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Proficiency in Style(s)

Survey Review

Docent Mall Stålhammar är verksam vid engelska institutionen, Göteborgs universitet, där hon undervisar inom bl.a. fackspråks- och översättarområdena. Hon utkom 1997 med boken *Metaforenas mönster i fackspråk och allmänspråk*. Här ger hon en pedagogiskt inriktad översikt av böcker om stilistik med särskild vinkling mot den svenska högre språkundervisningen.

University studies in modern languages differ from most other academic subjects in having an element of proficiency incorporated in their curriculum: they consist not only of canonical texts and analytical tools and skills, i.e. the largely theoretical competence that they share with e.g. history, comparative literature, philosophy and other traditional disciplines in the humanities - modern language students are expected to be able to produce concrete evidence that they have not only assimilated the theory relevant to their subject but also that they can actually put this theory into practice. While a graduate with a degree in comparative literature will hardly be expected to write a sonnet or a short story, modern language graduates will certainly be required to produce texts in the language they have studied - and texts for a growing variety of purposes, in various genres and in different styles. Knowledge of a foreign language thus includes both awareness of differences in its means of expression and versatility in its use.

These days the majority of Swedish students of modern languages, in this case English, will not go into teaching, but they will be expected to be able to write, edit or revise English texts (written or spoken) on different subjects and in varying circumstances (literary texts probably being the only exception). Examples may include descriptions of (parts of) Sweden, Swedish products and Swedish life (students know a great deal about British and American culture, including the appropriate terminology of political institutions etc, but how many know how to describe Swedish politics?); instructions connected with products or processes; presentations of their own skills and advantages or those of their employers' products; discussion on different levels; persuasive argumentation aimed at different audiences - all requiring adaptability in their production of English texts. Such adaptability requires a better awareness of stylistic differences than most students achieve within the narrowing scope of Swedish university courses.

While textual analysis of literary texts is growing in importance, not least at English universities (hence the growing output of textbooks in stylistics), it is equally important to remember that our foreign language students need to analyse not only canonical (literary) texts, but also the non-literary texts making up the majority of all written material in any language, the background against which literary language can be foregrounded. In trying to vary the teaching material, there is often, from secondary school on, an exaggerated emphasis on newspapers texts at the expense of greater variety, e.g. public information, instructions (from recipes to manuals for different product types), more or less popularised scientific texts, business writing, advertising, popular songs, comics, etc. Variety is needed for comparison, comparison for contrast, contrast for awareness of differences, all leading to the search for reasons behind the different choices of words, syntax, sound effects.

There is thus an increasing need for textbooks in stylistics, preferably comprising analyses of a greater variety of texts than different literary genres only; the need for such support is increasingly acutely felt when reductions in teaching hours are paralleled by increases in student numbers. A stronger emphasis on the linguistic aspects of set books in literary courses would not only help and support students in their language learning; it may also help in bridging internal differences within foreign language departments, to the benefit of staff and students.

Below follows a brief survey (in alphabetic order within each section) of examples of textbooks in stylistics published over the last few years, beginning with what still constitutes the overwhelming majority, i.e. analyses of literary texts. The sections on textbooks are followed by a brief chronological overview of useful works for teachers and advanced students.

Textbooks: Stylistics applied to literary texts

- N.F. Blake, *An Introduction to the Language of Literature*.

Various aspects of linguistic analysis (sentence structures and constituents, vocabulary, pragmatics, sound patterns) are thoroughly explained, exemplified, and finally brought together in the analysis of one poem (Auden's "The Lunar Beauty"). Unlike most other authors of similar textbooks, Blake devotes space to explaining the historical background of English usage, which makes this slim volume useful for other texts than the contemporary material constituting the majority of linguistic analyses. (The rather limited example of poetry analysis could be complemented by additional reading in Leech's comprehensive *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* from 1969.)

- Richard Bradford, *Stylistics*.

A condensed introduction to literary stylistics, with an overview of major theories, divided first into poetry and prose (including brief mentions of

contemporary linguistic contributions), followed by a division into historical periods. The final chapters discuss gender criticism and the role of evaluation in stylistic analysis. The emphasis is on 20th century critics, sorted into “textualists” and “contextualists”, in brief summaries and comparisons, sometimes illustrated with short quotations.

Although the focus is exclusively on literary texts, defined by their “stylistic character”, Bradford repeatedly points out the importance of “the double pattern”, i.e. the fact that all texts are dependent on norms dictated by both literary conventions and those prevailing in non-literary language. Despite this awareness, non-literary language remains an unidentified entity, the nondescript background against which literary texts are foregrounded.

To Swedish undergraduates, Bradford’s swift overviews may be less useful as an introduction to literary stylistics than as a review or revision of theories which should preferably have been read in more extensive forms, e.g. in one of the many useful anthologies in literary theory (e.g. David Lodge’s *Modern Criticism and Theory*, or the Open University’s *Literature in the Modern World*, ed. Dennis Walder). Similar anthologies of canonical texts in stylistics are less numerous, but Howard Babb’s classic collection *Essays in Stylistic Analysis*, including Auerbach, Spitzer, Mukarovsky, Ohmann, Schorer, Watt, etc, has recently been complemented by Jean Jacques Weber’s *Stylistics Reader*, an anthology of representative samples of movements over the last 40 years. The articles include papers on formalism (Jakobson), functionalism (Halliday), pedagogical aspects (Carter, Widdowson), pragmatics (Pratt, Short), critical stylistics (Fowler), feminism (Burton, Mills), and cognitive stylistics (Freeman).

• Nigel Fabb, *Linguistics and Literature. Language in the Verbal Arts of the World*.

Fabb applies linguistic theory to mostly oral literature from around a hundred different languages and literary traditions, with the aim of arriving at general conclusions comparable to those in Chomskyan grammar, in what he terms “literary linguistics”. The author’s choice of a formalist approach, rather than the functionalist views that dominate most linguistic analyses of literature, has resulted in a marked preference for highly formalised literary forms: roughly half of the entire work consists of metrical analyses, strongly influenced by Paul Kiparsky’s work in this genre. (The remaining chapters treat aspects of narratology and performance.)

As for the author’s choice to include a strikingly high number of (mostly oral) literatures in languages unfamiliar to most readers (including the author himself), preferring a “partial approach” for quantitative reasons, the technique of selecting details from unknown complexities for suitable evidence often seems unconvincing.

• Rob Pope, *The English Studies Book*.

A handbook of English Language and/or Literature or related subjects (for UK students in tertiary education), this book opens with a strong focus on the subject itself, discussed in all its many varieties and shifting definitions (“which Englishes?”), but in spite of the numerous options and the generous openness towards linguistic varieties of English, the traditional interpretation remains: English Studies, or whatever the subject’s label may be, is the study of literature (here also taken to include literature in translation, thus taking the subject closer to Comparative Literature than to English Language).

The opening chapter contains interesting overviews of the development of the subject, valuable reminders of historical changes in the subject termed “English”. Another variation on the recurring theme of change and variation is provided in the next, and longest, section of the book, a survey of major literary theories. Here again, the aim is to raise general awareness rather than lay down any laws, an attitude that more than anything else characterises the entire work. Another chapter presents common literary terms, with suggestions for discussion and application; together these two chapters on literary (and related) theories take up roughly half the book’s more than 400 pages. Theory is followed by suggested applications, with a striking sparsity when it comes to linguistic analysis. A selection (75 pp) of short literary text extracts, plus some examples of contemporary non-literary material, is continuously referred to as material for various activities. All sections have good suggestions for further reading, and the activities proposed are thought-provoking and imaginative. A useful, well formulated glossary of terms (with an elaborate system of cross-referencing) and appendices on the varieties of English and the chronology of cultural events complete what must be a highly useful student handbook.

To a Swedish audience, much of one of the book’s primary objectives, to improve the integration of speakers of various Englishes from different cultural backgrounds, is largely lost – although many observations on multicultural issues would be of equal value here. However, most of the suggestions for activities remain useful, as does the overriding attitude of openness and flexibility.

• Joanna Thornborrow & Shân Wareing, *Patterns in Language. An Introduction to Language and Literary Style*.

This textbook is intended not only for native English students of Linguistics, English Language or Literature, but also for EFL students, thus aiming at a broader audience than most similar publications. The tools of linguistic analysis are applied on (mainly) literary texts, on the principle that knowledge about the formal structures of language improves awareness of the many levels of language use involved in reading, writing, and speaking. The approach is “language-driven”, i.e. the authors’ aim is to “illustrate the

way language works in *any* text, rather than to construct a model which explains an individual text". The book proceeds through clear and well illustrated chapters on phonology (including a concise overview of phonetics as well as analyses of sound effects in poetry); morphology, syntax, semantics, and discourse, to analyses of drama (including sections on spoken language), prose fiction (comparing realism, modernism and postmodernism), ending with examples of popular media texts using stylistic features associated with literature. Each section is provided with illuminating exercises (answers are found at the end) and good suggestions for further reading. (A number of landmarks in contemporary research are incorporated in the text, providing incentives for further study.) A comprehensive glossary completes the book. Besides its clear explanations and well selected examples, the book is characterized by a balanced, commonsensical approach and a friendly, helpful tone. Among the large number of works on literary stylistics, this book stands out as particularly well suited for beginners in both language and literature studies of English at university.

• Laura Wright & Jonathan Hope, *Stylistics. A Practical Coursebook*.

This book combines "an introduction to the techniques of stylistic analysis" with "a practical introduction to basic descriptive grammar" through the use of a large number of contemporary literary (prose) texts, including such non-mainstream writers as Samuel Beckett, Henry Green, B.S. Johnson, Iain Sinclair, Stevie Smith.

Unlike most works on stylistics, it concentrates on the grammatical patterns of texts, leaving vocabulary until the last and shortest chapter (Noun Phrase – Verb Phrase – Clause – Text Structure – Vocabulary), claiming that this is "the most limited area linguistically and therefore the least rewarding." Unfortunately, but rather significantly, semantic elements tend to intrude constantly in the authors' analyses, although they are largely left unacknowledged.

The elementary grammar analyses (and the solutions provided for each exercise) may make this book useful for self-study for the student who needs to catch up on the basics of English grammar but there is a striking incongruity between the extremely basic grammar sections (in themselves useful for Swedish university first-termers), with their explanations in correspondingly simple language, and the text samples, where experimental writing is the norm rather than the exception. How can the same hypothetical reader who seems unable to take in more than the simplest rudiments of grammar be expected to read and analyse strikingly original literary texts? The answer (and the limitation of this book) seems to lie in the method: the literary sample texts are only to be analysed for one particular grammatical feature at a time (count the number of articles / pronouns /etc in...), at the expense of a holistic view, i.e. how form and meaning, grammar and semantics interdepend and interact. This is obviously a risk to which all intro-

ductory text books on stylistics are exposed, but in this case the unusually wide gap between analytical tools and primary material adds to the impression of oversimplification.

Although the authors claim that the techniques are "readily transferable to other genres of text", the character of their text selections may preclude rather than encourage such transfers. The book constitutes something of a regrettable lost opportunity: the basic grammar explanations might have worked well with other, more varied and contrasted texts from different genres.

Textbooks: Stylistics applied to various texts

• Ronald Carter et al., *Working with Texts. A core book for language analysis*. Written by a team of experienced teachers from varying levels of the educational system, this is a remarkably well thought-out textbook. Unlike most works on stylistics, it acknowledges the many roles of language use: spoken, written, informative, persuasive, performative, etc and maintains an integrated, holistic view throughout both explanations and exercises. The chapters cover signs and sounds (including a clear and concise overview of phonetics); vocabulary; grammar; discourse analysis (divided into written and spoken texts). Each chapter is provided with a wealth of imaginative exercises as well as valuable suggestions for additional work; sources cover a wide range: children's writing, poetry, advertisements, novels, plays, legal writing, public information, political speeches, regional dialects, etc. The comments retain the book's focus on the integration of various linguistic means towards an end (as opposed to Wright and Hope's artificial approach, cf. above, concentrating on one grammatical feature at a time) and continuously stress the character of language as a social activity. The terms introduced in the text are listed with definitions at the end, and there are useful suggestions for further reading.

• Urszula Clark, *An Introduction to Stylistics*.

Although intended for British A level students preparing for GCSE Advanced English exams (roughly one third of the text covers preparations for these tests), the book claims to be of value to "all those studying English at an advanced or undergraduate level", as well as the "interested general reader". It proposes to "introduce students to the linguistic analysis of written texts", adopting "a textual rather than a grammatical approach" and then goes on to devote almost half its pages to very basic grammar. Add a strikingly superficial chapter on "language change", lengthy treatment of the representation of speech in writing as opposed to spoken language (without any proper discussion of spoken language itself), and precious little space is left for any "textual analysis", which in this case seems largely limited to textual cohesion.

Among the weaknesses are unclear, sometimes oversimplified, occasionally illogical categories and definitions (“verbs will change their shape according to how they are used”; “Collocation describes the way in which certain words commonly (or uncommonly) associate with others in a semantic way”); confusing division of topics into different chapters; puzzling treatment of topics, either brief to the point of meaninglessness (why include less than one page on “Historical Periods in Literature”?) or developed at disproportionate length. The underlying cause seems to be a general lack of focus, possibly resulting from an exaggerated wish to cater to the (varying) ideals of examiners.

To students outside the British school system, or to teachers, the exercise texts, extracts ranging from novels (the bulk of the “activities”), poetry and plays to newspapers, manuals, leaflets, advertisements, may be useful as source material.

• John Haynes, *Style*.

An introduction “for absolute beginners”, presumably native secondary school students, with 12 short chapters (each with short exercises plus useful suggestions for further projects) on choosing the right word for the right purpose; the importance of conventions and expectations; recurring patterns in both grammar and semantics; the influence of different media; sequencing; attitude and ideology; the use of metaphor, significant detail, sound. Both spoken and written texts (mostly non-literary, but some literary examples are included) are discussed, and a brief, commented list of further reading is provided.

Despite the limited size of the book (85 pp., including texts and exercises), it manages to provide the novice with a surprising amount of ideas and insights and may work well as a simple introduction to stylistic aspects, for both undergraduates and pupils doing the more theoretically oriented “gymnasium” programmes in Sweden.

Books for teachers and advanced students: a brief chronological survey

Unlike surveys of course books, where availability through bookshops limits the choice to only relatively recently published works, a discussion of texts for individual use can – and should – include books which may be only available in libraries, as is the case for some titles below.

One of the earliest attempts to raise awareness of the many styles of English may serve as an amusing introduction: Martin Joos’s *The Five Clocks*, first published in 1961. This little book is often referred to as one of the most influential texts in the brief history of Anglo-American stylistics (and in its last chapter also contains what may have been the first seeds of process writing).

In 1966, David Lodge claimed in his *Language of Fiction. Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel*, that “[s]tylistics as

such scarcely exists as an influential force in Anglo-American criticism of literature in English.... There is in this respect a chasm between Anglo-American studies and modern language studies which is rarely bridged.... English criticism, in particular, has maintained a somewhat provincial mistrust of formal grammatical analysis and description from which its own characteristically intuitive and empirical approach could benefit.” To remedy this state of affairs, Lodge devotes the first part of the book to a discussion of the function of language in the art of fiction; theory is followed by practice in the remaining two thirds, where works of mostly 19th century novelists are analysed, both in detailed close reading and in more holistic analyses.

David Crystal and Derek Davy’s *Investigating English Style*, the first volume in Longman’s English Language Series, was published a few years later (1969, several reprints), a comprehensive study of mainly non-literary texts (among the material are extracts from newspapers, advertising, legal and scientific language, as well as excerpts from conversation and various types of public speaking). It still remains unsurpassed, both in its wide variety of interesting texts and in its systematic analyses.

Since these early beginnings, the case for the pedagogical use of stylistics as a “connecting middle ground between linguistic and literary studies” has been made increasingly often, thus focusing on literary texts as the primary material to be analysed. Among works along such pedagogical principles are H.G. Widdowson’s *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*, primarily addressing teachers in an attempt to bridge the gap previously indicated by Lodge: “we urgently need an attitude to literature, and a teaching approach based upon it, which... also recognizes that it is a use of language...”. Swedish teachers of English may also find it useful as inspiration for classroom discussions and exercises, particularly those (relatively few) passages that contrast non-literary and literary usage.

Similar attempts to compare and contrast everyday, non-literary language with literary language, i.e. the background with what is foregrounded against it, occur in Raymond Chapman’s *The Language of Literature*. The clear emphasis on semantic aspects in the numerous illustrations makes the examples accessible to non-native undergraduates, but also limits its use for exercises in grammatical analysis.

One of the foremost writers on educational aspects of linguistics, also National Director of the Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) project, Ronald Carter, has published a great number of articles and books related to stylistics, ranging from vocabulary (e.g. “Lexis and Literary Stylistics” in his *Vocabulary: Applied Linguistic Perspectives*) to larger patterns (e.g. *Seeing Through Language: A Guide to Styles of English Writing*, with Walter Nash, a highly commendable work combining both textual analysis and composition). The collection *Language and Literature. An Introductory Reader in Stylistics* contains not only a number of interesting examples

of linguistic analyses of literary texts by authors who have continued along similar lines, like Mick Short and Deirdre Burton, but also a suggestion for a model of analysis by John Sinclair.

Among Carter's later works are two collections of essays, one concentrating on pedagogical aspects: *Language, Literature and the Learner. Creative Classroom Practice*. Consisting of a dozen papers suggesting various methods for EFL classroom teaching, this book mirrors the division into language and literature and the trend towards integration. The "interface approach" proposed in this volume sees literature as a resource for language development: with a firm hands-on attitude, the teachers involved discuss the canon and the inclusion of other materials, "literature with a small 'l'", new literatures in English, the use of other media; Swedish secondary school teachers may find ideas or inspiration here. The bibliography includes a short reading list of other works along similar lines.

Some of Carter's own work on discourse analysis is found in another recent anthology: *Investigating English Discourse. Language, Literacy and Literature*. Among the articles certain notions recur, sharing an integrated, functional view of linguistics (frequently acknowledging Halliday's influence), applied to a variety of examples of language use. The concept of "standard" language is discussed against the constantly emphasised importance of contextual aspects, and the same openminded approach is reflected in the recurrent proposal of "clines", i.e. an attempt to replace dichotomies by continuities. In contrast to earlier attempts to distinguish and define "literariness" in language, Carter points to the occurrence of literary qualities in all language production, present in all texts, oral and written.

Carter has also contributed with both an overview of developments in stylistics, and with views on literature teaching, in another anthology, *Reading, Analysing and Teaching Literature* (ed. Mick Short), a very useful volume which combines discussions of methodology with examples of literary analyses.

Collections of analyses of individual works constitute a rapidly growing genre, and only a couple of examples will be mentioned here, e.g. *The Taming of the Text. Explorations in Language, Literature and Culture* (ed. Willie van Peer), by an assembly of authors from different countries and traditions. In spite of the publishers' claims, the "various text types" are, as in most such anthologies, overwhelmingly dominated by literary texts, but unlike most similar collections, this one contains concrete ideas for classroom experiments.

Greater variety is found in the texts analysed in *Language, Text and Context* (ed. Michael Toolan). This collection of articles emphasises "contextualism", here defined as the interdependence between text, analysis and situation, in an explicit argument against the view of stylistics as being exclusively formalist. Although the majority of the texts analysed belong to literature, there are also medical case histories, advertisements and tabloid crime reports.

Finally, a useful dictionary: Katie Wales's *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. Unlike the majority of the ever growing number of dictionaries of literary terms, it also includes linguistic terms and thus in itself illustrates the bridging nature of stylistics. Besides information on terminology, it provides references to seminal works in the areas of grammar, semiotics, communication theory, sociolinguistics and rhetoric.

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FERESHTEH ZANGENEHPOUR

The Alternative Intoxication: The Sufist Implications of The Work of D.H. Lawrence

In an often quoted passage from one of his letters Lawrence writes: "All the time, underneath, there is something deep evolving itself out in me. And it is *hard* to express a new thing, in sincerely... primarily I am a passionately religious man, and my novels must be written from the depth of my religious experience." Thus, throughout his work, Lawrence's "religion" has challenged critics into expounding what this might involve, since they recognize it as the key to reading his novels. Some have tried to define it in terms of the well-known European philosophers, others by means of Christianity or some mystical religions of the East. Although Lawrence was influenced by all these concepts and beliefs, yet none of them fully encompass both the sensuality and the spirituality found in his work. The philosophers often lack spirituality (since most of them are atheists), while these religions usually encourage a monastic life, withdrawal from the senses, or the pursuit of life after death. It is my suggestion, therefore, that Sufist wisdom could be considered as a prime alternative when examining the spiritual nature of Lawrence's work. Sufism is an ancient mystical religion and its idea of a loving Oneness of soul and the Absolute embodies both the immanence and the transcendental implication of spirituality which correspond with the sensual and spiritual levels of Lawrence's writing.

In Sufism, as in mysticism in general, there are two levels of perception, one referring to the level of empirical or phenomenal existence, and the other to the level beyond reason, the mystical or transcendental level. What is characteristic of Sufism is that everything is viewed simultaneously on both these levels which essentially appear to be incompatible. In *Tertium Organum*, a book Lawrence read very carefully, P. D. Ouspensky explains this point by referring to the common practice of Sufi poems which are written in the symbolic language of earthly love in order to explain mystical love. In these poems, the mystical is fused with the sensuous, or "the spirit" with "the flesh." According to Ouspensky, the reason for this amalgamation is that Sufis believe that "there is nothing in human language that can express the love between the soul and God so well as the love between man

¹ *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence: Vol. II (June 1913 - October 1916)*, ed. George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981) 165. This is a letter Lawrence wrote to Edward Garnett in 22 April 1914, during the writing of *Wedding Ring*.