

RHETORIC

***A Text-Reader
on Language
and Its Uses***

Jim W. Corder
Texas Christian University

A Random House Book



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on Language
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Random House New York

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Preface

The rationale and the design of this book are, I believe, adequately stated in the Introduction to Part I and the Introduction to Part II. Forecasting those fuller statements, I should like to say here only that the book is founded upon three primary beliefs: along with his study and exercise of prose method, the student must necessarily study the development and quality of his language; for the student's study and exercise of method, the best examples are to be found in the work of widely recognized and long-established masters of English prose style; and these examples can be arranged in a sequence that will help the student assimilate a body of methods he may use in any situation.

I should like to express my gratitude to Professor Lyle H. Kendall for countless suggestions and ideas, especially in the sections on Planning the Complete Essay and Exposition, and for assorted shouts and grimaces. Fit testimony of my respect I cannot offer.

I should also like to thank some of my students for their kind permission to use their work. I am indebted to Mr. David Parsons, Mr. Steven Neville, and Miss Ruth Ann Starnes.

My wife typed the manuscript, admonished, encouraged, and cherished me. I have already thanked her, and will again.

J. C.

December 1964

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Part One



ON THE
QUALITIES
OF
LANGUAGE

Introduction

The essays in this section, while their method and manner may illustrate and encourage good prose style, were chosen primarily for their material, to foster and enliven knowledge of the language. If they serve other purposes as well, it should arouse no surprise, only delight; but they were selected, and they are offered to the student, for their subject matter. This recommendation of essays for their *content* in a book later preoccupied with *method* requires some explanation.

Style, it may be presumed, should be paramount in a book designed for use in a college course in composition and rhetoric. The many reasons that such a book addresses itself to the procedures and principles of good prose style will be mentioned in Part II. These essays are variously pleasant, effective, and lively; some, of course, are more striking in their procedure than others. Yet they are recommended first for their subject matter.

To understand the relationship of the two parts of this book and the function of the subject matter of the following essays, consider the structure of the first sentence of this Introduction. The complex sentence, with a major and a minor statement, names two things that are important, but by its construction designates style as subordinate to content for this section. The book, an enlargement of the sentence, names two things, but insists that for this text at least, style is more important. Thus these essays, recommended for their ideas and information, have approximately the same relationship to the book as the dependent clause early in the first sentence has to the whole sentence.

These essays will help a student to understand that the study of English language and composition is more than the study of

grammar, punctuation, and spelling. They will help him to know that his language is alive and controversial, and that attitudes toward language may be manifestations of philosophical and moral positions. But while their intrinsic worth is great, it is assumed here that their ultimate function is to serve the rest of the book in its primary concern with style. Knowledge of the history, structure, and character of the language cannot but be helpful in developing good prose style, and some of the essays, stylishly written themselves, in turn have style itself as their subject. An educated man should know the nature of his language, and he should be able to write a literate essay. There are few statements so incontrovertible. Part I of this book is designed to help with the first of these duties in such a way that knowledge of the language will help the student fulfill the second.

The essays are arranged thematically in three groups. Those in the first describe, in approximately chronological order, significant stages in the history of the language. Those in the second, devoted to standards of language, are in their several ways given to current issues and controversies arising from the study of language, its usage, and the standards for determining usage. The essays in the third group have style as their subject. They thus serve two functions: to inform the student of various aims and procedures in good style, and to bridge the distance between this first part, given to subject matter, and the larger second part, given to method. The Recommended Readings that conclude Part I are for the student's use. This list of valuable and pertinent essays, articles, and books is given to provide guidance for the student who wants to know more about the history and the character of his language. And it is in the nature of the good student that he wants to know more.