interface

TWENTIETH-CENTURY FICTION

From Text to Context

•

Edited by

Peter Verdonk

and

Jean Jacques Weber

ROUTLEDGE

Twentieth-Century Fiction

By applying recent trends in literary and language theory to a range of twentieth-century fiction, the contributors to this text make new theoretical insights available to student readers. The analytical and interpretive strategies examined in this book are not intended to be prescriptive, rather they are presented in such a way as to facilitate critical reading and evaluation.

The essays, which are arranged into three groups and focus on a textual, narrative and contextual level, look at a wide range of twentieth-century authors including Fowles, Lessing and Woolf. In addition, this student-friendly text includes a detailed index, a full glossary and helpful suggestions for further reading.

Aimed at beginning students of English Language and Literature and Applied Linguistics, and advanced students of English as a Foreign or Second Language, *Twentieth-Century Fiction* provides an essential introduction to the subject which is both sensitive and enabling.

Peter Verdonk is a Reader in English Language and Literature at the University of Amsterdam. He has contributed widely to periodicals and books on literary stylistics and criticism. His previous publications include *Twentieth-Century Poetry: From Text to Context* (1993).

Jean Jacques Weber is Lecturer in English Language and Literature at University Centre, Luxembourg. He has previously authored *Critical Analysis of Fiction* (1992) and has published a large number of articles on stylistics and discourse.

The INTERFACE Series

> A linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods, are equally flagrant anachronisms.–Roman Jakobson.

This statement, made over twenty-five years ago, is no less relevant today, and 'flagrant anachronisms' still abound. The aim of the INTERFACE series is to examine topics at the 'interface' of language studies and literary criticism and in so doing to build bridges between these traditionally divided disciplines.

Already published in this series:

The Series Editor
Ronald Carter is Professor of Modern English Language at the University of Nottingham and was National Coordinator of the 'Language in the National Curriculum' Project (LINC) from 1989 to 1992.

Twentieth-Century Fiction

From Text to Context

Edited by Peter Verdonk and
Jean Jacques Weber

Contents

Figures

Contributors

Timothy R.Austin is Professor and Assistant Chairperson in the English Department of Loyola University, Chicago. He has published two books on stylistics, *Language Crafted* (Indiana University Press, 1984) and *Poetic Voices* (University of Alabama Press, 1994), and a variety of articles in *Language and Style, Poetics Today* and the *Journal of Literary Semantics.*

David Birch is Professor of Communication and Media Studies at the University of Central Queensland in Rockhampton. He has published widely in stylistics, language and literature, and theatre and drama studies. He is the author of *Language, Literature and Critical Practice* (Routledge, 1989) and of *The Language of Drama* (Macmillan, 1991), as well as the editor, with Michael O'Toole, of *Functions of Style* (Pinter, 1988).

R.A.Buck is Assistant Professor of English Language and Linguistics at Eastern Illinois University. Her research interests lie in the areas of stylistics, socio-linguistics and discourse analysis; she is currently working on a stylistics of literary dialogue in which she examines in particular the novels of E.M.Forster.

Helen Aristar Dry teaches English language and literature at Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti. She has published numerous articles on the linguistic analysis of literary narrative. Her most recent work includes 'Ghostly Ambiguity: Presuppositional Constructions in *The Turn of the Screw*' in *Style,* 1991 (with Susan Kucinkas) and 'Foregrounding: An Assessment' in *Studies in Honor of Robert Longacre,* 1992.

Susan Ehrlich is Associate Professor in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics, York University, Toronto. Her books include *Point of View* (Routledge, 1990) and (with Peter Avery) *Teaching American English Pronunciation* (Oxford University Press, 1992). She has

published articles in discourse analysis and language and gender, and is currently working on a book for Blackwell dealing with language, power and gender.

Irene R.Fairley is Professor of English and Linguistics at Northeastern University. Her publications in stylistics have focused on American poets and the reception of texts by the reader. She has also published poems and translations of poems. She is the author of *E.E.Cummings and Ungrammar* (Watermill Press, 1975) and co-author (with Caroline Bloomfield) of the writing textbook *Business Communication: A Process Approach* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990).

David A.Lee is Associate Professor of Linguistics in the Department of English, University of Queensland, St Lucia. He has published approximately thirty articles on stylistics and linguistics, and two books: *Language, Children and Society* (Harvester, 1986) and *Competing Discourses: Perspective and Ideology in Language* (Longman, 1991).

Sara Mills is Senior Lecturer in Linguistics and Critical Theory in the Department of English and Drama, University of Loughborough. She has co-written (with L.Pearce, S.Spaull and E.Millard) *Feminist Readings/ Feminists Reading* (Harvester, 1989) and written *Discourses of Difference: Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (Routledge, 1992). At present she is working on a book entitled *Feminist Stylistics* (Routledge), and is editing two collections: *Language and Gender* (Longman) and *Gendering the Reader* (Harvester).

Martin Montgomery is Senior Lecturer in Literary Linguistics and head of the Department of English at the University of Strathclyde. He is the author of *An Introduction to Language and Society* (Methuen, 1986) and a co-author (with A.Durant, N.Fabb, T.Furniss and S. Mills) of *Ways of Reading* (Routledge, 1992) and *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies* (Routledge, 1994). He co-edited (with Malcolm Coulthard) *Studies in Discourse Analysis* (Routledge, 1990) and has contributed to a wide range of journals including *Media, Culture and Society, Journal of Pragmatics* and *Critical Quarterly.*

Mick Short is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language at Lancaster University. He is editor of the journal *Language and Literature*. In addition to numerous articles on stylistic analysis, he wrote *Style in Fiction* (Longman) with Geoffrey Leech in 1981, and edited *Reading, Analysing and Teaching Literature* (Longman) in 1989. He is currently working on an introduction to stylistics, and is planning a book on the stylistics of drama.

Paul Simpson is a Lecturer in the School of English at Queen's University, Belfast, having moved there from Liverpool University in 1992. He teaches undergraduate and postgraduate courses on English language, linguistics and stylistics. He has published on stylistics, critical linguistics and related fields, and his most recent book in this area is *Language, Ideology and Point of View* (Routledge, 1993). He is currently writing a book on stylistics and language teaching.

Michael Toolan is Professor of English at the University of Washington, Seattle. He has published books on narratology and stylistics, recently authoring *Narrative* (Routledge, 1988), *The Stylistics of Fiction* (Routledge, 1990), and editing *Language, Text and Context* (Routledge, 1992). His current research interests include pragmatics and linguistic theory, culminating in the completion of a book-length manuscript provisionally entitled *Taking Language in Context Seriously.*

Peter Verdonk is Reader in the English Department of the University of Amsterdam. He has published widely on literary stylistic criticism in books and journals, and edited *Twentieth-Century Poetry: From Text to Context* (Routledge, 1993). With Roger D.Sell of the Åbo Akademi University (Finland) he has edited *Literature and the New Interdisciplinarity: Poetics, Linguistics, History* (Rodopi, 1994). Recently he has also co-edited and contributed to a course in British and American literature on Dutch radio and television.

Jean Jacques Weber is Lecturer in English Language and Literature at University Centre, Luxembourg. He has published a number of articles on stylistics and discourse analysis in journals and books, and is the author of *Critical Analysis of Fiction* (Rodopi, 1992). He also contributes the Stylistics section to *The Year's Work in English Studies,* and is currently working on a cognitive-stylistic analysis of David Mamet's plays.

Paul Werth is Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Amsterdam, and formerly worked at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and the University of Hull. His research interests centre on the study of discourse, and particularly in its theoretical and stylistic aspects. He is the author of *Focus, Coherence and Emphasis* (Croom Helm, 1984) and has edited a collection called *Conversation and Discourse* (Croom Helm, 1981). His forthcoming book, *Text Worlds: the Conceptual Representation of Discourse,* is to be published by Longman.

Series editor's introduction to the Interface series

There have been many books published this century which have been devoted to the interface of language and literary studies. This is the first series of books devoted to this area commissioned by a major international publisher; it is the first time a group of writers have addressed themselves to issues at the interface of language and literature; and it is the first time an international professional association has worked closely with a publisher to establish such a venture. It is the purpose of this general introduction to the series to outline some of the main guiding principles underlying the books in the series.

The first principle adopted is one of not foreclosing on the many possibilities for the integration of language and literature studies. There are many ways in which the study of language and literature can be combined and many different theoretical, practical and curricular objects to be realized. Obviously, a close relationship with the aims and methods of descriptive linguistics will play a prominent part, so readers will encounter some detailed analysis of language in places. In keeping with a goal of much work in this field, writers will try to make their analysis sufficiently replicable for other analysts to see how they have arrived at the interpretative decisions they have reached and to allow others to reproduce their methods on the same or on other texts. But linguistic science does not have a monopoly in methodology and description any more than linguists can have sole possession of insights into language and its workings. Some contributors to the series adopt quite rigorous linguistic procedures; others proceed less rigorously but no less revealingly. All are, however, united by a belief that detailed scrutiny of the role of language in literary texts can be mutually enriching to language and literary studies.

Series of books are usually written to an overall formula or design. In the case of the Interface series this was considered to be not entirely

appropriate. This is for the reasons given above, but also because, as the first series of its kind, it would be wrong to suggest that there are formulaic modes by which integration can be achieved. The fact that all the books address themselves to the integration of language and literature in any case imparts a natural and organic unity to the series. Thus, some of the books in this series will provide descriptive overviews, others will offer detailed case studies of a particular topic, others will involve single author studies, and some will be more pedagogically oriented.

This range of design and procedure means that a wide variety of audiences is envisaged for the series as a whole, though, of course, individual books are necessarily quite specifically targeted. The general level of exposition presumes quite advanced students of language and literature. Approximately, this level covers students of English language and literature (though not exclusively English) at senior high-school/upper sixth-form level to university students in their first or second year of study. Many of the books in the series are designed to be used by students. Some may serve as course books— these will normally contain exercises and suggestions for further work as well as glossaries and graded bibliographies which point the student towards further reading. Some books are also designed to be used by teachers for their own reading and updating, and to supplement courses; in some cases, specific questions of pedagogic theory, teaching procedure and methodology at the interface of language and literature are addressed.

From a pedagogic point of view it is the case in many parts of the world that students focus on literary texts, especially in the mother tongue, before undertaking any formal study of the language. With this fact in mind, contributors to the series have attempted to gloss all new technical terms and to assume on the part of their readers little or no previous knowledge of linguistics or formal language studies. They see no merit in not being detailed and explicit about what they describe in the linguistic properties of texts; but they recognize that formal language study can seem forbidding if it is not properly introduced.

A further characteristic of the series is that the authors engage in a direct relationship with their readers. The overall style of writing is informal and there is above all an attempt to lighten the usual style of academic discourse. In some cases this extends to the way in which notes and guidance for further work are presented. In all cases, the style adopted by authors is judged to be that most appropriate to the mediation of their chosen subject matter.

We now come to two major points of principle which underlie the

conceptual scheme for the series. One is that the term 'literature' cannot be defined in isolation from an expression of ideology. In fact, no academic study, and certainly no description of the language of texts, can be neutral and objective, for the socio-cultural positioning of the analyst will mean that the description is unavoidably political. Contributors to the series recognize and, in so far as this accords with the aims of each book, attempt to explore the role of ideology at the interface of language and literature. Second, most writers also prefer the term 'literatures' to a singular notion of literature. Some replace 'literature' altogether with the neutral term 'text'. It is for this reason that readers will not find exclusive discussions of the literary language of canonical literary texts; instead the linguistic heterogeneity of literature and the permeation of many discourses with what is conventionally thought of as poetic or literary language will be a focus. This means that in places as much space can be devoted to examples of word play in jokes, newspaper editorials, advertisements, historical writing, or a popular thriller as to a sonnet by Shakespeare or a passage from Jane Austen. It is also important to stress how the term 'literature' itself is historically variable and how different social and cultural assumptions can condition what is regarded as literature. In this respect the role of linguistic and literary theory is vital. It is an aim of the series to be constantly alert to new developments in the description and theory of texts.

Finally, as series editor, I have to underline the partnership and co-operation of the whole enterprise of the Interface series and acknowledge the advice and assistance received at many stages from the PALA Committee and from Routledge. In turn, we are all fortunate to have the benefit of three associate editors with considerable collective depth of experience in this field in different parts of the world: Professor Roger Fowler, Professor Mary Louise Pratt, Professor Michael Halliday. In spite of their own individual orientations, I am sure that all concerned with the series would want to endorse the statement by Roman Jakobson made over twenty-five years ago but which is no less relevant today:

A linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods, are equally flagrant anachronisms.

This volume of the Interface series parallels an earlier book, entitled *Twentieth-Century Poetry,* edited by Peter Verdonk. For this volume Peter Verdonk is joined by Jean Jacques Weber, as co-editors of a book which continues an orientation towards text analysis which takes particular account of the contexts and conditions within which the text and

analyses of them are produced. *Twentieth-Century Fiction: From Text to Context* explores a wide and diverse range of texts and contains with each chapter a number of carefully prepared questions, tasks and suggestions for further reading and research which makes the volume highly practical both as a classroom text and as a research resource. The work of the editors and of all the contributors contributes most, however, to ongoing literary-linguistic study of texts which includes systematic and retrievable text-instrinsic treatment but which, crucially, also goes beyond the words on the page to explore the ways in which those words are shaped by different social, cultural and historical contexts of use. During the 1990s work in literary linguistics is rapidly developing the tools to answer charges of narrow formalism. This volume is a significant stage in that development.

Acknowledgements

We have only been able to achieve the aims of this collection with the help of its contributors and we wish to express our sincere thanks for their keen appreciation of our ideas and their inspiring papers. Furthermore we are grateful to Ronald Carter, the series editor, for his encouragement to undertake this project and for the benefit of his wide experience. Jean Jacques Weber would also like to thank Georges Barthel for invaluable help with scanning and computer file conversions. And, last but not least, our thanks go to Julia Hall, Ann Grindrod, Moira Eminton, Alison Foyle and Louise McTaggart for all their kind help in the editorial and production stage at Routledge.

Acknowledgement is due to copyright holders for their kind permission to include the following material in this book: Ablex Publishing Corporation for portions of the chapter 'Repetition and Point of View in Represented Speech and Thought' by Susan Ehrlich from B.Johnstone (ed.) *Repetition in Discourse;* Reed Consumer Books, Sinclair-Stevenson and Richard Scott Simon Limited for an extract from *The Mist in the Mirror,* © 1992 by Susan Hill; Random House UK Ltd, the Estate of the author, the Hogarth Press and Harcourt Brace & Company, copyright 1925, renewed 1953 by Leonard Woolf, for extracts from *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf; Random House UK Ltd, the Estate of the author, the Hogarth Press and Harcourt Brace & Company, copyright 1927, renewed 1954 by Leonard Woolf, for an extract from *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf; Reed Consumer Books, Martin Seeker & Warburg Ltd, and Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc., copyright © 1984 by David Lodge, for an extract from *Small World* by David Lodge; Reed Consumer Books, Martin Seeker & Warburg Ltd, and Penguin Books USA Inc. for an extract from *The British Museum is Falling Down* by David Lodge; Laurence Pollinger Ltd, the Estate of Frieda Lawrence Ravagli and Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc. for extracts

Introduction

Peter Verdonk and Jean Jacques Weber

THE 'FROM TEXT TO CONTEXT' APPROACH: A WAY INTO MODERN LITERARY CRITICISM

This is the second book in the 'From Text to Context' series: just like its predecessor, Peter Verdonk's *Twentieth-Century Poetry* (1993), the present volume on twentieth-century fiction also aims to offer students a way into modern literary criticism. The approach is 'modern', not only because it reflects the current issues in literary and linguistic theory, but also because it provides a teaching methodology which is in keeping with the tendency in recent years to encourage in students greater critical autonomy. To achieve this, students are introduced to a set of analytic and interpretive strategies that open up paths which constrain but do not determine readings and, above all, which *empower* readers. Thus, they put students into a situation of model construction, providing building-blocks and leading them towards the creation of their own personal model, towards the development of a first-hand response to literary texts.

Computer software is evaluated according to its reader-friendliness and its performance; the approach advocated here also tries to be reader-friendly in the sense of being pedagogically oriented and highly replicable (each interpretative step is made explicit so that it can easily be replicated by other readers), and at the same time it is powerful, because it makes possible, at a higher level of awareness, the link with modern literary criticism. It does this by leading students from the textual level, via the narrative level (which deals with the specific characteristics of narrative texts), to the contextual level of worlds and ideologies.

FROM TEXT-ORIENTED TO CONTEXTUALIZED STYLISTICS

This openness to matters of context is characteristic of modern stylistics, which has moved from purely formalist and text-oriented to

more functional and contextualized approaches. Similar developments have taken place in literary criticism and linguistic theory. And since stylistics has a long tradition of being an interdisciplinary field, and has always profitably drawn on a mixture of both literary and linguistic theories, it should be no surprise that these sociological trends have given rise to a new movement in stylistics which recognizes the existence of that messy world outside. These stylisticians regard all speech and writing as primarily dialogic, that is, as social discourse in which the words used and the meanings of the words cannot be divorced from their relevant contexts (Macdonell 1986). Accordingly, they also view literary texts as part of a complex social and cultural process (Fowler 1981). There is no doubt that, from a theoretical point of view, this contextualized model has greatly increased the literary critical potential of stylistics and will give more satisfaction in advanced literary studies.[1]

This book presents an introduction to the contextualized approach without, however, simply rejecting the alternative, text-oriented models; on the contrary, it tries to combine the latter's obvious benefits of rigour and systematicity with the deeper insights of the former. Therefore, the contributors were asked to adopt a functional approach to their linguistic descriptions, that is, to take a pragmatic view of language as discourse or social interaction. This implies that the common levels of linguistic analysis (syntax, lexis and semantics) should also include a kind of extension (which, as such, is not a level of formal linguistic organization) accommodating the facets of language in use, which is the business of pragmatics. In other words, pragmatics attempts to explain the facts in the use of language which have a motivation and operation independent of language, but which at the same time function in combination with that language to effect communication (Graham 1992:185–7).

THE PROCESS OF MEANING CREATION

Implicitly or explicitly, all the contributors to this book see the process of reading as a creative interaction between writer, text, reader and context. Though they may highlight in their analyses one or the other of these factors, they are fully aware that each factor has a contribution to make, that no factor can be discounted, and that therefore each approach is partial and must remain open and sensitive to other approaches.

The result of this construction and negotiation of meaning is the creation of a cognitive text world, but note that the text world will be

different for the writer and for each reader (since we all use different assumptions, values, beliefs and expectations in the processing of the text). This by the way is not exclusive to literary discourse, but applies to both literary and non-literary texts, simply because all representation through language is a constructive process. Nor can stylistics nullify the indeterminacy of meaning. What is important, however, is that with a stylistic methodology, this indeterminacy is neither ignored nor allowed to go wild but it is contained, for the stylistic methodology ensures that our reading is both explicit and replicable. It thus allows us to achieve in our reading, not scientific objectivity, but an inter-subjective validity.

ORDERING THE CHAPTERS

We have ordered the chapters into three groups: the first group focuses on the textual level, the second on the narrative level and the third on the contextual level. There is thus, just like in the companion volume on twentieth-century poetry (Verdonk 1993), a gradual widening of the text's contextual orbit.

All the same, also, the first chapters show a thorough awareness of the wider contextual implications of the textual features that they deal with; they simply differ from later chapters in that they concentrate on one particular textual or structural feature in their analysis. Peter Verdonk elaborates on the phenomenon of lexical repetition as an element of meaning production. Because this textual device tends to create an emphatic or emotional style of writing, it is often an easy target for emulation or parody, which then results in what might be called 'intertextual repetition'.[2] Verdonk uses a pragmatic and socio-cognitive theory of language to give a possible explanation for the intriguing disposition of humans to produce these repetitive structures and attach meaning to them. Jean Jacques Weber introduces a method of analysing conceptual metaphors, and demonstrates how the choice of a particular metaphor can have important social and ideological consequences.

Two chapters deal with dialogue, what Mick Short in his chapter calls 'character talk'. Short himself is interested in what we can infer from the verbal interaction about the characters and their relationships. Rosemary Buck and Timothy Austin develop this type of pragmatic analysis of dialogue, focusing upon politeness and power: they study how conversational participants try to gain and maintain power over their interlocutor.

The following five chapters deal with what Short calls 'narrator talk'

or, more specifically, with the important question of point of view in narrative. Susan Ehrlich compares oral and literary narratives, and shows how repetition can have the stylistic effect of signalling a shift in point of view in the latter but not in the former. Helen Aristar Dry discusses linguistic point of view, especially free indirect discourse, and how it creates both empathy and also narrative ambiguity or uncertainty. David A.Lee looks at the close connection between visual and cognitive perception, between seeing and interpreting. Michael Toolan focuses even more squarely on the cognitive or ideological dimension of point of view, the aim of his chapter being to define 'the values and attitudinal individuality of [a] text's speaker'. And in the last chapter of this section, Paul Simpson and Martin Montgomery present a model of narrative structure and then study the way in which changes in point of view brought about by translation from one medium to another–here, from narrative to film–significantly affect characterization.

The chapters in the third group also rely on an analysis of textual features or details of narrative technique, but they emphasize the role played by contextual factors in the reader's construction of the fictional world. First, Irene R.Fairley situates the text within the contextual frame of genre, comparing the personal narrative of a diary entry with the more impersonal narrative of a literary essay. Next, Paul Werth proposes to apply the theory of text worlds to the fictional universe projected in novels and short stories. According to this theory, the text of the literary discourse invites the reader to co-operate with the author in constructing a conceptual space in which the fictional state of affairs occurs, i.e. a text world.

The last two chapters share a concern for a greater critical awareness. Sara Mills discusses the role of narrative schemata at the interface between linguistic choices and the wider ideological framework. Her analysis of sexism in discourse also makes explicit the link between stylistic approaches and feminist literary criticism. And David Birch advocates close attention to the political dimension of discourse, insisting that communication is always contingent upon the way in which people assign value to meanings.

TARGET GROUP AND ADVICE ON USING THE BOOK

This book intends to offer an intensive introduction to literary stylistic criticism and is aimed at senior school students of English, undergraduate students of English language and literature, students of

applied linguistics, and upper intermediate and advanced students of English as a second or foreign language.

In view of the educational level aimed at, the book contains a detailed index, as well as a glossary providing succinct explanations of the main linguistic and literary terms. Furthermore, there is a list of references at the end of each chapter which enables the student to read up on particular topics.

By way of introduction, we have supplied a preface to each of the chapters. In most cases these prefaces try to give the reader an idea of what the chapter is about, and sometimes they volunteer a piece of information which helps to put the text under discussion in a particular literary or linguistic perspective.

From a pedagogic point of view, the classroom model for teaching literary stylistics is very important. We have found that the seminar format and teaching in groups ensures maximum involvement of the students while the teacher's role is less dominant. As a result the students feel more inclined to share their views and ideas and to co-operate on oral and written assignments.[3]

Finally, we asked the contributors to include a set of assignments in the form of 'suggestions for further work'. We firmly believe that their chapters in combination with these suggestions will foster the students' linguistic awareness as well as their creative interpretation of salient formal and pragmatic features, and that they will be given a very firm foundation for the development of a receptive and sensitive language- and context-based literary criticism.

NOTES

1 In addition to Fowler (1981), some other recent books containing contextualized, i.e. discoursal, stylistic analyses of texts include Carter and Simpson (1989), Sell (1991), Toolan (1992), Weber (1992), Simpson (1993), Verdonk (1993), Sell and Verdonk (1994).
2 Jean Jacques Weber suggested this felicitous term in his reaction to Verdonk's chapter.
3 See Verdonk (1989:242–5) for a detailed account of a teaching project in literary stylistics carried out with upper intermediate and advanced students of English as a foreign language.

REFERENCES

Carter, R. and Simpson, P. (eds) (1989) *Language, Discourse and Literature: An Introductory Reader in Discourse Stylistics,* London: Unwin Hyman.

Fowler, R. (1981) *Literature as Social Discourse: The Practice of Linguistic Criticism,* London: Batsford.

Graham, J.F. (1992) *Onomatopoetics: Theory of Language and Literature,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Macdonell, D. (1986) *Theories of Discourse: An Introduction,* Oxford: Blackwell.

Sell, R.D. (1991) *Literary Pragmatics,* London: Routledge.

Sell, R.D. and Verdonk, P. (1994) *Literature and the New Interdisciplinarity: Poetics, Linguistics, History,* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Simpson, P. (1993) *Language, Ideology and Point of View,* London: Routledge.

Toolan, M. (ed.) (1992) *Language, Text and Context: Essays in Stylistics,* London: Routledge.

Verdonk, P. (1989) 'The Language of Poetry: The Application of Literary Stylistic Theory in University Teaching', in M.Short (ed.) *Reading, Analysing and Teaching Literature,* London: Longman.

——(ed.) (1993) *Twentieth-Century Poetry: From Text to Context,* London: Routledge.

Weber, J.J. (1992) *Critical Analysis of Fiction: Essays in Discourse Stylistics,* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

1   Words, words, words

A pragmatic and socio-cognitive view of lexical repetition

Peter Verdonk

EDITOR'S PREFACE

> There was a crooked man
> And he walked a crooked mile;
> He found a crooked sixpence
> Against a crooked stile;
> He bought a crooked cat
> Which caught a crooked mouse,
> And they all lived together
> In a little crooked house.

There is no doubt that from our earliest childhood onward we find great pleasure in playing with the formal structures of language, and as this nursery rhyme illustrates abundantly, the use of lexical repetition appears to be central to this language game. Since this kind of childlore is deeply rooted in ancient superstitions, traditional tales, local customs, folk festivals and the like, and is characteristically still passed on through word of mouth, this simple rhyme furthermore seems to confirm the generally accepted belief that verbal repetition, including such elements as rhythm, metre and rhyme, has its origin in oral cultures. This, of course, raises the question how it is that in cultures in which literacy and the written word are predominant, these rhetorical devices still have a significant aesthetic and social function. For instance, in literary discourse the use of repetition may create thematic or symbolic patterns, while in the case of persuasive discourse like advertising or propaganda, it may lull us into a less critical attitude.

In this chapter I have tried to show that this question cannot be answered with the help of a semantic theory which is focused on meaning as it is produced by the abstract system of language forms, that is, dissociated from the actual situation of a social interaction

between language users. Therefore, in my discussion of three different types of lexical repetition in fictional discourse, I have used a pragmatic model of meaning construction, which does not see language as a self-contained conceptual system, but as fundamentally interactive or 'dialogic', and in intimate interaction with a context of use. So we must go beyond the purely formal level of language and take into consideration the wider socio-cultural and ideological contexts of the production and reception of meaning.

Furthermore, extending the field of pragmatics, I have turned to recent work in socio-cognitive science (i.e. the study of the human mind centred upon human acts such as acts of language) to find a possible explanation for the intriguing fact that humans are invariably charmed or, as the case may be, taken in by linguistic quirks involving patterned structures of repetition. Interestingly enough, the cognitive linguists I consulted claim that our innate habit to structure things according to symmetrical patterns, including patterns of repetition, is in fact a projection of our embodied understanding of symmetry in the world around us. So, basically, these cognitivists analyse 'acts of language, including literature, as acts of a human brain in a human body in a human environment which that brain must make intelligible if it is to survive' (Turner 1991:vii–viii).

Yet another topic of interest came out of the very nature of lexical repetition in literary discourse, namely that it may contribute to a very emphatic or emotionally charged style, which in turn may expose writers to the strong temptation of emulation or parody. This then has prompted a discussion of the phenomenon of 'intertextuality', which may be defined as a dialogic interaction not only between books and readers, but also between books and books, each of which, of course, extending even further 'the widening gyre' of the context of signification.

<div align="right">P.V.</div>

INTRODUCTION

Since my subject is lexical repetition as an element of meaning production in literary discourse, Hamlet's tantalizing reply to Polonius' question about what he is reading suitably answers my need of a title for this chapter (*Hamlet,* II.ii. 192–3). As a matter of fact, in Shakespeare's age there was a revival of interest in the rhetorical arts of classical antiquity and in contemporary handbooks verbal repetition figured prominently. It was divided up into a lot of sub-categories ranging from the repetition of single words or phrases, located in

various places in the sentence, to repetition of words or phrases in concert with recurrent grammatical patterns (see Nash 1989:116–17 and Wales 1989:402–3). A quick glance at Shakespeare's plays shows that to put the spectators under the spell of his 'revels', he too made frequent use of the device and to profound effect. This is shown most strikingly in Macbeth's anguished lamentation 'To-morrow, and tomorrow, and to-morrow,/Creeps in this petty pace from day to day', in which a single word repeated three times takes up an entire line (*Macbeth,* V.v. 19–20). In the eponymous play, for that matter, the word 'blood' occurs over a hundred times!

Now, before this heyday of rhetoric, verbal repetition had gone through a long history, probably going back to the days when poems and narratives were composed and transmitted orally. In fact, as we can all see for ourselves, it has been in the literary tool box ever since. By its very nature, lexical repetition has always been a fundamental unifying device in poetry, jointly with other elements like rhythm, stress, metre and sound patterns. And, when occurring over longer stretches of text, it may have a similar controlling function in prose, in that it may intensify the overall thematic or symbolic structure of the work. For instance, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925/1976) contains rewarding examples of repeated thematically interesting keywords.

In addition to this unifying function, readers appear to attach meanings to verbal recurrences, and going by what literary critics and my students say, they are chiefly felt to convey emphasis and/or to heighten emotion. That this seems to be the predominant response from readers, is perhaps confirmed by the fact that emotionally-charged poetry or prose is an easy and welcome target for parody, especially when it features the regular beat of one single word or phrase creating a kind of incremental emotional effect. In his book *The Language of Humour* (1985:74–102), Nash has devoted an insightful chapter to this for many writers' irresistible temptation.

As a matter of fact, I was thinking about all this when I came across a recent piece of writing by a British author, who had evidently emulated the highly patterned style, teeming with lexical repetition, of one of the great Victorian novelists. This recognition raised a lot of questions including the following: what exactly is the nature of such an interaction between two novels from different centuries? What is the significance of this reading adventure or intertextuality, as it is now generally called, for my interpretation? What is its relation to the context of the writer, reader and book? Is it really a case of parody in the usual sense of the word? And, most importantly: what kind of

Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction is a critical text that could be used to supplement a range of crime ction courses, whether the structure of the course brings to the fore historical con-texts, ideological shifts, the emergence of sub-genres, or the applica-tion of critical theories. Forty-seven texts are chosen for detailed discussion.