

utterance, "Can you pass the salt?" although it is in the syntactical form of a question, can be used by the speaker, and correctly understood by the hearer, as a polite form of request? (H. P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," 1975, reprinted in his *Studies in the Way of Words*, 1989.) Grice proposed that users of a language share a set of implicit expectations which he calls the "communicative presumption"—for example, that an utterance is intended by a speaker to be true, clear, and above all relevant. If an utterance seems purposely to violate these expectations, we seek to make sense of it by transferring it to a context in which it is clearly appropriate. Other language theorists have continued Grice's analysis of the collective assumptions that help to make utterances meaningful and intelligible, and serve also to make a sustained discourse a coherent development of signification instead of a mere collocation of independent sentences. One such assumption is that the hearer shares with the speaker (or the reader shares with the writer) a large body of nonlinguistic knowledge and experience; another is that the speaker is using language in a way that is intentional, purposive, and in accordance with linguistic and cultural conventions; a third is that there is a shared knowledge of the complex ways in which the meaning of a locution varies with the particular situation, as well as with the type of discourse, in which it is uttered.

Some proponents of stylistics include discourse analysis within their area of investigation. (See *stylistics*.) And since the late 1970s, a number of critics have increasingly adapted discourse analysis to the examination of the *dialogue* in novels and dramas. A chief aim is to explain how the characters represented in a literary work, and also the readers of that work, are constantly able to infer meanings that are not asserted or specified in a conversational interchange. The claim is that such inferences are "rule-governed," in that they depend on sets of assumptions, shared by users and interpreters of discourse that come into play to establish meanings, and furthermore, that these meanings vary systematically, in accordance with whether the rule-guided expectations are fulfilled or intentionally violated. Such explorations of conversational discourse in literature often extend to the re-analysis of *point of view* and other traditional topics in the criticism of literary narratives. (Compare the entry on *dialogic criticism*.)

See Malcolm Coulthard, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis* (1977); Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (1983); Teun A. van Dijk and Walter Kintsch, *Strategies of Discourse Comprehension* (1983); Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (1986); Wendell V. Harris, *Interpretive Acts* (1988), chapter 2.

Dissociation of Sensibility was a phrase introduced by T. S. Eliot in his essay "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921). Eliot's claim was that John Donne and the other *metaphysical poets* of the earlier seventeenth century, like the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, "possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience." They manifested "a direct sensuous apprehension of thought," and felt "their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose." But "in the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in,

from which we have never recovered." This dissociation of intellection from emotion and sensuous perception, according to Eliot, was greatly aggravated by the influence of John Milton and John Dryden; and most later poets in English either thought or felt, but did not think and feel as an act of unified sensibility.

Eliot's vaguely defined distinction had a great vogue, especially among American New Critics. The dissociation of sensibility was taken to be the feature that weakened most poetry between Milton and the later writings of W. B. Yeats, and was attributed particularly to the development, in the seventeenth century, of the scientific conception of reality as a material universe stripped of human values and feeling. (See, for example, Basil Willey, *The Seventeenth Century Background*, 1934.) Especially since 1950, however, Eliot's conception of a sudden but persisting dissociation of sensibility has come in for strong criticism, on the ground that it is an invalid historical claim that was contrived to support Eliot's disapproval (as a political and social conservative) of the course of English intellectual, political, and religious history after the Civil War of 1642, as well as to rationalize Eliot's particular poetic preferences.

See T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," *Selected Essays* (2d ed., 1960), and "Milton II," *On Poetry and Poets* (1957). Attacks on the validity of the doctrine are Leonard Unger, *Donne's Poetry and Modern Criticism* (1950), and Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (1957), Chapter 8.

Distance and Involvement. In his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Immanuel Kant analyzed the experience of an aesthetic object as an act of "contemplation" which is "disinterested" (that is, independent of one's personal interests and desires) and free from reference to the object's reality, moral effect, or utility. Various philosophers of art developed this concept into attempts to distinguish "aesthetic experience" from all other kinds of experience, on the basis of the impersonality and disinterestedness with which we contemplate an aesthetic object or work of art. Writing in 1912, Edward Bullough introduced the term "distance" into this type of theory. He points, for example, to the difference between our ordinary experience of a dense fog at sea, with its strains, anxiety, and fear of invisible dangers, and an aesthetic experience, in which we attend with delight to the "objective" features and sensuous qualities of the fog itself. This aesthetic mode of experiencing the fog is, Bullough affirms, the effect of "psychical distance," which "is obtained by separating the object and its appeal from one's own self, by putting it out of gear with practical needs and ends." The degree of this psychical distance varies according to the nature of the artistic object that we contemplate, and also in accordance with an "individual's capacity for maintaining a greater or lesser degree" of such distance.

In recent literary criticism the term **aesthetic distance**, or simply **distance**, is often used not only to define the nature of literary and aesthetic experience in general, but also to analyze the many devices by which authors control the degree of a reader's distance, or "detachment"—which is in