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Introduction

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Stylistics is the proper study of literature. We mean this in several senses. Firstly, it is fit and apt. It is special and specialised. It is delineated by rules and principles, and by reasonable, open and honest argument. And for the evaluative sense of 'proper', we also do mean to suggest that it is ethically superior to other, non-stylistic forms of literary study. We insist that any approach to literary study that does not engage closely with the language in which the literary work appears is by definition indirect, distracted, partial and improper.

The word *stylistics* carries a strong sense of its recent etymology, inheriting a detailed interest in *style* from its French *stylistique* and German *Stilistik* ancestors in the 1950s and 1960s. Stylistics in the English language emerged as a British–American field in the late 1960s, and then developed with a northern European and Australian focus throughout the succeeding decades. There has been a steady broadening of the domain encompassed by the notion of 'style' throughout this period. Initially, stylistic features of a text were restricted to the narrow linguistic elements at the levels of phonetic arrangement, metrics and prosody, morphology and lexical choice, semantics and syntax up to the level of the clause and sentence. Even a restriction of a literary discussion to these features has never made such a discussion *formalist*, to the extent of disregarding matters of performance, utterance, artistic design and aesthetic effect. However, it was easy for others to disparage stylistics on this basis as having a narrow, decontextualised purview.

Those working in early stylistics regarded themselves very strongly as part of a European tradition of textual commentary and theory. Continuities and common concerns were perceived with the Russian Obshchestvo Izucheniiia Poeticheskogo Yazyka (the Society for the Study of Poetic Language; the so-called 'Formalists'), with the Prague School and the French Structuralists, and with the New Critics in the USA. For monoglot English-speakers, the influence of the polemical

positions of this last group was certainly the loudest, and prohibitions against authorial intention, creative design and artistic production on the one hand and readerly interpretation, emotional response and aesthetic value on the other were easily transferred to stylistics by its critics and also perhaps by some of its practitioners.

In the meantime, a related tradition in German-speaking and northern European countries was developing in which close relationships between rhetoric, stylistics and hermeneutic interpretation were being theorised and practised. Simultaneously in France a highly interpretative practice of stylistic explication, with an emphasis on the relationships between discourse and conscious meaning, was growing strong. These two movements – largely invisible to the monoglot – can certainly not be regarded as decontextualised or formalist at all.

As linguistics developed after the Chomskyan revolution of the 1960s, stylisticians enthusiastically picked up the latest advances in the field. The growth of text linguistics and functional grammar in the 1970s and 1980s offered analytical tools for exploring larger, longer and more complex literary works. The expansion of pragmatics and socio-linguistics around the same time offered similar opportunities for a systematic account of meaningfulness and interpretation. Generative grammar – with its focus on deep structure and relative disinterest in surface features of language – proved itself incapable of advanced stylistic analysis and disappeared from the stylistician's armoury during the 1970s, to be replaced almost exclusively until recently with systemic-functional linguistics.

Since the early 1990s, stylistics has been supercharged not only by further advances in these fields but also by the refinements of quantitative computational methods and by the cognitive turn that has affected almost all arts and humanities research. The use of computers and software programs to work efficiently through vast swathes of language data (as *corpus linguistics*) has revolutionised the study of language. Our understanding of all aspects of language has been radically affected as a result. New grammars based on spoken forms have been produced, and new dictionaries set out not only the meanings of words as they are actually used in context but also the meanings and usages of phrases, idioms and even particular syntactic sequences. Stylisticians have been able to create digital versions of literary texts, of all the works of an author or period or genre, and devise search-mechanisms to discover features across all of this material. Corpus-stylistic studies can confirm or reject intuitive assertions made by literary scholars; they can provide measured evidence for detailed stylistic analyses; and they can even capture textual features that are so diffused across a long text that they might only be felt subliminally or subconsciously. Many researchers who have been key figures in the development of corpus linguistics have also had a central interest in literature, as stylisticians.

In parallel with these developments, work broadly in cognitive science has had a huge impact on linguistics and therefore naturally on stylistics too. Many of the advances in cognitive science have involved matters of language, thought and consciousness, and cognitive linguists and cognitive psychologists have been most significant in the development of the field. Much of the key research in cognitive linguistics focused on features that have been of interest to literary stylisticians, such as metaphor and foregrounding. Many researchers who consider themselves straightforwardly as cognitive linguists have also included several literary examples in their work. At the same time, cognitive psychologists were developing an understanding of projected situations and imagined worlds that had obvious relevance to literary fiction. A *cognitive poetics* has emerged largely as a discipline very closely associated with stylistics, to the extent that it is difficult to say which discipline encompasses the other. When stylisticians have drawn on insights from cognitive science, we have been able to offer analyses of readerly knowledge and experience, feelings and emotions, imagined worlds, metaphors, allegories, and the valuations of social significance and personal affect.

All of these traditions are represented in this *Handbook*. As you read through the surveys and discussions, arguments and practical analyses in these chapters, it should become clear that stylistics as *the* discipline of English studies has been elsewhere during the recent history of literary scholarship in the academy. While literary criticism was having a crisis of theory and methodology, especially in the 1980s, stylistics remained largely distant from these debates. Stylisticians were often also the people who taught the courses in English language and linguistics in departments of literature, and so were not regarded as active combatants by their literary colleagues. To a certain extent, this allowed stylistics to carry on unperturbed by the waves of theoretical argument that disturbed literature departments, though of course most stylisticians were aware of the nature of those discussions. Many noted with either irritation or wry amusement the attempts to discuss language by critics who had never conducted a fieldwork collection of language data, never read any modern linguistics beyond the 1950s, had little inkling of work in applied linguistics or sociolinguistics, and never thought to engage in a descriptive account of what natural readers were doing when they read literature.

Stylistics today is probably closer to the concerns of literary scholarship in the mainstream than it has ever been. This is a mutual convergence: stylistics has developed systematic ways of addressing matters of value, aesthetics and cultural context; literary criticism has rediscovered matters of 'form' and the necessity of knowing about textuality in order to teach literature to students. However, there remains an uneasy complementarity. Literary criticism has largely settled into a form of cultural studies and historiography – essentially a literary branch of the discipline of history. The field of 'English' has thus been mostly vacated and left to

those who draw on other disciplines: the social and cognitive sciences on the one hand, and the creative arts and industries on the other. Though stylistics largely occupies the former of these domains, the connections with creative writing in terms of stylistic choice, rhetorical patterning and readerly affect are striking and increasingly obvious. From this perspective, it is an oddity that cultural literary studies remains central in departments of English across the world, and surely this will eventually be corrected. Already it is apparent that there is a demand for an integrated language and literature curriculum being voiced from several sources including schools, students and second-language learners who see it as empowering, from governments and employers who see it as a defined set of skills and tangible training, and from academics who perhaps would like to have their work professionalised and raised in prestige.

The situation, however, is patchy around the world. Stylistics is strongest in Britain and northern Europe, with inroads across southern Europe, eastern Europe and the Middle East. It is also a strong presence generally in the English-speaking or English-using world, from Australia and New Zealand, across the Indian sub-continent, and in southern Africa, and throughout east and south-east Asia. For historical and institutional reasons that are addressed by several contributors to this *Handbook*, stylistics has remained until very recently neglected in North America and particularly in the USA. However, we must remember that stylistics goes by different names across the world, and any of the following labels usually refers to analytical practices that are recognisable as stylistics: literary linguistics, literary semantics, literary pragmatics, English language studies, poetics, rhetoric, critical linguistics, corpus stylistics, literary discourse analysis, cultural stylistics and cognitive poetics. Though stylistics is unlikely to be seen as a course title in the USA very soon, there is a great deal of activity in cognitive rhetoric, composition and cognitive approaches to literature, and towards a science of literary analysis that would certainly be recognisable to stylisticians elsewhere in the world.

As a discipline, stylistics is *progressive, systematic, transparent, replicable, evidential* and *textually grounded*. It is progressive in the sense that frameworks and approaches that are tried out and shown not to work are generally abandoned in favour of a better analysis: so in the 1970s it became apparent that generative grammar could not provide a stylistic account, and almost no one these days tries to return to it. Compare literary scholarship, where archaeological oddities or poetic expressions that have been superseded as scientific models (such as psychoanalysis, for example, or an understanding of language from the early twentieth century) are still used as the basis for apparently serious literary commentary.

Stylistics is systematic in several senses. Models for analysis tend to be part of larger methodological domains, so features of language are viewed within a generally consistent theory of language. The method of stylistics is also systematic in that the terms of the analytical

framework are clearly set out first and then applied rigorously. The method does not emerge from the analysis. Furthermore, the objects of investigation (stylistic features or readerly effects) are available for investigation in the world outside the domain of stylistics: in other words, stylistic features are not constructed by the process of analysis itself. While it cannot be said that stylistics is objective (except in very narrowly restricted and non-interesting matters of linguistic facts), it is certainly an intersubjective discipline.

Stylistic descriptions have a tradition towards transparency and clarity in their exposition. This is perhaps a legacy of the pedagogic basis of many stylisticians as English-language or second-language teachers. As a stylistician you are regarded as a good practitioner if you can be clearly understood even by new students of the discipline. Obfuscation and deliberate obscurity are not well regarded, and stylisticians prefer a common currency of technical terminology rather than a personal vocabulary or the false scholasticism of 'scare-quotes' round ordinary language terms as a marker of false profundity.

Stylistic explanations aim towards a form of replicability, where possible. This represents the influence of a scientific approach to investigation, where the only valid statements are falsifiable ones. This is not straightforward when dealing with the subjective and perhaps idiosyncratic effects of foregrounding or readerly construal: two readings of the same text might generate different stylistic analyses. However, stylistics aims to be intersubjective, and analytical explanations are offered in an open and transparent articulation precisely so that later readers and stylisticians can see the working of the analysis and compare it with their own work or reading response. The aim is to present yourself not as the most interestingly eccentric and innovative reader, but as someone who presents a generalisable and recognisable explanation of literary effects.

It is self-evident that stylistics is evidential, in that stylistic arguments are only presented for verification if they are accompanied by data from the literary work or reading. The authority of the stylistician or the rhetorical skill of the account does not determine the success of the argument as stylistics. Even where stylistic work draws heavily on psychology rather than linguistics, the predominant source of the supporting evidence is grounded in the text itself, or in inferences, associations and consequences that are clearly defined as arising from the text itself. In this sense, and for all its other aliases, stylistics retains a central emphasis on style as its validating principle.

Back in 1991, one of the contributors to this volume suggested that there could not be a handbook of stylistics because, at that time, the practice had no agreed methodology, no agreed method or protocol, no clear sense of the field – in other words, it could not be said to be a discipline. In this sense, it echoed the famous distinction made by Henry

Widdowson, who observed in 1975 that English was a subject and linguistics was a discipline. Stylistics could not be encapsulated in a handbook because it was not sufficiently disciplinary, and still drew its ethos from literary scholarship, even though the two sat in an uneasy relationship with each other.

We believe this perspective is no longer true, and the *Handbook* in front of you demonstrates the proof of that. It is arranged into five parts. These reflect the slightly different audiences that might pick up the book, and we have tried to look in several directions at once. In Part I, our contributors set out and explore the discipline of stylistics. That stylistics is a coherent discipline is sometimes obscured by the fact that eclecticism is held as a central principle by many stylisticians. In other words, there has always been an artisanal edge to practice in the field, and this means that stylistic work has often proceeded on a practical basis, without being over-anxious about theoretical or philosophical issues. There has very much been a sense among stylisticians that if a particular linguistic model can contribute some insight to the literary text in hand, then it is worth pursuing. Stylisticians are sometimes wed closely to particular linguistic models or approaches, but more often than not will adapt frameworks from across the range of available linguistic scholarship. Equally, stylisticians generally do not seem to feel themselves tied to a particular literary historical period or mode, as literary critics tend to organise themselves both intellectually and institutionally. There is a risk, of course, in exploring the language of Geoffrey Chaucer one day and Raymond Chandler the next, but there are also benefits of insight and comparison to be gained, as well as a degree of intellectual agility being exercised.

Having said this, there have been many notable and serious statements over the years that seek to position stylistics as a theoretically rigorous as well as a productive practice. In the past, these have been rather defensive and reactive, often produced in response to a critique from outside the discipline. Michael Toolan opens this collection with an argument and discussion that is not at all defensive, but is perhaps more subtle and open to wider theoretical and critical viewpoints. We take this easiness and calmness as a sign of maturity in the field. Equally, Katie Wales, in her chapter, queries our remit of setting out the 'tool-kit' of stylistics, preferring again a more complex and nuanced view of the stylistic method, while recognising that there is a discernible and coherent methodological approach in the work of most stylisticians.

The other four chapters of this first section of the book turn the field over in different dimensions, viewing it from related aspects. Michael Stubbs takes the domain of quantitative methods as a major theme in stylistic work. He considers both the nature of textual evidence, and its theoretical relationship with literary reading; his thinking stands as an interesting counterpoint to the two previous chapters. Craig Hamilton

considers stylistics as part of the millennia-old practice of rhetoric, delineating a direct thread from ancient observations about style and performance to our modern thinking informed by the sciences of linguistics, psychology and cognition. Lastly in this orientating section, Ronald Carter and Geoff Hall reflect on the nature of stylistics as a form of applied linguistics and as literary criticism, respectively.

Part II of the book takes the latter perspective and sets out a series of contributions on themes that are of particular interest for students and scholars of literature. We set our contributors a range of concepts commonly discussed in literary commentary, in order to gain an insight into these concepts from a rigorous stylistic perspective. In Beatrix Busse's work on genre, Patrick Colm Hogan on intertextual allusion, and Violeta Sotirova on literary production and intentionality, we can see the extent to which modern stylistics can address issues that have traditionally been considered to be far beyond the confines of textuality. These are core themes in contemporary literary scholarship. We also consider the interests of non-academic but engaged literary observers and students in addressing key notions that most people outside universities and colleges talk about: character (in Dan McIntyre's chapter), narrative voice (in Christiana Gregoriou's), and the nature of plots and their echoes in a reader's other experience (in Jessica Mason's). Lastly in this section, we return to the key foundational notion of literary defamiliarisation with Joanna Gavins and view it afresh from a contemporary cognitive stylistic angle, and we take examples of canonical literary texts and view their intensity and power through a similar approach by Barbara Dancygier.

In Part III of the book, we turn to the interests of readers primarily concerned with linguistics and its application to literary texts. We focus on stylistic techniques and key features, with an arrangement of chapters that is intended to recall classic stylistics in moving up the linguistic rank scale from phonology, morphology and lexis, to syntax and semantics, to matters of transitivity and pragmatics, up to text and discourse-level features such as metaphor, foregrounding and dialogue. Manuel Jobert begins with a reconsideration of the relationship between sound and text in an examination of paralinguistic vocal features in literature. Michaela Mahlberg uses corpus stylistics to explore the local grammars in Dickens. Bill Louw and Marija Milojkovic also draw on corpus linguistics in order to discuss subtle matters of subtextual meaning. Paul Simpson and Patricia Canning show how matters of grammatical transitivity contribute to viewpoint, actions and descriptions in a range of literary examples. Billy Clark explores inference from a pragmatics perspective. At an even more discourse-based level, Gerard Steen explores metaphor across a poem, Catherine Emmott and Marc Alexander discuss foregrounding and its opposite 'burying' in detective fiction. Mick Short distils four decades of stylistic experience in his discussion of dialogue presentation. And Peter Stockwell aims to develop a stylistic account of the most rarefied

and subliminal effects of textual ambience, by drawing on both corpus linguistics and cognitive grammar.

In Part IV of the book, we adopt a perspective alongside the natural reader of literature, to explore the contextual experience of reading. Olga Fischer considers the central feature for stylistics of iconic connections between form and meaning in literary texts. Sara Whiteley develops a cognitive poetic account of how readers and characters are ethically positioned. Alison Gibbons shows that the stylistics of fictionality can offer a rich account even of experimental texts such as mobile interactive narratives. David Miall places the feelings and emotions of literary readers centrally in his empirical stylistic focus. Ruth Page shows how the analysis of narrative structure provides insight into the connections between a real-world narrative and its creative literary reflection. Tracy Cruickshank demonstrates that stylistic analysis also brings a fresh view to literary work on drama and performance. Lesley Jeffries proposes a model of communication to address again the important relationship between analysis and interpretation. And Joe Bray shows how stylistic analysis can make historical literary criticism richer and more evidential. Overall, the chapters in this section demonstrate in practical terms how the key questions for literary readers can be sharpened or resolved by a stylistic sensibility.

Finally, the last part of the book, Part V, recognises that stylistics has developed closely alongside applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis. Though the centre of gravity of the discipline has been literary stylistics, there is a great deal of work that shares the same approaches and methods in the analysis of other sorts of discourses. Some of these can be regarded as semi-literary, perhaps like certain advertising or media texts. All of the chapters in Part V demonstrate the continuities and the points of differentiation between literary and other sites of language. Marina Lambrou and Alan Durant show that a media stylistics can fruitfully adapt many of the same features and methods in evidence across the rest of this book. Rodney Jones looks at how a stylistic analysis of advertising discourse can reveal issues of genre, ethics and authenticity. Jonathan Charteris-Black takes an expansive view of the style of politicians, encompassing a close corpus analysis of deixis, pronouns and other inclusive and exclusive markers, and even taking in gender-projection as political image-making. Sara Mills explores the social differentiation of gender and power in personal relationships through a precise analysis of a contemporary novel. Benedict Lin considers the crucial importance of stylistic training in a translation of a Chinese poem. David Peplow draws on discourse analysis to show the continuities between creative and everyday patterns of conversation. It should be apparent from these examples that there is a mutually reinforcing and positive feedback mechanism between literary stylistics and its fellow-disciplines in applied linguistics, media studies and critical discourse analysis.

We end the book with a short reflective coda, in the form of an editorial dialogue about stylistics, its place in the world and its future. This format has been adopted explicitly in a few other chapters in the book: in Chapter 6, we interviewed Ronald Carter and recorded the conversation; in Chapter 18, Bill Louw and Marija Milojkovic conduct a written assertion-and-critique discussion. In truth, all of the chapters in this book have been the result of conversations, reflections, criticisms and further thinking. Our intention in presenting some chapters in the form of a Socratic dialogue is partly to reflect this co-operative endeavour in the discipline of stylistics, and also to echo the fact that the field has an ancient and rich pedigree.

Some chapters are principally theoretical and reflective in tone, and others are eminently practical. Almost all of them include an exemplary piece of stylistic analysis. The set of literary works covered is wide ranging: there is extended treatment, in order of appearance, of Raymond Chandler, Joseph Conrad, Khushwant Singh, Virginia Woolf, Dennis Potter, the crime writing and detective fiction of Agatha Christie and John Boyne, Stephen Chbosky, William Golding, Billy Collins, William Wordsworth, Edith Wharton, Charles Dickens, W. B. Yeats, David Lynch, Miranda July, Emily Dickinson, James Lasdun, Julia Darling, Marin Sorescu, Colum McCann, Seamus Heaney, John Keats, John Fowles, Ted Hughes, T. S. Eliot, Antjie Krog, Kazuo Ishiguro, Blast Theory, William Blake, Graham Greene, Benjamin Zephaniah, Richard Bean, Jez Butterworth, Peter Sansom, Jane Austen, Christos Tsiolkas and others. What is striking and astonishing about this list is its historical range, its coverage of poetry, prose, drama, hyperfiction and art installations, and its non-differentiation between high canonical and more populist literary works. There are also numerous shorter treatments or examples drawn from, among many others, early Sanskrit, Bertolt Brecht, Roald Dahl, Louis de Bernières, Henry James, James Kelman, Brett Easton Ellis, Sebastian Faulks, Lewis Carroll, D. H. Lawrence, Ian McEwan, Jack Kerouac, John Le Carré, David Mitchell, James Joyce, Bob Dylan and so on.

We have aimed to provide a handbook of stylistics that stands as a practical guide, a source of reflection and critical engagement, a reference for scholars, a showcase for the discipline, and a shining example for literary criticism, applied linguistics and in fact anyone interested in language and literature. Whenever we have taught stylistics to students encountering it for the first time, we have seen revelation light up in their faces: here is a way of approaching literary scholarship that is professional, disciplined and empowering.

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