The year’s work in stylistics 2003

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The field of stylistics continues to charm with its eclectic variety of wild flowers – or frustrate by its lack of co-ordination and clear boundaries, depending on your mood or perspective. On the other hand, cognitivists influenced by more empirical paradigms from psychology are prompting us all to more disciplined methodological principles as they progress and build on each other’s work. This review accordingly follows five headings of Narrative and Discourse; Metaphor and Proverb; Poetry, Play and Translation; Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); and Variation, to delineate more sociolinguistically oriented and inspired work on variety in use. We conclude with some larger reflections on questions of style and where future research may need to expand its horizons. At the same time it is fully acknowledged that these headings and boundaries are imprecise, overlap and cannot neatly contain all the variety found even in the one year of flourishing publication of 2003. We return to this point also in our Conclusion.

Narrative and discourse: cognitive perspectives

Just over a decade ago, while travelling in a bus across the wide Hungarian plateau east towards a big conference in Debrecen, two British academics were overheard surmising that narratology as an ongoing project was ‘mined out’. What they meant was that the theoretical study of narrative from Propp to Fludernik by way of Frye and Genette seemed, as the century drew to a close, to have said all that it was possible to say. Narratology seemed to have wrapped itself up through its own methodological success, and all there was left to do was run the final model over new narrative texts: poetics, it might be said, had given way to hermeneutics.

When Antony Easthope and Mike Reynolds (for it was they) speculated thus on that long, dusty journey, it must have seemed to everyone around them that the view was at least plausible. They could not know, of course, that the exploration of narrative over the last decade has again placed itself in the centre of language and literature studies; that narratology has been renewed by a series of theoretical innovations principally in how narrative organisation links with stylistic texture; that narrative analysis has again been used as the occasion for new literary linguistic theorising; and that 2003 has been a particularly fruitful year in this respect.

Many of the chapters in Gavins and Steen’s Cognitive Poetics in Practice deal with narrative. This collection of articles accompanies Stockwell’s Cognitive
Poetics: An Introduction, reviewed last year, and the chapter content corresponds with the earlier book. Each contributor offers a fleshed-out treatment of the theoretical dimension introduced in the companion volume. Chapters directly on narrative include Emmott applying her contextual frame theory to plot reversals, Gavins’ use of text world theory to explore the absurdist narrative of Donald Barthelme, Semino on a Hemingway short story through a possible worlds and mental spaces analysis, and Gibbs on ways of developing prototype theory using Catch-22 and other novels.

Even those chapters that are not primarily on narrative texts have implications for narrative reading; it is a peculiarity of the cognitive approach that an emphasis on sequencing, profiling, attentiveness and dynamic meaning construal serves to narrativise even explicitly lyrical works. Stockwell analyses surrealist writing where the distinction between narrative and descriptive pause is blurred. Tsur explores deixis in poetry in English and Hebrew, and addresses the effects of time and temporality. Hamilton tracks readerly profiling in the cognitive grammar of a Wilfred Owen vignette. Steen delineates the schematic story structure in love lyrics. Crisp follows the accumulation of conceptual metaphors in poems by D.H. Lawrence and Keats, and Burke traces parabolic projection in medieval allegories and a Shakespeare sonnet. All of these analyses illustrate how what Steen has called ‘the cognitive turn’ forces us to review the boundaries between traditional literary categories. Oatley’s closing intriguing chapter emphasises a similar interanimation in creative reading and writing by connecting cognitive poetic work on emotion with ancient Greek and Indian critical theory.

The book demonstrates an ongoing process by which cognitive poetics is ‘settling-in’ to its place in literary linguistics, and 2003 was marked by a further book which can be seen to bridge the field into the past and the future. Cockcroft’s Rhetorical Affect in Early Modern Writing is the sort of book few of us have the breadth of mind and scholarliness to write any more. It combines what he calls the ‘old rhetoric’ with the ‘new rhetoric’ of cognitive approaches to literature, and focuses on the ground where both meet in the form of original Renaissance writing and modern critical writing on the Renaissance. The treatment is elegant in its reading of literary and critical rhetoric, arguing for a re-emphasis on the rhetoric of emotion (pathos) which chimes with the latest directions in cognitive poetics. Cockcroft effects this thesis through a deictic analysis and through schema theory.

Another major contribution both consolidating and driving the field forward is Herman’s edited book Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences. This again follows up a single authored monograph (Herman, 2002, reviewed last year), here in pursuit of the argument that stories are ‘both a major target of and an important basis for cognition’ (12). Turner, Fludernik, Emmott, among others, attempt to move the insights of cognitive science from sentences and invented textoids to more natural and even the most demanding literary work. Herman emphasises the need to integrate social, historical and other contextual factors into developing models. Fludernik (2003c) includes a notable attempt to respond to that call as she...
revisits her ‘Natural’ Narratology monograph of 1996. Elsewhere, Herman and Childs, in the journal Style, explore narrative as the key to understanding experience of our selves and others from distant times and places. Here can also be noticed Keen’s advanced textbook, a new offering in the increasingly crowded field of introductions to narrative, though an interesting feature in this case is the attempt to stimulate graduate students on the creative writing courses which are growing exponentially in British and U.S. higher education, with the findings of the wide field and history of research into narrative.

Bortolussi and Dixon’s Psychonarratology should also be noticed in this section as a book length collection of attempts at a systematic empirical approach to the study of literature reading as discourse processing. The Introduction gives a helpful overview and situates the work in wider cognitive and narratological endeavours, with case studies by chapter following a format of literature review and experimental testing of hypothesis in key dimensions of narrative analysis: the fundamental issue is to test the proposals of narratology against actual behaviours of readers. Sceptics may doubt the complete validity of the ‘conversation’ model of literary reading, as well as some of the empirical work, but the collection is stimulating, addresses key issues and should be widely read.

As mentioned already, 2003 saw a further return to schema theory, Nietzsche’s original notion operationalised by discourse analysts and cognitive scientists, and drawn down latterly to illuminate reading processes by literary linguists. In a special issue of Language and Literature devoted to science fiction, Stockwell argues for the rehabilitation of schema theory precisely because it is a crude model, and a crude degree of delicacy is sometimes what is required by the analyst. His article addresses speculative cosmology, the hardest of hard science fiction. Other papers in that collection include Ryder’s inspired application of Emmott’s contextual frame theory to the mindbending time-paradox narratives of Robert Heinlein. Hardy traces the connections between H.G. Wells’ understanding of language at the dawn of science fiction and our current linguistically-informed views, and notices some remarkable prescience. Maintaining the Language and Literature facility in catching the literary zeitgeist, Walsh offers an expansive analysis of metaphors and metonyms in John Christopher and Philip Pullman.

Work on narrative dominated the 2003 issues of the PALA journal, with an impressive range of work explored, from Anglo-Saxon literature (McCully) to Thomas Pynchon (Herman, Hogenraad and van Mierlo). The range of techniques employed by contributors testifies to the vitality of the field. McCully develops a theory of poetic development. Herman et al. use a quantitative content analysis. By contrast, in the same issue (12(1)), Page writes of ‘écriture feminine’ and discusses feminist narratology; and Rashef offers a historical lexicology. Later in the year, Popova (12(2)) explores the synaesthetic potential of cognitive poetics, and Wallhead (12(4)) traces metaphors in A.S. Byatt.

The article by Fludernik (2003a) on Ondatje’s The English Patient represents the best in the literary linguistic tradition of detailed analysis in the service of a
more global argumentative position. Fludernik’s continuing work on narrative and time (see also Fludernik 2003b: diachronic perspectives on narrative modelling) demonstrates the technical innovations still to be explored between narratological patterns and texture.

In the same issue, Lambrou (12(2)) illustrates the adaptability of the stylistic approach with an exploration of collaborative oral narrative. An interesting contribution to spoken narrative analysis from another journal is Cots (2003) on collaborative involvement in storytelling. Building on work like Tannen’s (1989), Cots shows the importance of aesthetic features such as use of details, imagery, evaluative devices and discourse markers in a story which can be said to repair a disturbed relationship between two old friends.

Poetics Today’s Narrative issue (24:3) includes Banfield on time in Woolf, and Sternberg on universals in narrative from a cognitivist perspective (continued from 24:2). The Poetics Today ‘Cognitive Turn’ issue (24:2) includes a number of responses to the reservations of Adler and Gross (2002; discussed in ‘Year’s Work 2002’) and should be of interest to cognitivists and their doubters alike in their ongoing debate. Tsur (2003a) is a book length study across languages of religious poetry, which again would be beyond the reach of most to write, and should be read for just those horizon-broadening reasons.

Metaphor and proverb

Crisp’s chapter on metaphor in Gavins and Steen has already been mentioned. A further valuable publication is Crisp (2003b) which again responds to the charge that cognitive poetics needs to be more sensitive to historical and cultural variation. A stimulating paper gives a contextualised account of differences in the “LIFE IS A JOURNEY” metaphor between Bunyan and the modernist E.M. Forster. What Crisp shows here is that identification of metaphor can initiate important investigations into cognitive and cultural geographies. Other metaphor studies which came to our attention in 2003 would include Paxman, a study of metaphor in Eliot’s Middlemarch which uses the issue to contest deconstructive readings, and Cameron and Deignan, a corpus linguistic study of metaphor in spoken discourse which highlights the pragmatic devices speakers use to alert and assist their listeners to interpret more innovative metaphor use. Danesi, in ‘Metaphorical Connectivity’, argues the interest of Vico’s work for cognitivists working on the bodily basis of more abstract human thought, and summarises a corpus of research for non-readers of Italian. Poetics Today (23:4), edited by Boers, is a valuable themed issue on Cross-Cultural Variation in Metaphor. If anyone out there still doubts the practical importance of metaphor studies, Cameron (2003) is a full length book exploring the use of metaphor in school, and the problems it can cause for pupils, as well as the cognitive reasons for its centrality. At least, these are findings that should be brought to the attention of teachers in training and on INSET courses. The year 2003 also saw a new
Afterword to Lakoff and Johnson’s founding monograph on *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), reviewing developments and updating their ideas.

Proverbs are revisited notably by Valdaeva, in *Proverbium*, who draws particular attention to the creative, parodic and stylistic use of what she terms ‘anti-proverbs’ (transformations of canonical forms) across a range of domains (religion, feminism, politics, advertising) using poetic devices including phonetic foregrounding, syntactic deviance, parallelism and other patternings and figuration. In short, a compendium of central stylistic devices are to be found in everyday creative proverb use, so demonstrating the centrality of proverbs to stylistic understandings. Naciscione (‘Phraseological Metaphor’) similarly continues to argue this interest in the interplay between fixedness and change in actual uses of phraseology (with greater emphasis on discoursal contexts), but also aligns such research explicitly with cognate work in cognitive linguistics. Idioms, in this view, are not ‘frozen’ and meaningless, but index real ongoing creative and metaphorical thought.

Poetry, Play and Translation

*Language and Literature* also included innovative new work on poetry in 2003: Hanson on Pinsky, and Sobolev on Hopkins. It is interesting to see the field of stylistics maturing in its revisitation of its first arena, poetry (including metrical analysis), with the benefits of modern theoretical insights.

Byron (2003) produced a valuable study of the dramatic monologue form which could inform but also provide much food for further thought and research for workers in stylistics. This book does what it says on its cover, unusually enough, and a reader comes away with a deeper knowledge and understanding of the form and how it has been used historically to the present: a vehicle for social critique, including meditations on gender and identity. The range of reference is impressive, extending to less canonical writers, and the study raises larger issues of genre identification and description. (See also Seitel, 2003.) What is lacking at times is what a more linguistically informed approach could add to an already impressive monograph. Thus passing references to ‘speech rhythms’ or ‘multiple voices’ or possible first person/third person differences, also deixis (not recognised as such) are obvious examples of areas which would profit from more careful stylistic investigation.

It is some years since Ricks fired controversies in literary and poetic circles by suggesting Bob Dylan was as great a poet as Keats, but he pursues his project in *Dylan’s Visions of Sin* (2003). Dylan-philes are probably right to suspect that this is rather a partial and inadequate reading of Dylan’s whole oeuvre, as witnessed by a number of hostile reviews, and arguably the musical settings are more important than appears in this account (‘multimodality’). Nevertheless, Ricks remains in many ways a supreme model of New Critical close reading which, while again not obviously linguistically informed, reminds all stylisticians of the
value of careful and patient attention to words on the page, as well as to their intertextual contexts.

References have already been made to creativity and verbal play in discussing proverbs and metaphor, including the satirical and parodic use of ‘anti-proverbs’ in everyday conversation. We return to some of these issues under the heading of youth language studies of Variation. More centrally, however, a major work by Simpson on satire appeared in 2003, in the Benjamins series *Linguistic Approaches to Literature* (edited by Steen, van Peer and Verdonk). This is already shaping up to be a significant series for literary linguists. Simpson’s book sets out a sophisticated model for analysis that draws on stylistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis, while retaining an acute and informed critical and historical sensibility. The focus of analysis is on contemporary British satire and humour, though the approach is robust enough to encompass Swiftian satire and both literature and politics. If you want to see what a socially-situated, cognitively-amenable discourse analysis looks like, here it is.

Attardo’s work on humour informs Simpson’s study, and is represented and extended in a humour issue of the *Journal of Pragmatics* (Attardo, 2003), including applications of relevance theory, irony, gender issues, cross-cultural joking and conversational joking as well as a more psycholinguistic study of the process of ‘getting’ a joke. Cowper (2003) offers a study of a satirical parody of a political interview (Bird and Fortune will be known to British viewers), which raises interesting questions as to how parodic intentions are signalled and interpreted both textually (comparing an actual interview with the parody) but also in terms of Goffman’s (1974; 1981) notions of *keying* and *footing*. The study can usefully be aligned with Simpson’s proposed model, as well as suggesting the need for extensions of a textual model to visual and other more multimodal contexts.

**Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Arguing for future directions in cognitive analysis is the concern of O’Halloran in his polemical *Critical Discourse Analysis and Language Cognition*. Cognitive linguistics has been criticised from several quarters over the last few years for an asocial or consensual view of the world, and an accommodation between the cognitive and the discursive has been called for but proven elusive. O’Halloran, starting from CDA, might just have pulled it off. He queries the interpretative stage in CDA and draws on cognitive frameworks to provide a new theory of reading for gist, producing along the way a series of suggestions that offer the possibility of a genuine synthesis. Again ideology is rendered through narrative, and though the focus is on the staple of CDA in political and media discourse, there are obvious future applications for literary linguists here.

Fairclough (2003), meanwhile, offers an updated synthesis of his work and manifesto for CDA ‘as a resource for social analysis and research’ (2003), an
urgent call for better social theorising of linguists’ CDA, but also for closer attention to language on the part of social theorists. The second edition of *Language and Power* (2001) offered new chapters on globalisation and the internet, as well as an afterword. The new book with a different publisher is a more coherent theoretical updating of CDA and language in ‘new capitalism’, though possibly lacking the user friendliness of the best-selling earlier publication. Part IV, Styles and Identities may prove particularly stimulating to readers of *Language & Literature*. An edited collection from Weiss and Wodak (2003) also tries to improve and update what are perceived as the ‘eclectic and unsystematic’ (6) theoretical bases of CDA. In another edited collection, Martin and Wodak (2003) and their collaborators attempt an articulation of systemic-functional linguistics and CDA in investigating history as constructive and contested discourse, including media news stories (Part II) and postcolonial storytelling in school textbooks as well as in more private contexts (Parts III and IV).

**Varieties and variation**

‘Variation’ is an imprecise heading – variation from *what* exactly? – as even the sociolinguists increasingly ask. Variation may well be all we have. (Our Conclusion returns to this issue in discussing the centrality of stylistics.) The label is only intended here to gesture toward studies where stylistic variation is foregrounded and studied in social contexts. Thus a work which could come under the CDA rubric, but which exceeds that remit, is Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou *Discourse Constructions of Youth Identities*. The editors argue for a contextual and cultural understanding of ‘youth’ as studied in Communities of Practice perspectives, in some ways building too on Eckert’s seminal *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice* (2000) and Rampton (1995). Notable contributions in a generally stimulating collection include literacy scholars Sebba on non-standard spellings in adolescents’ use of ICT, graffiti, personal letters and elsewhere, and Wilson on young male prisoners writing on and about their trainers (sport shoes). Generation is also found to be a critical variable in Ito and Tagliamonte (2003), a sociolinguistic study of intensifier use in English (especially *very* and *really*, the most common) which shows important differences between generations (and genders) as well as evidence that intensifiers are used to signal in-group membership; the age group that uses their own intensifiers most frequently are the teenagers and young adults.

Multimodality is another topic many of the youth language studies draw on (see again Conclusion later, future directions for stylistics). Thus another distinguished report on youthful literacies in 2003 was Thurlow and Brown’s ‘Generation Text’, on the forms and functions of text messaging among a group of British undergraduates. Elsewhere, Krokøkke (2003) presents data on female IRC (internet relay chat), to challenge and test (but not completely invalidate)
established sociolinguistic ideas of gender and identity. Machin and Thornborrow (2003) present a multimodal analysis of *Cosmopolitan* magazine across differing international editions in pursuit of the global without neglecting the local, but also to suggest (this is perhaps overstated) that earlier analyses have underestimated the ludic and pleasurable dimensions of young women’s magazine reading. Gender and swearing are studied (through self reports) in Stapleton (2003), which again argues that analysts need to move beyond simplistic universals of gender, to performative aspects of ‘doing gender’ in specific Communities of Practice (compare Eckert, and Cameron and Kulick below).

Finally, youth features importantly too in *Black Linguistics* (Makoni et al., 2003), an ambitious collection dealing with black languages and linguistics in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, the U.S. and beyond, including Pollard on Rastafarian language and reggae, as well as Alim on African Nation Hip Hop language, and other contributors’ essays on issues in language in education and vernacular literacy. A particularly interesting feature of Alim’s chapter, in line with findings beginning to appear elsewhere in recent years, is that, in contrast to Labov’s canonical work, it may be when most attention is being paid to their language by these ‘street’ wise speakers, they are at their most non-standard (deletion of copulas, for example). In *Language in Society* Wharry (2003) analyses interesting data on ‘Amen’, ‘Hallelujah’ and others as poetic discourse markers of the preacher, rather than congregational responses, from African American sermons. Playful and creative uses of speech style in Argentina are reported by Cara (2003) in arguing for style as subversive identity in ‘New World’ Spanish, relating features of Borges’s writings, for example, to wider speech habits in the community. Researchers into bilingual creativity, code-switching, and uses of pidgins and creoles in literature should also be aware of critical essays in Sommer (2003), especially Zentella (2003) on puns, jokes and playfulness resources available to her bilinguals, and could also take note of de Courtivron’s anthology of pieces by ‘Bilingual Writers on Identity and Creativity’ (2003).

English as a world language continues to attract particular attention as an area for significant stylistic variation in language and literature, the expression and exploration of sub-cultural identities and styles, including Mair (2003), an edited postcolonial conference proceedings. While it has to be said that literary and linguistic scholars remain for the most part clearly differentiated species, a rich collection includes notable papers by Chiavetta, and Deuber and Oloko on Nigerian English literature (both 2003). Another useful study of postcolonial English language literature is Ellis (2003) on Papua New Guinean writer John Kasaipwalova. The argument and demonstration of papers like these is that local forms are now being used autonomously for serious artistic purposes, rather than as local or comic ‘colouring’, ‘local groups who are now globally doing local forms of the global’ (Mair, 2003: 9, after Pennycook).

Stylistics arguably began with curiosity into reported speech and the phenomenon of free indirect speech. Certainly it is an exemplary area for thinking
together the literary and the supposedly non-literary. Bredel (2003) provides a study of ‘voices in the text’ (quotative representations of story participants) of former East German as opposed to West German citizens’ stories. Quantitatively, the ‘Ossis’ (citizens of the former East Germany) produce more polyphonic stories, but the proposal is that (again) this is to be understood not so much as a ‘culture’ difference, but rather more contextually as narrative coping with specific social upheavals (here, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989). Turning to quotation practices in the media, Sleurs et al. (2003) report a careful investigation of incorporation of pseudo-quotations from press releases into journalists’ news reports. Here ethnographic method is combined to good effect with more cognitive think-aloud protocols and on-line registration of the writing process, to argue for the need for more complex models of the design and function of quotations in press releases than has previously appeared. The punctuation and meaning of quotation marks are studied from a philosophical angle with particular relation to ‘scare quotes’ by Predelli (2003). Bray’s monograph (2003) makes a thought-provoking argument for the centrality for later developments of representations of consciousness in early epistolary novels.

Another arguable origin for stylistics might lie in the study of distinctive authorial style. Here 2003 offers a number of useful quantitative contributions, all of North American origin, including Hoover arguing that collocation patterns are more reliable for authorship attribution than more general patterns of frequency; (though Barr (2003) reminds us that differences in style within works of one author can be as important as the differences between different authors). Hardy (2003), for his part, gives us a convincing stylistic study of ‘Knowledge in Flannery O’Connor’s Fiction’ using computational methods on O’Connor’s work as compared to the Brown K sub-corpus of general fiction. Concentrating on the linguistics of O’Connor’s expression of presupposition, negation and verbal complementation, we are given real and suggestive insights into an author’s ideas on human knowledge (a central theme in her work). A sobering collection of pieces edited by Griffin (2003), however, on ‘Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publication from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century’, must give pause to much authorial investigation. In short, ‘most of the literature ever published appeared either without the author’s name or under a fictive name’ (1), whether we are talking about ‘George Eliot’ or early Hardy or Byron or Doris Lessing, to the Shelleys or less canonical writers. Reasons for anonymity are shown to vary by period and other context but a stimulating set of essays shows the wide reaching ramifications of a fact too often unrecognised in literary linguistic publications. Later readers, that is, must in this respect too, read differently from the first readers of most works. Once again, the sweeping formulations of Foucault or Barthes, however stimulating as provocation, are seen to miss the actual nuances of the history of print culture and of literary reception. On reading of fiction and on literary authors, note also Poetics 31: (3–4): 151–300, ‘Advances in Reading Research’ (van Rees and Vipond, 2003).

A last important quantitative study of variation to notice in 2003 was Reaser’s
‘Quantitative Approach to “Sports Announcer Talk”’. Taking up the challenge of Biber (1988 and after), television and radio broadcasts of the same basketball game reveal important ‘sub’ register differences through more precise quantitative analysis. The theoretical issue of course, beyond the details of sports talk, is when a register becomes a register, the level of delicacy at which useful statements can be made about variation: ‘Defining registers becomes increasingly complex the more exactly researchers try to describe them’ (319). Reaser’s paper could be complemented for those working in this area by Bowcher, whose radio commentaries of an Australian rugby league match, analysed in a systemic-functional framework, are held to show a more complex and multiparty reality than previous literature suggested.

Translation formed the theme of a number of works in a world of increasing linguistic and cultural contacts, including Malmkjæer (2003) on translation of Hans Andersen as a window into Victorian culture and society, a useful themed issue of Meta on translation and children’s literature (Oittinen 2003), and Cameron’s (2003b) reflections on asymmetries of cultural exchange in the light of 9/11 and its aftermath.

In the light of much of the work on variation reviewed above, it is appropriate to close the section with Cameron and Kulick (2003a), Language and Sexuality. Cameron and Kulick (2003b) is an article derived from their book length study, as is Cameron (2003a), on the ‘openly gay’ collocation. The joint article is also introductory to a range of studies by other authors in a themed issue of Language & Communication. In their book, Cameron and Kulick (2003a) argue persuasively that work on language and sexuality has become hijacked by the sociolinguistic interest in identity, so that ‘sexuality’ tends to be read in the majority of studies as varieties of ‘homosexuality’, ‘gayspeak’ or other distinctive varieties at the expense of more everyday, broader languages of erotic desire and practice. A subsidiary argument is that in all the ‘celebration of difference’, the undeniable negative aspects of sex and sexual experience can be underplayed. The book as a whole promises more than it delivers for this programme, but along with the papers in the special Language & Communication issue, suggest how much valuable work could be done in surprisingly under-researched areas.

Conclusion: Style and stylistics

We began by noting the characteristic unevennesses, incompatibilities, incompletions and lack of systematicity of much of the work that is corralled here under the heading of stylistics, in 2003 as in previous years. Yet even the selection commented on here, with all its own inevitable omissions and misrepresentations suggests at least a field which has never been more alive and dynamic than it is today, if possibly in need of more reflexivity. We close by highlighting some areas which publications in 2003 are already suggesting will attract stylistic attention in the future if stylisticians continue to broaden their ambitions, as they surely should.
Style is a distinctive identity, typically a positive notion, something to be admired, if also sometimes problematic, a semiotic which challenges description and explanation even as it provokes them, but is central to understanding what it means to be human. Style requires care and attention, though an excess of self-consciousness amounts to a loss of style. Style is an outward sign of an inward state. Youth styles have been mentioned as one example of all this (‘subjectivities and subcultures’), or consider Miller’s unfocused (yes!) ruminations on the style of Jane Austen (2003). As integrationism suggests (Toolan, 2003), style comes into being in a context and only has meaning in contexts. And yet as Derrida suggests too, language typically exceeds its contexts, the ‘remainder’ (‘Be alert to these invisible quotation marks, even within a word’; “One could spend years on this sentence” – Derrida, quoted in Royle, 2003: 1). Joyce is the paradigmatic author whose fascination and dissatisfaction with language led to increasingly extreme experimentation and a seemingly unstoppable flow of commentary (the ‘supplement’), a ‘stylistic odyssey’ traced in Milesi’s publication which came out of a ‘Joyce and Linguistics’ panel, and which may offer points of purchase for further stylistic work. Senn (2003), for example, on ‘Syntactic Glides’ (elliptical syntax, missing subjects, and sound taking precedence over syntagmatic sense), seems to call for the complementary cognitive work of Emmott or others on discourse processing. The reader’s search for syntax (‘sintalks’ in Joyce’s term), as the search for larger ordered patterns and meaningful organisation, is central to the Joycean literary reading experience, as is the centrality of play and parody. (Attridge is one of Milesi’s critics.) Hardy concludes his study of O’Connor, discussed earlier, with reflections on the ways in which literary linguistics in the U.S. may be forging new convergences through poststructuralist linguistics of the kind adumbrated by integrational linguistics (Toolan, 2003, for example). Such a linguistics argues the ‘centrality of stylistics’ (see also Cook, 2003: 61), but also notes the Derridean/New Critical ‘heresy of paraphrase’, the irreducibility of particular forms which is the defining concern of stylistics.

Salient contemporary contexts which are the condition for style and which also exceed narrowly linguistic concerns, are what may be called in shorthand new media literacies. Eckert (2000) relates spoken styles to jeans style; we have mentioned rappers and reggae as well as the need for multimodal analyses of Dylan. Thurlow’s work on language in ICT is suggestive too, and can be complemented by Kress (2003), arguing that we are ‘Going into a different world’ (16). Something of this world is foreshadowed in van Leeuwen (2003), building on Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). This is a world in which, as van Rees and Vipond show, canonical literature, even books, are read less and in different ways, and in combination with screens, games, and other electronic media, all of which our ongoing stylistic efforts need to be able to cope with. Style.com and the Style Channel are our students’ understandings of style (and they are being syndicated internationally). (See Lawler’s (2003) quirky essay on ‘style’.) Saraceni’s Language of Comics demonstrates that the integration by readers of language and graphic design amount to more than the sum of the parts. This is another challenge for future stylistics, including the pedagogy of stylistics.
In *Language and Literature* (12:4) Clark and Zyngier remind us of the pedagogical dimension in all our work. Elsewhere Zyngier and Shepherd (2003) report a survey showing that their students do not associate literature reading with pleasure or enjoyment. (‘What is Literature, Really?’ – Showalter doesn’t know either, though she is sure of its value.) This is a useful reminder, though the same themed pedagogical issue of *Style* (37 (1): 1–123), contains more hopeful articles on the use of the internet and multi-modality in the study of language and style (Short and Archer; Jeffries). In *New Media Language* Aitchison and Lewis give us a stimulating cross-section of ‘a world of spin doctors, bureaucrats, chat-show hosts, emailers, wine writers, marriage counsellors and political circumlocutors’ (xiii), ‘terrorists’ and migrants, among others, though again the idea of ‘language’ may still be too narrow and formalist.

The Scollons’ *Discourses in Place*, a study of what is christened ‘geosemiotics’, may raise some eyebrows in anticipation. Nevertheless, read it! It contains one of the best introductions to the work of Goffman for stylisticians, though that is not quite the point. What is above all stimulating is its interdisciplinarity and awareness of the complete range of meaning making in space. Whether it be gesture, body styles, writing and sign making or arts, artefacts or architecture, choice is meaningful and we make choices all the time. That is why stylistics is so important. It is also why stylistics must be ever more ambitious and interdisciplinary in its efforts after understanding of human meaning making activities, taking these perspectives way beyond conventional understandings of ‘language and literature’. The year 2003 was altogether encouraging in this respect.

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