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Exercises in Style: Everything You Need to Know Beginning in the Field of Stylistics

- Nina Nørgaard/Beatrix Busse/Rocío Montoro, *Key Terms in Stylistics*. (Key terms series) London/New York: Continuum 2010. 269 p. [Price: EUR 24,56]. ISBN: 978-0-8264-1948-4.

Key Terms in Stylistics is part of the *key term series* that aims at providing undergraduates with comprehensive introductory information on linguistic core topics. The series structures its volumes according to a pattern that might differ slightly from topic to topic but always covers the three categories *key terms*, *key thinkers* and *key texts*. This way of processing linguistics' main fields of research is indeed a sensible approach if the declared objective is to offer a first comprehensive overview of the respective fields. In the case of *Key Terms in Stylistics* the authors modified the predefined structure by choosing to include an additional chapter that outlines the various branches of stylistics composing this highly interdisciplinary field. When Nørgaard, Busse and Montoro define stylistics as »the study of the ways in which meaning is created through language in literature as well as in other types of text« (1), they make right from the beginning a point of showing that stylistics has developed into a wide field that no longer restricts its objects of study to literary texts but includes »non-fictional forms such as advertising, academic writing, news reports as well as non-printed forms such as TV and pictorial advertising, film, multimodal publications, etc« (ibid.). This enumeration already suggests through the underlying broad definition of ›text‹ that stylistics has moved far beyond the notions of Russian Formalism on which stylistics heavily relied when it first became an academic discipline to be taken seriously in the 1960s. Today, stylistics has developed into an academic discipline with various branches reaching from formalist stylistics over corpus, critical, pedagogical, multimodal, functionalist stylistics to more reader-oriented approaches such as cognitive stylistics etc.

The inclusion of a chapter solely concerned with a brief but precise introduction of each branch is in line with the goal of the series to give a comprehensive overview of the field. However, to adhere to the objective of providing undergraduate students with introductory (meaning easily comprehensible) information on the field of stylistics that are comprehensive (meaning that extensive and detailed insight into the field should be given) at the same time is not an easy task. It is indeed an exercise in style. Nørgaard, Busse and Montoro meet this challenge when they make full use of the conception of the series by applying the technique of cross-referencing. Their introduction comprises all information necessary to get a good first impression of what stylistics is and how it developed historically as an academic discipline. The brief historical overview of the branches of stylistics included in the introduction summarizes what is dealt with more extensively in the succeeding chapter. This makes it easier for the student who is just beginning in the field of stylistics to put into context the explanations of the branches of stylistics that are to follow. The chapters on key branches, key terms and key thinkers are then structured like a reference book listing its entries in alphabetical order. The advantage of making the field of stylistics accessible by resorting to the structure of a reference book is obviously that specific terms, concepts etc. are easy to find. However, a decisive disadvantage is that contextualization becomes increasingly difficult, especially if the field of stylistics is *terra incognita*. Nørgaard, Busse and Montoro solve this problem in two ways: Firstly, through the chapter sequence, and secondly, through the use of a reference

structure. In order to have undergraduate students develop a deeper understanding of the field, it makes sense to first introduce the branches of stylistics since they comprise information on different approaches, key thinkers, key concepts, theoretical models etc. Keeping the entries relatively short, the referencing of relevant and important scholars, concepts or theoretical models allows the student to customize his further reading to his individual needs. This way two types of students are well served: Students who already have knowledge of the field can use *Key Terms in Stylistics* as reference book to quickly look up what they already know they are looking for. Students first dealing with stylistics are not confronted with lengthy chapters but are offered concise and informative entries instead that provide them with contextualizing references they can use as extensively as needed. The idea to have students adapt what and the extent of what they read to their individual needs within the process of making the field of stylistics accessible to themselves is a valuable approach in two respects. On the one hand it encourages students to systematically structure and monitor their research; on the other hand students can adjust the reading material to their learning and studying preferences. Therefore, *Key terms of Stylistics* serves students well not only from a pedagogical point of view but also from the perspective of cognitive sciences.

Key Terms in Stylistics offers everything one should know about this flourishing discipline. Especially the section on stylistics' key branches is helpful in developing a critical understanding of the discipline. The authors provide the criticism of each branch and show how this criticism has led to the development of new branches and hence its contribution to the overall development of the field. The emergence of functionalist stylistics for example can be seen as a direct consequence of the critique of formalist stylistics for its »overriding interest in linguistic form at the expense of considerations about the function and effects of the formal features put up for examination« (25). As for the key term section the selection of key terms comprises stylistic devices, linguistic paradigms, core concepts such as ›foregrounding‹ and theories underlying the different stylistic approaches. Although the single entries try to point out the relevance of the term for the field of stylistics, the reader is additionally supported in his contextualization through cross-referencing that was introduced in the chapter on the key branches and is continued in the section on key thinkers. Alongside key stilisticians and the summary of their works, ideas, and contributions to the field of stylistics scholars whose contribution to linguistic paradigms that have somehow informed the field are also included in the section on key thinkers. When this section is complemented with a list of key texts for further reading it becomes once more apparent that the authors are extremely committed to providing the reader with a comprehensive overview of stylistics as a full-fledged academic discipline. Their writing is clear and concise and tries to include as many application examples as possible to make the field, its branches and concepts even more accessible for undergraduate students.

Key Terms in Stylistics meets not only the goal set by the series in which it has been published but also the objective that it has set itself: It »provides the reader with an overview of the stylistic tool box, the tools available in it, the different linguistic paradigms and branches of stylistics which have produced/ or employed the tools as well as key thinkers in the field« (6). The reader has the chance to almost hermeneutically use this book to develop a profound understanding of stylistics in which there can be no doubt as to the enriching interdisciplinarity of a discipline that can no longer be regarded as a mere method, but has to be accepted as an independent field of research.

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