

Reviews

Nørgaard, Nina, Beatrix Busse and Rocio Montoro. 2010. *Key Terms in Stylistics*. London and New York: Continuum.

Using a toolbox as a metaphor for the interdisciplinary nature of stylistics, the authors of this book state that their aim is to “provide the reader with an overview of the stylistics toolbox, the tools available in it, the different linguistic paradigms and branches of stylistics which have produced and/or employ the tools as well as key thinkers in the field.” This is, indeed, a laudable aim and the book is a very welcome contribution to the field of stylistics.

The introduction defines stylistics as the analysis of “the ways in which meaning is created through language in literature as well as in other types of texts” (p. 2). This is a very broad definition which extends the scope of stylistics well beyond the language used in literature to nonfictional forms of language, such as advertising, and news reports, in fact, to all kinds of language use, aligning stylistics with functional approaches to language in general, which are also concerned with the creation of meaning in texts. The introduction also provides a brief historical background, which focuses mainly on developments from the 1960s to the present day and a short section on the growing significance of stylistics in education and academia, where it bridges the traditional gap between literature and linguistics.

The rest of the “stylistics toolbox” is divided into four “key” parts: branches, terms, thinkers and texts. *Key Branches* contains 15 subsections each dealing with one branch. These include well established branches of stylistics, such as historical stylistics, narratology, and feminist stylistics, and other branches which have emerged more recently. Some of these are primarily concerned with the texts themselves, such as corpus linguistics, for instance, which examines large amounts of data in order to identify norms and deviations in language use, and multimodal stylistics, which examines how meaning is created not only by words but by other means such as pictures, layout, visual images etc. Other recent branches in stylistics are concerned with the producers and receivers of texts, emphasizing, as the authors point out, “that the production of meaning needs to be accounted for as a double exercise encompassing as much text-informed inferences as the

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mental processes that allow text comprehension” (p.1). These include entries on pragmatic stylistics, cognitive stylistics/cognitive poetics, reader response criticism and Emotion: stylistic approaches. Each section describes the most important features of this branch, its main practitioners and, in most cases, also gives examples how the approach has been used, as well as a critique of the approach, discussing various problems and points of criticism.

Key terms is an alphabetical lists of terms which are central to the various branches of stylistic analysis, including terms for phonological features, e.g. alliteration, metre and rhyme; pragmatic features, e.g. deixis, entailment, politeness, presupposition, and speech acts; lexical features, e.g. collocation, metonymy, semantic features, e.g. modality, functional features, e.g. ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning, grammatical metaphor, and discoursal features, e.g. lexical cohesion, and coherence. Most of the entries provide definitions and discussions, and there are many cross references to other entries. Some of the entries are not key terms as such but accounts of theoretical frameworks, e.g. Blending theory, Possible Worlds Theory and Mental Spaces Theory, and others are descriptions of stylistics associations and journals. There is also, under the heading *Critique of stylistics*, an account of earlier controversies over the value of stylistics as a discipline. All this is extremely valuable information, but, as they are not what one expects to find under the heading “key terms”, they may not be easy for readers to find. It would perhaps have been better to present the theoretical frameworks in the *Key Branches* part of the book and the rest in the introduction.

Key thinkers describes the chief practitioners of stylistics, e.g. Roger Fowler and Mick Short, as well as other scholars who have had an impact on the field. These include the chief proponents of the main linguistic approaches, such as functionalism, e.g. Michael K. Halliday; formalism, e.g. Noam Chomsky, cognitive linguistics, e.g. Charles Forceville; corpus linguistics, eg John Sinclair and multimodality, Theo van Leeuwen, as well as “the father of linguistics”, Ferdinand de Saussure. Each section includes biographical details and descriptions of their main contributions to the different branches of stylistics. Sometimes there is, however, an overly evaluative tone in the description, which is somewhat out of place in a reference guidebook, with expressions such as “the amiability and clarity with which his academic work is

delivered”(p.199); “moved on to prestigious positions in the academic world” (p.207), making the entry read more like a Curriculum Vitae than an informative account.

Key texts, the final part of the book, is not a collection of texts as such, but a select bibliography. This is a useful, comprehensive list of the chief contributors to the field of stylistics.

As a reference guide to stylistics, this book provides a comprehensive and up-to-date coverage of stylistics, incorporating the latest developments in the field. It does not, however, always entirely live up to the goals of the key terms series “To offer undergraduate students clear, concise accessible introductions to core topics.” Sometimes this is because the authors assume too much prior knowledge by, for instance, using some terms without explanation, e.g. “paratactic construction” (p.162), a term used in Systemic Functional Grammar. In general, however, this is due to a lack of clarity both in the organisation of the content and in the language in which this is presented. The latter is, unfortunately, further marred by somewhat unnatural English expressions (e.g. ... *has been enormously felt* p.113). One gets the impression that the book has been put together in haste. Despite these shortcomings, which can be remedied by careful editing and revision, the main strength of the book remains. This is the wealth of information it contains and the contribution it makes to the field of stylistics today.

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