Approaches to Stylistics and the Literary Text

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Abstract
The present study offers a theoretical overview of the approaches of style in a literary text. The main directions are presented in strict relation to their relevance to highlighting the specificity of a certain type of literary production. To well-known names of international stylisticians there have been added outstanding Romanian names whose contribution to the domain is considered undoubtedly valuable.

Keywords: *style, stylistics, literary text, expressiveness*

1. Introduction: Style, Stylistics and the Literary Text

Sometimes he best way of beginning of any approach, therefore that of style and stylistics as well, is by offering a clear example: Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short start from the assumption that they are relational concepts, that is we normally talk about the style of a language in a certain context, by a certain person, for a certain purpose, and, consequently, about the stylistics as relating the critic's concern of aesthetic appreciation with the linguist's concern of linguistic description. Therefore, stylistics has, in their view, <<the goal of explaining the relation between language and artistic function. The motivating questions are not so much *what*, as *why* and *how*. From the linguist's angle, it is "*Why* does the author here choose to express himself in this particular way?" From the critic's viewpoint, it is "*How* is such-and-such an aesthetic effect achieved through language? >> (Leech & Short, 1981)

Style and stylistics have been given a lot of definitions and acceptations, proving that ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings lie at the very heart of such concepts. The definition given by Morton W. Bloomfield to stylistics, "the study or interpretation of the linguistics element or distinctive linguistic element in a writing, group of writings, or a text (that is, a structure capable of being interpreted by a code, including intentional structures like a culture or a whole language)" (Bloomfield, 1976) is broad and vague enough as it overlaps with other disciplines such as literary criticism, rhetoric, linguistics. The dependence of stylistics upon linguistics is obvious if one takes into consideration its meaningful units and terminology, the lack of linguistic definitions of metaphor, of discourse signalling their relatedness, etc.

In spite of the slipperiness of meaning of the word *stylistics*, there are some clearly established uses of the word: aesthetic stylistics, theoretical stylistics, descriptive stylistics, rhetorical stylistics (the

oldest of all types of stylistic analysis), historical stylistics, cultural and group stylistics, topographical or visual stylistics, psychological stylistics (Bloomfield, 1976). The last type of stylistics focuses on the study of language and style in order to discover the mind of a man or a writer, stressing the **element of choice** in writing and the fact that certain stylistic habits reveal the author.

2. Approaches to the Style of the Literary Text
2. a. Leo Spitzer's "Circle"
One of the theories worth taking into consideration is Leo Spitzer's "philological circle"– that is, that work from surface to the "inward life-center" of the literary text: first observing details about the superficial appearance (and here Spitzer includes also the ideas expressed by the author); then grouping these details and attempting to integrate them into a creative principle; and, at the end, making the "return trip" to all the other groups of observations in order to find whether the "inward form" tentatively constructed accounts for the whole. (Spitzer, 1948)

2. b. Style as Epistemic Choice
Another approach of style worth mentioning in this context is that of Richard Ohmann, who, in "Prolegomena to the Analysis of Prose Style", deals with the concept of style as epistemic choice. He considers that this concept may be what John Middleton Murry has in mind when he says that "a true idiosyncrasy of style [is] the result of an author's success in compelling language to conform to his mode of experience". W. K. Wimsatt makes reference to this idea when he calls style "the last and most detailed elaboration of meaning. Ohmann's opinion is that such a discussion can operate successfully only over wide areas of prose, where habitual kinds of choice become evident. (Babb, 1972)

2. c. Style and Meaning
As for the pair style and meaning, Ohmann defines the former as "the hidden thoughts which accompany overt propositions; it is the highly general meanings which are implied by a writer's habitual methods of expressing propositions."(Babb, 1972) Wanning's view completes Ohmann's: "the consideration of style is a consideration of complete meanings, and there is little of any importance that can be studied that is not a consideration of meanings." (Babb, 1972)
In *The Prose of Samuel Johnson* W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. develops a theory of "style as meaning". As the primary nature of words is to convey meaning, he asserts that words and style cannot be discussed in isolation from a "meaning" or regarded as providing alternative ways of saying exactly the same thing. He considers therefore words and the rhetorical pattern into which they may be used as essentially "expressive" of meaning. Wimsatt's recurrent use of expressiveness of meaning and his emphatic focus on meaning show that he views language itself as ultimately transitive, affecting an audience. (Wimsatt, 1963)

2. d. Style and Emotion
Beside the epistemic choice, the stylistic critic must turn his attention to emotion, as prose builds on the emotional force of coming to know, of giving shape to what has previously been formless and

resolving the tensions which exist between the human organism and unstructured experience. (Babb, 1972)

Speaking about language, the American philologist Bloomfield asserts - beside the fact that ordinary language is never uniform and that the idea of a perfectly stable language cannot be conceived – the emotive and dynamic side as a distinctive trait of language. (Bloomfield, 1976) Stephen Ullmann underlines the close relation between these two sides of language, quoting I. A. Richards: << These emotional factors are inextricably interwoven with the intellectual elements of language; and any attempt to separate by artificial methods what is inseparable in actual fact is beset by difficulties forcefully stated by Dr. Richards himself: "They (sense and feeling) are, as a rule, interlinked and combined very closely, and the exact dissection of one from the other is sometimes an impossible and always extremely delicate and perilous operation.">>

The power of language that makes possible the existence of abstractions is rendered metaphorically by Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound*:

"Language is a perpetual Orphic song,

Which rules with Daedal harmony a throng

Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were" (Ullmann, 1963)

Ullmann stresses the double identity of language, quoting Delacroix: <<In theory, every utterance is both communicative and emotive: there is always something to be said, and a subjective interest in saying it. In Delacroix's words: "Tout language a une valeur affective; si ce que je dis m'était idifférent, je ne le dirais pas. Mais aussi tout langage vise à communiquer quelque chose. Si l'on n'avait absolument rien a dire, on ne dirait rien.">> (Ullmann, 1963)

2. e. Stephen Ullmann and the Emotive Power of Word Meaning

Any literary text is an example of a "play" with the word, metaphorically defined by Georgias as a powerful king, feeble and stunted, yet able of extraordinary deeds: of stopping (or creating we might add) fear, of removing pain, of generating compassion, cheerfulness. (Tatarkiewicz, 1978) Such emotions can be conveyed in different ways: by intonation and rhythm, by choices of suffixes, by word order or syntactic arrangement. One of the resources is the emotive power of word meaning, as Stephen Ullmann asserts. He underlines the fact that it was realized by semanticists long time ago that no complete description of the sense of a word can leave out of account its affective "overtones". This way of thinking, combined with the view of the "zonal structure" of our "concepts" was concentrated in Erdmann's formula about the three factors of meaning: (1) essential or central meaning; (2) applied or contextual meaning; (3) feeling – tone (Ullmann, 1963). As to the sources of emotive meaning, Stephen Ullmann mentions Charles Bally's classification of the factors involved: (1) intrinsic – the emotive resources of the word itself, the name as well as the sense; (2) external – the special tone attaching to foreign words, archaisms etc. The latter's category emotive effect is due to their evocatory power: they will call up the environment or level of style to which they naturally belong. Concerning the emotive overtones, Ullmann views them as being largely dependent on speech-contexts – in most cases the situation alone can tell whether a term is used referentially or affectively. They may be linked with highly personal associations connected with memory of early childhood or private experiences, therefore confined to the individual. Some other categories of emotional elements are neither individual nor exclusively contextual – they are a permanent accompaniment of the word.

The conception of Stephen Ullmann referring to the levels of linguistic analysis represents a fundamental method of stylistic analysis of a literary text. In *Language and Style*, the stylistician considers the three levels of analysis: phonological, lexical and syntactical. In Ullmann's view the stylistics of the sound, or phonostylistics, is dealing, among other things with "the utilization of onomatopoeia for expressive purposes." (Ullmann, 1966) Of the two types of onomatopoeia, in the case of primary onomatopoeia the connection between sound and sense is more evident, while in the case of the secondary type, the non-acoustics experiences – movement, size, emotive overtones, etc., – are represented by sounds. The stylistics of the word explores the expressive resources available in the vocabulary of a language and investigates "the stylistic implications of word-formation, synonymy, ambiguity, the contrast between vague and precise, abstract and concrete, rare and common terms; the study of imagery."(Ullmann, 1966) The stylistics of the sentence will examine the expressive values of syntax at three superimposed planes: components of the sentence, sentence structure (word-order, negation), the higher units into which single sentences combine (direct, indirect free indirect speech). Beside this three level analysis there can be used the key-words analysis, as part of the lexical approach.

2. f. Monist/ Dualist Approach Versus Stylistic pluralism

Approaching Sperber's theory upon the emotive force of words, Stephen Ullmann considers that affective colouring "is not confined to single words: entire spheres of thought and activity participate in it. The pent-up emotion stored in such themes may find an outlet in two directions: Firstly, words belonging to such spheres may be transferred elsewhere; secondly, the spheres themselves may require help from outside"(Ullmann, 1966), referring to the two cases – of expansion and of attraction. In fact, emotive overtones, "evocative" elements that place style in a particular register, emphasis, euphony etc., they all belong to the domain of expressiveness, transcending the purely referential and communicative side of language.

The approaches of style and stylistics as study of language used in texts, literary or not, can be analysed and classified depending on the type of relation they establish between form and meaning. According to Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short, one can distinguish a *monist approach*, corresponding to a strong academic and literary tradition, whose view on the dichotomy form / content can be summarized in Flaubert's words as follows: "It is like the body and soul: form and content to me are one." (Leech & Short, 1981), where choices of expression are one and the same thing with choices of content. The second approach, *the dualist* one, based on the pair expression / content and is viewed in two variants: style as "dress of thought", corresponding to one of the earliest and most persistent concepts of thoughts – *style as some sort of "adornment"* of thought or meaning. This view appears in a more recent form – at the French stylisticians Bally and Riffaterre who hold the view that style is that expressive or emotive element which is added to the neutral presentation of the message itself (that "writing at degree zero" as postulated by Roland Barthes). The other variant of style as viewed by Leech and Short is *style as manner of expression*. This type of dualism sustains that there are different ways of conveying the same content. Richard M. Ohmann in his study on Shaw's style renders evident this distinction: "The very many decisions that add up to a style are decisions about what to say, as well as how to say it. They reflect the writer's organization of experience, his sense of life, so that the most general of his attitudes and ideas find expression just as characteristically in his style as in his matter, though less overtly. Style,

in this view, far from being intellectually peripheral ornament, is what I have called epistemic choice, and the study of style can lead to insight into the writer's most confirmed epistemic stances." (Ohmann, 1962) The third approach proposed by Leech and Short is called *stylistic pluralism,* according to which <<language performs a number of different functions, and any piece of language is likely to be the result of choices made on different functional levels. Hence, the pluralist is not content with the dualist's division between "expression" and "content": he wants to distinguish various strands of meaning according to various functions.>> ." (Leech & Short, 1981) Beside I. A. Richard's and Jakobson's functions, Halliday's recognition of the fact that different kinds of literary writing may foreground different functions makes an important presence. Halliday's view is that all linguistic choices are stylistic, somehow proving to be a more sophisticated version of monism.

According to the authors of *Style in Fiction,* "If Halliday's pluralism is superior to monism, it also has some advantages over dualism … For him, even choices which are clearly dictated by subject matter are part of style."(Leech & Short, 1981) What is important beyond the possible approaches to style is the fact that language is used, in fiction, to project a world "beyond language" in which we use "not only our knowledge of language, the meanings of words etc., but also our general knowledge of the real world, to furnish it."(Leech & Short, 1981)

2. g. Style and Literary Criticism

In her *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, Katie Wales defines stylistics as "the study of style; yet just as style can be viewed in several ways, so there are several different stylistics approaches" (Wales, 1989), underlining the fact that the lack of unity in the meaning of stylistics is due to the influences exercised by two domains: linguistics and literary criticism. Associated with the names of I. A. Richards and F. R Leavis, practical criticism or practical stylistics aimed at close analysis of the literary text itself, at its structure and themes. In *Practical Criticism - A Study of Literary Judgement*, I. A. Richards states that "The all-important fact for the study of literature – or any mode of communication – is that there are several kinds of meaning. […] Whether we are active, as in speech or writing, or passive, as readers or listeners, the Total Meaning we are engaged with is, almost always, a blend, a combination of several contributory meanings of different types. Language […] has not one but several functions to perform simultaneously."(Richards & Leavis, 1982) The four functions I. A. Richards brings under discussion are named Sense (referring to the contents of the communication), Feeling (dealing with the attitude towards what is being communicated, with the personal flavour or colouring of feeling – in other words with the whole conative-affective aspect of life: emotions, attitudes, the will, desire, pleasure-unpleasure, etc.), Tone (indicating the attitude of the speaker towards the listener, obviously reflecting the awareness of such a relation), and Intention (delineating the speaker's intention, his aim, either conscious or not, the effect he is endeavouring to promote.

F. R. Leavis on the other hand, views literary criticism in his own way: <<criticism, when it performs its function, not merely expresses and defines the "contemporary sensibility"; it helps to form it. Literary criticism, then, is concerned with more than literature, just as the "contemporary sensibility" is more than a matter of literary taste.>> (Leavis, 1934) The author concludes that

"Criticism […] is at one and the same time a discipline of sensibility and a labour of intelligence" (Leavis, 1934) , the true appreciation of literature and art consisting in examining and discussing it. The aim of the stylistic studies cannot therefore be viewed as simply to describe the features of the text, but to emphasize the part they play in the architecture of the text's meanings, this requiring both intuition and interpretative skills.

2. h. Choice and Expressiveness

In the production of style there is an intimate connection between choice and expressiveness. Professor Guiraud distinguishes between two types of stylistics values: expressive and impressive ones. The former are more or less unconscious, constituting "une socio-psycho-physiologie de l'exppression", while the latter are conscious and intentional, representing "une esthétique, une éthique, une didactique, etc., de l'expression."(Leavis, 1934) Nevertheless, the persistent recurrence of certain stylistics devices and leit-motifs is undeniable sign of artistry. As for the dichotomy choice / expressiveness, in *Style in the French Novel*, Stephen Ullmann asserts: "the pivot of the whole theory of expressiveness is the concept of choice. […] Synonymy, in the widest sense of the term, lies as the root of the whole problem of style." (Ullmann, 1957) Referring to the principles of stylistics explanation, the stylistician mentions: choice (the choice between two or more alternatives may be dictated by a variety of reasons), the principle of polyvalence (the same device of style may give rise to a variety of effects), the principle of deviation from the norm (the expressive force of a device depends in no small measure on whether it deviates from ordinary usage), the existence of two kinds of expressive devices: direct (they are expressive in themselves) and indirect (thy derive their force from their association). Of a special interest are the semantic problems that claim attention in a stylistic analysis: synonymy (that is in a sense the prototype of all stylistics devices, the purest and simplest example of a choice between alternative expressions, the combinations and accumulations of synonyms serving different purposes: variety, symmetry, precision etc.), ambiguity (lying either in the equivoque in the words used or in the structure of the sentence), imagery, the words with a marked evocative value. The role of the literary stylistician is that of delimiting the semantic loads and effects of the selected textual units, correlating them with macro-semantic ones (tone, view, attitude) and indicating in what way they reflect, enhance or help the text's general semantic and thematic structures. The stylistic approach is to be viewed as a pointer towards global textual interpretation, claiming to define in an objective and scientific manner the text's general meaning on the basis of the textual analysis and patterns chosen. Stylistic argumentation is realized in a bottom-up manner, from micro- to macro- units, from what concerns surface elements to what concerns subtle underlying comprehensive regularities.

2.i. Romanian Approach: Stylistic Attitude

Tudor Vianu speaks about a stylistic attitude**,** defined as a special focusing of attention, distributed between text and subtext, which differs from the successive orientation of the attention towards the text and the subtext through which a specialist could systematize in a scientific way all the notes implied in the subtext of the conversations and writings. What he means by this is the fact that the stylistic attitude refers to the focus on a specific subtext, a chain of thoughts, feelings and intentions that can be inferred from some peculiarities of the text. We understand therefore by stylistic subtext what is hidden behind the context, what must be read between the lines. The stylistic notes take

shape in the shadowy periphery of the conscience and attention gathers them there until it brings them to the bright nucleus of the conscience. This final stylistic attitude, grown much clearer and entirely aware of the constitutive elements of the subtext is the proper attitude of the stylist as a man of science. The stylist is the one who focuses his entire attention and the light of his conscience upon the subtext. (Vianu, 1968)

Ştefan Munteanu in his work on style and literary expressiveness quotes Marouzeau while considering the notion of stylistic attitude, whose effect on the enunciation plan is the quality of the style – the starting point of the research of the literary stylistics. (Munteanu, 1968) The Romanian linguist also mentions the stylistic convergence phenomenon, a common preoccupation of the stylisticians (Marouzeau, Ullmann), representing the use of several devices which all concur to express the same idea or to produce the same effect within the framework of a certain stylistic context. Another name referred to by Munteanu is that of Lucian Blaga who considers that style is a concept that must be related to the philosophy of culture. For Blaga, style is exactly what the art of an epoch has in common with the other branches of the culture. The stylistic phenomenon derives from the cultural background; it is an emanation or the creative spirit of a people or of an individual. This is the point where we can very well see that literary stylistics can transcend the study of a single work or author. It can examine the stylistics features of a group of writers, of an epoch, or of a genre. Although each work of art is an independent and self-contained world organized in a unique way, the task of stylistic analysis is to determine the role of each device in this organization, each literary text sharing a vocabulary adapted to the requirements of a specific aesthetic.

3.Conclusions

Either viewed as a discipline or a sub-discipline (in accordance with the classification of literary and linguistic stylistics as different domains, subordinated to general stylistics), literary stylistics is involved in the study of language in use and action as showed in written texts, especially in those recognized as literary. As for the distinction linguistic stylistics versus literary stylistics, R. Carter and P. Simpson state that linguistic stylistics is where "practitioners attempt to derive from the study of style and language a refinement of models for the analysis of language and thus contribute to the development of linguistic theory" (Carter & Simpson, 1989), while literary stylistics is more focused on providing "the basis for fuller understanding, appreciation and interpretation of avowedly literary and author-centred texts. The general impulse will be to draw eclectically on linguistic insights and to use them in the service of what is generally claimed to be fuller interpretation of language effects than is possible without the benefit of linguistics." (Carter & Simpson, 1989)

The many trends in stylistic approach highlight the complexity of literary stylistics. The levels of analysis prove that a literary text is to be accessed taking into account the fact that expressiveness very many times transcends the referential side of language. The intricacy of this phenomenon is due to the fact that a writing or a literary situation involves three elements: the author, the work itself and the reader. The first deals with the "reasons for the author's use of language, the second with the linguistic aspect of the work as text, and the third with the linguistic impact on the reader or audience." (Bloomfield, 1976)

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