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Stylistics

Stylistics is the linguistic study of style in language. It aims to account for how texts project meaning, how readers construct meaning and why readers respond to texts in the way that they do. This book is an introduction to stylistics that locates it firmly within the traditions of linguistics. Organised to reflect the historical development of stylistics from its origins in Russian formalism, the book covers key principles such as foregrounding theory, as well as more recent developments in cognitive stylistics. It includes an examination of both literary and non-literary texts, and substantial coverage of methodologies for stylistic analysis. Throughout the book, the emphasis is on the practicalities of producing stylistic analyses that are objective, replicable and falsifiable. Comprehensive in its coverage and assuming no prior knowledge of the topic, *Stylistics* will be essential reading for undergraduate and graduate students new to this fascinating area of language study.

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To the memory of our friend and fellow stylistician,
Mary Ellen Ryder

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Preface

This book, in the 'red' series, is one that we are very proud to have been given the opportunity to write. We have both been teaching stylistics courses at different levels of University education for a number of years, and have found that the sheer variety and diversity of practice that it encompasses causes problems in introducing the field to students for the first time. Equally, this diversity is part of its attraction as a discipline which can interest students from all areas of English Studies, from English Language through Literature to Creative Writing, as well as those coming to text analysis from a Linguistics background.

There are very many excellent books on stylistics already in existence of course, and we pay tribute to these in the pages of this book. Many of these books have been written by significant figures in the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA), which has been an extremely important player in the development of the field. Most of these books are the product of a particular personal view (of the author) or represent a particular stage in the development of the field, and for this reason, we felt there was room for another, more eclectic book, which would try to sum up the state of the art as it reaches approximately its centenary.

In planning the book, we felt that it was important to engage readers early, but that this could not come before we had set out some of the principles of the field as we see them. We therefore open with a chapter which approaches theoretical questions about the nature and scope of the subject via some of the questions that we thought new researchers might ask. Equally, though we knew it was important to introduce readers to some of the methodological issues in the practice of stylistics, we saw that it was difficult to introduce these until readers had some sense of the subject through seeing it in practice. We therefore return to these more practical questions in Chapter 7, by which time we anticipate that readers will be in a better position to apply the advice to their work.

Between these two extremes, Chapters 2–6 are concerned with the range of activity that we felt currently represents the field of stylistics. There are many ways in which we could have sub-divided the field, but in the end we judged that a reader who is new to this type of work would benefit most from learning about the origins of stylistics, and then reading about how it has branched out and developed from these beginnings. This is not a strict history of the subject, since many of the early forms of stylistics still co-exist with more recent approaches. However, in terms of the ways in which stylistics has exploited the insights,

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theories and models of linguistics and other related disciplines, there is a broadly developmental structure to this book.

One of the most significant developments in the field is probably the move from being concerned solely with literary texts to seeing all text as having the potential for stylistic (if not aesthetic) effect. Many stylisticians throughout the world are still motivated largely by wanting to explain how literary effects are achieved linguistically, but there is a large and growing number who do not have this motivation as their sole focus and whose interest has increasingly been on the process of reading, the interaction of text and reader to produce meaning, and the effects of this process, whatever they may be. Such effects will differ according to text, context and reader, so that they may include literary effect, but can also include other more practical and/or ideological effects.

Finally, we hope that this book will work on a number of levels. It ought to work as an introductory text book, and the extent to which it is used straightforwardly in this way will depend on the tutor, the students and the context. In addition, we hope that it will serve as a statement of a field reaching maturity in the early part of the twenty-first century, and that this will not be a limiting, but an enabling statement which will encourage future researchers to continue developing a rich field which has come so far since the Russian formalist school of early last century.

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