

## REVIEWS

N. E. Enkvist, J. Spencer & M. J. Gregory, *Linguistics and Style*. London: Oxford University Press, 1964. Pp. 109.

An introductory book on the nature of style and stylistic analysis is in great demand at the moment, there being at least three distinct audiences who could use it. First, there are those concerned with the study of language as an end in itself, who require introductory reading material for research purposes or course books for seminars on language variation. There has been no thorough attempt to compare and synthesize the many attitudes to style which exist as strands of critical scholarship in the corners of learned journals and elsewhere; but a critical eclecticism is an important stage in the development of a subject such as stylistics, which needs to have the variety of views and definitions brought together and examined within a stable framework. This the present book tries to do. Second, a very important audience, as all three authors emphasize, is the professional literary scholar. Here again, the demand for readable material about the linguistic approach to style is very great, particularly among the younger generations of critics, who are usually more tolerant of new external attitudes to literature and closer interdepartmental discussion about common issues than many of their older colleagues (for whom linguistics usually means, pejoratively, philology). Thirdly, there is the interest in style shown by scholars in other fields than literary criticism, such as biblical scholars or literary historians, for whom stylistic analysis is a prerequisite for determining problems of disputed authorship, provenance, and so on. It is unfortunate that this kind of practical comparative research has produced such unsatisfactory results and comment, statistical techniques and mechanical aids often being used without any thoroughly-reasoned theoretical linguistic perspective. It is, then, particularly important to point out to the non-specialist the need for an awareness of fundamental stylistic principles and realistic procedures in carrying out work of this kind; and an expository book on the subject would seem to be the best way of doing this.

Such a book, however, must be carefully planned and written, to convince (or even to attract) these potential audiences. To be satisfactory, it must be thorough; it must take nothing for granted, particularly in view of the controversial history of the word 'style' in philological and literary circles; it has to make a fairly full synthesis of past work and major future problems; and it needs judiciously to mix theory with practical example (of which there must be much). No-one would quarrel, then, with the admirable aims and ecumenical spirit of the present book, which, it is hoped, 'may contribute to the current rethinking of the relationship between linguistic and literary studies, and offer a stimulus, and perhaps some assistance, to the many teachers of English in schools and universities in Britain and overseas who would like to make this relationship a reality in their teaching and research' (xii). But such aims cannot be fulfilled in a mere 109 pages. A major criticism of this book, therefore, is a result of this: its brevity detracts from its usefulness, and leads at times to a harmful and confusing compression, along with an absence of essential comment and terminological and conceptual explanation. The book is composed of two, largely complementary monographs, which need to be considered separately to begin with: N. E. Enkvist, 'On defining style', and M. J. Gregory & J. Spencer, 'An approach to the study of style'.

Enkvist has a double purpose, which he states clearly: to define what he has come to regard as 'the most essential traits that set style apart from other levels of language' (3), and to answer the practical question: 'What must we do to give students of a foreign language a sense of style in that language?' (3). Two points immediately arise. First, in what sense can style be said to be a 'level'? This term is used very loosely in this essay (for example, on p.17, or on p.46, where he talks about 'levels' of literary analysis); and this is particularly unfortunate, in view of the history of the term in linguistics, and the further (different) use made by Gregory & Spencer (71). Secondly, it should perhaps be explained why a largely theoretical subject like the definition of style needs to be geared to the needs of foreign students, as opposed to anyone else. In fact, it is extremely difficult

to blend two largely independent aims, one relatively 'pure', the other 'applied'; and in this monograph applied considerations only really enter in under section five, and then rather disjointedly. The problem facing the foreign student – to 'know the language well enough to distinguish between common and rare types of linguistic behaviour in a given context and situation' (5) – is not really clarified in the essay: Enkvist concentrates more on the linguist's position, for whom 'the investigation of style is essentially a scientific description of certain types and sets of linguistic structures that occur in a given text, and of their distribution' (4).

The sections of the monograph dealing with the background to style study suffer badly from brevity. Only two 'classic approaches' to style are discussed at any length (Croce's and Spitzer's), and even here the extreme selectivity of comment and example gives an unbalanced picture. Section three, dealing with six main approaches to a definition of style, is, however, more useful. The six views are summarized by Enkvist: 'style as a shell surrounding a pre-existing core of thought or expression; as the choice between alternative expressions; as a set of individual characteristics; as deviations from a norm; as a set of collective characteristics; and as those relations among linguistic entities that are storable in terms of wider spans of text than the sentence' (12). Such a survey can be of great value, if one uses it as a stimulus for group discussion; but in isolation, the compression produces at times vague generalization, inadequate comment (e.g. on p.26, concerning the definition of style in the positive terms of a norm), and unclear critical distinctions. For example, there is introduced (in connection with the view of style as choice) the important but subtle difference between grammaticality and stylistic originality. This is given little discussion (16–17), but it hardly clarifies recent thinking on degrees of grammaticality to make such a statement as 'grammar distinguishes between the possible and the impossible' (18); instances of 'more/less' phenomena or disputed usage would in any case make this indefensible.

The use made of the term 'choice' in this essay, and in the book as a whole, does not clarify matters greatly. Enkvist has four kinds of choice, pragmatic, grammatical, stylistic and non-stylistic, which 'form a sequential hierarchy of one kind or another' (what does this mean?) (36). But stylistic choice is said to be 'contextually bound' (35). This would seem to mean that stylistic choice exists when one in fact has no choice, i.e. the situation dictates which forms are to be used, which is hardly a helpful use of the term. But in any case, such a definition would exclude literary style, which is in no sense wholly predictable or contextually bound. The whole point of originality is that it is unpredictable. The term 'choice' is also used, but in a different way again, by Gregory & Spencer (72), who say 'grammar deals with all those places where there is a choice that has to be made between a small and limited number of possibilities'. This hardly distinguishes grammar from some relatively closed lexical sets, or indeed from stylistic choice, which is usually a selection from a fairly small number of possible alternatives. Their examples, however, confuse the issue. Is the difference between *sit* and *be seated* completely and always grammatical? And, on the above definition, why CAN'T grammar differentiate *he had a fear* from *he had a hope*? (72–3).

A more fundamental criticism must be made concerning Enkvist's attitude to style seen as deviations from a norm, which is also discussed in section three. He suggests that 'contrasting a given style with the language as a whole is impracticable as well as theoretically undesirable' (23). Instead, 'it seems advisable first to define the norm against which the individuality of a given text is measured, not as the language as a whole but as that part of language which is significantly related to the passage we are analysing' (24). A number of points can be made here. A norm based on contextually similar data does indeed yield a relatively easy and meaningful comparison, and it may be procedurally advantageous to approach style analysis in this way (if one can be sure of the meaning of 'significantly'); but there are important disadvantages that should be borne in mind. Clearly, such a norm would only be useful and relevant for a particular text or textual group. The style of different texts from different registers would have to be assessed independently, and stylistics would thus be reduced to the study of particular situational languages. But of course stylistics needs to be more comprehensive than this, and a theory of style needs to be able

to cater for comparative statements of maximal generality, transcending single registers, as well as being able to make detailed statements about particular texts. It is important, for example, that a theory of style should allow comparison of the language of science and that of religion, and it should be possible to make meaningful statements about major contrasts, such as that between emotive and technical kinds of language, which is still a normal part of many school syllabuses in English. But such general comparative statements require norms much larger than that of particular contextual groups, and ultimately a norm based on the language as a whole. (Gregory & Spencer realize this, for they aim at producing a general model for describing stylistic variation.) Nor is it 'impracticable' to make statements about a linguistic norm for the whole language. Our intuition usually supplies this at will, save in those areas of uncertain usage where one needs to make more explicit reference to external sources of information. Personal recognition of unfamiliarity or linguistic eccentricity is really our introspective measurement of a form against our total personal knowledge of the language. Certainly there is nothing 'theoretically objectionable' (25) in trying to formalize this norm more satisfactorily. It may be a long and complex descriptive and statistical task, but formidableness is not objectionable *per se*, and more detailed and comprehensive facts are gradually being accumulated by surveys of usage.

It is difficult to understand Enkvist's position, for he himself implies the need for contextually different norms in the comparison of texts (29, 32), and he recognizes (28) the existence of intuitive acquaintance with the *LANGUE* of a speech community: 'Familiarity with frequencies of linguistic items in given contexts is part of the linguistic experience we have acquired ever since childhood'. But linguistic 'past experience' is primarily an awareness in memory of the *LANGUE* one has assimilated. In the study of style, it is quite true, as Enkvist suggests, that 'the delicacy of stylistic analysis . . . should be set at the level providing us with optimally meaningful results' (40); but it seems to me that the dangers of losing significant details when norms are defined in terms of the language as a whole are far outweighed by providing a general perspective for practical analysis and a general theory of style. The two positions are not contradictory, of course; one may have both detailed study of particulars as well as general descriptive statements. To ask for the latter to be catered for in a theory and definition of style is hardly being too 'ambitious' (24).

Enkvist's own definition of style is interesting, but difficult to understand, and probably too theoretical for foreigners to use as a guiding principle. 'The style of a text is a function of the aggregate of the ratios between the frequencies of its phonological, grammatical, and lexical items, and the frequencies of the corresponding items in a contextually related norm . . . . The style of a text is the aggregate of the contextual probabilities of its linguistic items' (28). It is a pity that there is no detailed statistical example provided to support this definition, and to explain precisely what is meant by such quasi-mathematical terms as 'function', 'aggregate' and 'ratio'; but it is refreshing to see a number of important points being made about style which are developed in the discussion which follows. Valuable emphasis is laid on the need for norms, and there is an awareness of degrees of relevance of different norms. There is the realization that, whatever style is, it can only be studied by reference to all levels of language (though the important question, 'What is the most useful way of working through the levels?' is not raised. In a complete stylistic study of a text, does one begin with phonetic analysis, or elsewhere?) There is the essential concentration on context of situation as the main influence on language usage, and the kinds of variable which this involves. The concept of style markers is discussed at some length. And finally, it is important to note the opposition to any extreme selectivity in subjecting texts to analysis: 'uncontextualized statistics on single items are of no stylistic significance' (26).

This is a valuable discussion, but its value is diminished by a failure to make precise the scope of the term 'context', which leads to a fundamental criticism of Enkvist's view of style. On the basis of his definition, style being the aggregate of the contextual probabilities of a text's linguistic items (and, incidentally, what is a 'grammatical item?'), there is no way of distinguishing style from either regional dialect or indeed from language itself. In other words, the concept of style has been broadened so far as to have become pointless;

the definition is too general to be of use. It is contextually probable, for example, that *oui* will not be used for *yes* in the English speech community. But is the difference between these words then stylistic? Only if style is made to cover ALL kinds of language variation; but this would be an unrealistic homogeneity, and stylistics would no longer be distinguishable from linguistics.

The whole issue of discriminating between style, regional dialect and language is in fact given unclear treatment throughout the book as a whole. At one point (45), it is said that dialect and style should be distinguished (though no criterion is given); then dialect is 'most conveniently . . . regarded as a sub-variety of style' (45); then the dialects used by Mellors in *Lady Chatterly's Lover* are said to be registers. On the other hand, 'languages and dialects have very different status and prestige' (46), and to Gregory & Spencer dialectal variations are a separate dimension in placing texts (86). The distinctions between these basic concepts should have been made more explicit in a book of this kind. It is not enough to excuse oneself from treating of the difference between style, language and dialect on the only grounds that 'traditional distinctions between dialect and language are based on historical and cultural, not purely linguistic, developments and principles' (46). This is true, but there still needs to be a boundary line for clear thinking. A book like this should have tried to draw it; and more discussion of the 'traditional distinctions' would have been most useful.

There remain three other points I would raise in connection with the first monograph. First, Enkvist soundly criticizes the view that there is utterance which has no style, and that style is an addition to language (12-15) - 'there is no styleless language' (32). Later, however, in defining his own style markers as 'contextually bound linguistic elements' he makes the statement that 'elements that are not style markers are stylistically neutral'. But there is no answer to the obvious question: what is stylistic neutrality, and how does it differ from a concept of stylelessness? There is a further point. Is the statement that there is no styleless language useful from a stylistic point of view? On the face of it, it may be true, but it again leads to a merging of the needed distinction between style and all language. If all language has style, then the study of style is no different from descriptive linguistics. It would seem more useful (certainly more realistic from the foreigner's viewpoint) to restrict style study to the examination of style markers taken as discontinuous, identifying phenomena. The norm can in most cases be taken for granted. It is usefully emphasized by Enkvist that the aim of stylistic analysis is 'the inventory of style markers and a statement of their contextual spread' (38), but the fact that not everything is a style marker should be equally stressed. Stylistic distinctiveness is occasional. It is rather the case that 'any linguistic feature MAY . . . possess stylistic significance' (93: my emphasis).

Secondly, the comment 'in teaching in Europe, the traditional categories of Latinate grammar may still be helpful because they are so far best known to the majority of students' (49) is very doubtful. Surely what is meant here is that the labels are best known? The categories of Latin (when they are understood at all) are more hindrance than help, as is commonly accepted. On the other hand, familiar labels inspire confidence in the learner.

Thirdly, towards the end of his monograph, Enkvist introduces the useful distinction between stylo-linguistics and stylo-behaviouristics, and goes on to suggest that the study of the former would most conveniently start from a corpus (though it is difficult to see what else one could start from in stylistics). The real value of a corpus, however, is not discussed at any length, and thus an important point is omitted, namely, that in stylistics a corpus can be of great use in fostering an awareness of features of language beyond the immediate experience of the individual. In literature, one needs some kind of a supplement to intuition, so that one is aware of overtones due to the use of specialized language, when they occur. Notes in the back of the text, or critical works on the text are two ways of increasing awareness: a description of the language conventions of different registers being used is another, more comprehensive way.

After the general orientation of Enkvist's essay, when one turns to the monograph by Gregory and Spencer, one expects something more practical, concrete and detailed than

is at first given. It begins with a general discussion of the relationship between language and literature, the components of literary understanding, and the authors' view of style. In view of the Introduction and the previous essay, this perhaps goes on too long. However, one important viewpoint is succinctly put: 'when the language of a text is examined, not as a source of information about plot or character or thought, but as the major focus of attention in the dialectical process – that is when the response is primarily to the use of language itself – the critic may be said to be examining the style of the text' (62–3). The authors emphasize the potential precision, explicitness and comprehensiveness of linguistic techniques, which would supplement, not replace, the methods of the literary critic. Linguistics has a threefold relevance: it provides techniques of description, facts about language, and assists in fostering more sensitive responses to language.

The authors then outline one theory of language, largely deriving from the work of M. A. K. Halliday. Their intention is 'not so much to offer an account of a particular model, as to suggest what might be demanded of a linguistic model in stylistic study' (67). 'It is not claimed that this is the only tenable view of the study of style. We have simply attempted to assimilate to our own approach what seems most valuable and relevant in the work of both literary critics and linguists' (105). With this, no-one would quarrel; but in this reviewer's opinion, they have not succeeded in their aim 'to sketch in one angle without erasing the others' (105). Again the limited space seems to be the cause. The compressed exposition leaves gaps, causes a fair amount of confusion, and begs a number of questions – and this apart from those criticisms which many would direct at Halliday's model as such.

Now in a book of this kind, it is of course defensible to take one theory and stick to it, but it was perhaps premature in the present instance, and one would in any case expect more cross-reference to other linguistic views on style than there is. The danger is not that certain issues may be passed over without discussion; but that insufficient reference to major linguistic disputes, plus injudiciously phrased statement, will give the false impression that the theory itself is part of God's truth. For example, it is written that a hierarchical arrangement of units is necessary for descriptive consistency and power (69–70), and then that phonology is an interlevel (70–1), with only a footnote to suggest any difference of opinion. It is not that such statements may be right or wrong, but simply that in a book of this kind the reader should be made aware of important points of critical divergence. Moreover, the only references to American theories of grammar are disparaging (63, 68).

The expository outline of the monograph can be justly criticized, especially if a non-specialist audience is intended, or even a linguistic audience not familiar with scale-and-category grammar. Halliday's terminology and categories are introduced with too little discussion and exemplification. It is not possible to cover a theory of grammar in a few pages – the compression of 'Categories' was difficult enough. Thus one finds issues undebated or left in the air: 'semantics takes over where grammar ends' (73), or 'phonology and graphology not only connect substance to form, they are themselves aspects of form' (71), a statement which is not at all clear in the context in which it appears. In particular, I wonder about the value of bringing the whole theory of lexis into the monograph, in view of its disputed independence and the many problems which the authors allow exist. Lexis cannot as yet be taken for granted, and while a little of language can be clarified in the light of its principles (and why, in literature, is it always Dylan Thomas who breaks collocations?) it seems premature to try and apply the theory to the whole of language and stylistic analysis.

A paragraph of detailed comment may help to show the need for a careful reading of this monograph. How can graphic SUBSTANCE be derived from phonic substance (67)? There are certainly correlations through the phonological and formal levels, but hardly any in substance. Second, the difference between *she's a pretty girl* as statement and question (67) is not an example of phonological contrastiveness only, but also grammatical (71). Thirdly, what is the difference between 'linguistically' and 'descriptively' (67–8)? Fourthly, after the fairly involved explanation of rank (78–80), one wonders whether the ecumenical aim of the book has been forgotten. Certainly it will not convince the non-

linguist to have descriptive labels thrust at him without justification. Indeed, in the discussion of rank, there is a hint of circularity in the explanation: rank-shift is postulated to account for a particular linguistic phenomenon (79), i.e. one begins by noticing a structural complexity; but later (80), we are told that the scale of rank and rank-shift 'help to isolate and illuminate where the structural complexity in a text lies'. It would seem that one isolates such complexity intuitively to begin with; and as for illumination, from the compressed exposition and the examples given, it is extremely difficult to see 'how the scale of rank and the concept of rank-shift make clear and help to describe accurately the infrastructuring nature of language' (80). (No explanation is given, incidentally, of what is meant by 'infrastructuring'.)

Finally, it is difficult to see why making the precise nature of linguistic features in a text explicit and producing statistical tables to support the intuitive judgement should involve 'the DANGER [my emphasis] of fixing the significant stylistic features in advance of careful analysis' (84). While most scholars these days would concentrate on description at the expense of prescription, even if they were to predict some characteristics of language usage, this would not always be such a bad thing. All styles and registers of English, with the one exception of literature, are to a large extent predictable, i.e. it is expected that people will conform to the habitually used language conventions of a particular situation. (One could compare Enkvist's 'contextually bound' language mentioned above, and the importance of predictability in giving students a 'sense of style'.) It would indeed be dangerous to try and define literary style in this way, because of its inherent unpredictability; but it is not the case that other uses of language (the majority) are in a similar position.

Perhaps the reason for this resides in a more general criticism of this monograph, and the book as a whole: namely, that literary style is concentrated on too much at the expense of other styles. The main examples in Gregory & Spencer are all from literature, and the useful discussion of the interplay between analysis and response is also from a literary point of view. Now this is not to underestimate the importance of a literary emphasis, but in view of the substantial differences between literature and the many definably distinct uses of language, a better impression would have been given by making a more detailed study of some of these other, contextually bound styles – styles which are certainly more readily definable and clear-cut. A linguistic perspective for style should emphasize all sides of context-determined language variation; and certainly the title of the book suggests a more general viewpoint. By all means, then, instil into your foreign student or native speaker a sense of style; but one of the ways in which he will appreciate literature for what it is worth linguistically will be by a process of comparison with other more predictable styles with which he is familiar.

The literary examples of detailed analysis also leave an unfortunate impression. Shortage of space presumably was the factor governing the selection of examples, and the comments about certain linguistic features in each. But the absence of any apparent order in the practical analyses clashes with the suggested importance of a methodical, ordered approach to style, systematically covering all levels of language organization. There is no example of a comprehensive piece of stylistic criticism, progressing (say) from phonetic and phonological information through grammatical and lexical study to semantic analysis, providing inter-level correlations where necessary. The point that should have become clear is that linguistically-orientated style analysis is a general method which transcends particular literary texts. An approach to style should clearly indicate its generality, by discussing a variety of examples from a similar point of view, thus indicating a method of application usable by people other than the authors. As it stands, it is difficult to avoid the impression in the Donne example (98) that the same results could not have been obtained by non-linguistic means.

I will end by making five comments about this book as a whole. First, it is a pity that there are so many vacuous statements. Though these are always a danger in discussing style, they can be got round by having more hard facts and practical analyses to give them proportion. The kind of thing I mean: 'style is one of the areas where linguistics, pragmatics and aesthetics readily overlap' (47); 'style in literature is a recognizable but elusive phenomenon' (59); 'if style in literature is the product of a particular, and in part

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unique, use of language . . .' (79); and 'style has proved notoriously hard of stringent definition' (54) – to which one can only ask, haven't other levels of language, and, for that matter, language itself been just as difficult to define? (But I am still not convinced at the end of this book that we really need to define style.)

Second, it is a pity that literature is concentrated on to the detriment of non-literary styles, as already mentioned. Thirdly, it is a pity that, within literature, there is hardly any space given over to a linguistic approach to the problems and interrelationships of idiom, metaphor, simile, personification, symbolism, and other poetic devices (initial, medial, end rhyme, metre, etc.) along with some order of analysis for their application. Fourthly, it is a pity that there is not greater parity in the use of terminology, and an attempt to clarify the sometimes very delicate issues which the terms hide, e.g. LEVEL, CATEGORY, DIALECT, REGISTER. And finally, from reading this book, I am still not clear about one important point: is style part of linguistics, or vice versa?

*Linguistics and Style*, then, can be criticized on a number of counts; but it is still of use, if read under supervision, such as in seminars, where I have already found it valuable. It is, after all, the first book of its kind. It looks at major issues that have all too long been ignored; and it tries to gather together the central strands of this many-sided subject. I have already said that its aims are admirable. One hopes that it is a sign of the times, and that it will be succeeded by longer and more thorough prolegomena and ordered and detailed stylistic analyses.

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