearer" (116-17).

These socially significant acts are, in J. L. Austin's terminology, *illocutionary acts*. Consider, for example, this utterance: "I promise to attend the meeting." The act of uttering it is a "locutionary act." This notion corresponds in part to what we earlier referred to as the act of execution and in part to the act of correlating units of content and expression.[9] By uttering the remark, the speaker is performing the illocutionary act of promising. In this particular example, the act is made explicit by the use of a performative verb, in the first person singular (i.e., a verb that performs an action rather than describing or reporting it). The illocutionary force of utterances can also be indirect, as in "There's a bull in the field," uttered as a warning.

In applying speech act theory to stylistics, Ohmann first attempts to identify fixed and variable components in the illocutionary act. The relevant dichotomy, according to Ohmann, is between "the unactivated meaning of the sentence and the fully launched illocutionary act" (118).[10] He goes on to state that "There is a realm of choice implied, a speaker may assign different illocutionary forces to the same meaning, and he may use different meanings to accomplish the same illocutionary act" (118). This remark implies that in some instances the illocutionary force is the constant, and in other instances it is the variable:

"The cage is unlocked." (locution) constant	→	Warning ("The lion may get loose.")
	→	Accusation ("You left it unlocked.")
	→	Apology ("I'm afraid I've botched it.")
		etc. (illocutions) variable

Request ("Close the window.") (illocution) constant	→	"I'm cold."
	→	"Please close the window."
	→	"Could you close the window?"
		etc. (locutions) variable

It would be absurd to take locutionary content as constant, with illocutionary force as the stylistic variable—but this seems to be the alternative Ohmann has in mind, in that he refers to "choices of illocutionary form for locutionary content" (131). It would be more reasonable to assimilate illocutionary force to content, and then talk about the choice of syntactic constructions to "clothe" a given illocutionary force. What Ohmann calls "instrumental style" would then be a variant of the notion of style as "different ways of saying it," with the invariant "it" being the illocutionary force, and the variable "ways" being sentences (including their propositional content as well as their syntactic structure).

Some aspects of Ohmann's analytic practice do in fact exemplify such an interpretation of the notion of instrumental style, with one modification. The "expression" of illocutionary force is characterized simply as either explicit or non-explicit. Illocutionary force is explicitly expressed by constructions in which performative verbs enter; e.g., *I* Performative Verb *you to* VP. One possible manifestation of this pattern is "I request you to close the window." However, the illocutionary act of requesting can be manifested non-explicitly; e.g., by uttering a description ("The room is cold"); asking a question ("Can you close the window?"); etc. It will be seen that this type of analysis represents a somewhat different perspective on the examples cited above of variable locutions for a constant illocution.

This type of analysis is exemplified in some of the remarks Ohmann makes about a passage from Carlyle's *Past and Present.* Ohmann points out that it contains a high proportion of sentences and clauses in which the illocutionary force is made explicit. Ohmann contrasts Carlyle's practice in this respect with that of Mill, whose *Three Essays on Religion* is marked by a low degree of explicitness in the acts performed (132, 134).[11]

However, the major thrust of Ohmann's sample analyses is not along the above lines. What he primarily does is present a catalog of the various illocutionary acts manifested in a given passage, drawing for this task upon an elaborate typology of illocutionary acts that is based on performative verbs. He refers to this typology as "a classification of the stylistic choices that a speaker of English can make in issuing his mean-

ings'' (119). Ohmann points out that the passage from Carlyle's *Past and Present*, for example, contains five Influencers, three Ceremonials, two Verdictives, etc.; and there is a relative lack of Attestors and Sequencers, which are generally prevalent in expository prose and in fact are extensively used by Mill in his *Three Essays on Religion*.

This particular stylistic practice of Ohmann's implies a conception of style as ''choices from among the illocutionary resources of the language.'' The notion of style as ''different locutionary ways of expressing an illocutionary force,'' which he stressed in his theoretical remarks, gets short shrift in his analytic practice. The situation here is exactly parallel to that in Ohmann's ''Generative Grammars,'' in which his analytic practice reflected the conception of style as ''choices from among the transformational resources of the language.'' The similarities between Ohmann's transformational stylistics and his speech-act stylistics are quite pervasive. In both cases, his analyses generate a mass of detail that in itself does not characterize a style. In both cases, Ohmann generalizes from the mass of detail by invoking a putative characteristic of the author. In the case of Carlyle, Ohmann concludes that he is an ''authoritarian'' writer (133).

It would thus appear that Ohmann's speech-act stylistics is cut from the same cloth as his transformational stylistics. One difference is that speech acts are more readily assimilated to the plane of content, whereas transformations constitute part of the formal apparatus of the language.

However, rather than seeing illocutionary forces as comparable to units of the content plane of language, it is possible to regard them as minimal units of the structure that underlies the language of expository discourse. Specifically, a case could be made for regarding the inventory of illocutionary forces, especially the class of Expositives, as the equivalent in expository discourse to the ''functions'' (in a Proppian sense) of narrative discourse. This interpretation would make one aspect of Ohmann's analysis of instrumental style actually an analysis of structure (at a fine-grained level).[12]

Another difference between Ohmann's speech-act stylistics and his transformational stylistics is in the nature of the ''habit of mind'' ascribed to stylists. In the case of Faulkner, Ohmann speaks of ''a certain conceptual organization''; but by calling Carlyle ''authoritarian'' he implies not an intrinsic characteristic, but a certain relationship between Carlyle the writer and his audience of readers. In other words, Carlyle ''chooses his own role, his audience, and a mode of relationship to social reality'' (131).

Seen from this perspective, Ohmann's notion of instrumental style would appear not to be a notion of style at all. In fact, in ''Generative Grammars'' Ohmann referred to such analyses as the study of ''tone'' or ''role'': ''The critic . . . infers, from the locutions on the printed page, a hypothetical live situation in which such language would be appropriate, and discusses the social and emotional features of that situation'' (424).

Tone or role would seem to fall within the domain of rhetoric rather than stylistics. However, tone might seem akin to functional style, the

correlation of language and situation, since "communicative situation" includes the relation between speaker and hearer. One difference is that in the case of literary discourse, the situation is not external to the text, but is built into it by verbal means. In functional stylistics the emphasis is generally on how situation determines language, and not on how language determines (inferences about) situation. But this is not an absolute distinction, for language may provide the necessary interpretation of situation in oral communication. The distinction that can be drawn between functional stylistics and the analysis of tone is as follows: in the former, the focus is on correlations of language and non-verbal situation, whereas in the latter, focus is on the relationship between writer and reader, as the writer determines it. The writer is "using" the language system, in part, to establish a relation with the receiver of his message. The relation is one-way since the writer does not have immediate feedback from his audience.

The analysis of tone is a matter of the analyst's inference as to how the writer intends to be perceived by the reader. Traditionally the procedure is conceived as one of directly inferring tone from the language. But Ohmann's application of speech-act theory suggests a two-stage process of inference. From the language the analyst infers the illocutionary force of utterances; and from these illocutionary acts he infers the tone.

The very fact that tone is twice removed from the language of discourse constitutes strong evidence against regarding tone as part of style. Style pertains to the language apprehended in itself and not as a means of obtaining other types of information—information about the writer, the communicative situation, etc. Style, it is true, must be inferred from the language in the sense that style cannot be equated with the stylistic corpus. But the inference does not go "beyond" or "through" the language in the way it does when the language is but the means to the end, whether the end is the conveyance of plot, character, tone, etc.

If tone is a matter of the reader's inference from the language of the text, it requires only a slight shift of focus to be concerned with the reader's response to the language itself. The way is then open to a concern with the gamut of the reader's emotional responses to the language of the text, with no need to impute any particular intent to the author. The result is a reader-centered stylistics.

The major thrust of Ohmann's stylistics is text-centered, even in his application of speech act theory. For Ohmann, speech acts are basically elements "frozen" in the text, elements to be labeled and counted. But there are the rudiments of a concern for reader response. For example, in his analysis of a passage from Mill's *Three Essays on Religion*, Ohmann notes the presence of a large number of Attestors and Sequencers, which he correlates with Mill's adoption of an egalitarian role vis-à-vis his readers. Ohmann takes a step toward reader response stylistics by referring to the effect of the Mill passage, viz., that it is "a depersonalized and undramatic argument" (134). This statement only arguably refers to reader response, however; it might be seen as descriptive of the text itself.

Other stylisticians have gone much further, promulgating approaches that may collectively be labeled "affective stylistics." The underlying assumption is that style "is concerned with response: if we speak objectively and normally, we might say it calls forth response; if we speak more subjectively and perhaps more correctly, we might say it *is* response."[13]

The objections to the above conception of style and stylistics are not different in kind from the objections we raised earlier against other conceptions, particularly that of style as the use of the language system to generate syntagmatic chains.[14] In fact, the two notions are essentially identical. To say that style is "response" is insufficient—a response is a response to something; and the "something" in this case is the set of linguistic constructions resulting from the stylist's use of the language system. To identify style with response to constructions is merely to shift the focus from the constructions themselves to readers' responses to them.

As we argued earlier, the language of a text fulfills multiple functions, it conveys multiple information. Style is only one aspect of language, hence style cannot be defined simply as the use of the language system. Exactly this same objection holds for the conception of style as response to language use. Such a conception is too inclusive; and as a consequence the work in reader-centered stylistics often deals with a much wider range of literary phenomena than style proper.

Another problem we pointed out earlier with the notion of style as use of the language system is that it equates style with the stylistic corpus, or rather the analyst's description of the corpus. But the description of a corpus yields a mass of detail, and not a generalized characterization of the corpus, a projection from the corpus that could be tested against future output from the stylist or against other samples from a closed corpus. The same problem obviously confronts us if we shift from the linguistic constructions constituting a corpus to the responses they invoke in readers. In fact, reader responses are in greater need of a generalizing characterization in that such corpora can never be closed—there will always be additional readers whose responses could be collected. (If the corpus of reader responses became closed, so would the set of stylisticians to analyze responses.)

We have now completed our examination of some of the major conceptions of style, and we have found them wanting. The logical next step, it would appear, would be to propose an alternative conception, one that avoids the shortcomings of the other conceptions. However, it is not totally inconceivable that the logicality of this step is chimerical. The discussion up to this point does, in part, constitute a characterization of style—albeit a negative one. But it might be the case that style can be defined only by specifying what it is not; cf. the word *silence*, which is most simply defined as "the absence of sound." Nevertheless, it does seem worth the effort to take a few tentative steps toward a positive characterization of style.

Let us begin by reviewing the exclusions we effected in the course of

our examination of the various notions of style. The initial circumscription of style is such that its study, stylistics, does not completely overlap with poetics, which may be loosely characterized as the scientific study of literature. Style is only one aspect of literature; hence stylistics is only a part of poetics. Second, we restrict our attempt at definition to verbal style, i.e., style as manifested in language. Style is not seen as a species of human action, not even verbal action in the sense of the execution of language. Nor is it assumed that style is immediately amenable to a general semiotic conception. Third, it is assumed that the locus of stylistic variation is the language itself. An analysis of style will therefore focus on language and not on the producer and receiver of verbal messages and the communicative setting in which messages are transmitted. This delimitation has the effect of excluding the notion of style as the use of the language system in order to attain a certain end—what Ohmann termed "instrumental style," though the ends that can be imputed to style are more diverse than the ones we discussed in connection with Ohmann's work. One example is the view that style serves to control the reader's decoding of the author's message, e.g., by making key parts of the text more salient than other parts.

These exclusions, it should be stressed, are meant to circumscribe the notion of "literary" or "belletristic" style. Some of the excluded phenomena might be regarded as a matter of style, but they are not the same as literary style; for instance, a "style" of performing music is a different notion from that of a "style" of writing manifested in a novel or essay.

The above exclusions still leave room for two of the most prevalent conceptions of style: (1) different expressions of the same content, where *expression* does not refer to the physical execution of language—phonation—but to the correlation of content with form, yielding linguistic signs; and (2) a habitual/characteristic use of the language system, where *use* refers not to a means to an end, but to the actualization, as syntagmatic chains of formal units, of the potentialities of the language system, short of phonation.

Each of these conceptions has major shortcomings. The basic problem with (1), which postulates a constant content underlying stylistic variants, is that, in actual fact, different writers do not say the same thing in different ways. This conception of style actually could be assimilated to the broader category of the instrumental use of language, where the goal would be the communication of a particular meaning. But this goal need not be actualized in order for style to exist. Discourse in double talk or Jabberwocky has a style, just as does any conventionally meaningful discourse. If the condition of constant content is eliminated, then (1) becomes, for all practical purposes, identical to (2), the notion of a habitual use of the language system. This notion thus becomes, by the process of elimination, the point of departure for a more adequate notion of literary style.

The major problems that will have to be overcome are as follows.

First, the notion of style as the habitual use of the language system is too inclusive, in that the language of discourse conveys multiple information, of which style is only a part. Second, the conception does not in itself admit of a generalizing characterization—style is equated with the stylistic corpus.

The conception of style that I feel overcomes these problems, while giving the above conception its due regard, can be succinctly expressed as follows: style is a differential mode of linguistic expression that is manifested on the lexico-syntactic level. I append "on the lexico-syntactic level" in order to distinguish style from phonology, but at the same time to indirectly suggest a kind of parallelism between stylistics and phonology.

Phonology is the study of the phonological system of a language. The system is comprised of phonemes, which are the minimally occurring units of the plane of expression. Phonemes are units of form, not substance. In the execution of language, the act of phonation, phonemes are realized or manifested as phonetic units, i.e., actual speech sounds. Typically there is a one-many relation between the phoneme and the phonetic units that manifest it. A careful phonetic transcription of utterances within one given language will indicate many more phonetically distinct sounds than there are phonemes in the phonological system. For example, the English phoneme /p/ can be phonetically manifested as either aspirated, [p^h], or unaspirated, [p]; released or unreleased, [p']; etc.

The principal reason physically distinct sounds are all regarded as realizations of one phoneme is that they do not have a differential function—they do not serve to keep apart meaningful units (morphemes, words). In English we do not have two different words, [pin] and [p^hin]; the unaspirated [p] never occurs in the same positions as [p^h]. However, [b] does occur in the same word-initial position; [bin] is a word, distinct from [p^hin] (which is spelled *pin*). Phonemes, then, can be defined as units with a purely differential function—they serve to distinguish meaningful units without themselves having any meaning. A given phoneme, say English /p/, is a phoneme not so much because of any inherent features, but by virtue of its contrastive function of being distinct from all the other phonemes in the phonological system.

The linguist undertaking an analysis of a language's phonological system must first begin with a detailed phonetic transcription of a corpus of utterances. His task is to determine which are the functional distinctions. From one perspective, this task can be seen as the grouping of sounds into functionally equivalent classes. One factor that enters into this grouping, in addition to the positions in which the sounds occur, is their phonetic similarity. For example, [p], [p^h], and [p'], which are grouped together as manifestations of the one phoneme /p/, share the phonetic characteristics of being voiceless bilabial stops.

Once the phonemes of a language are established, the linguist can then specify the type of system they form. Systems can be established on the basis of contrasts of articulation. All the vowels of a language, for

example, form a system based on a contrast in height of the tongue. The simplest vowel system, a one-dimensional one, consists of only three vowels, characterized in articulatory terms as high, mid, low.[15]

Let us now see how the notion of style and its analysis corresponds to the notion of the phoneme and phonemic analysis. Note first that the stylistician's starting point for the analysis of style is a grammatical description of the sentences in his corpus. These descriptions correspond to the phonologist's preliminary phonetic transcription of his corpus of utterances. The grammatically detailed description of the stylistic corpus no more constitutes a description of style than the phonetically detailed transcription of utterances constitutes an analysis of the phonemes of the language. The stylistician, like the phonologist, has to transcend the minute details, which in a sense obscure the basic system.

The crux of the problem with most approaches to stylistics, as we saw from our earlier discussion, is that the grammatical detail is often not really transcended; it may be summarized or reduced in various ways, but it still remains on the level of syntax. And if the purely grammatical is transcended, it is at the cost of shifting from the characterization of the writing itself to that of the writer, or the reader's response to the writing, etc.

The solution to this problem that appeal to phonology as a model suggests is as follows: style is on a different level from the sentences that constitute a text. These syntactic structures (resulting from the use of the language system) serve only to manifest or realize style. The relation between style and syntactic structures, in other words, is parallel to that existing between the phoneme and the phonetic units that actualize it.

The comparison of style to the phoneme also has the virtue of allowing us to define style as a differential mode of linguistic expression without thereby assimilating style to a species of human action, a way of doing something. Phonemes, to repeat, are abstract units of expression-form, not expression-substance. The physical act of phonation produces phonetic units, not the phonemes themselves. Likewise, style is manifested in syntactic constructions without thereby being identical to the (manner of the) physical act of their production.

Note further that the comparison with phonology points up the fact that the only use or function that may be associated with style is the minimal, purely formal one of differentiating one mode of linguistic expression from another. Style, like the phoneme, is inherently a contrastive notion; when we talk about one mode of expression, we are implicitly contrasting it with other modes.

However, it might appear that there is one crucial difference between stylistic differentiation and phonemic differentiation. The former is often regarded as setting one stylist apart from all other stylists. Phonemic contrasts, however, are supraindividual. They keep apart utterances, not the individual utterers. As one linguist has noted, "In examining the speech signal for linguistic purposes, we are interested only in its utterance-identifying function, and so want somehow to strain out those

characteristics which are solely matters of voice-quality modulation. Only thus can we see how the remaining physical properties of the speech signal serve to tell the hearer what has been said'' (Hockett, 115).

To transfer these remarks to the domain of style, we would rephrase them as follows: In examining the grammatical properties of a corpus (drawn from the work of a given writer) for stylistic purposes, we are interested only in their style-identifying function and so want to somehow strain out those properties that convey information about the individual identity of the writer (his ``verbal fingerprints'').

The implication of the preceding remarks is that style is *not* the man; that is, style cannot be equated with individual personality. This conclusion follows if we take seriously the basic comparison between stylistics and phonology. To take the comparison seriously, we must ask ourselves if there is an exact analogue in stylistics to the phoneme in phonology. It seems clear that the true analogues to phonemes are the style types of traditional stylistics, types identified by such labels as ``Ciceronian,'' ``periodic,'' ``loose,'' etc.

Style types have often been regarded exclusively as classifications of stylists, based on chronological factors. But they can be interpreted in a purely synchronic fashion as classifications of grammatical constructions occurring within a corpus for stylistic analysis. A style type may be said to ``classify'' constructions in a way analogous to that in which a phoneme ``classifies'' physically distinct sound segments. There is thus a one-many relation between the style type and the syntactic constructions that actualize it; and the constructions that are grouped together as functionally equivalent—i.e., they serve the same style-identifying function—share certain features in common, just as phonemes share certain phonetic features. For example, the style type designated ``loose'' is manifested by, among others, the nominative absolute construction, the appositive, adjectival modifiers displaced from their head, etc. All of these constructions are similar in that they reflect the string properties of language.[16] ``Loose'' is appropriate to these constructions, particularly in comparison with hierarchically organized constructions; therefore the term for the style type is not simply a metaphoric term for the reader/analyst's emotional response to the constructions.

One difference between phonemes and style types is that the number of phonemes in a language is much greater than the number of style types. Stylisticians have posited only about three style types (though there is no one standardized set of terms for them). There is also a difference in the respective corpora for analysis of stylistics and phonology. The phonologist's corpus of utterances will contain manifestations of all the phonemes of the language. It is not unusual for the stylistician to work with a corpus of sentences from a single writer, and hence the sentences are manifestations of only one style type. Even in such a case, however, the stylistician's description of the writer's style must implicitly take into account, or presuppose, the other style types. To describe a style as, say, loose is tacitly to contrast it with the other style types.

The style types of a language form an interrelated system, analogous to the systematic relations among phonemes. I have proposed that the literary style system of English consists of the three types loose, balanced, and tight.[17] Loose and tight are maximally distinct in that their grammatical correlates (string properties and hierarchical properties respectively) are maximally distinct "families" of syntactic constructions. A gradient divides the two polar types; balanced style thus constitutes a "balance" between loose and tight.

The postulation that style types are organized along a gradient suggests the possibility of recognizing additional types, or more exactly, subtypes of balanced style; some stylists will tilt more toward the "loose" end of the gradient, others toward the "tight" end. Such possibilities, however, are too restricted to overcome what may seem to be the major shortcoming of a theory that recognizes no more than three basic types of style. Such a theory would fail to differentiate among innumerable stylists, and stylistic descriptions would seem to be so general as to be worthless. Of course, each style type is manifested by a large range of constructions, and the details of the "syntactic substance" of each type, the particular constructions that manifest a given type, could be made part of the full description of a style. After all, a phonological description of a language must indicate exactly how the phonemes are phonetically manifested. The problem, though, is that we would seem to be back where we started—with a mass of detail, and an implicit identification of style with the stylistic corpus.

The problem is not without its analogue in phonology. All speakers of English share the same set of phonemes; but all speakers do not "sound" alike, aside from the factor of individual voice quality. Speakers from Mississippi, say, do not actualize the phonemes of English in the same way as speakers from New York. The linguist accounts for such facts by invoking the concept of geographic dialects. Speakers in one region use one particular cluster of sounds in actualizing the phonemes, particularly the vowels; and speakers from another region use another cluster. A skilled dialectologist can progressively differentiate smaller and smaller regional dialects, up to a particular neighborhood of a city. (It takes no skill in dialectology, of course, to recognize particular individuals by their voice quality.)

Since each style type is manifested by a wide range of syntactic constructions, the way is open for an analogous process of successive differentiation, based on the establishment of clusters of constructions. For example, the elements that are "strung together" in the manifestation of loose style can vary—for one stylist they may primarily be noun phrases; for another stylist, they may primarily be simple clauses. This is one distinction that allows us to establish two main subtypes of loose style.[18]

To establish successively more refined subtypes, it may be necessary to have recourse to quantitative studies; e.g., one subtype may be shown

to use a given cluster of constructions 40 percent of the time, whereas another subtype utilizes it only 10 percent of the time. Also, lexical choice can be a consideration, just as it is in dialect studies.

Let me close by emphasizing what should be obvious from the immediately preceding discussion. The notion of style as a differential mode of expression on the lexical-syntactic level is intimately tied up with the notion of synchronic style types. Further advances in stylistics will be contingent upon refinement of the theory of style types, as well as practical work in the description of a range of stylists that will yield successive differentiations of the basic types.

SAN GABRIEL, CALIFORNIA

1. Richard Ohmann, "Generative Grammars and the Concept of Literary Style," *Word*, 20 (1964), 423-39.
2. Harris Goldsmith, "Beethoven Piano Sonatas by Three Specialists," *High Fidelity*, Feb. 1979, p. 65.
3. It might seem that we should specifically refer to "written literature," since oral literature might be said to exist as a set of variants of a given "archetype." Folklore scholarship often deals with different versions of the "same" tale; but such versions do not exist in a relation of "local" paraphrase, differing only in the language that manifests them; see the discussion below of "local" vs. "global" paraphrase.
4. See M. A. K. Halliday, "Descriptive Linguistics in Literary Studies," in *Linguistics and Literary Style*, ed. Donald C. Freeman (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970).
5. For a discussion of shortcomings in Ohmann's comparison of Faulkner and Hemingway, see William O. Hendricks, *Grammars of Style and Styles of Grammar* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1976), pp. 9-10.
6. It can be noted that this general conception of style, by not specifically tying stylistic variation to semantic constancy, causes some of Ohmann's arguments in favor of transformational analysis to collapse. There is no special advantage to a mode of grammatical analysis which imposes two grammatical descriptions on each sentence, one of "deep structure" and one of "surface structure," with the two structures seen as corresponding to the distinction between invariant content and variable form.
7. Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1957), 17.
8. Richard Ohmann, "Instrumental Style: Notes on the Theory of Speech as Action," in *Current Trends in Stylistics*, ed. Braj B. Kachru and Herbert F. W. Stahlke (Edmonton: Linguistic Research, Inc., 1972).
9. At one point Ohmann mistakenly asserts that the locutionary act is the one that linguists and stylisticians have mainly studied. But at another point he also states, correctly this time, that linguists have primarily viewed language as a static object, abstracted from the process of speech, the "flow of mental process and physical execution" (116).
10. We will pass over Ohmann's further dichotomy between illocutionary means and perlocutionary end (118, 131).
11. Ohmann's particular observations are vitiated by his unacceptable appeal to "near approximations" of performatives (cf. 132). However, our intent here is not so much to evaluate Ohmann's application of speech act theory as to analyze the various notions of style that underlie his stylistic theory and practice.
12. Ohmann himself excluded structure from style; see "Generative Grammars," p. 425.
13. Eugene R. Kintgen, "Effective Stylistics," *Centrum*, II (1974), 52.

14. While reader response to linguistic configurations cannot be equated with style, the study of such responses does constitute a bona fide area of investigation that can supplement the study of style.

15. Cf. Charles F. Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 95.

16. For further discussion of style types and their grammatical correlates, see Hendricks, *Grammars*.

17. See William O. Hendricks, "Style Types: Theory and Practice in Linguistic Stylistics," *Poetica*, 12 (in press).

18. For examples of such subtypes, see Hendricks, "Style Types."