

ATTITUDE, COMPARISON, AND RELATION IN STYLE REMARKS ON THE SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS OF STYLE*

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Abstract

This paper builds heavily on the cognitive theoretical model of style developed by Gábor Tolcsvai Nagy (2005) (see also Tolcsvai Nagy 1996, 2004). While sharing the model's functional cognitive theoretical assumptions and following its terminology, I will also raise some theoretical and methodological issues which deserve further attention. Moreover, a shift in focus will be proposed, with meaning generation in the context of linguistic interactions, rather than the symbolic structures themselves, regarded as central to the study of style (cf. Tátrai 2011). As a result, the style attributions of discourse participants and the stylistic schemas they draw on will be taken as crucial for the functioning of socio-cultural variables of style.

*Naturally, these points are not in conflict with Tolcsvai Nagy's general approach (see Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 127–146). However, they do allow for a re-assessment of the model's usage based character, spelling out some theoretical and methodological implications of the usage based thesis with regard to the socio-cultural variables of style. I will interpret the functioning of socio-cultural variables against the triadic structure of intersubjective meaning generation. A key element of the proposal will be the concept of stylistic attitude, here understood as the speaker's context-dependent vantage point bringing socio-cultural factors of the discourse universe to bear on linguistic construal. Relatedly, the socio-cultural variable of proto-discourses will be introduced, with attributions spanning from sophisticated through neutral to casual style. Finally, the paper will also address the issue of typical vs. atypical co-occurrences of values across socio-cultural variables, linking the problem to the homogenizing stylistic ideal and the opposing, subverting tendency of syncretism, which results in stylistic heterogeneity (cf. Lachmann 1986). The functioning of these will be illustrated by sample texts from two short stories by Antal Szerb, *A választott lovag* [*The Chosen Knight*] (1921) and *Szerelem a palackban* [*Love in a Bottle*] (1935).*

Keywords: joint attention, construal, adaptation, stylistic pattern, style attribution, stylistic attitude, proto-discourse, proto-style, stylistic syncretism

1. Style and social cognition

Cognitive stylistics uses a key concept of cognitive linguistics, namely **linguistic variability**, to interpret the notion of style. This sets the scene for an analysis of the stylistic potential of

* I am grateful to the Stylistic Research Group of Eötvös Loránd University for fruitful dialogues inspiring my work on this paper. I owe special thanks to the two reviewers, Ágnes Domonkosi and József Pethő, for their useful comments and critical remarks on an earlier version.

linguistic symbols (Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 43—44). Linguistic variability is manifested in the fact that linguistic symbols are linked to varying **conceptual construals** of experiences of the world (for details, see Langacker 2008: 55—89, Tolcsvai Nagy 2011: 31—50, and Verhagen 2007). On the one hand, linguistic symbols code variations in conceptual construal; on the other, they also invite alternate conceptualizations (cf. Sinha 1999). This accounts for the perspectivity (broadly conceived, cf. Tomasello 1999) inherent in these symbols, which is put to work in discourse when speakers adopt their own perspective (context-dependent vantage point) for the purposes of interpreting a situation. More specifically, speakers use particular symbols in discourse in order to get their addressees to interpret the objects and events of the world in a particular way, as afforded by these symbols (rather than any other way). This also implies that linguistic cognition is a form of social human activity which is based on the functioning of **joint attention** and the triadic structure of intersubjective meaning generation. The general notion for describing the relationships involved is that of the discourse universe (Tátrai 2011: 29—35), which comprises:

- the joint attentional scene along with its participants and their physical, social and mental worlds, as processed jointly in discourse,
- the linguistic symbols employed by the discourse participants, grounded in the intersubjective context of the joint attentional scene, and
- the referential scene made accessible and interpretable by these symbols; in other words, experiences of the world as they are conceptualized and linguistically represented.¹

On the one hand, it follows from the above that one need not assume a stylistic difference between symbols construing a given object or event from alternate perspectives (e.g. *lawyer vs. man, the window broke vs. somebody broke the window*) (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 23—24). On the other, it is worth emphasizing that the linguistic symbols themselves (with their typical meanings) only have an associated stylistic potential which is realized when they contribute to the interpretation of a referential scene in the intersubjective context of a joint attentional scene. In other words, processing the stylistic function of linguistic symbols crucially depends on the discourse context, viewed here as an intersubjective system of relations (cf. Tátrai 2011: 51—67). In particular, a key role is played by the social world as conceptualized by the participants, which includes any socio-cultural (community and culture specific) knowledge brought to bear on linguistic construal as discourse unfolds (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy, this volume).

At this juncture, it is important to note that construal in discourse is interpreted as part of the adaptive linguistic activity which is geared toward the coordinated and contextually adjusted satisfaction of the discourse participants' communicative demands (goals and expectations) (cf. Verschueren 1999: 55—71, Verschueren—Brisard 2009, see also Croft 2009: 413—414, Sharafian 2008). The two major aspects of **adaptation** are choice making and negotiation. The concept of **choice making**, which has a long and complex history in the literature, is here interpreted as the implementation of a range of strategies characterized by varying degrees of intentionality and routinization. It is manifested, firstly, in the selection of

¹ This interpretation of 'discourse universe' is related to Tolcsvai Nagy's (2001: 121—125) 'text universe', and Langacker's (2008: 463—467) 'current discourse space.' The proposed interpretation of 'intersubjective context' is in line with Langacker's understanding of the 'ground' (Langacker 2002: 7).

linguistic conventions thought to be best suited to the communicative goals (from the speaker's perspective) and secondly, in the activation of related expectations (on the addressee's behalf). **Negotiation**, for its part, concerns the process (central to the emergence, management and changing of linguistic norms) whereby the discourse participants enforce their own choices, and accept or discredit the selections made by the other (cf. Verschueren 1999: 55—71, Tátrai 2011: 45—50).² Characteristic of adaptive language use in general, choice making and selection are naturally also highly relevant for the linguistic construal of discourses, as they may contribute to the description of style attributions made by the participants.

According to cognitive stylistics, style is based on differences in construal: it becomes salient when the construal of a given linguistic construction is foregrounded in the linguistic interaction, notably with regard to alternative modes of construal (for details, see Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 22—40, Tolcsvai Nagy 2004). However, this in no way implies that style only plays a significant role in dynamic meaning generation when the construal of a construction is salient. The semantic function of style hinges on the degree to which the construal of linguistic constructions meets, or fails to meet, the relevant socio-cultural expectations (conventions) put to use in the ongoing discourse.

Therefore, the stylistic function and stylistic markedness of linguistic symbols are not evaluated against an abstract, undefined (and undefinable) system of grammatical norms. Under the proposed usage based interpretation, the stylistic value of an expression is always described in its discursive context, with regard to the stylistic schemas (used as orienting norms) being activated by the discourse participants.³ In language use, stylistic patterns are open, prototype-based categories functioning in a context-sensitive and probabilistic way, anchored to typical situations, actions, topics, and associated discourse types (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 132—134). This means that the **style attributions** made by participants (as a ubiquitous aspect of meaning generation) are linked to the activation of stylistic patterns and the processing of relevant stylistic elements. Modelling the socio-cultural variables of style may provide the necessary theory and methodology for describing this process in detail.

2. Socio-cultural variables of style and stylistic attitude

In the style attributions made by discourse participants, a key role is played by socio-cultural variables, whose functioning is crucial to how the stylistic potential of linguistic symbols is grounded in discourse (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 86).⁴ As a result of this **grounding**, linguistic symbols are endowed with stylistic functions whose processing forms an integral part of the discourse universe, and within it the joint observation and interpretation of the referential scene.

² Negotiation is interpreted similarly by Tolcsvai Nagy (2005: 130).

³ The interpretation of stylistic value followed here is closely related to the definition offered by Péter (1991). According to him, “stylistic value is the markedness of linguistic elements that refers to contexts which are stylistically relevant for the community, and the corresponding language varieties, styles” (1991: 45).

⁴ See the following passage in particular: “The socio-cultural factors have a complex role in stylistic functions. These factors constrain the stylistic potential in relation to the current discourse space, more specifically both to the scene put on stage within a viewing frame and to the ground. In other words, the socio-cultural-factors specify the activated stylistic functions relative to the speaker and the recipient within the verbal interaction as location, i.e. these factors ground epistemically the stylistic potential” (Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 86).

In his cognitive stylistic model, Tolcsvai Nagy (1996, 2004, 2005) discusses socio-cultural factors of style along five variables, which are separable only on methodological grounds:

- the domain of attitude highlights the speaker's attitude in construing the scene, which is evaluated on a scale with 'sophisticated', 'neutral', and 'familiar' or 'vulgar' as subdomains;
- the domain of situation pertains to how the speaker and the addressee relate to each other in construing the scene, with 'formal', 'neutral' and 'informal' as subdomains of the scale;
- the domain of value concerns the speaker's value attribution in construal, with the scale including 'value saturating', 'neutral' and 'value depriving' as subdomains;
- the domain of time characterizes the style of a text and expressions within it as 'archaic', 'neutral' or 'innovative';
- and finally, the domain of language varieties highlights as a component of style the various institutionalized ('standard', 'literary') or conventionalized ('regional', 'urban', 'slang', etc.) language varieties to which a given text or expression belongs.⁵

In this context, it is important to note that Tolcsvai Nagy does not regard the instantiation of particular (sub)domains as describable by purely objective criteria. Rather, in line with the usage based thesis of cognitive linguistics, he links it to the interpretive processes of the conceptualizers (cf. Barlow—Kemmer eds. 2000, and Ladányi—Tolcsvai Nagy 2008). In other words, the functioning of socio-cultural variables is to be described from the perspective of discourse participants, with regard to their style attributions, under the assumptions of the model.

2.1. The activation of stylistic schemas

As has been mentioned above, the functioning of socio-cultural factors determining the stylistic markedness (stylistic value) of linguistic symbols/constructions in discourse is interpreted with respect to the stylistic schemas being activated by discourse participants. When a given construction is seen to comply with the typical construal associated with a certain type of situation, action, topic and discourse (i.e. it complies with the stylistic pattern being activated), its stylistic value can be regarded as neutral (unmarked). If, however, a construction activates a typical construal (stylistic pattern) associated with a different type of situation, action, topic and discourse with regard to some socio-cultural variable, its stylistic value shifts toward one or the other extreme of that variable's domain and becomes marked. An important aspect of this approach is that in the style attribution of recipients, the functioning of socio-cultural factors is affected not only by **schema-instantiation**, but also by **schema-schema** relations, with the two also mutually depending on each other.

This accounts for why a given expression can be evaluated as sophisticated, informal, archaic or neutral both "within a particular action, situation, or context" and "generally" (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 136—151). In the former case, the stylistic markedness of linguistic

⁵ For a detailed presentation of the system of socio-cultural variables, see Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 134—166.

symbols in discourse is assessed from an "internal perspective", the vantage point lying with the situated discourse participants in the current joint attentional scene. In the latter, however, the attentional scene and the construal of linguistic symbols within it are observed from an "external perspective", relating them to (typically) similar and (typically) different attentional scenes and associated stylistic patterns. Nevertheless, the possibility of adopting an "external perspective" is not exclusive to researchers systematically comparing the construal of various discourses. Since people in general are capable of viewing themselves and the current joint attentional scene from without (cf. Tomasello 1999), they also have the opportunity to reflect on the typicality of their situatedness as discourse participants, and any stylistic implications that this may have (e.g. on the situation being predominantly formal or informal).⁶

In addition to the dynamic schema—instantiation and schema—schema interactions, **instantiation—instantiation** relations are also fundamental to the functioning of socio-cultural variables in style attributions. This is because the stylistic pattern being activated in a given discourse is the result of abstraction from previous discursive experiences of the participants, when they were involved (as speakers, addressees, or even outside observers) in discourses carrying out similar actions or addressing similar topics (cf. Bakhtin 1986). This also entails that individual speakers do not possess the speech community's repertoire of stylistic patterns in its entirety. Not only because they are not familiar with every stylistic pattern, but also because they are not familiar with them to the same extent. As a result, there may be a significant gap between the goal and expectation norms of the discourse participants (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 56—68, 2005: 134—138, see also Sharafian 2008), and their negotiation on the adequacy of particular construals may border on confrontation.

2.2. The notion of stylistic attitude

In Tolcsvai Nagy's model of style, outlined above, the most complex socio-cultural factor seems to be the variable of **attitude**, which can also be regarded as central. According to the general definition, "the domain of attitude conceptualizes the speaker's attitude towards the formation of linguistic structures, texts, in the interpretation of the recipient" (Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 88). This interpretation is inclusive enough to allow for the view (departing from the original model) that attitude is a global concept characterizing socio-cultural factors in general rather than merely one of the variables concerned. More specifically, it can be treated as a basic category pertaining to the issue of how socio-cultural factors contribute to linguistic construal, and how they become an integral part of meaning generation in linguistic interactions.

Under these assumptions, the notion of **stylistic attitude** marks the speaker's context-dependent vantage point bearing on linguistic construal through the role afforded to socio-cultural factors, including the domains of discourse, situation, value, time, and language varieties.⁷ From this perspective, the notion of attitude hinges on the perspectivity of linguistic

⁶ From this perspective, certain linguistic devices, especially lexical items (e.g. *csaj* 'chick', *kajál* [slang for 'eat'] are stylistically (schematically) marked even in themselves, out of context, since they are able to evoke stylistic schemas without contextual support (cf. Péter 1991: 44—46, Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 198—203).

⁷ The interpretation of stylistic attitude as a context-dependent vantage point also highlights the (broadly construed) deictic nature of style. Although this paper makes no attempt at a detailed study of the relation between style and deixis, it is worth noting that the use of linguistic constructions foregrounding socio-cultural factors can be interpreted as a kind of cultural deixis (cf. Simon 2012, see also Stockwell 2002: 41—57) which allows the exploitation

constructions in general, being exploited in particular discourses, and it is a central concern for the study of style.⁸ In addition, it is worth pointing out that this concept of attitude meshes well with the interpretation of style as a relation, an act of comparison, in functional approaches.

The speaker's attitude, an inherent aspect of construal, characterizes the domains of situation, value, time, and language varieties alike. With regard to the variable of **situation**, construal reflects the speaker's attitude to the discourse partner, i.e. an interpersonal relation.⁹ The variable of **value** concerns the evaluative attitude of the speaker (as a context-dependent centre of evaluation) in construing her experience.¹⁰ The variable of **time**, for its part, highlights the speaker's attitude to the temporality of linguistic constructions as a component of linguistic construal (cf. the papers by Gábor Simon and Réka Sólyom in this volume). Finally, the notion of stylistic attitude also appears to be relevant for interpreting the stylistic implications of language varieties. As Tolcsvai Nagy (1996: 152) observes, "Linguistic registers are not styles in and by themselves; invariably, they become stylistic through the style attributions of the speaker or the listener, in comparison, selection, adaptation and connotation in a given system of relations."

However, it should be mentioned that this interpretation of stylistic attitude bears no direct relation to the socio-psychologically inclined interpretation of attitude also adopted in attitude studies on linguistic phenomena. The latter regards attitude as „a cognitive representation which subsumes the person's evaluations with regard to a given individual, group, thing or action; i.e. it is a long-term disposition with an evaluative component" (Domonkosi 2007: 38—39). Under the present proposal, stylistic attitude is not viewed as a long-term disposition. Instead, it is seen to depend on the functioning of joint attention at a given stage of a discourse, and within it on the context-dependent vantage point of the speaker. As mentioned before, the perspectivity and the related stylistic potential of linguistic constructions are exploited in discourse as the speaker enforces her own context-dependent vantage point. Through the linguistic symbols being employed, she attempts to get the addressee(s) to interpret the objects and events of the world in a particular way (cf. Tátrai 2011: 29—35). This also entails that the speaker (as part of her adaptive linguistic behaviour, i.e. aiming at the satisfaction of her own and her discourse partner's communicative demands) adjusts linguistic construal to the relevant **socially grounded and culture-specific expectations** accessible to the participants of the joint attentional scene. In other words, the speaker makes socio-cultural factors as an inalienable, integral part of the process of construal, thereby affecting the mental disposition of the other participant of the joint attentional scene. It is important to stress that manifesting one's stylistic attitude need not be a process under conscious control; rather, it may be subject to gradience as a function of routinization.

A further point worth emphasizing is that stylistic attitude can also be anchored to the issues of **subjectification**.¹¹ Stylistic attitude is generally a covert, subjectified aspect of construal

of the stylistic potential of these constructions in the intersubjective socio-cultural context of the joint attentional scene (see also Tolcsvai Nagy, this volume).

⁸ It deserves to be mentioned that the original meaning of attitude is 'posture, pose, spatial position' (cf. Nemesi 2009: 141—142), which is closely related to the issues of construal.

⁹ See also the notion of attitude deixis (Verschueren 1999: 20—21, Tátrai 2010a: 218).

¹⁰ See also the interpretation of ironic attitude (Wilson—Sperber 1992, Tátrai 2011: 190—204, cf. Grice 1978).

¹¹ Subjectification is "most generally the covert, implicit presence of the speaker or another agent through the implicit signaling of her attitude, beliefs, perspective, in a sentence or a longer passage, without this agent becoming an overt, objectified participant of the scene profiled by this sentence or passage" (Tolcsvai Nagy 2011: 134).

in discourses, with linguistic constructions giving evidence of the effects of socio-cultural factors (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy, this volume). This claim remains true despite the fact that stylistic attitude can also be objectified occasionally in the form of metapragmatic reflections (e.g. in formulas such as *to put it eloquently*; cf. Hámori, this volume).¹² More generally, the degree to which subjectification is salient correlates strongly with the stylistic (un)markedness of linguistic constructions. Whereas stylistically marked constructions (drawing on the scales' extremes with regard to socio-cultural variables) foreground the speaker's subjective attitude in construal, constructions assigned to the neutral domain leave it in the background. Therefore, the assumption that **salience** is based on the degree to which the constructions being employed comply with the norms and expectations in the discourse (Tátraí 2011: 116, see also Verschuere 1999: 173—200) can be seen as stylistically highly productive.¹³ Looking at the degree to which particular linguistic construals are expected or unexpected with respect to the patterns conventionalized by the community and routinized at the individual level, we may conclude that the stylistic salience and level of accessibility (expectedness) of linguistic constructions are inversely proportional. The easier it is to access a given linguistic construal in a given situation, the less it becomes salient, and conversely. This also means that a construction which proves to be salient in a particular context need not be similarly salient in a characteristically different context, and vice versa (see also Pethô, this volume).

2.3. The factor of proto-discourses

In previous sections, it was argued that Tolcsvai Nagy's definition of the factor of attitude (Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 136) allows for an interpretation of attitude as a global category (grounded in perspectivization). However, it cannot be overlooked that the stylistic domains involved in Tolcsvai Nagy's variable, i.e. sophisticated, neutral, familiar and vulgar bring a narrower interpretation into play. They foreground an aspect of the socio-cultural layering of style which has a similar stylistic rationale as the variables of situation, value, and time; thus it would be a mistake to eliminate these domains within the overarching category of stylistic attitude.

One solution to this problem is to introduce the socio-cultural factor of **proto-discourses** (or proto-texts). Note that the **sophisticated** domain suggests an interpretation in terms of the stylistic patterns of the two proto-discourses, namely those of conversation (characterized by direct interaction, spontaneity, the oral medium, dialogicity, and a lower codification level of genre-related norms) on the one hand, and those of literary or eminent texts (featuring indirect interaction, prior planning, the written medium, monologicity and a higher codification level of genre-related norms) (cf. Tátraí 2011: 74—80, see also Tolcsvai Nagy 2008). The sophisticated domain is associated with the latter, while the familiar and vulgar domains (partial as they are) with the former. In comparison with 'sophisticated', the terms 'familiar' and 'vulgar' are arguably too specific for describing the speaker's attitude to the linguistic construal of the discourse. Therefore, a more schematic label may be in order. One suitable term could be '**casual**' (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 141).¹⁴

¹² For more on metapragmatic reflections, see Tátraí 2011: 119—125.

¹³ "Salience refers to a cue's ability to attract attention in its context" (Smith—Mackie 2000: 66). For more on the interpretation of salience, see Schmid 2007.

¹⁴ The introduction of a 'casual' subdomain is also supported by the fact that 'vulgar' may seem like a prescriptive term carried over from the traditional doctrines on stylistic virtues and errors, which goes against the basic descrip-

Out of the full range of associated properties, the sophisticated domain primarily profiles the planned and carefully formulated nature of prototypical literary (fictional, official, scientific, theological) texts; similarly, the casual domain foregrounds the spontaneity and less careful formulation inherent in prototypical conversations. These points are not challenged by the fact that some speakers are able to speak or write in a sophisticated way with little effort, and that the casual style of others may be the product of premeditated decisions. As argued before, the style attribution of the recipient is determined by the activation of stylistic patterns; this forms the basis of interpreting the style of a text and linguistic constructions within it.

Finally, it is worth recalling that the domains associated with socio-cultural factors of style have a basically methodological motivation (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 135). It is only one aspect of this that in reality, the domains form a continuum. A second important qualification is that the domain names construe a given type of stylistic attitude with regard to a particular domain in a highly schematic way. This suggests the possibility of using more specific domain labels (based on either folk or scientific categories) in more detailed descriptions of the functioning of socio-cultural factors. In the case of the variable of proto-discourses, such examples may include 'ordinary', 'solemn', 'personal' or 'impersonal'; with regard to the variable of situation, 'condescending', 'flattering', 'polite' or 'impolite', etc.

3. Co-occurrences between socio-cultural factors: proto-styles and stylistic syncretism

As noted in the previous section, the separation of socio-cultural factors in the model is methodologically motivated, since “the subdomains of the variables are functioning in parallel fashion in the style structure of a linguistic expression or the text” (Tolcsvai Nagy 2004: 157). When it comes to describing the coordinated functioning of socio-cultural factors, it deserves special attention that the variables have typical and atypical co-occurrences (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 164—166, 2005: 90—105). Typical co-occurrences, e.g. between sophisticated, formal, value-saturating and archaic on the one hand, and casual, informal, value-depriving and innovative on the other, result in homogeneous style. By contrast, atypical co-occurrences give rise to stylistic heterogeneity. Hence, the functioning of socio-cultural factors supports the view of style as an “assembly of homogenizing strategies”, and the transgression of boundaries set by homogenization as “a disposition against style” (Lachmann 1986, see also Bahtyn 1976). To this day, our style attributions are shaped by the **homogenizing stylistic ideal** of the rhetorical tradition, which is based on the Aristotelian triad of the three style types, low, middle and grand, and which is constantly challenged by the subversive, heterogenizing tendency of **stylistic syncretism** (for details, see Lachmann 1986).

3.1. Two models of proto-styles

The above points owe their relevance to the fact that cognitive stylistics allows for a reinterpretation of the homogenizing stylistic ideal which takes into account the **proto-styles** emerging from typical co-occurrences. Fundamental for the style attributions of discourse participants, proto-styles can be argued to include formal, neutral, and informal (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy 2005: 86), or, alternatively, sophisticated, neutral, and casual (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy 2004:

tive orientation of the model (confirmed by other domain labels). Secondly, the 'familiar' subdomain may be methodologically difficult to separate from the 'informal' subdomain of the variable of situation.

160). However, it is also possible to use these terminologies in parallel, with the former applied to the linguistic construal of prototypical conversations and discourses evaluated relative to them, and the latter to prototypical (literary) texts and related discourses.

With regard to prototypical conversations, the criterion of (in)formality based on the variable of situation deserves to be highlighted because these discourses are characterized by direct interaction and as a corollary, foreground the negotiation of interpersonal relations (equality vs. hierarchy, social proximity vs. distance). It is no coincidence, for example, that the model of style developed by Bartha and Hámori (2010: 304), which interprets style on the basis of, and with reference to, conversational discourses, takes the distinction between informal and formal styles as a point of departure, and proposes a subtle elaboration of this by the concepts involvement/distancing, solidarity/power, convergence/divergence, and directness/indirectness. A key feature of conversational discourses is the personal relationship between participants, with an individualized marking of the addressee(s).

On the other hand, prototypical literary (fictional, official, scientific, etc.) texts, since they presuppose indirect interaction, are not characterized by a personal (individualized) relationship between participants. The speaker shares her experiences in such a way that, given the necessary knowledge and effort, anyone at any place or time should be able to understand them (Tátrai 2011: 78). Thus, the socio-cultural factor of situation plays a lesser role in these discourses compared to conversations. Since prototypical literary texts become relatively independent of the circumstances of both their creation and their reception, the linguistic construal, “construct-ness” of the text as a whole comes more to the foreground, suggesting sophisticated, neutral, and casual as the most adequate descriptive categories. At first, it may be difficult to accept the relevance of casual style, characteristic of prototypical conversations (see 2.3.) for the study of prototypical literary texts. However, given the complexity of literary texts (cf. Bakhtin 1986), i.e. the fact that they often embed various conversational discourses in themselves,¹⁵ the socio-cultural factors involved in casual style may be put to work in the description.

3.2. Two methods of stylistic imitation: *The Chosen Knight* and *Love in a Bottle*

In what follows, the functioning of proto-styles will be illustrated by two fictional texts, namely the short stories *The Chosen Knight* (1922) and *Love in a Bottle* (1935) by Antal Szerb. No attempt will be made at a comprehensive and systematic stylistic analysis of the texts, however.¹⁶ Rather, the points made about illustrative samples will serve to highlight relevant analytic criteria for the cognitive stylistic study of proto-styles in fiction, with particular regard to **style imitation** and **stylistic syncretism** (cf. Lachmann 1986, Bahtyin 1976). The two short stories both evoke the Arthurian legend with their choice of topic, and medieval chivalric romances with their style. However, they are remarkably different in their use of style imitation.

As example (1), taken from the opening lines of *The Chosen Knight*, aptly illustrates, this short story features homogenizing style imitation.

¹⁵ “Secondary (complex) genres of speech (e.g. novels, dramas, scientific texts, the lengthy genres of journalism etc.) [...], over the course of their formation, subsume in themselves and process a hugely diverse array of primary (simple) genres which evolved directly under the circumstances of linguistic interactions” (Bakhtin 1986: 62–63).

¹⁶ For the theoretical and methodological issues of stylistic analysis, see Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 255–258.

- (1) Abban az időben történt, hogy a dicsőséggel teljes Arthus király hadnépével hazatért Avalun csodaszigetéről, és fogolyként követte őt Merlin, a százesztendős varázsló, aki az almafák ama szigetének fejedelme volt. Mesélik, ez lett volna Arthusnak legsúlyosabb csatája, mert nem lovagi sereggel, pajzzsal pajzs ellen kellett küzdenie, hanem foghatatlan, titokzatos bűvölettel. Rettenetes volt a nem apa nemzete Merlinnek hatalma, szolgálói voltak a föld koboldjai, kik titkos aknákat ástak, a tenger tündérei, kik éjszaka az árral túlköelve fellovagoltak a partra, a viharok koronás madarai, kik csaponganak a légi síkokon, és az erdők fénylő hasú kígyói mind. Senki sem győznél elmondani a sok csodát és veszedelmet, de végtére mégis győzött az igaz lovagság, ki soha hamisat nem ismert — Merlin tisztelt fogolyként vonult Arthus király diadalmenetében, és kincseit hozta hűbéri adóul.

It happened in those times that the glorious king Arthur returned with his army from the miraculous island of Avalun, followed by Merlin the hundred-year-old wizard as a captive, who was the monarch of that island of apple trees. Legend has it that this might have been Arthur's fiercest battle, as it wasn't knights he was up against, shield to shield, but an elusive, magic spell. Begotten by no father, such tremendous power did Merlin possess that the goblins of the earth digging secret mines, the fairies of the sea riding the waves to the shore, the crowned birds of the tempest circling in the air, and the shiny snakes of the woods were all his slaves. The countless miracles and dangers hardly bear telling, but at long last the true and fair knights claimed victory, and Merlin marched along in King Arthur's parade as a well-respected captive, carrying his treasures as a token of feudal bond.

(The Chosen Knight. 40. Transl. by András Imrényi)

The homogenizing style of the text is created by the regular co-occurrence of sophistication, value saturation and archaism. The sample contains linguistic constructions which exploit the stylistic potential of sounds, words, sentence structures and semantics alike (cf. Tolcsvai Nagy 1996: 176—245, 2005: 43—84), and which can be described as value saturating or archaic as well as sophisticated. Nevertheless, it seems plausible to foreground sophistication and treat it as the key feature of the proto-style. In the style attribution of the recipient, the stylistic patterns of prototypical literary texts are activated, whose crucial feature is their high level of elaboration, in line with the rhetorical tradition, and the corresponding stylistic attitude.

It should be emphasized, however, with regard to both the above sample and the short story as a whole, that the homogenizing style imitation found in *The Chosen Knight* does not amount to a full reconstruction of the style of medieval chivalric romances. Rather, it takes an Art Nouveau approach to construing this style. Through the combination of medieval and Art Nouveau stylistic features, a special tone (i.e. stylistic attitude) is created and maintained throughout the text. In other words, the style of *The Chosen Knight* can be regarded just as much if not more characteristic of Art Nouveau as it is reminiscent of chivalric romances.¹⁷

The text's homogenizing style, enforcing a consistent tone, does not only affect the ut-

¹⁷ Compare with Szabó (1998: 173): “according to many (especially art historians) Art Nouveau is basically a kind of historicism, i.e. the imitation or revival of a style from the past; relatedly, a more widespread opinion holds that it is a neo-style, the revival of an earlier decorating style” (Szabó 1998: 173).

terance of the authorial narrator, but also embedded utterances by the story's characters, reported in direct speech.

- (2) „[...] és mégis, Cynevare, te mindenkinél csodálatosabb, én mindet-mindent elfelejtem, eldobom emlékezetüket, mint kincses rakományt hajóból, mely végső tengeren zátonyra fut, honnan már nincs menekvés — és a hajó boldog szigetté lesz, lobogók köszöntik majdan a hajnalt, ó, engedj örökre pihennem szívednek édes zátonyán, tűzzed ki ajkadra mosolyod várívó zászlaját.”

De valamint vannak holt várak, melyeken nem leng zászló feltámadásig, oly módon Cynevare sem mosolygott.

“[...] and yet, Cynevare, most wondrous of all, I shall forget every one of them, I shall cast their memories away as a load of treasure from a ship stranded at far sea wherefrom there is no escape — and the ship shall turn into a merry island, with flags greeting dawn... oh let me rest forever on the sweet reef of your heart, and smile, hoisting the siege flag on your lips.”

Alas, just as dead castles exist whereon no flag ever flutters until the day of resurrection, Cynevare did not smile.

(The Chosen Knight. 49. Transl. by András Imrényi)

The style of the utterance in (2) does not depart from that of the narrator's reflections following it, thus the remarks made about (1) can also be applied to both the former and the latter. The characters of the story, e.g. the red knight speaking in (1), make rhetorically structured, eloquent speeches, matching the narrator's sophisticated proto-style.

By contrast, *Love in a Bottle* uses the mixing of incompatible tones, i.e. stylistic syncretism, as a dominant stylistic factor (cf. Bahtyin 1976).¹⁸ This short story also activates the stylistic patterns associated with medieval knight tales or love stories (romances, legends, epic poems), prompting the reader to expect archaism and value saturation as well as sophistication in the narrator's stylistic attitude. The authorial narrator indeed partially meets this expectation, both in his own utterance and embedded ones (see for example the expressions *sokat nyájaskodott az asszonyokkal* 'he found much amusement with ladies' (p. 284), and *most már eleget nyájaskodtunk* 'we have had enough amusement' (p. 288)).

However, the sophisticated style of this short story is constantly countered by a tone evoking conversational narratives, which departs significantly from the stylistic norms of medieval knight tales and love stories in its temporal and evaluative attitudes.

- (3) Lancelot, a lovag, akit nem érhet semmiféle gáncs, Chatelmerveilnek, Klingsor varázsló várának vendége volt. Vacsora után voltak, Klingsor a legjobb borait hozatta fel előkelő vendége tiszteletére. Kettesben iddögáltak az irdatlan nagy terem közepén.

Lancelot, the knight who cannot be tripped up, was the guest of Chatelmerveil, the castle of Klingsor the wizard. They had finished supper, and Klingsor had his

¹⁸ For a more detailed study of *Love in a Bottle*, focusing on the functioning of irony, see Tátrai 2010b.

best wines served to honour his distinguished guest. The two were slowly drinking away the evening in the middle of that enormous room.

(Love in a Bottle. 280. Transl. by András Imrényi)

As shown by the first lines of the text, quoted in (3), *Love in a Bottle* conforms much less to the reader's expectations in its construal of the knights' world in the Arthurian legend than *The Chosen Knight* does. Characteristically, it features an ironic twist on the conventional meaning of *gáncs nélküli lovag* ('knight without reproach'), an honorific term reserved for medieval knights. Whereas originally, the expression means 'knight who does not resort to trip-up or reproach', here it is re-interpreted in a value depriving manner as 'knight who cannot be tripped up'. The importance of this construction in meaning generation is shown by the fact that the phrase *gáncs nélküli lovag* 'knight without reproach' recurs twice more in the text (288, 293), both times in contexts where Lancelot's behaviour hardly complies with knightly morals, i.e. where an ironic, value depriving interpretation is brought into play (for details, see Tátrai 2010b: 243–245).

Thus, *Love in a Bottle* features a conflict between two manners of speech: an imitated „medieval” style characterized by sophistication, archaism and value saturation on the one hand, and a „modern” style subverting or relativizing it by its casual, innovative and value-depriving language on the other.

- (4a) — Én boldog? Cipelem magammal a gyötrelmet, és néha lefekszem a földre, úgy üvöltök. Napjaim kétharmadát aktív boldogtalansággal töltöm, maradék harmadában pedig csodálkozom, hogy hogy is bírom elviselni.

'Me happy? I am carrying the agony with me, and sometimes just lie on the ground, bawling. Two thirds of my daily life are spent in active unhappiness, and in the third that remains I am wondering how I can bear this.'

(Love in a Bottle. 282. Transl. by András Imrényi)

- (4b) Abban az időben még nem találták fel a diszkréciót, és a nevezetesebb szerelmekkel országról országra házaltak a lantosok.

In those times discretion had not been invented, and minstrels were going from house to house with their songs on famous lover affairs.

(Love in a Bottle. 282. Transl. by András Imrényi)

- (4c) Az öreg varázsló alapjában véve igen jóindulatú ember volt, és Wolfram von Eschenbach éppúgy félreismerte, mint a középkoriak általában.

The old wizard was by and large a very well-meaning man, and Wolfram von Eschenbach misjudged him just as medieval people in general did.

(Love in a Bottle. 283. Transl. by András Imrényi)

In (4a), which is a verbatim quote of Lancelot's words, the phrase *aktív boldogtalanság* 'active unhappiness' is miles apart from the eloquently archaic register which serves as a baseline in the

reader's processing of the story. And in (4b), the narrator's own words include such constructs (*nem találták fel a diszkréciót* 'discretion had not been invented yet', and *házaltak* 'they were going from house to house'), which also mark the presence of an evaluative and interpretive position with a distancing function. Relatedly, the phrase *abban az időben* 'in those times' is used in (4b) in a way that signals cultural as well as temporal distance between the narrator and the narrated events, which is not the case in *The Chosen Knight* (cf. occurrence of the same phrase in (1)).

Ironic distancing, emerging from the conflict between manners of speech, is therefore effected here with respect to both the cultural tradition and the tradition of storytelling. The authorial narrator of *The Chosen Knight* assimilates himself to his sources (cf. the function of *mesélik* 'they tell (as though in a tale)' in (1)). By contrast, the authorial narrator of *Love in a Bottle* takes issue in (4c) with the greatest epic poet of the German Middle Ages, *Wolfram von Eschenbach*, who also has his own take on the Arthurian legend in his *Parzival*, a romance based on earlier French sources (cf. Vizkelety 1994). This highlights the multiple and embedded layers of narration in the story, the indirect and elusive nature of construed reality, and (what is especially significant from a stylistic perspective) the possibility of presenting the events from alternate culturally determined vantage points (cf. Stockwell 2002: 41—57, Simon 2012).

To return to socio-cultural factors, it is safe to suggest that heterogeneous style (characteristic of style syncretism) is not simply created by atypical co-occurrences between socio-cultural factors. Much rather, it results from the mixing of two conflicting manners of speech (stylistic perspectives, attitudes) which belong to different proto-styles.

4. Summary

In this paper, I have revisited some theoretical and methodological issues pertaining to the cognitive model of style developed by Tolcsvai Nagy (1996, 2004, 2005). While sharing the model's fundamental assumptions, I proposed modifications with regard to the functioning, and description, of socio-cultural factors of style. The main elements of the proposal are as follows:

- Reflecting on the usage based nature of the model, and its implications, I interpreted the functioning of socio-cultural factors in the context of the discourse participants' style attribution and the stylistic schemas activated in this process. In addition to the dynamic interaction between schemas and instantiations, the importance of dynamic relations across schemas and across instantiations was also highlighted.
- Interpreting the functioning of socio-cultural factors of style against the background of the triadic (intersubjective) structure of attention directing, I introduced the notion of stylistic attitude. This notion seems adequate for capturing the speaker's context-dependent perspective which brings the various factors/dimensions of the discourse universe to bear on linguistic construal. In the interpretation of style, special emphasis was placed on how the speaker (as an integral aspect of her language use) links up the linguistic construal of her experiences with the community-based, culturally grounded expectations about adequate linguistic construal which can be routinely activated by participants of the joint attentional scene.
- In a minor departure from Tolcsvai Nagy's model of socio-cultural factors, I introduced the socio-cultural variable of proto-discourses. The 'sophisticated' domain was linked

to the stylistic patterns of prototypical literary (fictional, official, scientific, etc.) texts, and the opposite end of the spectrum to those of prototypical everyday conversations. For describing the latter, the 'familiar' and 'vulgar' labels were deemed too specific, and consequently replaced by 'casual'.

- Touching on the issue of typical co-occurrences across variables, I suggested that two models of proto-styles may be simultaneously at work. Prototypical conversations, characterized by a personal relationship between participants and the individualized construal of addressees, may be adequately described by the 'formal' and 'informal' proto-styles foregrounding the variable of situation. By contrast, prototypical (literary) texts, which take the indirect interaction between participants as a given, can be better interpreted with the variable of proto-styles, highlighting the level of „elaboration” in the language of the discourse (sophisticated vs. casual).
- Finally, the issue of typical vs. atypical co-occurrences between socio-cultural factors was related to the homogenizing stylistic ideal and the opposing tendency of style syncretism resulting in heterogeneous style. This line of investigation was illustrated by two short stories by Antal Szerb, imitating medieval romances in two different ways. As the analysis of *The Chosen Knight* showed, this short story's homogenizing style imitation is produced by typical co-occurrences between socio-cultural variables. By contrast, *Love in a Bottle* is characterized by the mixing of different manners of speech (stylistic perspectives), and the conflict between stylistic patterns. These are key features of style syncretism, which also lends itself to systematic analysis in the model of socio-cultural variables of style.

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