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Forensic stylistics. By GERALD R. MCMENAMIN. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1993. Pp. xv, 249. $160.00.

Reviewed by DAVID CRYSTAL, *University of Wales, Bangor*

While I waited for this intriguingly titled book to arrive, I sketched out what I thought it might be about. I figured it would need to begin with a characterization of the established field, forensic linguistics, then identify a putative subfield, which would presumably be based on some notion of variety distinctiveness. To be practicable, there would next have to be some sort of methodology, both linguistic and situational. And to be convincing, it would need to conclude with some examples of the theory and method in operation—some real cases, in which stylistic inquiry would provide objective evidence for or against a case, a generalizable and reasonably comprehensive method, and standards of precision at least comparable to the best examples of forensic linguistic practice hitherto, with solid statistical support, as in some of the classic Swedish studies (Jan Svartvik, Alvar Ellegård).

What we get is curious. The book begins with two case illustrations (but no statistical analysis), and only then do we get a brief introduction to linguistics and stylistics. This is followed by a manual-like historical review of the way stylistic notions have been used as evidence in the courts. There is then a more detailed comparison of forensic linguistics and forensic stylistics, and a review of approaches to style and stylistics. The book concludes with two appendices (on descriptive markers and quantitative indicators of style) and a bibliography, which takes up nearly 70 pages—over a quarter of the book.

I can see why someone would adopt this way in to the subject—to involve the reader as quickly as possible in authentic examples—but it doesn't really work. Application before description presents an author with a terrible problem of exposition. Without any arguments in support of the chosen methodology, one is left wondering why certain criteria have been used and not others, and what some of the criteria could possibly mean. For example, in Ch. 1, 'State v Brown: A case of questioned authorship' (3–28), a diary authorship study, M gives us just 15 analytic criteria: they include such content categories as

'expressions of cleanliness and grooming' and 'attention to jewelry', whose generalizability is remote, and such structural categories as 'characteristic words and phrases' and 'various syntactic choices', whose level of vagueness is not much assisted by the selectivity of the subsequent examples. We are asked to take on trust that such criteria are well-motivated. It makes a frustrating read, ameliorated only by the hope that eventually these criteria will be presented as part of a coherent analytic framework. When it transpires that there is no such framework (at least, not in this book), the opening chapter becomes less than compelling.

M's aims are unexceptionable. The chief goal is to demonstrate 'author-specific linguistic patterns', which 'are present in unique combination in the style of every writer' (xiii). As I always thought that this was one of the goals of forensic LINGUISTICS, the definition of stylistics becomes critical, in order to justify what seems to be a new field of study. M defines stylistics as 'the scientific study of patterns of variation and meaning in written language' (xiv); he also adds that 'literary stylistics studies works of literature whose authorship is questioned' (3). The focus on variation is what I was expecting, but the restriction to writing was not. Why is a forensic stylistics of speech excluded? Nor was I impressed by the restriction of literary stylistics to authorship questions.

There is no theoretical justification presented (and I can conceive of none) in which the distinction between linguistics and stylistics is reduced to a contrast of medium. The spoken language is a central feature of both. M seems to allow the point when he refers to work in stylometry (listing several of A. Q. Morton's writings—though none of the devastating criticism which that approach has received), and defines this domain as 'the scientific comparison of written or spoken utterance habits ...'. But his focus on the written language as the defining feature of the stylistic approach is central. He even rewrites the history of ideas to suit this view. My own work, for example, is subtly reinterpreted. On p. 137 he summarizes the approach of Crystal & Davy 1969. He refers to some work from the 1980s, then says: 'Earlier and more general approaches to specification of writing situation are represented by that proposed by Crystal and Davy. Features of writing style are grouped into two categories ...' He then lists our eight dimensions of situational constraint, including the following definitions:

'1. INDIVIDUALITY: idiosyncratic writing habits.'
'5. PROVINCE: occupational or professional writing context'
'7. MODALITY: purpose of an act of writing or utterance'

If we were dead, we would turn in our graves. There is no justification for the restriction of these notions to the written language. Our approach was a general one, with speech and writing viewed co-equally; and the dimensions are illustrated from both spoken and written texts. We never restricted ourselves to 'writing style' or 'writing situation'.

I think the main difficulty with M's book is that he is giving his readers the

impression that he is presenting an established field, whereas in fact what he is doing is presenting a personal account. This point gradually becomes apparent, later in the book (141): 'Because my present purpose is to describe and THEREBY FURTHER DEVELOP the scientific basis of forensic stylistics, of greater importance is the even narrower notion of style as a feature of written language ...' (my emphasis). I doubt the value of this narrowing. A more fruitful approach is to preserve the breadth of the domain so that it parallels linguistics as a whole, maintaining a differential by explicating the notion of variation in the forensic setting. That would be truly interesting. However, this view is flatly ruled out of court: the use of the label FORENSIC LINGUISTICS to include stylistics is 'a simple inaccuracy with complicating circumstances' (67).

M makes a lot of the scientific basis of the proposed subject, especially in a section in Ch. 3, 'Forensic stylistics' (43–55) entitled 'the problem of proof' (48–52). And certainly, if anything is to persuade lawyers that forensic linguistic/stylistic inquiry should be taken seriously, it would be the cogency of a comprehensive description and a rigorous analysis. The statistical dimension is essential, in moving towards that goal, and M seems to agree. 'To the extent that variation in written language can be measured, stylistics incorporates statistics' and 'Evaluative stylistics (intuitive reaction to writing) will not achieve the intersubjective testability needed for reliability'. This is fine. What has left me scratching my head is why M doesn't do the first and does do the second. There isn't a single test of statistical significance in the book, and the whole of the opening chapter, which is the central illustration of the approach, is based on impressionistic statements of varying levels of vagueness.

The impressionism can be seen in such comments as 'There is NEAR EQUIVALENCE in the type of punctuation used' (5, my emphasis) or 'The author of the QUESTIONED diary uses NEARLY THE SAME set of obscene terms, and IN MUCH THE SAME WAY they are used in the KNOWN Brown letters' (9, my emphasis). We are then given five pages of examples from the two diaries, without further comment, which the author presumably thinks is compelling evidence. M talks in a semistatistical way ('It is extremely unlikely that this close lexical match in profanity could be due to chance coincidence ...'), but he does not present the statistical analysis which would make such comparisons convincing. Indeed, at several points, one wonders whether it would in principle be possible to do so, given the sample sizes, and the lack of lexical frequency norms. There are major theoretical issues here, which are never addressed. The conclusion, 'The above findings demonstrate an EXTRAORDINARY LEVEL OF STYLISTIC SIMILARITY between the QUESTIONED diary and the KNOWN writings' (27, author's emphasis) might in the hands of a good lawyer convince a jury, but it would not be difficult for another good lawyer to question the supposedly 'scientific' basis of the argument. For instance, your honor, what norms are being used as the baseline for judgments? When M says, concerning the use of the percent sign and ampersand, that 'what ... they have in common is their occasional use. Their use is not frequent or abnormal', or 'parentheses ... are used very frequently', or 'The semicolon ... occurs very frequently', how are we to inter-

pret these remarks? Is this linguistic SCIENCE? Or again, to take the second case example, Ch. 2, 'Is SIDS an "accident"? A case of questioned meaning' (29–42), which is a lexical analysis of the meaning of the term *accident* in relation to an insurance claim. The methodology uses a comparison of several dictionary definitions to inform about the chief semantic components of the word. But can this provide reliable evidence about a word's meaning? It is by no means unknown for dictionaries to be (to use a neutral phrase) 'influenced' by each other. How scientific is this procedure, therefore? Indeed, how scientific is lexical analysis generally, given the limited state of our knowledge about lexical frequency?

M has a penchant for long lists of examples, but these do not replace the need for proper analysis. We are told that the preferred way of stating times of day (e.g. 8:00 p.m., 12:30 a.m.) in the Ch. 1 texts is mainly through the use of 15-minute intervals or 5-minutes before or after the hour or half-hour, and are informed that there is only one exception out of 254 occurrences. M then gives us every occurrence, including the solitary exception. It takes five pages. I do not see the point. Science involves analysis, not just description.

M's aim is 'to remind the forensic community that the analysis of language style has long been a part of document examination and the law, and to suggest that systematic stylistic analysis become one of the "front-line" approaches in the examination of questioned writings' (xiii). The audience is evidently lawyers, not linguists. There are long series of factual summaries inserted between passages of general discussion, and these are likely to be useful to American lawyers who are familiar with this tradition of inquiry. Ch. 4, 'Stylistics as evidence' (57–74), devotes six pages to the rules of evidence, state by state, and four pages of citations identifying stylistic points which have been used in evidence. Ch. 5, 'The admissibility of stylistic evidence' (75–110) lists 30 pages of precedents showing the admissibility of stylistic evidence in court. Ch. 6, 'Stylistic analysis in document examination' (111–20) reviews the attention to style paid by a number of document examiners. The general linguist will find these lists of limited interest, and will look to later chapters, where there is an account of the relevant central linguistic topics: Ch. 7, 'The nature of writing' (121–38), Ch. 8, 'Style' (139–58), and Ch. 9, 'Stylistics' (159–79).

These later chapters show that M is well aware of the complexity of the field: he gives a detailed account of the many different conceptions of style that have emerged in the linguistics literature, and of the various methodologies that have been proposed. The second half of the book provides a good perspective for lawyers wanting to develop their sense of the complexity of the field. Unfortunately, there is an enormous gap between this perspective and the actual approach M uses, both in theory and in practice. The problem is that, after reading this book, lawyers might be forgiven for thinking that this is an orthodox account of a domain of applied stylistics. It is not. It is an account which has been tailored to meet the traditions and expectations of the legal profession, with its emphasis on written documentation. It may well do a service to jurisprudence; but I am not sure that it does a service to applied linguistics.

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A theory of syllabification and segmental alternation. With studies on the phonology of French, German, Tonkawa and Yawelmani. By ROLAND NOSKE. (Linguistische Arbeiten, 296) Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993. Pp. ix, 248. Paper DM 114.00.

Reviewed by CAROLINE R. WILTSHIRE, *Yale University*

Noske's aim in this work is to develop a theory expressing the relationship between syllable-structure assignment and rules that delete and insert segments. The Introduction (1–4) presents N's goals and an outline of the chapters. Ch. 1, 'Syllable assignment and the true constituent model', (4–30), introduces autosegmental phonology and proposes that syllable-structure assignment parallels autosegmental association. Ch. 2, 'Moraic versus constituent syllables' (31–63), compares N's theory of subsyllabic autosegments with moraic representations (Hyman 1984, 1985, Hayes 1989), arguing that moraic phonology is unsatisfactory. Chs. 3, 'Syllabification in Tonkawa' (64–89), 4, 'Syllabification in Yawelmani' (90–140), 5, 'Schwa in German' (141–83), and 6, 'Schwa and gliding in French' (184–234), apply N's theory to four case studies. Ch. 7, 'Conclusions' (235–38), briefly summarizes the preceding discussions. Also included is a half-sheet of Corrigenda, which should be expanded given the number of typographical errors.

N adopts a parameter-based approach, with four syllable-related parameters. Two are widely accepted (the direction and level of syllable-structure assignment), and the third (the basic syllable-structure size) extends McCarthy and Prince 1986's templates for reduplication to ordinary syllabification. Most interesting perhaps is the parameter that governs which segments trigger syllable structure building. In Tonkawa, for example, N argues that consonants trigger syllabification but vowels do not, with vowels being deleted when they do not fit into the syllable structures built for consonants.

N proposes an unusual model of syllable constituency, with onset, nucleus and coda nodes that 'play a role similar to that of autosegments' (3). He equates relations between syllable constituents and the segments they dominate with relations between elements on autosegmental tiers, treating subsyllabic nodes as segment-bearing units parallel to tone-bearing units. This conception of subsyllabic nodes allows general principles of autosegmental association to syllabify segments by one-to-one directional association, spreading, and default filling. However, it also blurs distinctions between timing and constituency. In