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Modality.
Commitment, Truth Value and Reality Claims Across Modes in Multimodal Novels

This article presents exploratory work in the newly emerging field of *multimodal stylistics.* By bringing together literary studies, linguistics and multimodal semiotics, multimodal stylisticians aim to extend the stylistic tool box by developing methodological frameworks applicable to the description and analysis of literary texts which – in addition to wording – make use of other semiotic modes such as typography, visual images, colour and layout for their meaning-making. The approach to multimodality deployed and examined is that proposed, for instance, by Kress and van Leeuwen (e. g. 1996; 2001) and Baldry and Thibault (2006). According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, 2) »common semiotic principles operate in and across different modes«. Following this line of thought, the article sets out to examine modality as a cross-modal semiotic principle.

After a brief introduction to the field of multimodal stylistics, the concept of modality is presented in its (Hallidayan) linguistic context as a verbal resource for the expression of speaker commitment by means of modal verbs, adverbials, modalised sentences and metaphorised modality. From here, the concept is transferred to the context of visual communication where it concerns the truth value of the visual representation, described at a »lexico-grammatical« level in terms of the visual modal parameters of articulation of detail, background, light, shadow, depth and colour (Kress/van Leeuwen 1996). Subsequently, the concept of modality is applied to the analysis of two explicitly multimodal novels, with particular focus on the realisation of modality in visual images and typography. The texts put up for analysis are Alexander Masters' *Stuart. A Life Backwards* and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close.* While Kress and van Leeuwen's modal parameters prove to apply well to the analysis of modality at a lexico-grammatical level of the photographic images, analysis of the two novels reveals that modality also appears to be at play at a discourse level as a result of the multimodal interplay of the verbal and the visual. The analysis of Masters' and Foer's sporadic use of special typography, in turn, reveals that although some of Kress and van Leeuwen's modality parameters may be applicable to typography, the descriptive system is clearly less adequate in a typographic context where further work is needed before workable tools can be added to the multimodal stylistic tool kit.

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