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## A TAXONOMY FOR STYLISTICS

Camille Stilson Williams

In his book Style in Hamlet, Maurice Charney (1969) describes the style of Hamlet's language as "self-conscious", "swaggering, expressive self-indulgent, fulsome and rhetorical, inflated, theatrical, flamboyant"; adjectives that may warm the heart of the literary critic, but cause the linguist to grimace.

Linguists smile and literary critics cool, no doubt, at a reading of Rolf Sandell's (1977) discussions of operationalizations of style, quantifications in stylistics, stylistic variables and interrelations among stylistic variables.

While the advocates of the two approaches have agreed to a truce, and even to a peaceable cooperation under the skillful arbitration of King (1941), Enkvist (1964), and others, there remains the struggle to find a model of style based upon linguistic principles, but also accounting for the elusive quality that establishes the literary merit of a piece.

What is needed is a taxonomy for stylistics that names the "objects" of our study as adequately as the taxonomies used by the biologist and botanist name the objects of their studies.

I agree with King's view that traditional rhetorical terms interpreted by modern linguistic principles can prove extremely helpful in the analysis of style; I believe those terms form the beginning of our taxonomy. As Lanham (1968) points out, in the field of rhetoric there are many "differences of opinion about what basic terms mean." We considered the rhetorical terms available to use, then selected 29 terms which we felt could be used descriptively in the analysis of the language of Shakespeare and of the King James Bible (see Lanham 1968, Joseph 1947).

Since that time, I have been writing self-instructional lessons which our students complete at the beginning of the semester; in order to teach these terms, it has been necessary for us to modify the definition of a term in a way that makes it consistent, understandable, and useful for the non-expert. After about two weeks of study, the students have been able to use this limited taxonomy effectively as they read Shakespeare (or the Bible), and their abilities to both understand the plain sense of a passage, and to analyze its style have improved significantly.

It has become apparent that if readers do not have a clear idea of the language patterns that may exist, they may not notice what does exist.

Even a limited rhetorical analysis of Shakespeare's Macbeth 5.5.17-28 (See handout A) yields about a page and a half of information identifying phonemic, morphemic, lexical, syntactic and semantic patterns. This is simply a matter of identification at this stage; the linguist or the

literary critic would still need to evaluate the significance of the use of these devices. Significance might be determined for example by comparison with a norm, such as comparing this speech with the style of other speeches by Macbeth, or with the rhetorical norm of the play as a whole.

MAC 5.05.17-28

Macb. She should have died hereafter;  
 There would have been a time for such a word.  
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
 To the last vnilable of recorded time;  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.

20

25

Handout A

#### ANSWERS

Line 17, alliteration: she, should; homoeoteleuton: should, died.

Lines 17-27 consonance /r/: To-morrow, tomorrow, to-morrow, creeps; poor, player, struts, frets, hour, heard, more.

Lines 17-28 consonance/alliteration/homoeoteleuton: should, died, would, word, and, and, day, day, recorded, yesterdays, lighted, dusty, death, candle, shadow, and, and, Told, idiot, sound and; /d/t/alteration: should, died, hereafter, would, time, such, word, To-morrow, and to-morrow, and tomorrow, petty, day to day, To last, recorded time; And yesterdays, lighted, dusty death, Out, out, candle, but, shadow, That struts and frets, stage, And, It, late Told, idiot, sound and.

Lines 17-18 internal rime: should, would; assonance: died, time.

Line 18 paramoeon + assonance: would, word (Sh; some modern dialects); assonance: would, such, word (Sh; some modern dialects).

Line 19 triad, polysyndeton, epanalepsis.

Lines 19-20 anacoluthon (sg. verb form with a pl. subject).

Line 20 consonance/alliteration: creeps, petty pace; sense-play (elicited by to-morrow 19): from day to day/'from day to-day'; assonance: pace, day, day.

Lines 21-2 consonance /t/ + assonance /ai/: time, lighted; consonance /i/s/: last, syllable, all, yesterdays, lighted, fools.

Lines 22-3 consonance /st/: yesterdays, dusty.

Line 23 transferred modifier: dusty (those who die become dust);  
epizeuxis: out.

Lines 23-4 consonance: brief, life's; candle, Life's player;  
assonance + consonance: candle, shadow.

Line 24 paromoeon: poor, player.

Lines 24-6 assonance: player, stage, tale (accentuated by final position  
in line).

Lines 23-7 assonantal echoes: Out, out, hour, sound.

Line 25 homoeoteleuton, consonance: struts, frets, stage.

Lines 25-6 assonance: frets, then, heard (Sh).

Line 26 assonance: no more.

Lines 26-7 polyptoton, /t/l/: tale, Told; consonance: tale, Told, full.

Line 27 alliteration + assonance /u/u/: full, fury; hendiadys:  
sound and fury = furious sound.

Lines 27-8 alliteration: sound, signifying; consonance: sound an  
signifying nothing.

Line 28 homoeoteleuton: signifying, nothing.

It is likely that studies of different individual authors and possibly further studies of different works by one author would extend the taxonomy we are now using.

Carpenter (1969) suggests that traditional rhetoric be used to help identify uncommon word orders, in texts under study. He then

reduces rhetorical theory to twenty-one discrete conformations... the essential schemes of syntax... identified and classified by their five basic and discernible characteristics of repetition, omission, suspension, inversion, or antithesis.

While it may be convenient to reduce the number of rhetorical terms used, such large groupings may not adequately model or preserve the subtle but significant variations that exist within each classification.

Carpenter claims to have classified on the basis of syntax; however, he has relied a good deal on semantic information. We have found that some rhetorical devices occur only when specific syntactic and semantic requirements are met. For example, being able to distinguish between hendiadys and a pleonastic pair or a transferred modifier and some instances of hyperbaton requires having specific semantic information.

Carpenter claims to be classifying solely on the basis of syntax; however, the meanings of his classifications derive from non-syntactic

information. Unless the definition of syntax is extended considerably, as Carpenter seems to do to include such things as phonemic, morphemic and supra sentence patterns as well as semantic features, many rhetorical patterns ranging from below word level to above sentence level will not be recognized, and the stylistic analysis will be the poorer for the omissions.

We have made the point that 1) traditional rhetoric interpreted by modern linguistic principles provides a taxonomy for stylistics, and we will direct our attention next to establishing its corollary, that is, that 2) this taxonomy can be useful for describing the style of contemporary as well as ancient or Renaissance texts.

It is my view that analysts of modern poetry would find it particularly helpful to employ traditional rhetoric; for while many poets have discarded traditional metrical and rime schemes, they have retained, unknowingly perhaps, other traditional devices. By recognizing the existence of those devices the reader may better appreciate how modern poetry "holds together" without regularity of meter or rime.

Here (on handout B) is the first stanza of Dylan Thomas's "And Death Shall Have No Dominion".

And death shall have no dominion,  
 Dead men naked they shall be one  
 With the man in the wind and the west moon; 3  
 When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone.  
 They shall have stars at elbow and foot 5  
 Though they go mad they shall be sane,  
 Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;  
 Though lovers be lost love shall not; 8  
 And death shall have no dominion.

Rhetorical devices used in these lines include: Sound Patterns: Title, 1-2. /d/alliteration, couplet; 1./æ/assonance; 2. /ɛ:/, /ei/; 2-3. /w/a/literation; 3. /i/assonance, man, moon paromoeon; 2-4. /n/homoeoteleuton; 6. /ei/assonance, Though, go; internal rime; 7. /s/alliteration; 8. /a/assonance, /t/ homoeoteleuton; 9. /d/ alliteration, /æ/assonance.

Other rhetorical devices: 1-2. isocolon; 1, 9. refrain; 2. hyperbaton (naked); 2-3 men, man polyptoton; 4. bones, clean antimetabole; 2, 5, 6, 7. they shall epanalepsis; 6-8. Though anaphora; antithesis in each line; 8. lovers love polyptoton; 8-9. isocolon.

Continuity in this poem is achieved through the use of repetition of sounds: consonance, assonance, alliteration, homoeoteleuton and paromoeon; through the repetition of words; refrain, epanalepsis, and anaphora; and through repetition of length of line; isocolon. This repetition is counterpointed by variation of word form: polyptoton; by variation of syntax: hyperbaton, and antimetabole; and by semantic contrast coupled with syntactic similarity: antithesis.

This is not to say that the effectiveness of the language inheres in the forms themselves; rather the poet uses these devices to develop the semantic content, meter, and tone of the poem.

Prose is also open to rhetorical analysis; here is an excerpt from The Bee and the Stork:

Thus ryghtwyse men þat lufes God are never in ydyllnes;  
for owthyre þay ere in travayle, prayand, or thynkande or  
redande or othere gude doande or withtakand ydill mene and  
schewand thaym worthy to be put fra þe ryste of heven, for  
þay will noghte travayle. Here þay take erthe, þat es, þay  
halde þamselwe vile and erthely, that thay be noghte blawen  
with þe wynde of vanyte and of pryde.

Since the relationship of spelling and pronunciation during this period is still in dispute, I have not proposed a sound analysis. Rhetorical Figures include: morphemic homoeoteleuton: prayand, thynkande, redande, doande, withtakand, schewand; polysyndeton: or; polyptoton: travayle, ydyllnes, ydill and erthe, erthely; hendiadys: vile and erthely = vile because earthly; pleonastic pair: of vanyte and of pryde.

Carpenter (1969, p. 166) notes that John F. Kennedy's most quoted words:

Ask not what your country can do for you--Ask what you can do for your country.

is antimetabole (your country, you) within antithesis.

We have found the stylistic taxonomy we adopted with 17th century texts in mind very helpful; it will take further research to establish one inclusive, systematic taxonomy for all periods and genres. I think it can be done; it has begun, and I think that it's worth doing.

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