SECTION A

INTRODUCTION

KEY CONCEPTS IN STYLISTICS
WHAT IS STYLISTICS?

Some years ago, the well-known linguist Jean-Jacques Lecercle published a short but damning critique of the aims, methods and rationale of contemporary stylistics. His attack on the discipline, and by implication the entire endeavour of the present book, was uncompromising. According to Lecercle, nobody has ever really known what the term ‘stylistics’ means, and in any case, hardly anyone seems to care (Lecercle 1993: 14). Stylistics is ‘ailing’; it is ‘on the wane’; and its heyday, alongside that of structuralism, has faded to but a distant memory. More alarming again, few university students are ‘eager to declare an intention to do research in stylistics’. By this account, the death knell of stylistics had been sounded and it looked as though the end of the twentieth century would be accompanied by the inevitable passing of that faltering, moribund discipline. And no one, it seemed, would lament its demise.

Modern stylistics

As it happened, things didn’t quite turn out in the way Lecercle envisaged. Stylistics in the early twenty-first century is very much alive and well. It is taught and researched in university departments of language, literature and linguistics the world over. The high academic profile stylistics enjoys is mirrored in the number of its dedicated book-length publications, research journals, international conferences and symposia, and scholarly associations. Far from moribund, modern stylistics is positively flourishing, witnessed in a proliferation of sub-disciplines where stylistic methods are enriched and enabled by theories of discourse, culture and society. For example, feminist stylistics, cognitive stylistics and discourse stylistics, to name just three, are established branches of contemporary stylistics which have been sustained by insights from, respectively, feminist theory, cognitive psychology and discourse analysis. Stylistics has also become a much valued method in language teaching and in language learning, and stylistics in this ‘pedagogical’ guise, with its close attention to the broad resources of the system of language, enjoys particular pride of place in the linguistic armoury of learners of second languages. Moreover, stylistics often forms a core component of many creative writing courses, an application not surprising given the discipline’s emphasis on techniques of creativity and invention in language.

So much then for the current ‘health’ of stylistics and the prominence it enjoys in modern scholarship. It is now time to say a little more about what exactly stylistics is and what it is for. Stylistics is a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language. The reason why language is so important to stylisticians is because the various forms, patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structure are an important index of the function of the text. The text’s functional significance as discourse acts in turn as a gateway to its interpretation. While linguistic features do not of themselves constitute a text’s ‘meaning’, an account of linguistic features nonetheless serves to ground a stylistic interpretation and to help explain why, for the analyst, certain types of meaning are possible. The preferred object of study in stylistics is literature, whether that be institutionally sanctioned ‘Literature’ as high art or more popular ‘noncanonical’ forms of writing. The traditional connection between stylistics and literature brings with it two important caveats, though.
The first is that creativity and innovation in language use should not be seen as the exclusive preserve of literary writing. Many forms of discourse (advertising, journalism, popular music – even casual conversation) often display a high degree of stylistic dexterity, such that it would be wrong to view dexterity in language use as exclusive to canonical literature. The second caveat is that the techniques of stylistic analysis are as much about deriving insights about linguistic structure and function as they are about understanding literary texts. Thus, the question ‘What can stylistics tell us about literature?’ is always paralleled by an equally important question ‘What can stylistics tell us about language?’.

In spite of its clearly defined remit, methods and object of study, there remain a number of myths about contemporary stylistics. Most of the time, confusion about the compass of stylistics is a result of confusion about the compass of language. For instance, there appears to be a belief in many literary critical circles that a stylistician is simply a dull old grammarian who spends rather too much time on such trivial pursuits as counting the nouns and verbs in literary texts. Once counted, those nouns and verbs form the basis of the stylistician’s ‘insight’, although this stylistic insight ultimately proves no more far-reaching than an insight reached by simply intuiting from the text. This is an erroneous perception of the stylistic method and it is one which stems from a limited understanding of how language analysis works. True, nouns and verbs should not be overlooked, nor indeed should ‘counting’ when it takes the form of directed and focussed quantification. But the purview of modern language and linguistics is much broader than that and, in response, the methods of stylistics follow suit. It is the full gamut of the system of language that makes all aspects of a writer’s craft relevant in stylistic analysis. Moreover, stylistics is interested in language as a function of texts in context, and it acknowledges that utterances (literary or otherwise) are produced in a time, a place, and in a cultural and cognitive context. These ‘extra-linguistic’ parameters are inextricably tied up with the way a text ‘means’. The more complete and context-sensitive the description of language, then the fuller the stylistic analysis that accrues.

**The purpose of stylistics**

Why should we do stylistics? To do stylistics is to explore language, and, more specifically, to explore creativity in language use. Doing stylistics thereby enriches our ways of thinking about language and, as observed, exploring language offers a substantial purchase on our understanding of (literary) texts. With the full array of language models at our disposal, an inherently illuminating method of analytic inquiry presents itself. This method of inquiry has an important reflexive capacity insofar as it can shed light on the very language system it derives from; it tells us about the ‘rules’ of language because it often explores texts where those rules are bent, distended or stretched to breaking point. Interest in language is always at the fore in contemporary stylistic analysis which is why you should never undertake to do stylistics unless you are interested in language.

Synthesising more formally some of the observations made above, it might be worth thinking of the practice of stylistics as conforming to the following three basic principles, cast mnemonically as three ‘Rs’. The three Rs stipulate that:
To argue that the stylistic method be rigorous means that it should be based on an explicit framework of analysis. Stylistic analysis is not the end-product of a disorganised sequence of *ad hoc* and impressionistic comments, but is instead underpinned by structured models of language and discourse that explain how we process and understand various patterns in language. To argue that stylistic method be retrievable means that the analysis is organised through explicit terms and criteria, the meanings of which are agreed upon by other students of stylistics. Although precise definitions for some aspects of language have proved difficult to pin down exactly, there is a consensus of agreement about what most terms in stylistics mean (see A2 below). That consensus enables other stylisticians to follow the pathway adopted in an analysis, to test the categories used and to see how the analysis reached its conclusion; to retrieve, in other words, the stylistic method.

To say that a stylistic analysis seeks to be replicable does not mean that we should all try to copy each others’ work. It simply means that the methods should be sufficiently transparent as to allow other stylisticians to verify them, either by testing them on the same text or by applying them beyond that text. The conclusions reached are principled if the pathway followed by the analysis is accessible and replicable. To this extent, it has become an important axiom of stylistics that it seeks to distance itself from work that proceeds solely from untested or untestable intuition.

A seemingly innocuous piece of anecdotal evidence might help underscore this point. I once attended an academic conference where a well-known literary critic referred to the style of Irish writer George Moore as ‘invertebrate’. Judging by the delegates’ nods of approval around the conference hall, the critic’s ‘insight’ had met with general endorsement. However, novel though this metaphorical interpretation of Moore’s style may be, it offers the student of style no retrievable or shared point of reference in language, no metalanguage, with which to evaluate what the critic is trying to say. One can only speculate as to what aspect of Moore’s style is at issue, because the stimulus for the observation is neither retrievable nor replicable. It is as if the act of criticism itself has become an exercise in style, vying with the stylistic creativity of the primary text discussed. Whatever its principal motivation, that critic’s ‘stylistic insight’ is quite meaningless as a description of style.

Unit A2, below, begins both to sketch some of the broad levels of linguistic organisation that inform stylistics and to arrange and sort the interlocking domains of language study that play a part in stylistic analysis. Along the thread, unit B1 explores further the history and development of stylistics, and examines some of the issues arising. What this opening unit has sought to demonstrate is that, over a decade after Lecercle’s broadside, stylistics as an academic discipline continues to flourish. In that broadside, Lecercle also contends that the term *stylistics* has ‘modestly retreated from the titles of books’ (1993: 14). Lest they should feel afflicted by some temporary loss of their faculties, readers might just like to check the accuracy of this claim against the title on the cover of the present textbook!
In view of the comments made in A1 on the methodological significance of the three Rs, it is worth establishing here some of the more basic categories, levels and units of analysis in language that can help organise and shape a stylistic analysis. Language in its broadest conceptualisation is not a disorganised mass of sounds and symbols, but is instead an intricate web of levels, layers and links. Thus, any utterance or piece of text is organised through several distinct *levels of language*.

**Levels of language**

To start us off, here is a list of the major levels of language and their related technical terms in language study, along with a brief description of what each level covers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of language</th>
<th>Branch of language study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sound of spoken language; the way words are pronounced.</td>
<td>phonology; phonetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The patterns of written language; the shape of language on the page.</td>
<td>graphology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way words are constructed; words and their constituent structures.</td>
<td>morphology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way words combine with other words to form phrases and sentences.</td>
<td>syntax; grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The words we use; the vocabulary of a language.</td>
<td>lexical analysis; lexicology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The meaning of words and sentences.</td>
<td>semantics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way words and sentences are used in everyday situations; the meaning of language in context.</td>
<td>pragmatics; discourse analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These basic levels of language can be identified and teased out in the stylistic analysis of text, which in turn makes the analysis itself more organised and principled, more in keeping so to speak with the principle of the three Rs. However, what is absolutely central to our understanding of language (and style) is that these levels are interconnected: they interpenetrate and depend upon one another, and they represent multiple and simultaneous linguistic operations in the planning and production of an utterance. Consider in this respect an unassuming (hypothetical) sentence like the following:

(1) *That puppy’s knocking over those potplants!*

In spite of its seeming simplicity of structure, this thoroughly innocuous sentence requires for its production and delivery the assembly of a complex array of linguistic components. First, there is the palpable physical substance of the utterance which, when written, comprises *graphetic substance* or, when spoken, *phonetic substance*. This
'raw' matter then becomes organised into linguistic structure proper, opening up the level of graphology, which accommodates the systematic meanings encoded in the written medium of language, and phonology, which encompasses the meaning potential of the sounds of spoken language. In terms of graphology, this particular sentence is written in the Roman alphabet, and in a 10 point emboldened ‘palatino’ font. However, as if to echo its counterpart in speech, the sentence-final exclamation mark suggests an emphatic style of vocal delivery. In that spoken counterpart, systematic differences in sound sort out the meanings of the words used: thus, the word-initial /n/ sound at the start of ‘knocking’ will serve to distinguish it from, say, words like ‘rocking’ or ‘mocking’. To that extent, the phoneme /n/ expresses a meaningful difference in sound. The word ‘knocking’ also raises an issue in lexicology: notice for instance how contemporary English pronunciation no longer accommodates the two word-initial graphemes <k> and <n> that appear in the spelling of this word. The <kn> sequence – originally spelt <cn> – has become a single /n/ pronunciation, along with equivalent occurrences in other Anglo-Saxon derived lexis in modern English like ‘know’ and ‘knee’. The double consonant pronunciation is however still retained in the vocabulary of cognate languages like modern Dutch; as in ‘knie’ (meaning ‘knee’) or ‘knoop’ (meaning ‘knot’). 

Apart from these fixed features of pronunciation, there is potential for significant variation in much of the phonetic detail of the spoken version of example (1). For instance, many speakers of English will not sound in connected speech the ‘t’s of both ‘That’ and ‘potplants’, but will instead use ‘glottal stops’ in these positions. This is largely a consequence of the phonetic environment in which the ‘t’ occurs: in both cases it is followed by a /p/ consonant and this has the effect of inducing a change, known as a ‘secondary articulation’, in the way the ‘t’ is sounded (Ball and Rahilly 1999: 130). Whereas this secondary articulation is not necessarily so conditioned, the social or regional origins of a speaker may affect other aspects of the spoken utterance. A major regional difference in accent will be heard in the realisation of the historic <r> – a feature so named because it was once, as its retention in the modern spelling of a word like ‘over’ suggests, common to all accents of English. Whereas this /r/ is still present in Irish and in most American pronunciations, it has largely disappeared in Australian and in most English accents. Finally, the articulation of the ‘ing’ sequence at the end of the word ‘knocking’ may also vary, with an ‘in’ sound indicating a perhaps lower status accent or an informal style of delivery.

The sentence also contains words that are made up from smaller grammatical constituents known as morphemes.Certain of these morphemes, the ‘root’ morphemes, can stand as individual words in their own right, whereas others, such as prefixes and suffixes, depend for their meaning on being conjoined or bound to other items. Thus, ‘potplants’ has three constituents: two root morphemes (‘pot’ and ‘plant’) and a suffix (the plural morpheme ‘s’), making the word a three morpheme cluster. Moving up from morphology takes us into the domain of language organisation known as the grammar, or more appropriately perhaps, given that both lexis and word-structure are normally included in such a description, the lexico-grammar. Grammar is organised hierarchically according to the size of the units it contains, and most accounts of grammar would recognise the sentence as the largest unit, with the clause, phrase,
word and morpheme following as progressively smaller units (see further A3). Much could be said of the grammar of this sentence: it is a single ‘clause’ in the indicative declarative mood. It has a Subject (‘That puppy’), a Predicator (‘s knocking over’) and a Complement (‘those potplants’). Each of these clause constituents is realised by a phrase which itself has structure. For instance, the verb phrase which expresses the Predicator has a three part structure, containing a contracted auxiliary ‘[i]s’, a main verb ‘knocking’ and a preposition ‘over’ which operates as a special kind of extension to the main verb. This extension makes the verb a phrasal verb, one test for which is being able to move the extension particle along the sentence to a position beyond the Complement (‘That puppy’s knocking those potplants over!’).

A semantic analysis is concerned with meaning and will be interested, amongst other things, in those elements of language which give the sentence a ‘truth value’. A truth value specifies the conditions under which a particular sentence may be regarded as true or false. For instance, in this (admittedly hypothetical) sentence, the lexical item ‘puppy’ commits the speaker to the fact that a certain type of entity (namely, a young canine animal) is responsible for the action carried out. Other terms, such as the superordinate items ‘dog’ or even ‘animal’, would still be compatible in part with the truth conditions of the sentence. That is not to say that the use of a more generalised word like, say, ‘animal’ will have exactly the same repercussions for the utterance as discourse (see further below). In spite of its semantic compatibility, this less specific term would implicate in many contexts a rather negative evaluation by the speaker of the entity referred to. This type of implication is pragmatic rather than semantic because it is more about the meaning of language in context than about the meaning of language per se. Returning to the semantic component of example (1), the demonstrative words ‘That’ and ‘those’ express physical orientation in language by pointing to where the speaker is situated relative to other entities specified in the sentence. This orientational function of language is known as deixis (see further A7). In this instance, the demonstratives suggest that the speaker is positioned some distance away from the referents ‘puppy’ and ‘potplants’. The deictic relationship is therefore ‘distal’, whereas the parallel demonstratives ‘This’ and ‘these’ would imply a ‘proximal’ relationship to the referents.

Above the core levels of language is situated discourse. This is a much more open-ended term used to encompass aspects of communication that lie beyond the organisation of sentences. Discourse is context-sensitive and its domain of reference includes pragmatic, ideological, social and cognitive elements in text processing. That means that an analysis of discourse explores meanings which are not retrievable solely through the linguistic analysis of the levels surveyed thus far. In fact, what a sentence ‘means’ in strictly semantic terms is not necessarily a guarantor of the kind of job it will do as an utterance in discourse. The raw semantic information transmitted by sentence (1), for instance, may only partially explain its discourse function in a specific context of use. To this effect, imagine that (1) is uttered by a speaker in the course of a two-party interaction in the living room of a dog-owning, potplant-owning addressee. Without seeking to detail the rather complex inferencing strategies involved, the utterance in this context is unlikely to be interpreted as a disconnected remark about the unruly puppy’s behaviour or as a remark which requires simply a
verbal acknowledgment. Rather, it will be understood as a call to action on the part of the addressee. Indeed, it is perhaps the very obviousness in the context of what the puppy is doing vis-à-vis the content of the utterance that would prompt the addressee to look beyond what the speaker ‘literally’ says. The speaker, who, remember, is positioned deictically further away from the referents, may also feel that this discourse strategy is appropriate for a better-placed interlocutor to make the required timely intervention. Yet the same discourse context can produce any of a number of other strategies. A less forthright speaker might employ a more tentative gambit, through something like ‘Sorry, but I think you might want to keep an eye on that puppy . . .’. Here, indirection serves a politeness function, although indirection of itself is not always the best policy in urgent situations where politeness considerations can be over-ridden (and see further thread 9). And no doubt even further configurations of participant roles might be drawn up to explore what other discourse strategies can be pressed into service in this interactive context.

Summary
The previous sub-unit is no more than a thumbnail sketch, based on a single illustrative example, of the core levels of language organisation. The account of levels certainly offers a useful springboard for stylistic work, but observing these levels at work in textual examples is more the starting point than the end point of analysis. Later threads, such as 6 and 7, consider how patterns of vocabulary and grammar are sorted according to the various functions they serve, functions which sit at the interface between lexico-grammar and discourse. Other threads, such as 10 and 11, seek to take some account of the cognitive strategies that we draw upon to process texts; strategies that reveal that the composition of a text’s ‘meaning’ ultimately arises from the interplay between what’s in the text, what’s in the context and what’s in the mind as well. Finally, it is fair to say that contemporary stylistics ultimately looks towards language as discourse: that is, towards a text’s status as discourse, a writer’s deployment of discourse strategies and towards the way a text ‘means’ as a function of language in context. This is not for a moment to deny the importance of the core levels of language – the way a text is constructed in language will, after all, have a crucial bearing on the way it functions as discourse.

The interconnectedness of the levels and layers detailed above also means there is no necessarily ‘natural’ starting point in a stylistic analysis, so we need to be circumspect about those aspects of language upon which we choose to concentrate. Interaction between levels is important: one level may complement, parallel or even collide with another level. To bring this unit to a close, let us consider a brief illustration of how striking stylistic effects can be engendered by offsetting one level of language against another. The following fragment is the first three lines of an untitled poem by Margaret Atwood:

You are the sun
in reverse, all energy
flows into you . . .

(Atwood 1996: 47)
At first glance, this sequence bears the stylistic imprint of the lyric poem. This literary genre is characterised by short introspective texts where a single speaking voice expresses emotions or thoughts, and in its ‘love poem’ manifestation, the thoughts are often relayed through direct address in the second person to an assumed lover. Frequently, the lyric works through an essentially metaphorical construction whereby the assumed addressee is blended conceptually with an element of nature. Indeed, the lover, as suggested here, is often mapped onto the sun, which makes the sun the ‘source domain’ for the metaphor (see further thread 11). Shakespeare’s sonnet 18, which opens with the sequence ‘Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?’, is a well-known example of this type of lyrical form.

Atwood however works through this generic convention to create a startling re-orientation in interpretation. In doing so, she uses a very simple stylistic technique, a technique which essentially involves playing off the level of grammar against the level of graphology. Ending the first line where she does, she develops a linguistic trompe l’oeil whereby the seemingly complete grammatical structure ‘You are the sun’ disintegrates in the second line when we realise that the grammatical Complement (see A3) of the verb ‘are’ is not the phrase ‘the sun’ but the fuller, and rather more stark, phrase ‘the sun in reverse’. As the remainder of this poem bears out, this is a bitter sentiment, a kind of ‘anti-lyric’, where the subject of the direct address does not embody the all-fulfilling radiance of the sun but is rather more like an energy-sapping sponge which drains, rather than enhances, the life-forces of nature. And while the initial, positive sense engendered in the first line is displaced by the grammatical ‘revision’ in the second, the ghost of it somehow remains. Indeed, this particular stylistic pattern works literally to establish, and then reverse, the harmonic coalescence of subject with nature.

All of the levels of language detailed in this unit will feature in various places around this book. The remainder of this thread, across to a reading in D2 by Katie Wales, is concerned with the broad resources that different levels of language offer for the creation of stylistic texture. Unit B2 explores juxtapositions between levels similar in principle to that observed in Atwood and includes commentary on semantics, graphology and morphology. In terms of its vertical progression, this section feeds into further and more detailed introductions to certain core levels of language, beginning below with an introduction to the level of grammar.

GRAMMAR AND STYLE

When we talk of the grammar of a language we are talking of a hugely complex set of interlocking categories, units and structures: in effect, the rules of that language. In the academic study of language, the expression ‘rules of grammar’ does not refer to prescriptive niceties, to the sorts of proscriptions that forbid the use of, say, a double negative or a split infinitive. These so-called ‘rules’ are nothing more than
a random collection of *ad hoc* and prejudiced strictures about language use. On the contrary, the genuine grammatical rules of a language are *the* language insofar as they stipulate the very bedrock of its syntactic construction in the same way that the rules of tennis or the rules of chess constitute the core organising principles of those games. This makes grammar somewhat of an intimidating area of analysis for the beginning stylistician because it is not always easy to sort out which aspects of a text’s many interlocking patterns of grammar are stylistically salient. We will therefore use this unit to try to develop some useful building blocks for a study of grammar and style. The remainder of this thread examines patterns of grammar in a variety of literary texts, culminating, across in D3, with a reading by Ronald Carter which explores patterns of grammar in a ‘concrete’ poem by Edwin Morgan. But first, to the basics.

**A basic model of grammar**

Most theories of grammar accept that grammatical units are ordered hierarchically according to their size. This hierarchy is known as a *rank scale*. As the arrangement below suggests, the rank scale sorts units in a ‘consists of’ relationship, progressing from the largest down to the smallest:

- sentence (or clause complex)
- clause
- phrase (or group)
- word
- morpheme

As the rank scale indicates, the *morpheme* (see A2 above) is the smallest unit in grammar simply because it has no structure of its own; if it did, it would not be the bottom-most unit on the scale. Arguably the most important unit on the scale is the *clause*. The clause is especially important because it is the site of several important functions in language: it provides *tense*; it distinguishes between positive or negative *polarity*; it provides the core or ‘nub’ of a proposition in language; and it is where information about grammatical ‘mood’ (about whether a clause is declarative, interrogative or imperative) is situated. The clause will therefore be the principal focus of interest in the following discussion.

For our purposes, we can distinguish four basic elements of clause structure. These are the *Subject* (S), the *Predicator* (P), the *Complement* (C) and the *Adjunct* (A). Here are some examples of clauses which display an ‘SPCA’ pattern:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Predicator</th>
<th>Complement</th>
<th>Adjunct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) The woman</td>
<td>feeds</td>
<td>those pigeons</td>
<td>regularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Our bull terrier</td>
<td>was chasing</td>
<td>the postman</td>
<td>yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) The Professor of Necromancy</td>
<td>would wear</td>
<td>lipstick</td>
<td>every Friday.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Aussie actress looked great in her latest film.

The man who came to dinner was pretty miserable throughout the evening.

These examples highlight grammar’s capacity to embed units of different sizes within one another. Notice for example how the elements of clause structure are ‘filled up’ by other units, like words and phrases, which occur lower down on the rank scale. Indeed, it is a defining characteristic of clause structure that its four basic elements are typically realised by certain types of phrases. For instance, the Predicator is always filled by a verb phrase. The Subject is typically filled by a noun phrase which is a cluster of words in which a noun forms the central component. The key nouns in the phrases which express the Subjects above are, respectively, ‘woman’, ‘terrier’, ‘Professor’, ‘actress’ and ‘man’. The Complement position is typically filled either by a noun phrase or, as in examples (4) and (5), by an adjective phrase where an adjective, such as ‘great’ and ‘miserable’, features as the prominent constituent in the cluster. Finally, the Adjunct is typically filled either by an adverb phrase or by a prepositional phrase. The Adjunct elements in examples (1), (2) and (3) are all of the adverbial type. Prepositional phrases, which form the Adjunct element in (4) and (5), are clusters which are fronted by a preposition and which are normally rounded off by a noun or phrase, as in ‘in (preposition) her latest film (noun phrase)’. The rule which stipulates that a verb phrase must fill up the Predicator slot is a hard and fast one, whereas the rules about what sorts of phrases go into the other three slots are less absolute and are more about typical tendencies. Later in this unit, a little more will be said about phrases (also known as ‘groups’) and their significance in stylistic analysis, but for the moment we need to develop further our account of clauses.

**Tests for clause constituents**

We can test for the Subject, Complement and Adjunct elements of clause structure by asking various questions around the verb – assuming of course that we can find the verb! Here is a list of useful tests for sorting out clause structure:

Finding the Subject: it should answer the question ‘who’ or ‘what’ placed in front of the verb.

Finding the Complement: it should answer the question ‘who’ or ‘what’ placed after the verb.

Finding the Adjunct: it should answer questions such as ‘how’, ‘when’, ‘where’ or ‘why’ placed after the verb.

Thus, the test for Subject in example (1) – ‘*who or what?* feeds those pigeons regularly’ – will confirm ‘The woman’ as the Subject element. Alternatively, the test for Complement in example (2) – ‘The man who came to dinner was *what?* throughout the evening’ – will confirm the adjective phrase ‘pretty miserable’ as the Complement.
There is another useful test for elements of clause structure which can also be used to adduce further information about grammatical structure. Although this test will feature in a more directed way in unit B3, it is worth flagging it up here. The test involves adding a ‘tag question’ to the declarative form of a clause. The examples provided thus far are declarative because all of their Predicator elements come after the Subject, in the form that is standardly (though not always) used for making statements. Adding a tag, which may be of positive or negative polarity, allows the speaker or writer to alter the function of the declarative. Thus:

(1a) The woman feeds those pigeons regularly, doesn’t she?
(2a) Our bull terrier was chasing the postman yesterday, was it?

There are several reasons why the tag is a useful tool for exploring grammatical structure. For one thing, it will always repeat the Subject element as a pronoun (‘she’, ‘it’) and it will do this irrespective of how complicated or lengthy the Subject is. It also draws out an important aspect of the Predicator in the form of an auxiliary verb (‘does’, ‘was’) which supplies amongst other things important information about tense and ‘finiteness’ (see further B3 and C3). The slightly awkward thing about the ‘tag test’ is that the questioning tag inverts the word order and often the polarity of the original clause constituents. However, if you have the good fortune to be Irish, then the Hiberno-English dialect offers an even more straightforward mechanism for testing elements of the clause. Adding an Hiberno-English emphatic tag (eg. ‘so she does’; ‘so it was’) to the end of a declarative will repeat the Subject as a pronoun without affecting word-order or changing the polarity of the original. Thus:

(3a) The Professor of Necromancy would wear lipstick every Friday, so she would.

The tag test, whether in the questioning or the emphatic form, still works even when the Subject element is relatively ‘heavy’. In a sequence like

(6) Mary’s curious contention that mackerel live in trees proved utterly unjustified.

the appending of ‘did it?’, ‘didn’t it?’ or ‘so it did’ renders down to a simple pronoun the entire sequence ‘Mary’s curious contention that mackerel live in trees’. This structure, which incidentally contains an embedded clause of its own, is what forms the Subject element in (6).

The tag test can usefully differentiate between other types of grammatical structures. For example, in each of the following two examples, the Subject element is expressed by two noun phrases. If this is your book, write in an appropriate tag after each of the examples in the space provided:

(7) My aunt and my uncle visit the farm regularly, ________
(8) The winner, a local businesswoman, had donated the prize to charity, _______
Clearly, the application of our ‘who or what?’ test before the verb will reveal the Subject elements in (7) and (8) straightforwardly enough, but what the tag test further reveals is that the Subjects are of a very different order. In (7), the two noun phrases (‘My aunt’ and ‘my uncle’) refer to different entities which are brought together by the conjunction ‘and’. Notice how the tag will yield a plural pronoun: ‘don’t they?’ or ‘so they do’. The grammatical technique of drawing together different entities in this manner is known as coordination (and see further B3). In the second example, the tag test brings out a singular pronoun only (‘had she?’, ‘so she had’) which shows that in fact the two phrases ‘The winner’ and ‘a local businesswoman’ refer in different ways to the same entity. The term for a grammatical structure which makes variable reference to the same entity is known as apposition.

**Variations in basic clause structure**

Whereas most of the examples provided so far exhibit a basic SPCA pattern of clause structure, it is important to note that this configuration represents only one of a number of possible combinations. Other types of grammatical mood, for example, involve different types of clausal patterning. A case in point is the imperative, which is the form typically used for requests and commands. Imperative clauses like ‘Mind your head’ or ‘Turn on the telly, please’ have no Subject element, a knock-on effect of which is that their verb always retains its base form and cannot be marked for tense. Interrogatives, the form typically used for asking questions, do contain Subject elements. However, many types of interrogative position part of the Predicator in front of the Subject thus:

(3b) Would the Professor of Necromancy wear lipstick every Friday?

When there isn’t enough Predicator available to release a particle for the pre-Subject position, a form of the pro-verb ‘do’ is brought into play:

(1b) Does the woman feed those pigeons regularly?

By way of footnote, the use of the verb ‘do’ for this purpose is a relatively recent development in the history of English language. In early Modern English, the SP sequence was often simply inverted to make an interrogative, as in the following absurdly anachronistic transposition of (4):

(4a) Looked the Aussie actress great in her latest film?

Declarative clauses may themselves display significant variation around the basic SPCA pattern. Pared down to its grammatical bare bones, as it were, a clause may realise S and P elements only, as in ‘The train arrived’ or ‘The lesson began’. Occasionally a clause may contain two Complements. This occurs when one of the C elements is a ‘direct object’ and the other an ‘indirect object’, as in ‘Mary gave her friend a book’ or ‘Bill told the children a story’. Notice however that both examples will still satisfy our test for Complement in that the test question is answered twice in each case: ‘Mary gave who? what?’, ‘Bill told who? what?’. 
Adjunct elements are many and varied in terms of the forms they take and of the type of information they bring to a clause. They basically describe the circumstances (see A6) that attach to the process related by the clause and for that reason they can often be removed without affecting the grammaticality of the clause as a whole. Here is an example of a clause with an SPAAAA pattern. Try to sort out the four Adjuncts it contains by asking the test questions: ‘how?’ ‘where?’ ‘when?’ and ‘why?’:

(10) Mary awoke suddenly in her hotel room one morning because of a knock on the door.

What the forgoing discussion illustrates is that, strictly speaking, neither the Subject, Complement nor Adjunct elements are essential components of clause structure. The situation regarding the Predicator element is not quite so clear-cut, however, and there has been much debate among grammarians about the status of ‘P-less’ structures. Impacting on this is the fact that much of our everyday language use involves a type of grammatical abbreviation known as ellipsis. For instance, if A asks ‘Where are the keys?’ and B answers ‘In your pocket!’, then B’s response, while lacking a Predicator, still implicitly retains part of the structure of the earlier question. In other words, even though B’s elliptical reply amounts to no more than a simple prepositional phrase, it still presupposes the elements of a full-blown clause. The term minor clause is conventionally used to describe structures, like this one, which lack a Predicator element. It is important to acknowledge minor clauses not only because these elliptical structures play an important role in much spoken interaction but also because, as the other units in this thread will argue, they form an important locus for stylistic experimentation. Finally, as a general rule of thumb, when analysing elements which are present in a text, there can only be one Subject element and one Predicator element of structure in any given clause. There may however be up to two Complement elements and any number of Adjunct elements.

Quite how clause structure and other types of grammatical patterning function as markers of style will be the focus of attention across the remainder of this strand, and indeed for part of unit C4 also. Next up in this introductory section of the book is the topic of sound and rhythm as it intersects with style in language. The following unit introduces therefore some key concepts used by stylisticians in their investigations of phonology and metrical patterning.

RHYTHM AND METRE

Literature is, by definition, written language. This truism might suggest then that literature is not a medium especially well suited to exploration either at the linguistic level of phonology or in terms of its phonetic substance. However, sound patterning plays a pivotal role in literary discourse in general, and in poetry in particular.
Attention has been given elsewhere (unit C2) to the techniques writers use for representing accent, one aspect of spoken discourse, in prose fiction. This unit deals more directly with the issue of sound patterning in literature and it introduces core features, like rhythm and metre, which have an important bearing on the structure and indeed interpretation of poetry.

**Metre**

When we hear someone reading a poem aloud, we tend to recognise very quickly that it is poem that is being read and not another type of text. Indeed, even if the listener cannot make out or, as is often the case for young readers, the listener doesn’t understand all the words of the text, they still know that they are listening to poetry. One reason why this rather unusual communicative situation should arise is because poetry has metre. A pivotal criterion for the definition of verse, metre is, most simply put, an organised pattern of strong and weak syllables. Key to the definition is the proviso that metrical patterning should be organised, and in such a way that the alternation between accented syllables and weak syllables is repeated. That repetition, into a regular phrasing across a line of verse, is what makes rhythm. Rhythm is therefore a patterned movement of pulses in time which is defined both by periodicity (it occurs at regular time intervals) and repetition (the same pulses occur again and again).

Let us now try to work through these rather abstract definitions of metre and rhythm using some textual examples. In metrics, the foot is the basic unit of analysis and it refers to the span of stressed and unstressed syllables that forms a rhythmical pattern. Different sorts of metrical feet can be determined according to the number of, and ordering of, their constituent stressed and unstressed syllables. An iambic foot, for example, has two syllables, of which the first is less heavily stressed than the second (a ‘de-dum’ pattern, for want of a more formal typology). The trochaic foot, by contrast, reverses the pattern, offering a ‘dum-de’ style of metre. Here is a well-known example of the first type, a line from Thomas Gray’s ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’ (1751):

```
(1) The ploughman homeward plods his weary way
```

In the following annotated version of (1), the metrical feet are segmented off from one another by vertical lines. Positioned below the text are two methods for capturing the alternation between strong (s) and weak (w) syllables:

```
(1a) The plough | man home | ward plods | his wea | ry way
        ws ws w s w s w s ws
        de dum de dum de dum de dum
```

As there are five iambs in the line, this metrical scheme is *iambic pentameter*. Had there been six feet, it would have been iambic *hexameter*, four feet, iambic *tetrameter*, three feet... well, you can work out the rest by yourself. What is especially important about metre, as this breakdown shows, is that it transcends the lexico-grammar (see A2). Metrical boundaries are no respecters of word boundaries, a
consequence of which is that rhythm provides an additional layer of meaning potential that can be developed along Jakobson’s ‘axis of combination’ (see B1). That extra layer can either enhance a lexicogrammatical structure, or rupture and fragment it. In respect of this point, it is worth noting the other sound imagery at work in the line from Gray. *Alliteration* is a type of rhyme scheme which is based on similarities between consonants. Although rhyme is normally thought of as a feature of line endings, the internal alliterative rhyme in (1) picks out and enhances the balancing halves of the line through the repetition of, first, the /pl/ in ‘ploughman’ and ‘plods’ and, later, the /w/ in ‘weary’ and ‘way’. In terms of its impact on grammatical structure, the first repetition links both Subject and Predicator (see A3), while the /w/ consolidates the Complement element of the clause; taken together, both patterns give the line an *acoustic punctuation*, to use Carter and Nash’s term (Carter and Nash 1990: 120). A rearrangement of the line into a structure like the following

\[(1b) \text{ The ploughman plods his weary way homeward} \]

will make the acoustic punctuation redundant because the Adjunct ‘homeward’, which had originally separated the Subject and Complement, is simply no longer there. And of course, this rearrangement collapses entirely the original metrical scheme.

Here are some more examples of metrical patterning in verse. The following fragment from Tennyson’s *Lady of Shallott* (1832) is a good illustration of a trochaic pattern:

\[(2) \text{ By the margin, willow veiled} \\
\text{ Slide the heavy barges trailed} \]

Using our model of analysis, the first line of the couplet can be set out thus

\[(2a) \text{ By the | margin | willow | veiled} \]
\[s w s w s w s w \]
\[d u m \ d e \ d u m \ d e \ d u m \ d e \ d u m \ d e \]

and this will reveal, amongst other things, that (2) is an example of trochaic *tetrameter*.

The following line from W. H. Auden’s poem ‘The Quarry’ represents another, slightly more complicated, type of versification:

\[(3) \text{ O what is that sound that so thrills the ear} \]

This sequence, on my reading of it, begins with an *offbeat*. An offbeat is an unstressed syllable which, depending on the metrical structure of the line as a whole, is normally placed at the start or the end of a line of verse. In the initial position, an offbeat can act like a little phonetic springboard that helps us launch into the metrical scheme proper. Here is a suggested breakdown of the Auden line:
(3a) O what is that sound that so thrills the ear
w  s  w  w  s  w  w  s  w  w
de dum de de dum de dum de de
der three metrical feet contain three beats apiece, and in a strong-weak-weak configuration which is known as a *dactyl*. That makes the line as whole an example of *dactylic trimeter*.

**Issues**
The example from Auden raises an interesting issue to do with metrical analysis. I am sure that for many readers their scansion of (3) brings out a different metrical pattern, with stress on words other than or in addition to those highlighted in (3a). A strong pulse might for example be preferred on ‘ear’, giving the line an ‘end-weight’ focus, or maybe even on ‘so’ which would allow extra intensity to be assigned to the process of thrilling. In spite of what many metricists suggest, metrical analysis is not an exact science, and these alternative readings are in my view perfectly legitimate. Basically, while conventional phrasing dictates certain types of metrical scheme, readers of poetry have a fair amount of choice about exactly how and where to inflect a line of verse.

A contributing factor in reader choice is that the distinction between strong and weak syllables is relative, and not absolute. Consider again the line from Shakespeare’s sonnet 18 which was mentioned briefly in unit A2:

(4) Shall I | compare | thee to | a sum | mer’s day?

The line’s five metrical feet, with stress falling on the second element, clearly make it iambic pentameter. However, this classification tends to assume that all accentuation is equal, an interpretation which is not necessarily borne out when reading the line aloud. Whereas in the fourth foot (‘a sum’) the contrast in stress is clear, in the first foot (‘Shall I’), the second beat is only marginally more accentuated, if at all, than the first beat. The second foot (‘compare’) exhibits a degree of contrast somewhere between the fourth and the second, while the third foot seems to have little accentuation on either syllable. In other words, there are about four *degrees* of accentuation in this line, which we might order numerically thus:

(4) Shall I | compare | thee to | a sum | mer’s day?

3 4 1 4 1 2 1 4 1 4

Although the degree of contrast within metrical feet may be variable, what is important in metrical analysis is that the contrast itself be there in the first place, whatever the relative strength or weakness of its individual beats. (See further Fraser 1970: 3–7)

Now to a final issue which will wrap up this unit. While verse is (obviously) characterised by its use of metre, it does not follow that all metre is verse; and it is important not to lose sight of the fact that metre has an existence outside literature.
We need therefore to treat this stylistic feature, as we do with many aspects of style, as a common resource which is shared across many types of textual practice. By way of illustration, consider the following short example of ‘nonliterary’ discourse, an advertisement for a bathroom shower appliance:

(5) Never undress for anything less!

Example (5) is a jingle; that is, a phonologically contoured text designed by advertisers as an aide memoire. A ‘simple’ text, to be sure, but (5) nonetheless makes use of an interesting metrical scheme. My own ‘reading’ suggests the following pattern:

(5a) Nev er | un dress
      s w | w s
dum de | de dum
      for | an y | thing less
      w s | w s
de | dum de | de dum

Notice how the couplet employs an offbeat at the start of its second line. Line-initial offbeats are commonly used to help galvanise so-called ‘four-by-four’ sequences, and example (5) does indeed contain two lines of four syllables each. The scheme is also organised into a chiasmus, which is a symmetrical ‘mirror image’ pattern where the strong to weak pulse (‘dum de’) is paralleled by a weak to strong pulse (‘de dum’). Overall, this four syllable pattern resembles a ‘pæonic’ metre, which is a type of metrical pattern that invites a brisk style of delivery with a ‘cantering’ tempo of recitation (Leech 1969: 112).

Other issues to do with sound and style will be taken up across this thread. In B4, attention turns to developments in the interpretation of sound symbolism in literary texts. Unit C4 offers a set of activities based on a single poem where particular emphasis is put on patterns of sound. That poem introduces, amongst other things, a different form of versification, known as free verse, where strict metrical schemes give way to the inflections of naturally occurring speech. Finally, the reading which rounds off this thread is Derek Attridge’s entertaining study of the significance of sound, not in poetry, but in prose.

NARRATIVE STYLISTICS

Narrative discourse provides a way of recapitulating felt experience by matching up patterns of language to a connected series of events. In its most minimal form, a narrative comprises two clauses which are temporally ordered, such that a change in their order will result in a change in the way we interpret the assumed chronology of the narrative events. For example, the two narrative clauses in
suggest a temporal progression between the two actions described. Indeed, not only do we assume that John’s mishap preceded Janet’s response, but also that it was his mishap that brought about her response. However, reversing the clauses to form ‘Janet laughed suddenly and John dropped the plates’ would invite a different interpretation: that is, that Janet’s laughter not only preceded but actually precipitated John’s misfortune.

Of course, most narratives, whether those of canonical prose fiction or of the spontaneous stories of everyday social interaction, have rather more to offer than just two simple temporally arranged clauses. Narrative requires development, elaboration, embellishment; and it requires a sufficient degree of stylistic flourish to give it an imprint of individuality or personality. Stories narrated without that flourish will often feel flat and dull. On this issue, the sociolinguist William Labov has argued that narratives require certain essential elements of structure which, when absent, render the narrative ‘ill-formed’. He cites the following attested story as an illustration:

(2) well this person had a little too much to drink
    and he attacked me
    and the friend came in
    and she stopped it

( Labov 1972: 360)

This story, which is really only a skeleton of a fully formed narrative, was told by an adult informant who had been asked to recollect an experience where they felt they had been in real danger. True, the story does satisfy the minimum criterion for narrative in that it comprises temporally connected clauses, but it also lacks a number of important elements which are important to the delivery of a successful narrative. A listener might legitimately ask, for instance, about exactly where and when this story took place. And who was involved in the story? That is, who was the ‘person’ who had too much to drink and precisely whose friend was ‘the friend’ who stopped the attack? How, for that matter, did the storyteller come to be in the same place as the antagonist? And is the friend’s act of stopping the assault the final action of the story? Clearly, much is missing from this narrative. As well as lacking sufficient contextualisation, it offers little sense of closure or finality. It also lacks any dramatic or rhetorical embellishment, and so risks attracting a rebuke like ‘so what?’ from an interlocutor. Reading between the lines of Labov’s study, the narrator of (2) seems to have felt some discomfort about the episode narrated and was therefore rather reluctantly lured into telling the story. It may have been this factor which constrained the development of a fully articulated narrative.

There is clearly, then, more to a narrative than just a sequence of basic clauses of the sort evidenced in examples (1) and (2). However, the task of providing a full and rigorous model of narrative discourse has proved somewhat of a challenge for stylisticians. There is much disagreement about how to isolate the various units which
combine to form, say, a novel or short story, just as there is about how to explain the interconnections between these narrative units. Moreover, in the broad communicative event that is narrative, narrative *structure* is only one side of a coin of which narrative comprehension is the other (see further thread 10). Allowing then that a fully comprehensive description is not achievable, the remainder of this introductory unit will establish the core tenets only of a suggested model of narrative structure. It will point out which type of individual stylistic framework is best suited to which particular unit in the narrative model and will also signal whereabouts in this book each of the individual units will be explored and illustrated.

It is common for much work in stylistics and narratology to make a primary distinction between two basic components of narrative: narrative *plot* and narrative *discourse*. The term *plot* is generally understood to refer to the abstract storyline of a narrative; that is, to the sequence of elemental, chronologically ordered events which create the ‘inner core’ of a narrative. Narrative *discourse*, by contrast, encompasses the manner or means by which that plot is narrated. Narrative discourse, for example, is often characterised by the use of stylistic devices such as flashback, prevision and repetition – all of which serve to disrupt the basic chronology of the narrative’s plot. Thus, narrative discourse represents the realised text, the palpable piece of language which is produced by a story-teller in a given interactive context.

The next step involves sorting out the various stylistic elements which make up narrative discourse. To help organise narrative analysis into clearly demarcated areas of study, let us adopt the model shown in Figure A5.1.

Beyond the plot–discourse distinction, the categories towards the right of the diagram constitute six basic units of analysis in narrative description. Although there are substantial areas of overlap between these units, they nonetheless offer a useful set of reference points for pinpointing the specific aspects of narrative which can inform a stylistic analysis. Some further explanation of the units themselves is in order.

The first of the six is *textual medium*. This refers simply to the physical channel of communication through which a story is narrated. Two common narrative media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract storyline</th>
<th>Represented storyline</th>
<th>Domain in stylistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textual medium</td>
<td>Sociolinguistic code</td>
<td>Characterisation 1: actions and events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Characterisation 2: points of view</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Textual structure</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intertextuality</td>
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*Figure A5.1  A model of narrative structure*
are film and the novel, although various other forms are available such as the ballet, the musical or the strip cartoon. The examples cited thus far in this unit represent another common medium for the transmission of narrative experience: spoken verbal interaction. The concept of textual medium, in tandem with the distinction between plot and discourse, is further explored in B5.

*Sociolinguistic code* expresses through language the historical, cultural and linguistic setting which frames a narrative. It locates the narrative in time and place by drawing upon the forms of language which reflect this sociocultural context. Sociolinguistic code encompasses, amongst other things, the varieties of accent and dialect used in a narrative, whether they be ascribed to the narrator or to characters within the narrative, although the concept also extends to the social and institutional registers of discourse deployed in a story. This particular narrative resource is further explored in C2.

The first of the two characterisation elements, *actions and events*, describes how the development of character precipitates and intersects with the actions and events of a story. It accounts for the ways in which the narrative intermeshes with particular kinds of semantic process, notably those of ‘doing’, ‘thinking’ and ‘saying’, and for the ways in which these processes are attributed to characters and narrators. This category, which approaches narrative within the umbrella concept of ‘style as choice’, is the main focus of attention across the units in strand 6.

The second category of narrative characterisation, *point of view*, explores the relationship between mode of narration and a character’s or narrator’s ‘point of view’. Mode of narration specifies whether the narrative is relayed in the first person, the third person or even the second person, while point of view stipulates whether the events of story are viewed from the perspective of a particular character or from that of an omniscient narrator, or indeed from some mixture of the two. The way speech and thought processes are represented in narrative is also an important index of point of view, although this stylistic technique has a double function because it relates to actions and events also. Point of view in narrative is examined across strand 7, while speech and thought presentation is explored in strand 8.

*Textual structure* accounts for the way individual narrative units are arranged and organised in a story. A stylistic study of textual structure may focus on large-scale elements of plot or, alternatively, on more localised features of story’s organisation; similarly, the particular analytic models used may address broad-based aspects of narrative coherence or they may examine narrower aspects of narrative cohesion in organisation. Textual structure (as it organises narrative) is the centre of interest across the remainder of this strand (B5, C5, D5).

The term *intertextuality*, the sixth narrative component, is reserved for the technique of ‘allusion’. Narrative fiction, like all writing, does not exist in a social and historical vacuum, and it often echoes other texts and images either as ‘implicit’ intertextuality or as ‘manifest’ intertextuality. In a certain respect, the concept of intertextuality overlaps with the notion of sociolinguistic code in its application to narrative, although the former involves the importing of other, external texts while the latter refers more generally to the variety or varieties of language in and through which a narrative is developed. Both of these constituents feature in units C1 and C2.
STYLE AS CHOICE

Much of our everyday experience is shaped and defined by actions and events, thoughts and perceptions, and it is an important function of the system of language that it is able to account for these various ‘goings on’ in the world. This means encoding into the grammar of the clause a mechanism for capturing what we say, think and do. It also means accommodating in grammar a host of more abstract relations, such as those that pertain between objects, circumstances and logical concepts. When language is used to represent the goings on of the physical or abstract world in this way, to represent patterns of experience in spoken and written texts, it fulfils the experiential function. The experiential function is an important marker of style, especially so of the style of narrative discourse, because it emphasises the concept of style as choice. There are many ways of accounting in language for the various events that constitute our ‘mental picture of reality’ (Halliday 1994: 106); indeed, there are often several ways of using the resources of the language system to capture the same event in a textual representation. What is of interest to stylisticians is why one type of structure should be preferred to another, or why, from possibly several ways of representing the same ‘happening’, one particular type of depiction should be privileged over another. Choices in style are motivated, even if unconsciously, and these choices have a profound impact on the way texts are structured and interpreted.

The particular grammatical facility used for capturing experience in language is the system of transitivity. In the present account, the concept of ‘transitivity’ is used in an expanded semantic sense, much more so than in traditional grammars where it simply serves to identify verbs which take direct objects. Transitivity here refers to the way meanings are encoded in the clause and to the way different types of process are represented in language. Transitivity normally picks out three key components of processes. The first is the process itself, which is typically realised in grammar by the verb phrase (see A3). The second is the participant(s) associated with the process, typically realised by noun phrases. Perhaps less importantly for stylistic analysis, transitivity also picks out the circumstances associated with the process. This third element is typically expressed by prepositional and adverb phrases which, as we saw in A3, fill up the Adjunct element in clause structure.

Linguists working with this functional model of transitivity are divided about how exactly to ‘carve up’ the experiential function. How many sorts of experience, for example, should the system distinguish? How easy is it to place discrete boundaries around certain types of human experiences when those experiences tend to overlap or shade into one another? In the brief account of transitivity that follows, six types of process are identified, although the divisions between these processes will always be more provisional than absolute.

Material processes, the first of the six, are simply processes of doing. Associated with material processes are two inherent participant roles which are the Actor, an obligatory role in the process, and a Goal, a role which may or may not be involved in the process. The following two examples of material processes follow the standard notation conventions which place the textual example above its individual transitivity roles:
Mental processes constitute the second key process of the transitivity system and are essentially processes of sensing. Unlike material processes which have their provenance in the physical world, mental processes inhabit and reflect the world of consciousness, and involve cognition (encoded in verbs such as ‘thinking’ or ‘wondering’), reaction (as in ‘liking’ or ‘hating’) and perception (as in ‘seeing’ or ‘hearing’). The two participant roles associated with mental processes are the Sensor (the conscious being that is doing the sensing) and the Phenomenon (the entity which is sensed, felt, thought or seen). Here are illustrations of the three main types of mental process:

(3) Mary understood the story. (cognition)
   Sensor Process Phenomenon

(4) Anil noticed the damp patch. (perception)
   Sensor Process Phenomenon

(5) Siobhan detests paté. (reaction)
   Sensor Process Phenomenon

The roles of Sensor and Phenomenon relate exclusively to mental processes. This distinction is necessary because the entity ‘sensed’ in a mental process is not directly affected by the process, and this makes it of a somewhat different order to the role of Goal in a material process. It is also an important feature of the semantic basis of the transitivity system that the participant roles remain constant under certain types of grammatical operation. Example (5), for instance, might be rephrased as ‘Paté disgusts Siobhan’, yet ‘Siobhan’ still remains the Sensor and ‘Paté’ the Phenomenon.

A useful check which often helps distinguish material and mental processes is to test which sort of present tense best suits the particular example under analysis. The ‘natural’ present tense for mental processes is the simple present, so the transformation of the past tense of example (3) would result in ‘Mary understands the story’. By contrast, material processes normally gravitate towards the present continuous tense, as in the transposition of (2) to ‘The washing machine is breaking down’. When transposed to the present continuous, however, mental processes often sound odd: ‘Siobhan is detesting paté’, ‘Anil is noticing the damp patch’ and so on.

There is a type of process which to some extent sits at the interface between material and mental processes, a process which represents both the activities of ‘sensing’ and ‘doing’. Behavioural processes embody physiological actions like ‘breathe’ or ‘cough’, although they sometimes portray these processes as states of consciousness as in ‘sigh’, ‘cry’ or ‘laugh’. They also represent processes of consciousness as forms of behaviour, as in ‘stare’, ‘dream’ or ‘worry’. The key (and normally sole) participant in behavioural processes is the Behaver, the conscious entity who is ‘behaving’.
(6) That student fell asleep in my lecture again.
Behave Process Circumstance

(7) She frowned at the mess.
Behave Process Circumstances

The role of Behave is very much like that of a Sensor, although the behavioural process itself is grammatically more akin to a material process. Thus, while both examples above display many of the characteristics of mental processes, our ‘tense’ test satisfies the criteria for material processes: ‘That student is falling asleep . . .’; ‘She is frowning . . .’.

Close in sense to mental processes, insofar as they articulate conscious thought, are processes of verbalisation. These are processes of ‘saying’ and the participant roles associated with verbalisation are the Sayer (the producer of the speech), the Receiver (the entity to which the speech is addressed) and the Verbiage (that which gets said). Thus:

(8) Mary claimed that the story had been changed.
Sayer Process Verbiage

(9) The minister announced the decision to parliament.
Sayer Process Verbiage Receiver

Notice how the Verbiage participant, which, incidentally, is not a term used in any derogatory sense, can cover either the ‘content’ of what was said (as in 8) or the ‘name’, in speech act terms, of what was said (as in 9). It is also important to note that the process of saying needs to be interpreted rather broadly, so that even an inanimate Sayer can be accommodated: ‘The notice said be quiet’.

Now to an important and deceptively complex category: relational processes. These are processes of ‘being’ in the specific sense of establishing relationships between two entities. Relational processes can be expressed in a number of ways, and not all of the numerous classifications which present themselves can be accommodated here. There is however general agreement about three main types of relational process. An intensive relational process posits a relationship of equivalence, an ‘x is y’ connection, between two entities, as in: ‘Paula’s presentation was lively’ or ‘Joyce is the best Irish writer’. A possessive relational process plots an ‘x has y’ type of connection between two entities, as in ‘Peter has a piano’ or ‘The Alpha Romeo is Clara’s’. Thirdly, circumstantial relational processes are where the circumstantial element becomes upgraded, as it were, so that it fulfils the role of a full participant in the process. The relationship engendered is a broad ‘x is at/is in/is on/is with/ y’ configuration, realised in constructions like ‘The fête is on all day’, ‘The maid was in the parlour’ or ‘The forces of darkness are against you’.

This seemingly straightforward three-way classification is rather complicated by the fact that it intersects with another distinction between attributive and identifying relational processes. This means that each of the three types come in two modes, yielding six categories in total. The grid shown in Table A6.1 will help summarise this.
classification. In the attributive mode, the entity, person or concept being described is referred to as the Carrier, while the role of Attribute refers to the quality ascribed to that Carrier. The Attribute therefore says what the Carrier is, what the Carrier is like, where the Carrier is, what it owns and so on. In the identifying mode, one role is identified through reference to another such that the two halves of the clause often refer to the same thing. This means that unlike attributive processes, all identifying processes are reversible, as the grid above shows. In terms of their participant roles, one entity (the Identifier) picks out and defines the other (the Identified). Thus, in the pattern:

(10) Joyce is the best Irish writer

the sequence ‘the best Irish writer’ functions to identify ‘Joyce’ as the key representative of a particular class of individuals. The alternative pattern, ‘The best Irish writer is Joyce’, simply reverses the sequence of these two participant roles.

Existential processes constitute the sixth and last category of the transitivity model. Close in sense to relational processes, these processes basically assert that something exists or happens. Existential processes typically include the word ‘there’ as a dummy subject, as in ‘There was an assault’ or ‘Has there been a phone call?’, and they normally only contain one participant role, the ‘Existent’, realised respectively in these examples by ‘an assault’ and ‘a phone call’.

In another sense, the existential process leads us right back to the material process, the category with which we began this review of the system of transitivity. Significantly, both types of process can often accommodate a question like ‘what happened?’, the response to which results in two possible configurations. Thus, both ‘X assaulted Y’ and ‘There was an assault’ would offer a choice of responses to this hypothetical question. However, what happens in the existential version is that no role other than Existent is specified, and that role, moreover, is filled by a nominalised element which is created by converting a verbal process into a noun (see C3).

It is worth reemphasising this idea of ‘style as choice’ in transitivity, and in this respect consider an anecdotal example. When questioned about some rowdiness that
resulted in a slight injury to his younger brother, my (then five year old) son replied: ‘There was a nip’. This is an interesting experiential strategy because it satisfies the question ‘what happened’ while simultaneously avoiding any material process that would support an explicit Actor role. It manages in other words to sidestep precisely the configuration displayed in example (1) above, ‘I nipped Daniel’, where the role of Actor is conflated with the speaker. Another strategy might have been to create a passive, as opposed to active, construction, wherein the Goal element is brought into Subject position and the Actor element removed from the clause entirely (‘Daniel was nipped’). However, because the passive still supports the question ‘by whom?’, this configuration retains a degree of implicit agency. The general point is that transitivity offers systematic choice, and any particular textual configuration is only one, perhaps strategically motivated, option from a pool of possible textual configurations.

The core processes of transitivity, arranged so as to capture their interrelationship to one another, are summarised in Figure A6.1. The transitivity model has proved an important methodological tool in stylistics and in more general investigations of text. The remainder of this strand surveys some developments in this area and goes on to examine patterns of transitivity in a variety of texts. The thread concludes with a reading by Deirdre Burton (D6) which applies the model to a passage from Sylvia Plath’s novel *The Bell Jar*.

**Figure A6.1 A model of transitivity**

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**A7 STYLE AND POINT OF VIEW**

The *perspective* through which a story is told constitutes an important stylistic dimension not only in prose fiction but in many types of narrative text. Much of the feel, colour or texture of a story is a direct consequence of the sort of narrative framework it employs. A story may for instance be told in the first person and from the viewing
position of a participating character-narrator whose account of actions and events is the one we must as readers share. Alternatively, the story might be narrated in the third person by a detached, invisible narrator whose ‘omniscience’ facilitates privileged access to the thoughts and feelings of individual characters. Yet further permutations are possible. We may encounter a kind of ‘restricted omniscience’ where a third-person narrator, although external to the action of the story, comes across as unable or reluctant to delve at will into the thoughts and feelings of characters. These issues of narrative organisation are very much at the heart of story-telling and, as noted in A5, function as an important index of characterisation in fiction. The umbrella term reserved for this aspect of narrative organisation is point of view.

Point of view in fiction

Much has been written on point of view by stylisticians and narratologists, such that there is now a proliferation of often conflicting theories, terms and models. In these circumstances, the best way to develop an introduction to point of view will be by going straight to a textual example from which can be garnered some basic categories and principles. Below is a passage from Iain Banks’s novel The Crow Road which raises a number of interesting general issues concerning point of view in fiction. Kenneth McHoan, one of the novel’s central characters, has just returned from university to his home town of Gallanach, and this episode details his arrival in the rural village station.

He rested his arms on the top of the wall and looked down the fifty feet or so to the tumbling white waters. Just upstream, the river Loran piled down from the forest in a compactly furious cataract. The spray was a taste. Beneath, the river surged round the piers of the viaduct that carried the railway on towards Lochgilphead and Gallanach.

A grey shape flitted silently across the view, from falls to bridge, then zoomed, turned in the air and swept into the cutting on the far bank of the river, as though it was a soft fragment of the train’s steam that had momentarily lost its way and was not hurrying to catch up. He waited a moment, and the owl hooted once, from inside the dark constituency of the forest. He smiled, took a deep breath that tasted of steam and the sweet sharpness of pine resin, and then turned away, and went back to pick up his bags.

(Banks 1993: 33)

A good general technique for the exploration of point of view in a piece of narrative is to imagine it as if you were preparing to film it. That is, try to conceive a particular episode, as a director might, in terms of its visual perspective, its various vantage points and viewing positions. There are often clear textual clues about where to point your camera, so to speak, and about how a visual sequence should unfold. This passage works extremely well in this respect insofar as it abounds in point of view markers that work to structure the panoramic sweep of the narrative camera. There will be more on these markers shortly, but a feature of more general interest is the way this passage offers an almost model explication of a core distinction in point of view theory. This is the distinction in a story between who tells and who sees. It is clear from this passage that whereas a detached, omniscient narrator tells the story,
it is a particular character who sees the unfolding scene described. Although this is not the pattern for the whole of Banks’s novel – most of it is written in the first person, in fact – there is a marked limiting of narrative perspective, in this instance at least, to that of an individual character within the story. We see what McHoan sees, and we see it in the gradual and accumulative unfolding of the focal points that are reflected in his visual purview. Following the relevant terminology, that makes the character of McHoan, even if momentarily, the reflector of fiction.

Even working from so short an extract, there is much more that can be said on the general dynamic of point of view in narrative fiction. We have established that the third person narrator is external, detached, situated outside the story as such. In the sense that its narrator is ‘different’ from the exegesis that comprises the story, this makes the narrative heterodiegetic. However, had the events described been narrated directly in the first person by McHoan himself, the narrative would be homodiegetic. A homodiegetic narrator is one who is internal to the narrative, who is on the ‘same’ plane of exegesis as the story.

The distinction between heterodiegesis and homodiegesis can be explored by transposing the text between first-person and third-person modes of narration. This is a very useful exercise in terms of what it can reveal about point of view, and it is often surprisingly easy to carry out a transposition in those instances where a third person narrative employs a reflector of fiction. Converting the character of McHoan into an internal, homodiegetic narrator requires very little alteration to the text. Indeed, most of the passage can stay exactly as it is, as this checklist of third-to-first-person transpositions shows:

I rested my arms on the top of the wall [. . .] I waited a moment [. . .] I smiled, took a deep breath [. . .] and went back to pick up my bags.

The smoothness and facility of transposition shows just how strongly in the reflector mode the original passage is; in effect, nothing is narrated that has not been felt, thought or seen by McHoan. (Indeed, the passage reverberates with references to its reflector’s senses of taste, sight and hearing.) However, a first person version makes for a very different narrative in other respects. For a start, it brings us psychologically much closer to the central character. In consequence, it loses much of the space, the often ironic space, that can be placed by a writer between the narrator of a story and a character within that story. There will be more on this issue later in this strand, but for now it is worth developing yet further features of general interest in the passage.

Throughout the Banks extract, as noted above, there are stylistic cues about the viewing position it privileges. These cues are a result of the combination of two levels of language: the semantic principle of deixis (see unit A2; and further B7) and the use of certain types of grammatical Adjunct (see units A3 and B3). The first of these, deixis, works primarily by situating the speaking voice in physical space. In the passage, the reflector of fiction forms a deictic centre, an ‘origo’, around which objects are positioned relative to their relative proximity or distance to the reflector. Notice, for instance, how certain verbs of directionality express movement towards the
speaking source: eg. ‘[A grey shape] zoomed . . .’. Alternatively, movement away is signalled when, near the end of the passage, the reflector ‘turned away’ from the scene and when he ‘went back’ (not ‘came back’) to pick up his bags. This deictic anchoring is supplemented by groups of Adjuncts which express location and spatial relationship. These units of clause structure are normally expounded by prepositional and adverb phrases indicating place and directionality, of which a selection from the passage includes but is not restricted to:

looked down
Just upstream
aped down
Beneath
across the view
from falls to bridge
into the cutting
on the far bank of the river
from inside the dark constituency of the forest.

The umbrella term locative expression is used to cover grammatical units, such as those listed, which provide an index of location, direction and physical setting in narrative description.

Lastly, there is in the passage an occurrence of a particular, specialised point of view device which merits some comment. The term attenuated focalisation refers to a situation where point of view is limited, even if temporarily, to an impeded or distanced visual perspective. Lexical items which signal that such a restricted viewing has occurred are nouns with generalised or unspecific reference like ‘thing’, ‘shape’ or ‘stuff’. Consider this sequence from the passage:

A grey shape flitted silently across the view . . .

McHoan sees something which (at that point) he can’t make out, and that blurring of vision is relayed as attenuated focalisation. However, the restriction in point of view is only temporary and, as is often the case when this technique is deployed, is soon resolved. Interestingly, whereas most attenuation is resolved when an indistinct object comes into sharper focus visually, the status of the shape is resolved here by recourse to another mental faculty, through auditory and not visual identification:

. . . the owl hooted . . .

Attenuated focalisation often works subtly in relaying the impression that we are momentarily restricted to the visual range of a particular character. As always in point of view analysis, transposition exercises will accentuate the technique and its stylistic effect. Consider, for example, how the impact would be nullified had the sequence been reversed in the first instance; that is, had the item ‘owl’ replaced ‘shape’ thus: ‘A grey owl flitted silently across the view’.
In sum, this unit has laid some foundations for a description of point of view in narrative. Working from a single passage, some general categories for a model of point of view have been proposed. Across the thread, the model will be progressively refined and reviewed as further categories are added and further passages analysed. The reading which informs this unit is Mick Short’s study of narrative viewpoint in Irvine Welsh, a reading which given its breadth of coverage ‘doubles up’ for both units 5 and 7.

**REPRESENTING SPEECH AND THOUGHT**

An important preoccupation of modern stylistics has been its interest in the way in which speech and thought is represented in stories. In other words, stylisticians are keen to examine the methods which writers use for transcribing the speech and thoughts of other people, whether these people be imagined characters in a novel or, in the case of everyday 'social' stories, real individuals. While it is true that a great deal of what makes up a story is action and events (see A6), it is also the case that stories contain a great deal of reported speech and thought. And this is as true of news reporting as it is of prose fiction – much of what makes up the ‘news’, for instance, is a record of what politicians and other public figures (allegedly) say and think.

The presentation of speech and thought is not straightforward. There is an array of techniques for reporting speech and thought, so it makes sense as stylisticians to be aware of and to have at our disposal a suitable model that in the first instance enables us to identify the modes used, and in the second, enables us to assess the effects in the ways these modes are used. The first step towards the development of this model is taken in the next sub-unit which provides a brief outline of the principal categories of speech and thought presentation.

**The speech and thought model**

The most influential framework for the analysis of speech and thought representation in narrative fiction is undoubtedly that developed by Mick Short and his co-researchers. Leech and Short’s textbook (Leech and Short 1981) contains the first systematic account of this important narrative technique and their account is rich in illustrative examples. More recently, much work has been carried out by stylisticians on the way speech and thought is presented in discourse genres beyond those conventionally classed as literary. As our chief concern here is to develop a set of tools that can be used relatively comfortably by the student of language and stylistics, the brief summary of the model provided in this unit will of necessity be kept as simple as possible. To this effect, reference will be made principally to the introductory treatments of the subject in Leech and Short (1981) and Short (1996).
Beginning with the categories of speech presentation, the ‘baseline’ form against which other forms are often measured is Direct Speech (DS). In this mode, the reported clause, which tells us what was said, is enclosed within quotation marks, while the reporting clause (which tells us who did the reporting) is situated around it. The following two examples of Direct Speech (DS) illustrate how the reporting clause in this mode may be either put in front of, or, as is more common, placed after the quoted material:

(1) She said, ‘I’ll come here tomorrow.’

(2) ‘I’ll come here tomorrow,’ she said.

Direct Speech stands in contrast to (though is systematically related to) an altogether more remote form of reporting known as Indirect Speech (IS). Here is the equivalent Indirect form of the examples above:

(3) She said that she would go there the following day.

The method for converting Direct forms into Indirect ones requires you to carry out a series of simultaneous grammatical operations. These are summarised as follows:

Stage 1: Make the reported material distant from the actual speech used.
Stage 2: Alter pronouns by shifting 1st and 2nd person pronouns (‘I’, ‘you’, ‘we’) into 3rd person forms (‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’ or ‘they’).
Stage 3: Switch deictic words (see A7) from their proximal forms into their distal forms.
Stage 4: Change the direction of movement verbs.
Stage 5: Place tenses in their ‘backshifted’ forms. For example, if the primary tense is in the simple present (eg. ‘know’) the backshifted tense will be in the simple past (‘knew’). Through this process, a modal verb like ‘will’ becomes ‘would’, ‘does’ becomes ‘did’, ‘must’ becomes ‘had to’, ‘is’ becomes ‘was’ and so on. If the primary tense is already in the past (‘knew’) the backshifted tense will be past perfect (‘had known’).

When these steps are carried out, the following changes are brought about to the report in our Direct Speech example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct form</th>
<th>Indirect form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I’</td>
<td>‘she’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I’ll’(will)</td>
<td>‘would’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘come’</td>
<td>‘go’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘here’</td>
<td>‘there’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘tomorrow’</td>
<td>‘the following day’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A further operation may be carried out on both the Direct and the Indirect forms above to render them into their corresponding ‘Free’ variants. This involves removing
the reporting clause and removing, if present, any inverted commas. If this operation is only partially followed through, then various intermediate forms present themselves. Here are the ‘Free’ versions, along with possible subvarieties, of both the DS and IS forms introduced above:

**Free Direct Speech (FDS):**

(4) I’ll come here tomorrow, she said.

(5) ‘I’ll come here tomorrow.’

(6) I’ll come here tomorrow. (freest form)

**Free Indirect Speech (FIS):**

(7) She would be there the following day.

(8) She would be there tomorrow. (freest form)

The categories available for presenting thought in narrative fiction are formally similar to those for speech. Here are examples of the four main types:

Does she still love me? (Free Direct Thought: FDT)

He wondered, ‘Does she still love me?’ (Direct Thought: DT)

Did she still love him? (Free Indirect Thought: FIT)

He wondered if she still loved him. (Indirect Thought: IT)

It is important to note that in spite of their formal similarities, there are significant conceptual differences between the speech and thought modes. Whereas speech could be overhead and reported by any bystander to an interaction, the presentation of thought is somewhat ‘counterfeit’ insofar as it presumes entry into the private consciousness of a character. To this extent, the presentation of thought in stories is ultimately an artifice (see Short 1996: 290).

There is one more important category of speech and thought presentation which we can add to our model. This is manifested in its speech and thought variants as, respectively, Narrative Report of Speech (NRS) and Narrative Report of Thought (NRT). This technique involves a narrator reporting that speech or thought has taken place but without offering any indication or flavour of the actual words used. Here are two Narrative Report transpositions, one for speech and one for thought, of the basic examples given above:

(9) She spoke of their plans for the day ahead. (Narrative Report of Speech)

(10) He wondered about her love for him. (Narrative Report of Thought)

Unlike the more explicit modes discussed above, where it is possible to work out the ‘words’ in which something was said or thought, this mode can be used to summarise
whole stretches of reported speech or thought. That is not to say that the NRS and NRT modes are always more 'economical' than their more explicit counterparts – in fact, it is sometimes easier to report verbatim what someone has uttered than to try to look for alternative ways of capturing what they have said.

**Practice**

The practical work suggested in unit C8 of this thread is very detailed, requiring some fine distinctions to be drawn between various modes of speech and thought presentation, so this is a good place to begin firming up your knowledge of how the basic speech and thought categories work. Admittedly a departure from the overall format of this introductory section, the remainder of this unit therefore develops a short transposition exercise which is designed to test the categories introduced thus far.

Examples a–e listed below are all written in the Direct mode of speech or thought presentation. Working from these base forms, try to convert the five examples into their equivalent Free Direct, Indirect and Free Indirect modes. Some suggestions on how to proceed are offered below the examples:

a  ‘I know this trick of yours!’ she said. [said to a male addressee]
b  ‘Can you get here next week?’ he asked. [said to a female addressee]
c  ‘Why isn’t John here?’ she asked herself.
d  She said, ‘We must leave tonight.’

e  ‘Help yourselves,’ he urged them.

It is probably most straightforward if you convert them into their Free Direct counterparts first of all. Then, going back to the Direct forms, convert these into their Indirect variants using the five sets of criteria provided in the sub-unit above. It should also be possible to get from the Free Direct variants to their equivalent Free Indirect forms by following these same criteria. That said, there are certain types of grammatical patterns which block some transpositions and you may come up against some them here. If so, try to account for any problems you encounter. Can you construct some NRS and NRT forms for a–e also? For solutions and commentary, go to unit D8.

Across the remainder of this strand, we will see how speech and thought presentation can be aligned with broader issues to do with narrative communication. In B8, additional refinements are made to the speech and thought model. Further along the strand, unit C8 offers a workshop programme which is designed to develop awareness of the way speech and thought presentation can be used in literary narrative. Unit D8 provides solutions relating to the practice material developed in this unit, which is why there is not the space for a selected reading to accompany this strand.
DIALOGUE AND DISCOURSE

The late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed a new interest among stylisticians in the role of dialogue in literature. This interest was paralleled by a concern with literature's status as discourse; that is, as a form of naturally occurring language use in a real social context. Thus, the emerging field of discourse stylistics was defined largely by its use of models that were interactive in their general bearing and which situated the units of analysis for literary discourse in a framework of utterances as opposed to sentences (see A2). The concept of the 'literary speech situation' (see D9) required for its exploration the methods of pragmatics, politeness theory, conversation analysis and speech act theory. Given this new orientation in research method, it was no coincidence that there developed in parallel a particular interest in the interactive dynamic of drama dialogue, and for this reason much early work in discourse stylistics has come to be associated with the study of dialogue in plays (See Burton 1980; Short 1989; Simpson 1989). To reflect these trends in stylistics, this thread focuses generally on dialogue, and more particularly, on dialogue in plays.

Dialogue in drama

It is important to think carefully about what we mean when we talk of literature as interaction. We need for instance to separate out the types of interaction that go on between characters within a text from the sort of higher-order interaction that takes place between an author and a reader. In the context of drama dialogue, Short argues that interaction works mainly on two levels, with one level of discourse embedded inside another. He suggests the schema shown in Figure A9.1 as a way of configuring the structure of dialogue in plays. Short’s schema is useful in a number of ways. It shows how the utterances that pass from one character to another become part of what the playwright ‘tells’ the audience. It also differentiates two sets of interactive contexts: the fictional context surrounding the characters within the world of the play, and the ‘real’ context framing the interaction between author and reader. From this, it holds that the features that mark social relations between people at the character level become messages about those characters at the level of discourse between author and reader/audience.

This is not to say the levels of discourse portrayed by the schema are absolutely rigid. For example, reported speech (see A8), where one character reports the words of another on stage, opens up a further, third layer of embedding. By contrast, the use

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**Figure A9.1** Dialogue in plays: from Short (1989: 149)
of soliloquy tends to break down the layering pattern because the words of a character, while remaining ‘unheard’ by other interlocutors on the stage, are relayed directly to the reader/audience. Whatever the precise characteristics of its embedding, verbal interaction in plays nonetheless requires for its understanding and interpretation the same rules of discourse that govern everyday social interaction. In other words, the assumptions we make about dialogue in the world of the play are predicated upon our assumptions about how dialogue works in the real world (see further B9).

Understanding dialogue in drama: context, structure, strategy

It was observed in unit A2 that discourse is a relatively fluid and open-ended level of language organisation that encompasses aspects of communication that go beyond the structure of words and sentences. In this respect, it is not that easy to find a compact, workable model of discourse that can be readily pressed into service for the exploration of dramatic dialogue. However, one principle that is common to many models of discourse analysis is the understanding that all naturally occurring language takes place in a context of use. We can divide up the notion of context into three basic categories:

Physical context: This is the actual setting in which interaction takes place. Physical context may be constituted by the workplace, the home environment or by a public area. In face-to-face conversation, speaker and hearer share the same physical context, although in some forms of spoken interaction, such as broadcast or telephone talk, speaker and hearer are physically separated.

Personal context: This refers to the social and personal relationships of the interactants to one another. Personal context also encompasses social networks and group membership, the social and institutional roles of speakers and hearers, and the relative status and social distance that pertains between participants.

Cognitive context: This refers to the shared and background knowledge held by participants in interaction. Cognitive context, which is susceptible to change as interaction progresses, also extends to a speaker’s world-view, cultural knowledge and past experiences (see further A10).

Against this sketch of interactive context, we can begin to plot some principles of dialogue. One approach that I have found to be reasonably effective, though in no way a canonical or definitive method of analysis, is to conceptualise dialogue in terms of two axes. These intersecting axes – let us call them structure and strategy – are organised along the lines of the Jakobsonian ‘axis of combination’ and ‘axis of selection’ introduced in unit B1. From this perspective, an utterance can be analysed either in terms of its linear placement along an axis of combination or in terms of its status as a strategic choice from the axis of selection. Put another way, the axis of combination forms a structural frame along which units of dialogue are strung in an ‘a and b’ relationship, while the axis of selection connects elements of discourse in an ‘a or b’ relationship.
To illustrate more clearly how this conceptual model works, consider the following hypothetical exchange in which a speaker, who for the sake of argument needs to get a taxi home, decides to borrow some money from a close acquaintance:

(1) A: Could you lend me five pounds, please?
   B: Umm, OK. [hands money to A]

The two utterances in (1) combine to form a jointly produced unit of discourse called an *exchange*. Here the speaker’s request prompts a reaction from the hearer, expressed through both a verbal act (‘Umm, OK’) and the non-verbal act of handing over the money. This ‘request and reaction’ pattern is a common exchange type, as are other familiar two-part pairings like ‘question and answer’ and ‘statement and acknowledgement’.

Of course, this simple exchange pattern may have been realised through other structural permutations, through other variations along the axis of combination as it were. For instance:

(2) A: Could you lend me five pounds, please?
   B: What d’ye wannit for?
   A: I need to get a taxi home.
   B: Umm, OK. [hands money to A]

Here, the progress of the exchange is delayed by speaker B’s request for clarification. This utterance prompts a little mini-exchange, known as an *insertion sequence*, which, until it is completed, holds up the progression of the main exchange.

The axis of selection, with its focus on strategy, emphasises the ‘tactical’ nature of discourse. In this respect, the form of A’s utterance represents just one choice from a pool of options that are available to speakers. More direct choices present themselves, as do more indirect ones:

- Choice 2 [more direct]: Lend me five pounds.
- Choice 1: Could you lend me five pounds, please?
- Choice 3 [less direct]: Er, I think I might have a bit of a problem getting home . . .

This three-way pattern of options says much about the ways in which we make strategic choices in utterance selection. We tend to balance the need for directness, whose principal pay-off is clarity and conciseness, with the need for indirectness, whose principal pay-off is politeness. Much of our everyday linguistic practice involves instant on-the-spot calculations of this sort. Choice 2, for example, is a maximally direct speech act because it matches up a grammatical form with the function of the utterance: it uses an imperative structure to make a request. However, while this tactic is unquestionably efficient and clear as a directive, its forthrightness will be interpreted as peremptory and rude in many contexts. Choice 3 is, by contrast, a more oblique gambit, the content of which is rather more tangential to the task it
asks of the hearer. It is a *hint*, so defined because the body of the utterance makes no direct lexical link to what it implicitly refers. The pay-off is that the speaker is seen to be politely non-coercive, although the down-side is that the relative obscurity of the utterance means that it stands less chance of successfully accomplishing its goal.

It is interesting, then, that the middle sequence, choice 1, would seem to be the default option for most interactive contexts. This strategy exhibits *conventionalised indirectness* because it draws on the grammatical form used for asking questions and not the one anticipated for commands or requests. Nevertheless, this sort of indirectness is normal in situations where we want to mitigate what we say with a degree of politeness (see further below). Also, the utterance’s particular speech act status – its *illocutionary force* – is made clear by the particle ‘please’. As well as consolidating the politeness function, this particle confirms the utterance’s function as a request for action, and not, say, as a polite inquiry about the addressee’s hypothetical ability to carry out the action referred to.

As with the elements arranged along the structural continuum, variations in the strategic continuum are also possible. In respect of choice 1, we can supplement the main request with extra markers of politeness that make use of additional pragmatic tactics. For example, a common technique when making requests is to indicate pessimism about the intended outcome of your utterance:

(3) I don’t suppose you’ll be able to do this, but could you lend me five pounds, please?

Alternatively, it is always a good idea to state the overwhelming reasons that led you to carry out the request:

(4) The cash machine wasn’t working, so could you lend me five pounds, please?

Then again, perhaps a formal declaration of indebtedness might be the best gambit:

(5) I’d really be eternally grateful to you for this – could you lend me five pounds, please?

Finally, it normally helps to downplay the degree of imposition you are making on your interlocutor, throwing in a few hedges for good measure:

(6) Er, I’ve just a tiny wee favour to ask you . . . umm . . . I was wondering . . . umm . . . could you lend me five pounds, please?

Leaving aside for the moment the more fine-tuned politeness tactics in examples (3) to (6), the three basic choices from the axis of selection – the unmitigated command, the routinely indirect default form and the ‘hint’ embodied by choice three – all mark a broad shift in politeness, ranging from the least polite to the most polite form.
Speakers are normally acutely aware of what sort of strategy can be used in which circumstances, which is why the idea of context can never be divorced from the analysis of dialogue. Whereas there may be little interactive risk in using choice 2 with friends and social equals in an informal setting, its use in a formal setting with an interlocutor who is an acknowledged social superior may have damaging interactive consequences. A speaker’s communicative strategies are thus sensitive to the perceived context, so in this respect, context, in its three aspects outlined above, operates as a key strategy-framing device in discourse. This knowledge of what to say, and when and where to say it, is called communicative competence (Hymes 1972). Communicative competence is the skill involved in matching an utterance to an appropriate context of use; in other words, knowing when to be familiar and when to be formal, knowing when to be direct and when to be indirect, or simply knowing when to talk and when to keep quiet.

Summary
This unit has established some basic categories and concepts for the analysis of dialogue. Developing the strand further, unit B9 looks at some of the directions that have been taken within this branch of stylistics while unit C9 suggests a practical activity based around the theoretical constructs developed here. The thread is concluded in D9 with a reading by Mary Louise Pratt which explores the concept of the literary speech situation. In A10, the notion of cognitive context is developed further as attention is focussed on a movement in stylistics which followed in the wake of discourse stylistics. This movement has become known as cognitive stylistics.

COGNITIVE STYLISTICS

It is part of the natural development of modern stylistics constantly to enrich and update its methods of analysis. In the previous strand, we saw how ideas about dialogue, discourse and social interaction have found their way into stylistics, both as a tool for exploring the interactive dimension of literary discourse in the broader sense and as a method for examining patterns of dialogue between fictional characters in the narrower. In this unit, attention focusses on a yet further development in stylistics which has had a profound impact on the direction the discipline has taken in the twenty first century. This development has come to be known as the ‘cognitive turn’ in stylistics, and its broad rationale is the basis of this unit.

Cognitive models in and for stylistic analysis
As highlighted by the Fowler-Bateson debate (D1), stylistics has since its earliest days set great store by the use of detailed linguistic analysis as a basis for the interpretation of literary texts. This focus on the methods of compositional technique has tended to make stylistics writerly in its general theoretical orientation. However,
what has largely been missing from this approach has been any account of the mental processes that inform, and are affected by, the way we read and interpret literary texts. Stylistics has in other words lacked a readerly dimension. In the last decade of the previous century, stylisticians began to redress the 'writerly bias' in stylistics by exploring more systematically the cognitive structures that readers employ when reading texts. In doing so, they borrowed heavily from developments in cognitive linguistics and Artificial Intelligence, and this new emphasis in research method saw the emergence of cognitive stylistics or cognitive poetics. While cognitive stylistics is intended to supplement, rather than supplant, existing methods of analysis, it does aim to shift the focus away from models of text and composition towards models that make explicit the links between the human mind and the process of reading.

A further stimulus to the cognitive turn was provided by the object of analysis itself, literature. As noted from strand 1 onwards, a core assumption in much stylistic work has been that there is simply no such thing as a 'literary language'. This ground rule has been important polemically because it positions stylistics in direct counterpoint to the sort of literary criticism that places 'the language of literature' beyond the reach of ordinary users of ordinary language. It does, however, come at a price in that it tends to make harder the task of finding out what it is that makes literature different from other forms of social discourse. With its focus on the process of reading rather than writing, cognitive stylisticians have addressed precisely this problem in their work, arguing that literature is perhaps better conceptualised as a way of reading than as a way of writing. Furthermore, exploring fully this way of reading requires a thorough overhaul of existing models of stylistic analysis.

This search for new models was to go beyond even those models of pragmatics and discourse analysis that had become a familiar part of the stylistics arsenal since the 1980s. Moving away from theories of discourse, the new orientation was to models which accounted for the stores of knowledge which readers bring into play when they read, and on how these knowledge stores are modified or enriched as reading progresses. To bring this discourse-cognitive interface into sharper focus, let us consider the following seemingly rather banal utterance whose full significance will emerge shortly:

(1) Could I have a pint of lager, please?

Across the previous thread, we looked at how spoken utterances might be interpreted in terms of either discourse strategy or discourse structure. An example like this was developed in A9, where observations were made on its various tactical functions in verbal interaction. We might indeed make a number of similar inferences about the pragmatic function of the utterance above. For instance, the utterance, with its conventionally indirect form-to-function pattern, is of the 'choice 1' variety on the strategic continuum (see A9). Furthermore, its illocutionary force as a request is confirmed by the particle 'please', which, along with the reference to a quantity of alcoholic drink within the utterance, would lead to the fairly unexceptional deduction that it is uttered by a single speaker in some kind of public house.
However, what an analysis of discourse would not account for is the way we are able to store a mental picture of a ‘pub’ which can be activated for the understanding of this utterance in context. This mental picture develops out of past experience of such places, experience gathered either through direct contact or through indirect sources. In other words, even if the pub as a social phenomenon does not feature in your own culture, your experience of, say, Western film, television and literature may have provided sufficient input to form an image schema which, if only weakly held, is still susceptible to ongoing modification as more new information comes in.

Whatever the precise type of primary input, it is clear that we can form a mental representation which will specify what a certain entity is, what it is for, what it looks like and so on. This image has been rendered down from multiple experiences into a kind of idealised prototypical image, an image which we might term an *idealised cognitive model*. An idealised cognitive model (ICM) contains information about what is typical (for us) and it is a domain of knowledge that is brought into play for the processing and understanding of textual representations. These domains of knowledge are also accompanied by conceptual slots for the things that routinely accompany the mental representation; the mental representation for the pub would, for instance, include an entry for ‘roles’ like barman, customer, waiter, bouncer and so on, as well as one for ‘props’ like tables, optics, chairs, a bar and so on (Schank and Abelson 1977: 43; and see B10). Of course, ICMs differ between subjects, so the props for one individual prototypical representation of a pub might include, say, traditional carved panelling and old oak tables while, for another, the inventory could contain a pool table, a wide-screen television or a games machine. Importantly, ICMs are subject to modification in the course of an individual subject’s experience and development. For example, I once had cause to visit a pub in the west of Ireland which doubled up both as a grocery shop, and, more improbably, as a funeral parlour. Amongst other things, this experience caused me to revise my mental model of the pub: the less typical representation interacted with the prototype leading to a modified ICM. Yet I was still able to ‘make sense’ of the newly experienced pub-cum-funeral-parlour because I was able to structure the new knowledge in terms of the older, familiar ICM. In a dynamic process of conversion, transference between concepts leads us constantly to modify our ICMs as new stimuli are encountered.

When it comes to reading and interpreting texts, it is important to bear in mind that ICMs may be activated often by only the most minimal syntactic or lexical marker in a text. This is not surprising. After all, it would be odd indeed if, for every time we heard the word ‘pub’, we required for its understanding the provision of a contextualising text like the following:

\[(2)\] The term ‘pub’ is a contraction of ‘public house’. Pubs are premises licensed for the consumption of alcohol and soft drinks. In Western cultures which have no prohibition on alcohol, pubs are establishments which are open to the public, although localised restrictions apply to the admission of minors. Licensed premises may be housed in a variety of building designs which vary in character and theme, although most contain a bar across which drinks, and possibly light snacks or meals are served . . .
There is simply no end to the amount of context that could be provided here, but the point is that such context is unnecessary because the domains of knowledge that comprise ICMs allow us to take cognitive short-cuts when we interpret language. We do not, in other words, need to have a fully elaborated textual representation of a concept in order to set in motion a cognitive representation of that concept.

Summary
This unit has addressed the broad tenets of a cognitive approach to style. Coverage has however been rather sketchy because little explicit information has been provided either on key models of cognitive stylistic analysis or on the main practitioners in the field. To address this, the cognitive theme will be elaborated further in two different directions. Horizontally, unit B10 surveys some of the key developments in this branch of stylistics and introduces a variety of models of analysis. Further across the strand, C10 develops some practical activities for cognitive stylistic analysis which take account of the ideas introduced both here and in B10. The strand concludes with a reading by Margaret Freeman which offers a rigorous cognitive stylistic analysis of Emily Dickinson’s poetry. Vertically, the cognitive theme is developed in A11 where attention focusses on one of the most important devices we use to transfer, modify or blend mental constructs. This device is metaphor which, along with the related concept metonymy, plays a pivotal role in contemporary cognitive stylistic analysis.

METAPHOR AND METONYMY

An important feature of cognitive stylistics has been its interest in the way we transfer mental constructs, and especially in the way we map one mental representation onto another when we read texts. Stylisticians and cognitive poeticians have consistently drawn attention to this system of conceptual transfer in both literary and in everyday discourse, and have identified two important tropes, or figures of speech, through which this conceptual transfer is carried out. These tropes are metaphor and metonymy and this unit will introduce these core concepts in cognitive stylistics.

Metaphor
A metaphor is a process of mapping between two different conceptual domains. The different domains are known as the target domain and the source domain. The target domain is the topic or concept that you want to describe through the metaphor while the source domain refers to the concept that you draw upon in order to create the metaphorical construction. Thus, in an expression like:

(1) She really blew her lid.
the target domain is our understanding of the concept of anger because it is the concept we wish to describe through the metaphor. The source domain for the metaphor can be conceptualised as ‘heated fluid in a container’ because that is the concept which provides the vehicle for the metaphorical transfer. The metaphor as a whole can be represented, using the standard notation of small capital letters, by the formula: ANGER IS A HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER. This type of formulation is useful because it abstracts out of the particular linguistic structure of the metaphor its underlying organisation.

Importantly, the relationship between metaphor and linguistic form is an indirect one, which means that we can express the same conceptual metaphor through a variety of constructions. Consider, for instance, an alternative version of example (1):

(2) Talk about letting off steam . . . She really blew her lid, I mean really blew her top. She just exploded!

Although this example comprises four grammatical clauses, this is not to say that it contains four metaphors. All of the clauses in fact express the same source and target domain, which means that the single underlying conceptual metaphor ANGER IS A HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER is being played out through a variety of linguistic constructions.

In his influential study of the poetic structure of the human mind, Gibbs (1994) highlights the important part metaphor plays in our everyday conceptual thought. Metaphors are not some kind of distorted literal thought, but rather are basic schemes by which people conceptualise their experience and their external world. Figurative language generally, which also includes irony (see A12), is found throughout speech and writing; moreover, it does not require for its use any special intellectual talent or any special rhetorical situation (Gibbs 1994: 21). Indeed, the fact that many metaphors pass us by in everyday social interaction is well illustrated by this unwitting slip by a venerable British sports commentator:

(3) We didn’t have metaphors in my day. We didn’t beat about the bush.

Metaphor is simply a natural part of conceptual thought and although undoubtedly an important feature of creativity, it should not be seen as a special or exclusive feature of literary discourse. For instance, examples (4) to (6) below, which embody the same conceptual metaphor, are from a variety of print and broadcast media covering the conflict in Iraq in 2003:

(4) The third mechanised infantry are currently clearing up parts of the Al Mansur Saddam village area.

(5) The regime is finished, but there remains some tidying up to do.

(6) Official sources described it as a ‘mopping up’ operation.

Examples (4) to (6) rehearse the same basic metaphor through three different linguistic realisations. The experience of war, which is the topic that forms the target
domain of the metaphor, is relayed through the idea of cleaning, which is the concept that provides the source domain. The metaphor might thus be represented as: war is cleaning. Given its context, the ideological significance of this metaphor is worth commenting on. It suggests that the conflict is nothing more than a simple exercise in sanitation, a perspective which, it has to be said, is unlikely to be shared by military personnel on the opposing side. In an effort presumably to allay domestic worries about the progression of the conflict, the British and American press are playing down both the extent and intensity of the conflict through this strategically motivated metaphor.

If we accept that metaphors are part and parcel, so to speak, of everyday discourse, an important question presents itself. Are there any qualitative differences in the sorts of metaphors that are found in different discourse contexts? An important criterion in this respect is the degree of novelty exhibited by a metaphor. As with any figure of speech, repeated use leads to familiarity, and so commonplace metaphors can sometimes develop into idioms or fixed expressions in the language. The commentator’s reference to ‘beat about the bush’ in (3) is a good example of this process. However, what arguably sets the use of metaphor in literature apart from more ‘idiomatised’ uses of the trope is that in literature metaphors are on the one hand typically more novel and on the other typically less clear (Kövecses 2002: 43). Writers consciously strive for novelty in literary expression and this requires developing not only new conceptual mappings but also new stylistic frameworks through which these mappings can be presented. This theme of novelty in metaphor is taken up in B11.

Metonymy

In contrast with metaphor, metonymy is based on a transfer within a single conceptual domain. Staying within the boundaries of the same domain, metonymy involves transpositions between associated concepts and this commonly results in transfer between the part and the whole, a producer and the produced, an institution and its location and so on. Metonymy in which the part stands for the whole – a trope known as synecdoche – is found in expressions like ‘hired hand’ or ‘a fresh pair of legs’. Alternatively, constructions where a location substitutes for the particular institution which it houses can be found in expressions like ‘Buckingham Palace is thought to be furious’ or ‘The Pentagon refused to comment on the story’. Metonymies where the producer of something is associated with what is produced occur in expressions like ‘Have you read the new Kate Atkinson?’ or ‘There’s a good Spielberg on tomorrow night’.

Other metonymies are more contextually dependent for their interpretation, as in, say, ‘The lead guitar has gone AWOL’ where a more contingent ‘stands-for’ relationship pertains between the musician and the particular instrument played. In general, whereas a metaphor assumes a certain distance between the concepts it embodies, between its target and source, a metonymy upgrades certain salient characteristics from a single domain to represent that domain as a whole.

It is not always easy to spot the difference between metaphor and metonymy but a useful test to distinguish one trope from the other is to try to convert the expression into a simile. A simile makes an explicit connection between two concepts
through the use of the *IS LIKE* formula. Applying the test serves therefore to draw attention to the conceptual space between a target and a source domain in metaphor, but the same test will collapse when applied to metonymy. For example, (1) and (4) to (6) convert easily into similes, as in, respectively:

\[
\begin{align*}
(1') & \text{ ANGER IS LIKE A HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER} \\
(4') \text{ to (6')} & \text{ WAR IS LIKE CLEANING}
\end{align*}
\]

By contrast, the metonymy ‘hired hand’ cannot support the parallel simile ‘A worker is like a hand’, nor does ‘a fresh pair of legs’ convert to ‘A substitute is like a pair of legs’. The same restriction blocks the conversion of the other metonymies noted above, as in: ‘A musician is like a lead guitar’, ‘A monarchy is like Buckingham Palace’, ‘Spielberg is like a film’ and so on.

Like metaphors, metonymies find their expression in everyday discourse practices. A metonymy that became briefly popular in Britain some years ago began life when a notoriously combative midfielder, employed by a wealthy English football club, criticised certain of that club’s fans for their less than committed support of the team. He described them as the sort of people who would eat prawn sandwiches during the half time interval, behaviour which he at least considered unworthy of real soccer fans. The British sports pundits quickly seized on this figure of speech, and within a few months, a novel metonymy had found its way into media and popular discourse. The term ‘prawn sandwich’ had come to stand for any effete or whimpish football fan, while expressions like ‘They’re just a bunch of prawn sandwiches’ could be said of any set of supporters, and not just those who comprised the original referents of the phrase.

Metonymy has an important stylistic function. In unit B6 it can be seen how meronymic agency is a type of transitivity process which involves the part ‘standing for’ the whole in such a way as to place a human body part, rather than a whole person, in the role of an Actor, Sensor, Sayer and so on. Metonymy also plays an important role in the technique of *caricature*. Caricature is a form of metonymic distortion, much favoured by satirical humorists, which involves the distortion of some aspect of human appearance, normally physiognomy, such that this exaggerated body part assumes a prominence sufficient to symbolise the whole being. For example, most caricatures of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher played, according to Garland (1988: 77), on her bouffant hair and pointed nose. This gradually shaded into ever more grotesque representations until the nose and hair themselves became the visual embodiment of the politician (and see further chapter five of Simpson (2003)).

**Summary**

This introductory unit is developed further in B11, where amongst other things the important issue of novelty as a feature of literary metaphor is explored. Unit C11 offers a range of practical suggestions covering both metaphor and metonymy, while the thread concludes, in D11, with a reading by Peter Stockwell on the theory of metaphor.
In various places in the book, connections have been drawn between patterns of style and verbal humour (see for example units B9, C1, C5 and C9). This concluding unit to section A offers the opportunity to review some of the principles which inform the stylistic analysis of humorous discourse. Although there are no corresponding B and C units in this thread, the theme of style and humour is explored further in reading D12, by Walter Nash.

Puns and verbal play

Two key theoretical principles underpin the language of humour, the first of which is that humour requires an incongruity. The principle of incongruity is mooted in B9 and C9 in respect of absurdism in drama dialogue, but the concept applies more generally to (i) any kind of stylistic twist in a pattern of language or (ii) any situation where there is a mismatch between what someone says and what they mean. The second principle is that incongruity can be situated in any layer of linguistic structure. Just as style is a multilevelled concept (A2), the humour mechanism can operate at any level of language and discourse, and it can even play one level off against another. The stylistic analysis of humour therefore involves identifying an incongruity in a text and pinpointing whereabouts in the language system it occurs. Of course, not all incongruities are funny but the complex reasons as to why this is so will have to be left aside for now (see further Attardo 2001).

One of the most commonly used stylistic devices for creating humour is the pun. In its broadest sense, a pun is a form of word-play in which some feature of linguistic structure simultaneously combines two unrelated meanings. Whereas the unrelated meanings in a pun are often situated in individual words, many puns cut across different levels of linguistic organisation and so their formal properties are quite variable. Clearly, the pun is an important part of the stylistic arsenal of writers because it allows a controlled ‘double meaning’ to be located in what is in effect a chance connection between two elements of language. It is however a resource of language that we all share, and it is important, as emphasised throughout this book, not to sequester away literary uses of language from everyday language practices. Let me provide a simple illustration of the commonality of punning as a language resource, which comes, of all things, from the names of various hairdressing salons in the south of the city of Belfast. Such emporia are now but a distant memory for your follically challenged author, and so the examples and commentary that follow are offered strictly from the vantage point of the dispassionate outsider:

(1) Shylocks
   Curl up n Dye
   Shear Luck
   Streaks Ahead
   Hair Affair

Although a variety of individual punning strategies are used here, all of the names play on a chance similarity between two or more unrelated aspects of language. My
own favourite, ‘Shylocks’, plays on an intertextual connection with Shakespeare’s famous character by exploiting the phonological similarity between ‘locks’ (of hair) and the morphology of the personal name. Other names make use of ‘homophones’ which are words with the same sound but different spellings: thus, ‘dye’ versus ‘die’, ‘Shear’ versus ‘sheer’ and so on. Interestingly, these puns are framed in the context of familiar idioms and fixed expressions in the language (‘curl up and die’, ‘sheer luck’) and they provide good illustrations of how foregrounding takes its source material from the commonplace in language (see B1). Especially clever is the multiple punning in ‘Streaks Ahead’. Projected into the discourse domain of hairdressing, this fixed expression not only gives a new resonance to the word ‘streaks’ but the morphology of ‘a head’ facilitates an allusion to the relevant feature of anatomy. The last name on the list, if not strictly a pun, contours a sequence of sounds to create an internal rhyme scheme. It thus works by projecting the Jakobsonian axis of selection onto the axis of combination – a good example of the poetic principle in operation if ever there was one!

Moving onto puns in literature, the technique is illustrated by the following lines from the fourth book of Alexander Pope’s *Dunciad* (1743):

\[(2) \text{Where Bentley late tempestuous wont to sport} \\
\text{In troubled waters, but now sleeps in port.}\]

Although this is just an isolated example from what is undoubtedly an enormous pool of possibilities in literature, it does illustrate well the basic principle of punning. The form *port* embraces two lexical items: both obvious, one refers to a harbour and the other an alcoholic beverage. In the context of Pope’s couplet, Bentley (a boisterous Cambridge critic) is described through a nautical metaphor, as someone who has crossed turbulent seas to reach a tranquil safe-haven. Yet the second sense of *port* makes for a disjunctive reading, which, suggesting a perhaps drunken sleep, tends to undercut comically the travails of Bentley. This is the essence of punning, where an ambiguity is projected by balancing two otherwise unrelated elements of linguistic structure.

**Parody and satire**

Parody and satire are forms of verbal humour which draw on a particular kind of *irony* for the design of their stylistic incongruity. Irony is situated in the space between what you say and what you mean, as embodied in an utterance like ‘You’re a fine friend!’ when said to someone who has just let you down. A particularly important way of producing irony is to *echo* other utterances and forms of discourse. This is apparent in an exchange like the following:

\[(3) \text{A: I’m really fed up with this washing up.} \\
\text{B: You’re fed up! Who do you think’s been doing it all week?}\]

In this exchange, the proposition about being fed up is used in a ‘straight’ way by the first speaker, but in an ironic way by the second. This is because the proposition
is explicitly echoed by the second speaker during their expression of their immediate reaction to it. The status of the proposition when echoed is therefore not the same as when it is used first time out.

We have already seen in this book an example of the echoic form of irony at work. In unit C1, it was observed how the greater part of Dorothy Parker’s poem ‘One Perfect Rose’ echoed ironically the lyric love poem of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. This principle of ironic echo is absolutely central to the concept of parody. Once echoed, a text becomes part of a new discourse context so it no longer has the illocutionary force (A9) it once had in its original context. Parody can take any particular anterior text as its model, although more general characteristics of other genres of discourse, as we saw in the case of ‘One Perfect Rose’, can also be brought into play. This broad capacity of parody to function as a ‘discourse of allusion’ is the substance of Nash’s reading at the end of this thread, and readers will find there some further illustrations of this technique.

The distinction between parody and satire is not an easy one to draw, but it is commonly assumed that satire has an aggressive element which is not necessarily present in parody. How this translates into stylistic terms is that satirical discourse, as well as having an echoic element, requires a further kind of ironic twist or distortion in its textual make-up. This additional distortion means that while parodies can remain affectionate to their source, satire can never be so. Consider, for example, Jonathan Swift’s A Modest Proposal (1729) which lays good claim to being the most famous piece of satire ever written. Swift’s text echoes the genre of the early eighteenth-century pamphlet, and more narrowly the proliferation of pamphlets offering economic solutions to what was then perceived as the ‘Irish problem’. The opening of the Proposal reviews various schemes and recommendations to alleviate poverty and starvation, but it is only after about nine hundred words of text that its mild-mannered speaker eventually details his ‘proposal’:

(4) I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout.

(Swift 1986 [1729]: 2175–6)

While Swift’s text echoes the conventions of a particular genre of discourse, it contains the requisite distortion that marks it out as satire. This distortion comes through the startling sequence where the persona proposes to alleviate the burden of overpopulation in Ireland by eating that country’s children. This twist is both brutal and stark, and marks an abrupt shift from a seemingly moral framework to a framework of abnormality and obscenity. Just how ‘humorous’ this particular brand of satire is, where the sense of opposition between what is morally acceptable and what is not is very wide, is difficult to assess (see further Simpson (2003)). What it
does show is how satire is created through both an echo of another discourse and an opposition or distortion within its own stylistic fabric.

**Summary**
This unit has introduced some of the basic principles of punning and other forms of verbal humour. Although no more than a snapshot of an enormous area of inquiry, it should have demonstrated both how techniques in stylistics are well suited to the exploration of verbal humour and why stylisticians have shown a continued interested over the years in this area of study. One such stylistician is Walter Nash, whose essay on the techniques of parody and allusion, complete with some entertaining self-penned parodies, is reproduced as reading D12.