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Basic Concepts of Poetics (Penn State Series in German Literature)

Emil Staiger

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Basic Concepts of Poetics (Penn State Series in German Literature) Emil Staiger
Emil Staiger (1908-1987), a native of Switzerland, was one of the foremost scholars in the field of literary studies. Grundbegriffe der Poetik is a monument in the history of literary criticism that has been unavailable to the English reader until now. Of Staiger's works, Poetics is probably the most radical, the most disruptive, for it constructs a revolutionary new poetics and erects it alongside the old traditional Aristotelian one. Here Staiger challenges the usefulness of the most distinguished of Western literary critical paradigms, the genre theory, that since the eighteenth century has been part of critics' indispensable theoretical equipment-- a sort of literary sine qua non. In its stead, Staiger proposes to explain literary genres on the basis of fundamental patterns of literary creativity. He selects his examples from various European literary traditions, thus engaging the scholar as well as the comparatist in national literatures. By choosing an inductive method, he speaks to all concerned with literary values.In her introduction, Luanne Frank establishes how the Poetics mediates between those modes of criticism current in the 1940s and those of the 1980s, as well as between those held by European scholars and those embraced by American scholars. Frank places Staiger's work within the history of genre criticism from an American perspective, defines its goals and merits, and formulates a critical response long overdue in Europe and most welcome in the United States.

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