

erto unedited Old French translation of Gratian's *Decretum*, preserved in a thirteenth century manuscript in Bruxelles (BR 9084). Based on the investigation of distinctive items of vocabulary, names, grammatical morphemes and spelling, she argues that the translation is a Central French copy of an Anglo-Norman original and boldly infers from this fact that the translator might have been Thomas Becket during his six year exile in Pontigny and Sens.

8. Pragmatics. Jadranka Gvozdanović's investigation (pp. 177–90) of the textual organization in the Synodal MS of the Old Russian *First Novgorod Chronicle* is an attempt to apply the principles of textlinguistics to a medieval Russian text.

Clause structure and thematic structure are focused on in Pieter van Reenen and Lene Schøsler's (pp. 401–19) extremely thoughtful pragmatic comparison of the preverbal particles *si* and *or* in Old and Middle French. Their analysis shows that the particles have different pragmatic functions: while *si* connects clauses having the same implicit subject, *or* connects sentences with different implicit subjects. Thematic *si* therefore has a strong tendency to indicate subject continuity; *or*, on the other hand, marks a thematic break by introducing a new topic.

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SARA MILLS, *Feminist stylistics* (Interface). London/New York: Routledge, 1995. x + 230 pp.

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A book called *Feminist stylistics* is bound to arouse suspicion, in particular when it is published in the mid-1990s, a period in which "Feminist Studies" are gradually being superseded by "Gender Studies" and which is even described as a "post-feminist" era by some authors.

Both “feminist” and “stylistics” are, moreover, complex and widely-debated notational terms. There is on the other hand, hardly any issue which seems to be more appropriate for the INTERFACE series, which is designed to examine topics at the “interface” between language studies and literary criticism, and whose contributors are explicitly expected to explore the role of ideology at this interface. The title therefore also arouses interest, in particular when the author is Sara Mills, who has shown herself to be a very politicized and provocative writer in the past (cp. “Knowing your place: a Marxist feminist stylistic analysis”, Mills 1992).

Feminist stylistics is designed as both an introduction to feminist literary and linguistic theory and a “toolkit” for readers who have little or no previous knowledge of feminism or mainstream stylistics (p. 2). Mills describes a form of contextualized stylistics which not only traces sexism in texts but, more generally, aims to examine the way in which gender difference is encoded or even hidden in texts. Arguing against a form of traditional stylistics which focuses on the appreciation of literary value, against subjective, individualistic interpretations of texts and also against “feminist studies” which concentrate predominantly on content analysis, she seeks to propose a theorized, replicable form of feminist analysis. By introducing, commenting on and applying techniques from a wide range of linguistic and literary backgrounds, she wants to provide the reader with skills to distance themselves from naturalized, gender-biased reading strategies.

The book consists of two separate, but interrelated parts. The first part introduces the reader to Mills’ basic notions of “Feminism” (pp. 3–4) and “Stylistics” (pp. 4–10) and examines “General Theoretical Issues”, namely “Feminist Models of Texts” (pp. 25–43), “The Gendered Sentence” (pp. 44–65) and “Gender and Reading” (pp. 66–79). The second part then focuses on the analysis of texts at the levels of the word (pp. 83–127), the phrase/sentence (pp. 128–58) and discourse (pp. 159–97). Throughout the book numerous textual examples—mainly taken from advertisements, newspaper reports and popular texts such as thrillers and romances but also from “canonical” literary texts (Donne, Hemingway, Joyce, etc.)—serve to illustrate the practical application of the theoretical issues examined.

Mills’ move towards a contextualized stylistics is best documented in her interactional “Feminist Model of Text” (pp. 31–43). This model considers various determinants of the contexts of text production (constraints on the author, literary conventions, publishing practices, affiliations, sociohistorical factors, etc.) and especially text reception. The reader’s role is given prominence as the text is seen as a “site for nego-

tiation". By close analysis, together with an awareness of stereotypes, the reader, as an active participant, is able to locate and interrogate the often gender-biased dominant reading of a text.

In her chapter on the "gendered sentence" (pp. 44–65), Mills refutes the assertion of a simple binary gendered sentence, namely Virginia Woolf's notion of a "male sentence", the tradition of an *Écriture féminine* and the reaction to it (Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray; Julia Kristeva), as well as overgeneralized interpretations of sex-preferential language or "genderlect" in sociolinguistic research. These studies are shown not to deal with gender-determined linguistic differences, but to concentrate on content or register analysis and to argue predominantly with stereotypes of men and women. The "male sentence" is thus described as hierarchical, rational and clear because men are supposed to be rational and in control of things; in accordance with the stereotypical female, the "female sentence" is described as hesitant, emotional and opaque. Yet, rather than simply dismiss gender as a determinant in text production Mills favours the notion of "female affiliation" (cp. Sandra Gilbert/Susan Gubar; Lynne Pearce), i.e. the textual signalling to the reader that the writer or the persona are affiliating with a particular literary tradition. Mills demonstrates, in her analysis of novel extracts by Iris Murdoch, Malcolm Lowry, Anita Brookner and Ellen Galford, how the authors' conscious choices for the affiliation to a male, feminine or feminist tradition can be traced in a number of textual cues (clauses displaying epistemic modality, a meandering sentence structure, etc. for the feminine affiliation; a subversive address to the reader, untypically chosen similes, etc. for a feminist affiliation).

Chapter 3 ("Gender and Reading", pp. 66–79) focuses on the reader's negotiation with the text, and especially on the positioning of the reader as male by means of direct and indirect address (generic nouns and pronouns, cultural code, etc.). In an analysis of several perfume and car advertisements Mills shows how "obviousness" becomes successful in reader-positioning by the fact that an ideological message is presented as a seemingly coherent, commonsense message (cp. Louis Althusser's notions of "hailing" and "obviousness").

Part II examines gender bias and sexism from the micro- to the macro-textual level. "Analysis on the level of the word" (pp. 83–127) explains asymmetries of male and female representation, names specific types of sexist usage in individual words such as generic pronouns/nouns and particular terms of address and also searches certain word fields for lexical gaps. For each group a number of different—often well-known—examples are given. Proposals for a gender-free lan-

guage are collected in style-sheet form (pp. 100–1). On the “level of the phrase/sentence” (pp. 128–58) idioms, metaphors, *double entendres* and jokes are shown to carry a lot of seemingly “obvious” background information which, according to Mills, has to be dismantled as gender-biased or even sexist ideology. In very thorough analyses of extracts from popular romances and in particular the lyrics of the song “Hit” by the Sugar Cubes (pp. 143–58) the value of the analysis of transitivity choices (Halliday) is contested. This kind of analysis can show how women are being disenabled by syntactic choices and support the impression that romances reinforce the stereotype of women as being the passive recipients of males’ actions: whereas women are hardly ever agents, and in the rare event that they are, then in mental processes, males are frequently agents in material-intention-processes. Mills rightly points out, however, that this must not lead to simplified interpretations, as the pejorative connotation of, for example, passivity can be ideological itself. At the “level of discourse” Mills wants to introduce gendered discursive structures, i.e. “gendered frameworks” (pp. 159–197), such as constraints on the construction of female characters which result in their fragmentation and sexualization; women’s “hair”, for example, is not simply described as blonde but as “natural”, “ash” or “peroxide blonde”, all of which have connotations of sexual attractiveness or availability. Linguistic fragmentation of the female body into anatomical elements also tends to co-occur with a male focalizer. Having thus considered character focalization as gendered frameworks, Mills examines gender-bias in larger-scale frameworks, i.e., certain narrative patterns which she refers to as “schemata” (cp. the “before-and-after” items or the general tone of advice in women’s magazines; pp. 187–97).

Mills is certainly right in her assertion that “feminist studies” in the past, especially in the Anglo-American context, have concentrated too much on content or register analysis alone and have neglected linguistic theories of language and texts. Therefore her attempt to integrate literary and linguistic findings and base her analysis on theory is certainly overdue. Yet, there remains a certain uneasiness about the issues mentioned at the beginning of this review. The term “gender” is neither explicitly introduced nor dealt with in the book¹ because Mills sticks to a politicized feminist stance and is highly sceptical of the term as it “carries the risk of effacing the political edges” (p. 18).² A theoretical apparatus modified more consistently on gender lines, however, would have allowed an integration of texts which may now serve as counterexamples (asymmetries, reader positioning, etc.), e.g. androgynous models and sexist items discriminating against males in advertising.

Some of the inconsistencies and the occasional lack of coherence in the text are probably due to its "chequered career" (Preface³) which obviously also delayed its publication. Many of the examples (advertisements) and sexist definitions from dictionaries are outdated; the description of dictionary makers as male sexist "gatekeepers" of language (pp. 123–5) cannot remain unchallenged in a time in which the *Longman dictionary of contemporary English* (director: Della Summers) has long since adopted the sexist-free language Mills seeks to propose. The analysis of stereotypes in metaphors and ready-made phrases would have profited from the recent findings in the field of cognitive linguistics. The textual examples are generally highly illuminating, even if the many which are taken from the lexical field "sex" (terms for the genitals, sexual intercourse, menstruation) do not seem of great worth for everyday text analysis. Unfortunately, no textual analysis is provided which combines all the findings of the book in an exemplary way. The questions collected in the summary (pp. 199–202), which are supposed to serve as a toolkit for the systematic analysis of gender-bias, are certainly very helpful as a guideline, but are too many and complex for a textbook (42 question-groups with up to 10 questions amount to about 100 questions for a single text!).

Feminist stylistics is a very lively book which opens up new perspectives on texts. It is Mills' introduction to a variety of skills and techniques from linguistic and literary backgrounds, however, which is most important for the development of a stylistic analysis along gender lines. That certain companies (Always, Chanel) did not grant permission for the reproduction of their advertisements also demonstrates that such a politicized feminist stylistics is essential in a society still dominated by males.

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ENDNOTES

¹The definition in the glossary "the sexualized identity of each individual" is not at all helpful. Many of the definitions there (p. 203–17) are misleading or even wrong, e.g. "homosexuality: having sexual and emotional relations with a member of the same *gender/sex*" (my italics), "syntax: word order", "connotation: words often have an overlaid meaning which modifies the dictionary definition", "clause: a group of words which contains a finite verb".

²Many of the edges in the earlier parts of the book seem too sharply feminist, even if only in terminology, e.g. the complex model of text which is called "a feminist model of text".