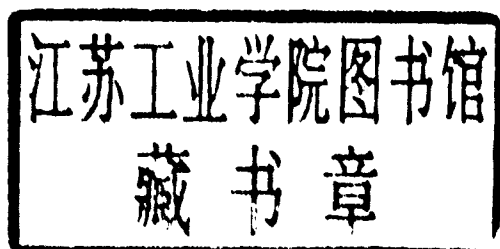Edited by Marina Lambrou and Peter Stockwell

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Contents

Introduction: The State of Contemporary Stylistics

Marina Lambrou and Peter Stockwell

Contemporary Stylistics presents the current state of the integrated study of language and literature. From its emergence as an interdisciplinary blend of literary criticism, linguistics, psychology, cognitive science, social studies and philosophy, *stylistics* is now a mature and vibrant single discipline, with a confident new generation of researchers engaged in the proper study of literature. This book collects some of these new voices together for the first time, and presents their latest work in a form that is accessible and placed into context. The book includes specific introductions to each piece of work by an established figure in stylistics. Taken together, the book offers a comprehensive showcase for the range of approaches and practices which form modern stylistics: from cognitive poetics to corpus linguistics, from explorations of mind style and spoken discourse in narrative to the workings of viewpoint in lyric poetry, from word meanings to the meanings and emotions of literary worlds, and more.

In identifying the new generation of stylisticians, we were faced with an embarrassment of riches: stylistics is practised in its broadest terms across the world, across all the fields of literary scholarship, genre, culture and period, and is increasingly used as the core discipline for further interdisciplinary encounters with literary historiography, critical theory, second language and cultural pedagogy and other forms of literary and language study. More stylisticians are being trained and are holding important academic posts than ever before. More students and graduate researchers are being enthused by the energy and rigour of stylistics than ever before. In order to keep the book under control, we set ourselves a limit in determining a profile for our contributors: each had to be in the first few years of their full academic career; each had to have a proven research record in terms of published articles and conference paper output; more trickily for us, in each contributor we had to see the sort of passion and sharp analytical intelligence that convinced us that here was a person who would be significant in the field in the future.

In literary studies in general, stylistics offers rational and progressive continuity where there is elsewhere so much self-generated crisis. In this book, we also wanted to demonstrate these features of the discipline. An appreciation of earlier work makes it possible for this generation, and indeed subsequent generations of stylisticians, to make further advances through new research. Our new stylisticians

have enough self-confidence to respect previous work and develop it, without being threatened by past success or afraid to challenge perceived deficiencies in order to progress the discipline. We gave our contributors an almost free licence to produce a chapter from their own latest research with just a few suggestions as a guide: we asked them to apply or critique an existing model for stylistic analysis; present a new tool, model or method for analysis; review or discuss the current state, thinking or advances in stylistics; provide a comparative stylistic analysis or discussion across texts or a comparison in the historical sense of literary analysis. As the central focus, all the chapters present accessible, practical, stylistic analysis of a particular text that is also challenging and original. Taken altogether, the book covers an extraordinarily broad range of literary genres and texts.

In order to pay proper attention to the traditions, roots and richness of stylistics, we asked several key figures in the field to introduce each chapter. It is a mark of the collegiality of the discipline of stylistics that almost everyone we asked enthusiastically agreed to support this project. We gave our eminent writers a narrower brief: they had to pick out the key features of the chapter, and highlight where the writer was doing something significant or particularly interesting. We asked them to contextualize the chapter in relation to the field. We also asked them to mention any points with which they took issue, or did not agree, and of course said that they could point to possible further directions for work. In short, we wanted to enact the start of the sort of dialogue that has been the hallmark of work in stylistics ever since its inception.

Stylistics is usually drawn with its origins in classical rhetoric, though its modern incarnation stems most directly from the practical criticism and structuralism of the middle of the twentieth century. Stylistics has long outgrown this recent rebirth, and though it was never as formalist as its detractors liked to think, the field went on to gather to itself new analytical tools in pragmatics, text linguistics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, computational corpus linguistics and cognitive linguistics. As each innovation in the source disciplines became available for literary investigations, so the stylistic exploration reached out with infectious excitement away from short, simple and linguistically deviant texts to address longer, more complex and richer literature and literary contexts and readings. What is particularly noteworthy in the work which came back to us for this book is the return to the earlier sorts of texts equipped with the analytical capacities of the present. Just under half of the chapters in the book explore aspects of prose fiction, employing techniques which were simply not available to early stylisticians. The range of literary texts covered is also broad: from the most experimental hyperfiction to the most canonical, from the frothiest of popular fiction to the most serious high art, across the history of the novel to writing for young adults, stylistics has always had a demonstrably practical democratic instinct while retaining an aesthetic and social scientific sense of literary value.

We did not intend to divide the book into the three traditional modes of writing: prose, poetry and drama, but the chapters simply fell out that way. Two things surprised us: firstly, the innovations that the cognitive poetic branch of stylistics is bringing to the exploration of poetry, which reinvigorates this

substantial body of work in stylistics; secondly, the renewed interest in drama and dialogue. Early stylistics struggled with poor tools to analyse the rich setting and context of drama and performance. Now, several different analytical techniques are being triangulated on script and dialogue, with productive effects.

One early idea we had for the organisation of the book was to section it by the sub-disciplines of stylistics, which also reflected the specific expertise of each of our authors, but we quickly had to abandon that when it became apparent what a rich diversity of tools the contemporary stylistician has available. Numerous linguistic models of syntax, transitivity, deixis, modality, lexical choice, pragmatics, corpus linguistics, world-building and management, and many other aspects of language have been used by our contributors in this book. Equally, stylisticians are not fossilised or frightened by historical periods or the traditional literary divisions, so arranging the book by literary genre, theme or period was also not viable. It is a quality of the stylistician that is immediately apparent to students that the analytical techniques we use – rigorous, thorough, transparent, articulate, and open to betterment – are adaptable across a range of literary works. This is not to say that stylistics renders the singularity of literary texts as a reduced set of 'features', 'patterns' and other universals: the best contemporary stylistics is as interested in the appreciation of the particular piece of literary art in hand as in the shared conventions of language that configure it. However, stylistic analysis can make a contribution not only to literary criticism, but also in varying ways to linguistics, psychology, cognitive science, corpus analysis and the philosophy of language.

Moreover, stylistics has always been an *applied* discipline. Stylisticians have traditionally spent far less time pondering methodology compared with the practical matter of getting on with the analytical and exploratory work. This is not to say that stylisticians have ignored the methodological and critical theoretical dimensions of our practices, but by and large stylistics is an artisanal pursuit. It is noticeable that there is little anxiety about this in evidence amongst our contributors. In general, they are alive to the critical and theoretical positions they have adopted, but they do not make a fuss about the matter. Detractors might see this as naivety or complacency; we see it as confident self-assurance, and a sign that the discipline has come of age.

There are two views of what stylistics is for, what its functions are, and what it can achieve. All stylisticians would agree that the discipline accounts for the workings of literary texts. That is a matter of describing as systematically and openly as possible the nature of the textual evidence which accompanies a particular reading of the text. Stylistics can always do this, and it works 100% of the time with all texts and all readings. This basic outcome of stylistics provides a descriptive account of textual mechanics and the reading process which is made available in a common currency of register, in order to allow other stylisticians to compare their own account, verify or take issue with the analysis. The procedure is neither objective (since it involves analytical judgements and selections in context) nor purely subjective, since the models for analysis are conventionally shared and validated in a range of other disciplines. Stylistics offers an

intersubjective analysis that can be shared, compared and evaluated on the basis of explicit criteria. One happy consequence of this fact is that engaging with stylistic analyses often enriches the reading experience: the stylistician-reader gathers together perspectives from others and can make imaginative leaps into different viewpoints and feelings about a literary work.

Some stylisticians also believe that stylistics has a further power beyond this central and permanent descriptive advantage. While stylistic frameworks cannot in general really be predictive of certain readings, they are certainly often *productive* of new ways of seeing the literary work. These moments of insight are what create the spark of engagement in many students of literature as they come to demystify the meaning of the text in an interpretation that is fresh rather than subjectively theirs alone. It is not so much that the linguistic approach has generated a reading by itself, as the fact that the systematic effort towards pattern-description encourages the recognition of a reading that the stylistician might have come to eventually, or that others might reasonably have come to, or which might be seen as appropriate in the future. In other words, stylistics can sometimes (or even, can *often*) produce the sort of startling, pleasurable and perspective-changing moments in reading that literary criticism traditionally stumbles over clumsily and inarticulately. Both of these views of stylistics are represented in this book.

Contemporary stylistics is in bouncing and dynamic health. We hope this collection of twenty new chapters by contemporary scholars in the field will encourage you to read more stylistics, engage more with its theory and practice, learn more about how verbal art and language work, roll your sleeves up and start doing some stylistics.