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Introduction

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Language, Literature and Stylistics

Beatrix Busse and Dan McIntyre

This book has two purposes. It is a collection of essays demonstrating the state of the art in stylistics, and it is a tribute to Professor Mick Short and his contribution to stylistics over the course of his long and distinguished career. Such books are often called festschrifts, though we have deliberately not used this word in the title of the book for reasons we will explain below.

To anyone even vaguely familiar with stylistics, Mick Short will be an immediately recognisable name. Indeed, one of the reviewers of our proposal for this book described him as 'perhaps the most influential stylistician of the latter part of the twentieth and first part of the twenty-first century'. We would concur entirely, save for the word 'perhaps'. Since 1996 Mick has been Professor of English Language and Literature in the Department of Linguistics and English Language at Lancaster University, where he has taught since 1973. His connection with Lancaster extends back even further, as he was an undergraduate student at the university before moving to the University of Birmingham for his MA. Following a short spell teaching in Birmingham, Mick Short returned to Lancaster, subsequently gaining a PhD for his work on the stylistics of drama. Professor Short's work at Lancaster has focused primarily on stylistics, and it is in this area that he has developed a truly international reputation. Of course, many academics achieve such status, but what sets Mick Short apart is the extent to which he has influenced his discipline, his colleagues and his students.

Nowadays, anyone interested in learning about stylistics has myriad opportunities open to them. There is a worldwide organization to join – the *Poetics and Linguistics Association* (PALA). There are international journals to read – PALA's own *Language and Literature*, as well as others such as the *Journal of Literary Semantics*. There are textbooks to consult, and research monographs available. And there is an increasing number of stylistics courses on offer at universities the world over. It is no exaggeration to say that Mick Short has had a significant hand in establishing this current state

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of affairs. He is, for example, responsible for PALA, which he founded in 1979, with the support of his colleagues Ron Carter, Roger Fowler and Katie Wales, and for which he acted as chair from 1990 to 1993. He was the founding editor of PALA's journal, *Language and Literature*, from 1992 to 1996, and of its predecessor, *Parlance*. Through his teaching and lectures at universities and conferences worldwide, he has played a leading role in establishing stylistics as an area of serious academic research both in the United Kingdom and overseas, particularly in China where he taught from 1983 to 1984.

Additionally, Mick is the author of many books and articles which have contributed to the development of stylistics as a discipline. He established his reputation with *Style in Fiction* (Longman, 1981) which he wrote in collaboration with his colleague Geoffrey Leech. This book is notable for the systematic and detailed account it gives of the language of narrative fiction, as well as for its introduction of a stylistic 'tool-kit' for the literary critic. *Style in Fiction* also includes the original model of discourse presentation (i.e. speech, thought and writing presentation) that has been so influential both within and beyond stylistics. Since the publication of *Style in Fiction*, Mick has continued his work on discourse presentation with other colleagues, elaborating and extending the model through meticulous corpus-based research (see Semino and Short 2004). The importance of *Style in Fiction* is also apparent by the fact that in 2005 PALA members voted it the most influential stylistics book published in the preceding 25 years. Furthermore, Mick Short's textbook *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose* (1996) has become a classic introduction to stylistics, demonstrating its potential for the systematic, retrievable and rigorous investigation of (literary) texts. He has been influential in almost all areas of stylistics, and was one of the first stylisticians to apply pragmatic findings to the analysis of drama (Short 1981). Most recently, he has illustrated the usefulness of the stylistic approach to the analysis of film.

Mick Short's work as an editor is also significant, and demonstrates his commitment to the academic community. In addition to his own edited collections (Short 1989; Thomas and Short 1996; Culpeper *et al.* 1998) he was also responsible for editing *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse* (1999) from an unfinished manuscript by the late Paul Werth. Werth's work has, of course, gone on to have tremendous influence on the recent development of cognitive stylistics.

What makes this enviable reputation for research all the more impressive is that it has not been achieved at the expense of his primary role as a university teacher. Throughout his career Professor Short has been committed to sharing his knowledge and to educating the next generation of stylisticians. For many years at Lancaster he has taught a first-year introduction to stylistics called *Language and Style* (the title of this book is a direct tribute to the

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success of this course). This is a course famed (some would say notorious) for its innovative pedagogical techniques, which include, *inter alia*, cross-dressing to perform extracts from featured plays and sketches, having students stand hand-in-hand at the front of the lecture theatre to illustrate the concept of syntactic co-ordination, and hitting students over the head with an inflatable hammer to remind them of the arbitrariness of sound symbolism (see Short and Breen 1988; Breen and Short 1988; Short 1993; and McIntyre 2003 for serious scholarly accounts of this outlandish behaviour). For this innovative teaching, Mick was awarded a UK National Teaching Fellowship in 2000. Typically, he used his award of £50,000, granted to him for his fellowship, to try and improve his students' learning experience by developing a web-based interactive version of the *Language and Style* course, which in 2005 he made freely available on the internet.[1] And in a perfect demonstration of the symbiotic nature of teaching and research, he edited a special issue of the journal *Language and Literature* (Short et al. 2006) in 2006, reporting on the findings from various investigations of the efficacy of the web-based course.

This interest in the pedagogy of stylistics is what led us to abandon the idea of a traditional festschrift in favour of a book that students as well as researchers would benefit from. In view of his interests, this seems a far more fitting tribute to Professor Short's contribution to stylistics. In a further break with tradition, we are presenting this book to Mick not as a valedictory gift to mark his retirement, nor in honour of a significant birthday, but to mark the 30th anniversary of PALA. We have done this because stylistics has always been a forward-looking discipline and nowhere is this more apparent than in the activities of PALA. We want Mick to enjoy using the book with his own students and we present it to him in gratitude for the knowledge, advice, support and time that he has given to us and to all his students, colleagues and friends over the years.

Aims of this collection

As explained above, *Language and Style* is intended to demonstrate current thinking at the cutting edge of the discipline, as well as to convey the practical means by which stylistic analysis can be carried out. To the researcher or student new to stylistics, however, the sheer volume of work now available can be bewildering. What links corpus-based analysis to the more qualitative endeavours of the past? How is cognitive stylistics related to literary criticism more generally? What are the foundational principles of stylistics, and how are these reflected in current research? It is an awareness of the historical development of stylistics that provides the answers to these

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questions. To understand where we are heading we need to know where we have come from.

A brief history of stylistics

Stylistics in its most general sense is the study of style in language and how this results from the intra-linguistic features of a text in relation to non-linguistic factors such as author, genre, historical period, and so on. It is also about making meaning inferences based on the linguistic framework of the text. While stylisticians have engaged with a wide variety of text-types, it remains the case that the most popular object of study for stylistics is literature. Indeed, this is the primary concern of most of the chapters in this collection. The history of stylistics sheds some light on why literary texts have remained core to the analytical concerns of stylisticians.

Even from its beginning we can see that stylistics embraces much more than the rhetorical notion of literary embellishment or 'elocutio'. Stylistics as a discipline can trace its roots to the formalist tradition that developed in Russian literary criticism at the turn of the twentieth century. Of particular interest is the work of the Moscow Linguistic Circle. Its most famous member and the most well known exponent of Russian Formalism was Roman Jakobson (1896–1982), whose work in this area focused on defining the qualities of what he termed 'poetic language'. According to Jakobson (1960), the poetic function of language is realized in those communicative acts where the focus is on the message for its own sake (as opposed, say, to a communicative act focused on conveying the emotions of the speaker). Jakobson's work was to have tremendous influence on the development of stylistics, not least as a result of his varied academic career and the opportunities it afforded for the cross-fertilization of ideas. Following his emigration to Czechoslovakia in 1920, Jakobson began collaborating with Czech literary scholars such as Jan Mukařovský (1891–1975), establishing the Prague Linguistic Circle in 1926 which was to become famous as the birthplace of structuralism. Like Jakobson, Mukařovský was interested in identifying the formal and functional distinctions between literary and non-literary writing, noting that literary texts deviate from what he termed the 'standard language' (Mukařovský 1964). According to Mukařovský, the consequence of such deviation is the creation of a defamiliarizing effect for the reader, something he claimed to be one of the hallmarks of literature. In turn, Jakobson (1960) suggests that defamiliarization also results from structural patterning in texts, or, to give it its later name, parallelism. Shklovsky's (1917, 1925) notion of defamiliarization ('estrangement') or 'making strange' also entailed a political notion because he stressed that the function of art is to make people look at the

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world from a new perspective. These concepts – deviation, parallelism, and foregrounding – are the foundations of contemporary stylistics.

Jakobson's work with the Prague structuralists was interrupted by the Second World War, which forced him into an extended period as an itinerant scholar. After several years in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden he finally settled in America in 1941. This move to the US was crucial to the spread of his ideas to scholars in Europe and America, and to the later development of the New Criticism and Practical Criticism movements, in America and Britain respectively.

This, though, is to get ahead of ourselves. Almost in tandem with the work of the formalist and structuralist movements, developments in the linguistic study of literature were being made by continental European scholars. Chief among these was Leo Spitzer, an Austrian philologist interested in the literature of the Romance languages. In Spitzer's work (e.g. Spitzer 1948) we see an approach that will be familiar to any modern stylistician; namely, the concept of starting with an interpretation of a literary text and then using a linguistic analysis to validate or invalidate that initial hypothesis. Spitzer rejected purely impressionistic criticism and his work may thus be seen as a forerunner to later work in stylistics which embraced the scientific notion of objectivity in analysis. Alongside Spitzer, other important scholars working in this tradition included Auerbach (1951), Bally (1909), and Guiraud (1954), whose work was to have an influence on the development of the French tradition of *analyse de texte*. While this approach is more intuitive than would be accepted by today's stylisticians, there is undoubtedly a relation here to contemporary stylistics.

Of these two groups of scholars – characterized by Jakobson on the one hand and Spitzer on the other – it was the former which was to have the most immediate impact on the development of modern stylistics. Russian Formalism influenced the development of the two movements we have already mentioned – New Criticism in America and Practical Criticism in Britain. Both of these approaches were characterized by a focus on the language of the text, though New Criticism (exemplified in the work of Brooks and Warren, 1976) was concerned with the description of the aesthetic qualities of a literary text, while Practical Criticism (developed in the work of I. A. Richards, 1929) was interested in the psychological aspects of how readers comprehend texts. Both essentially proceeded by means of techniques of close reading, and while this approach is viewed by today's stylisticians as too imprecise in analytical terms, West (2007) points out that the concern of Practical Criticism with readers' processing of texts makes it a direct precursor of contemporary cognitive stylistics.

While the formalist and structuralist work of Jakobson and others is not without problems, it should be clear that its value is in the insights that it

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generated and the later approaches it inspired. Indeed, insights from formalism have proved essential for modern stylistics, with the concepts of deviation, parallelism, and foregrounding still acting as the linchpins of contemporary approaches to the discipline. Van Peer (1986) has provided empirical support for Mukařovský's notion of foregrounding, while Leech (1969) demonstrates convincingly that foregrounding in texts is intrinsic to literary interpretation. The connection between analysis and interpretation is strengthened by Leech's concepts of congruence and cohesion of foregrounding, which goes some considerable way towards refuting accusations of interpretative positivism often levelled at stylistics by its critics and robustly defended by stylisticians like Mick Short (see, for example, Short *et al*. 1998). And in recent work in cognitive stylistics, foregrounding has been related directly to the cognitive concepts of figure and ground.

Nonetheless, for a while New and Practical Criticism's formalist tendencies could still be observed in stylistics as it developed. Since stylistics draws so heavily on linguistics, a history of its development would not be complete without some reference to the work of Noam Chomsky. Although Chomsky's concerns were never with literary texts and their effects, his influence on the development of linguistics inevitably impacts on stylistics. Semino and Culpeper (1995) cite the work of Thorne (1965), Halle and Keyser (1966) and Ohmann (1964) as exemplars of early stylistics that proceeds on the assumption that literary texts constitute instances of linguistic transformations of some underlying structure. To these we can add the work of Levin (1962) on linguistic structures in poetry. Indeed, Hough (1969: 103) notes that the contribution of linguistics to literary study is 'virtually confined to semantics and syntax', therein reflecting the dominance of Chomskyan linguistics at the time he was writing.

While stylistics had so far concentrated on using linguistic tools to explain literary effects, it had also been the subject of criticism for its eclecticism, its lack of a methodological and theoretical foundation, and its alleged base in literary criticism. A major focus on poetry also caused some suspicion in linguistic circles. In the 1960s and early seventies these criticisms were addressed in part through the development of a branch of stylistics that focused particularly on style in non-literary language. The work of Crystal and Davy (1969) and Enkvist (1964, 1973) is particularly important here. Crystal and Davy's concern was how particular social contexts restrict the range of linguistic options open to speakers, while Enkvist proposed that this could work the other way too: that is, that a speaker's stylistic choices could affect the context for his or her addressees (think, for instance, about the informal lexis and grammar often used in adverts for high street banks, and how this is designed to create a context of informality for customers). Work in non-literary stylistics, however, appeared to stall at this point, and it was not until much later

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that it picked up again. The reasons for this are perhaps the lack of linguistic frameworks able to deal with the contextual issues at the heart of Crystal and Davy's and Enkvist's work.

The basis of stylistics in linguistics has always meant that an advance in the latter inevitably impacts on the former, and so it was in the 1970s and early eighties. Some of the attacks levelled at stylistics were circumvented by its becoming particularly practical and by the movement of stylistics into the areas of language teaching and pedagogical stylistics. Furthermore, Halliday's work on systemic functional grammar (Halliday 1971, 1978, 1985) related form to function within the context of the language system as a whole and had particular influence on the study of prose fiction. Here, Hallidayean-style transitivity analysis was used to uncover point-of-view patterns in text (see, for example, Fowler 1977, 1986, whose own *Essays on Style and Language*, 1966, is a seminal work in early stylistics). The influence of Halliday's work can also be seen in Leech and Short's now famous *Style in Fiction* ([1981] 2007).

During the late seventies and early eighties, advances were also made in the developing field of pragmatics, where the focus was on how context affects meaning. Carter and Simpson (1989) is an exemplar of how this work influenced the development of stylistics in the 1980s. These advances enabled for the first time the serious stylistic study of drama. Burton (1980) is an early attempt at using pragmatic and sociolinguistic insights in the study of dramatic discourse, and Short's (1981) article on discourse analysis applied to drama is a groundbreaking study of how such insights can be used to uncover aspects of characterization. Advances in pragmatics and their concern with context also facilitated a renewed interest in non-literary stylistics (Carter and Nash, 1990) and the ideology-shaping nature of texts (Fowler, 1986). There is a crossover here, of course, with work in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), though CDA-inspired work that is unremittingly stylistic in approach continues today and is exemplified in the work of Lesley Jeffries (2007, 2009, 2010).

Into the 1990s there was a growing concern with the cognitive elements involved in comprehending and processing texts, and this movement gave rise to the branch of the discipline now generally known as cognitive stylistics or cognitive poetics (see, for example, Emmott 1997; Stockwell 2002; Semino and Culpeper 2002; and Gavins and Steen 2003). Of course, all forms of stylistic analysis have always considered text comprehension to a certain extent, and in this respect current work in cognitive stylistics can be seen as directly related to earlier investigations into the ways in which readers process texts. Among such earlier work is the Practical Criticism of Richards (1929) and the later reader-response work of, for example, Fairly (1988) and Alderson and Short (1989). Advances in computer technology in recent years have also had a significant impact on the direction in which stylistics is heading. The construction and analysis of large-scale linguistic corpora is easier than

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ever before and this has enabled a return to some of the original concerns of stylistics – namely, the extent to which foregrounding is quantifiable and whether authorial style really is as distinguishable as critics have claimed. These were questions that were largely unanswerable before the development of corpus linguistics. Nowadays, the ease with which it is possible to analyse a text computationally means that there is almost no excuse not to use evidence from corpus studies to support qualitative analysis. Beyond such corpus-assisted stylistics, of course, lies the more sophisticated use of corpora for the study of style (see, for example, Semino and Short 2004, Mahlberg 2007a, and Hoover, this volume).

Stylistics, then, has come a long way since its beginnings. Its primary concern with literary texts is a direct result of the early interests of the formalists and structuralists, though it is by no means exclusively focused on literature any more. In addition to current work in non-literary stylistics, a developing interest in multimodal texts is taking stylistics in yet another direction. In addition, other branches, such as historical stylistics, draw on a variety of approaches mentioned here in order to investigate the style of a particular historical period or text, or to investigate the ways particular styles change over time. The chapters in this volume all draw on the rich traditions of stylistics outlined in this section and represent the current research concerns of stylisticians. Since stylistics has always prided itself on clarity of expression, these chapters are also intended as exemplars of how to go about doing stylistic analysis. In this respect, a brief explanation of the structure of the book will be useful.

Language and Style

There are many introductory stylistics books available that demonstrate how insights from linguistics can be applied in the analysis of literary texts, in order to explain how texts mean and what interpretative effects such texts have on readers. Among such books is Mick Short's own bestselling *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose* (1996), in which he demonstrates how to analyse stylistically the three main literary genres.

Correspondingly, *Language and Style* also has three carefully balanced broad sub-sections in which each chapter is intended to demonstrate a particular analytical technique and how this might be applied to a text from one of the literary genres (in many cases, the insights revealed are also applicable in the analysis of non-literary texts). These are preceded by an introductory segment, entitled 'Preliminaries', designed to cover some of the foundational principles of stylistics outlined in the previous section. Each initial chapter in the genre-based sections has an introductory purpose and aims either to

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survey the field or to provide a general stylistic analysis of a text from the genre in question. The remaining chapters provide exemplars for both students and researchers of the classic and the very latest analytical techniques. Common to all the chapters of the book is that each owes something to the work of Mick Short. They can be read in tandem with his own introductory books on stylistics, or with any other stylistic introductions or linguistics textbooks, but they also stand independently as examples of current research concerns in stylistics. All are based on the original research of their authors.

In Part I, 'Preliminaries', Geoffrey Leech's model stylistic analysis of two famous Shakespearean speeches functions as an exemplar of the kind of analysis that this book is concerned with. This is followed by chapters from Beatrix Busse and Ron Carter, each of which focus on stylistic methodologies: on stylistic methods and their pedagogic potential, both generally and in specific relation to the language classroom (Carter), and on essential parameters for the stylistic analysis of historical texts (Busse). In discussing current work in historical stylistics and by looking at the past, Busse's chapter also suggests that this is an area that will be of increasing concern to stylistics in the future.

Part II of the book focuses on poetry, the literary genre which has been of concern to stylisticians since the inception of stylistics. Katie Wales's opening chapter is a classic stylistic analysis of Walter de la Mare's famous poem 'The Listeners', and illustrates how stylistic analysis can elucidate our response to a literary text. The other chapters in this section demonstrate a wide variety of stylistic approaches to poetry, taking in cognitive stylistics (Verdonk), syntactic iconicity (Jeffries), text worlds (Semino) and sound patterns (Barney).

The focus of Part III of the book is on the stylistics of drama. The move from poetry to drama matches the arrangement of topics in Short's (1996) *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*, and also reflects the increasing complexity of the discourse structures of the three literary genres. Part III begins with a chapter on the universal elements of drama (Munkelt) and continues with a corpus stylistic approach to dialogue and characterization in film (McIntyre), a pragma-stylistic investigation of the language of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (Bousfield and Archer) and an analysis of how activity type theory can shed light on the creation of humour in dramatic texts (McIntyre and Culpeper). Readers will notice that Part III of the book is by far the shortest. In this respect it is representative of the current balance of interest within stylistics, and also reflects the fact that this is the newest of the three main literary genres to have been studied by stylisticians.

Part IV concerns the stylistics of narrative fiction. Its status as the longest section of the book reflects the dominance of prose analysis within stylistics. The section begins with Dan Shen's introductory application of the stylistic tool-kit to a range of extracts from novels. The other chapters in this section

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extend the range of topics that Shen discusses and cover such diverse subjects as authorial style (Hoover), stance in popular fiction (Opas-Hänninen and Seppänen), point of view (Simpson), sentence and clause types (Toolan), plot construction and reader manipulation (Emmott and Alexander), narrative and metaphor (Fludernik), corpus-based semantic analysis (Walker), discourse presentation (Bray), text world theory (Gavins), texture (Stockwell), multimodality (Nørgaard), corpus stylistics generally (Mahlberg and Smith) and the analysis of non-literary language from a stylistic perspective (Busse). Fittingly, the final chapter of the book is an afterword by Geoff Hall, the current editor of *Language and Literature*, the journal of the Poetics and Linguistics Association whose founding editor was Mick Short. In an admirably succinct essay, Hall describes the contribution that Mick Short has made to stylistics, and the influence that he has had on his discipline and on his many colleagues and friends.

NOTE

1. See <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/stylistics/index.htm>

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