

Discussions

Styl?

Moje dzisiejsze rozumienie stylu

W „Stylistyce” IV zostały zamieszczone pierwsze nadane wypowiedzi w ankiecie „Styl? Moje dzisiejsze rozumienie stylu”. Redakcja „Stylistyki” zaprasza na swoje łamy dalszych dyskutantów. W niniejszym tomie publikujemy wypowiedź M. Čarkicia oraz omówienie dyskusji niemieckich stylistyków.

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On the Notion of Style

In the beginning was the Word!

1) Nowadays style, in the most general sense, is taken to signify any organized and closed system of means of expression (in words, but also in colours, sounds, and lines). That is why style is discussed not only in the context of literature, but also that of painting, music, architecture. Expanding in time its meaning, the notion of „style” became equivalent to that of „manner”, and was, therefore, brought into connection with manner in general. Thus, one can often hear of the style (manner) of behaviour, dressing, writing, singing, reciting, and thinking. The term „style” is regularly used with attributes which denote some characteristic or some aspect of

creation. Consequently, every human activity and every product of such activity is a mirror of those who design it and those who realize it, and of the atmosphere in which it is created. Style is, therefore, the content, the face and flip side, of what man has already created, of what he is creating and is yet to create. It belongs to the order of differentiating categories of any class of phenomena, according to which these phenomena are distinct from others, both of the same category or of others. The generality of style is achieved through the abstraction of some of the distinctions of individual phenomena, whose universality is taken into account only within the framework of the established generality. Thus, style appears as external shape (form), as internal shape and as structure of all that is connected with man and his activities. The individuality of style is achieved by insisting on the distinctive elements of individual phenomena, and on their unique authenticity. That is why style is the essential shape of each individually experienced reality. Without style, every phenomenon would lose its recognizability, and become part of a shapeless mass in which everything individual would be the same as the whole. That is why style appears as the constant positive or negative qualitative companion of every phenomenon. Each of them has some style, the quality of which is expressed as aesthetic value. Therefore, two phenomena are two precisely by what differentiates them, by their uniqueness and singularity, and this is nothing but the manner of expression, the true essence of style. That is why individual phenomena, as qualitative indicators of style, are the only forms of presentation of different styles. They are style itself.

2) The content of the concept of style was determined according to different criteria which changed greatly in the course of historical development. For example, for Plato style was a specific characteristic, a quality which one work had and another did not, for Aristotle style was a generic idea which marked various characteristics of a work, for Cicero style was a better manner of speaking, for Buffon style was man himself, for Stendhal style was the total effect which a thought was supposed to produce, for Flaubert style was an absolute way of looking at things, for Bally style was an affective addition to purely intellectual information, for Jakobson style was disappointed expectation, for Marouzeau style was a choice from among the means which language puts at the speakers disposal, for Spitzer style was the expression of the writers own personality, for Alonso style was what individualized some literary entity: a work, a writer, an epoch, a literature, for Keiser style is the style of the work, for Steiger style is the world in an aesthetic sense, for Tomaszewski style was a particularity, for Mistrík style was a manner of expression in any area, for Mathesius style was the way in which the utterance

responded to explicit requirements of the functional object, for Reisel style was the manner of usage in a speech or written act a system for constructing expression, for Vinogradov style was a system of means of expression organized for a particular purpose, semantically closed and explicitly limited, for Timofeyev, style was unity in diversity, for Kozhina style was functional style. All these understandings of style essentially not only show that style in a historical context has its own existential character, but also demonstrate the general definition of style as something unique and unrepeatable, both in its language realization and in any other form of expression. Being a linguist involved in the study of the language of literary works, I shall try to cast light on the concept of style from the point of view of linguistics and literary scholarship, without entering into a debate on the numerous theories of the nature of style, its genesis and its forms of manifestation.

3) The relationship between language expression and thought, in which language material itself is seen as a means of expression, gave rise in linguistics to the view that style is a linguistic category expressed through the nature of the language sign, that is, through the established relationship of the signified and the signifier. Study of the structural and functional characteristics of signs which make up verbal structures, as well as of their mutual effects and transformations, not only during the process of constituting context, but also in the process of communication, led to certain aspects of the sign: the semantic (symmetrical and asymmetrical relationship of the signifier and the signified), syntactical (relationship between signs in a system), pragmatic (relationship between signs and the one using signs) and aesthetic (relationship between the sign in linguistic and the sign in poetical usage). The sign in complete isolation, in non-usage, has a stylistic value of zero, because both sign and signifier are in a state of absolute rest. It is only in usage, in context, that the sign becomes the scene of active relations between the sign and the signifier, which leads to the establishing of a mutual relation out which the stylistics of each sign unit arises. It is known that language in concrete realisation is not homogenous, but has many types of layering, wherein each word and each construction belong to one state of a particular language, to a particular zone of speech: (1) territorial (dialects, regional speech), (2) social (sociolects: jargon, argot, language of urban environments, language of rural environments, etc.). (3) sexual (male and female); (4) age (childrens speech, youth speech, grown-up speech, speech of the elderly); (5) functional (literary, scientific, administrative, publicistic, discursive) and (6) individual (individual speech idiolects). Style in linguistics is not merely a reflection of a concrete realisation of the sign, but also a dynamicization of the formal abstraction of signifier and signified of two distinctions which, as stylistically

active means, can realise all its potential present. That is why the notion of style in linguistics is faced with linguistic reality itself, with the endless realisation of its use and with all individual creative actualisations of the spoken or written word. From the linguistic understanding of style as the stylistic level in language the theory of functional styles arose, which in relationship to general language are nothing but particular ways of realizing language. Functional styles came into being through imitation and multiplication of established social and linguistic habits and conventions in specific areas, and as language patterns they unavoidably impose themselves on every individual usage of language, without abolishing its creativity or authenticity (which are neglected in the study of functional styles).

4) *Style* is one of the terms that are most frequently used in literary scholarship. In this area of meaning, the notion of „style” becomes more encompassing, so differences in its understanding arise. These stem from the development of the perception of literature, as well as from different theories about the nature of the literary work. Therefore, the notion of style is used in literature with a very wide range of meanings, from the strictest pertaining to the linguistic expression of one man, to the most comprehensive comprising the intellectual and emotional manner of expression of a whole people. Thus, we read about the style of a writer, about the style of a literary class or type (novel, drama, lyrical poem), about the style of an epoch or a literary school (Renaissance, Baroque, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Realism, Symbolism, Expressionism), about a national style (English, French, Russian, Polish, Serbian). Regardless of what it marks, style in literature comprises a unity of all intellectual, emotional and other spiritual characteristics of a writer, work, literary class, epoch or people, expressed in an unrepeatable manner typical of that writer, work, literary class, epoch or people. It is irrelevant whether style marks the style of a writer, work, literary class, epoch or people, it always represents individuality, with the difference that in determining a literary class, epoch or a people, style marks the sum total of the specific characteristics which achieve the rank of generality. Even though the individuality of style is reflected in many diverse elements in the choice of subjects described, in the attitude adopted, in the selection of linguistic means (sounds, words, forms, syntagms, sentences), in the manner of combining images and characters, in the strength of effects of all elements used in a historical perspective it can take on all the attributes of integrity, when it marks several individual stylistic terms taken to the level of general significance (epic, dramatic, lyrical style; Romantic, Realist, Symbolist style; English, French, German, Russian, Polish, Serbian style, etc.).

5) In order to fully determine the essence of style in linguistics and in literary scholarship (the poetics of language), it is necessary that the scholar in each of these fields should study the semiological structure of the linguistic sign (in and out of context). The scholar should keep in mind that signs are a part of all structural constructs of context (everything functions only in context), and that numerous processes which take place in context depend on their behaviour. Thus, when speaking of style in language and literature, the meaning of a word must be kept in mind, as well as its use in language and literature, the meaning of the word out of context, the etymological or figurative meaning, different types of connotations (expressive, evocative, projective), the intrinsic form of language, the link between sound and meaning, the link between phonetic and semantic elements, the relationships of acoustic substance to the signified object, between language and the human spirit, between language and the forms of thinking, between expression and content, between meaning and signified function, etc. This means that one must keep in mind the semiological processes which encompass the signifier and the signified: the relationship of signifier and signified, shifting of the relationship of signifier and signified, realized contact of the signifier with the signified content; bipolarity of the sign, asymmetric dualism of the sign, linearity of the sign, arbitrariness of the sign, the sign as multi-layered construct, the semiological field of the sign, state of the sign in action and in inactivity, development of the sign, identification of the sign, etc., which represent a detailed description of the nature of the sign, the composition of the sign, the function of the sign. Only such study can lead to a more reliable and all-encompassing understanding of the notion of „style”, both in language and literature and in all verbal sign systems.

6) Finally, a few words on defining the notion of „style”. Although style is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon, it is necessary to define it as precisely as possible for the purpose of scholarly generalization and abstraction. Thus, for me the notion of „style”, in a general sense, marks the external shape (form) and the internal content (structure) of every phenomenon; in a linguistic sense, it marks the particular selection and the manner of use of linguistic means relative to the existing linguistic norm; in a literary sense, it marks the selection and manner of use of linguistic means conditioned by the chosen poetical form relative to the established linguistic and poetical norms.