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20. Poetics

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1. Linguistics and literature

The study of literature and culture has often proceeded in philosophical or thematic terms, influenced at different moments in history by an emphasis on sociology, anthropology or history itself. Currently in most university and college departments of literature across the world, the paradigm of discussion falls within a broad cultural studies, and we live in these early decades of the 21st century in one of the periodic moments in which the fact that literary texts are written in language is a relatively neglected notion. However, there has always been a thread running consistently through human intellectual development which has explored the workings of language both in its outward or recorded form (speech, writing, screen text) and in its inward manifestation (introspection, cognition and neuroscience). Most recently, this thread of interest in language has been finding expression once again in the study of literature, in a form variously known as *cognitive poetics*, *cognitive stylistics* or a generally *cognitive approach to literature*.

Literature is the most culturally highly valued form of language. It is usually regarded as being fixed in form as writing or public inscription, though there is a closely associated performative aspect that allows drama, theatre and readings aloud of poetry and prose to be encompassed within the notion of the literary. Hybrid forms blending poetry and graphic art, recitation and dance, and even quotation within architecture and horticulture can be regarded as even less prototypical examples. However, the normative historical perception of literature as writing on paper has encouraged a view of literary analysis in mainly formalist terms, whenever over time literature has been discussed for its language. The parameters of *language*, in other words, have been restricted to the boundaries of the physical text in most linguistic traditions of literary analysis. Aspects of language that a non-formalist might consider inherently part of the language system would include both the immediate and general social and ideological context, creative authorial perception and motivation, and the processes and predilections of a reader or reading community.

In the most famous statement of formalist literary analysis, Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954a, 1954b) set prescriptions against discussions of authorial intention on the one hand and against the psychology of the reader on the other. It must be borne in mind that Wimsatt and Beardsley and the whole New Critical movement of which they were a part were reacting to the worst sort of loose biographical musing and flowery speculation on readers and reading that served for much literary “debate” and “analysis” in those days. And the absurd and groundless treatments of literary authors in terms of their imagined psychoanalytical motivations or their assumed experiences and memories remain unfortunately a feature of the contemporary literary critical scene even today. However, the reaction against the extreme nonsense of the 1930s and ’40s produced its own extremism: a bar on any consideration of psychology even when discussing readerly reactions; an assumption that aesthetic effects and meanings were purely the preserve of a text without reference to its reader; a literary work divorced from the integral culture of its language and the cognitive models and schemas that informed it.

Where much literary criticism in the latter part of the 20th century – especially in the US – headed off into abstraction and generalisation about language, other, more linguistically-focused traditions such as *stylistics* retained a formalist approach overall. Stylistics (arising mainly in France as *stylistique*, Germany as *stilistik*, and in Britain within applied linguistics) took a firmly delimited approach from linguistics to literary

texts. It seems likely that this self-imposed constraint not to consider context alongside text was a contrastive reaction to literary critical theory's evasion of textuality altogether. The prohibitions of New Criticism still weighed heavily for stylisticians. And the nature of the linguistic toolkit available at the time led perhaps inevitably towards a focus on aspects of language up the rank-scale towards but not really including text linguistics and discourse analysis. For some, "linguistics" itself was a term that dealt only and single-mindedly with the rank-structure from phonology and phonetics and morphology and lexicology to semantics and syntax; even pragmatics, not to mention text and textuality, discourse and sociolinguistic matters, were regarded as extra-linguistic areas.

As stylistics evolved in the European tradition, the nature of its development has been a steady re-engagement with context, framed within a similarly rigorous and systematic methodology. Models from pragmatics, insights from sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, and the most recent advances in computerised corpus linguistics have enriched stylistics over the past few decades. The cognitive turn in the arts and humanities has been especially influential in stylistics, where there is no question it has been the main conduit for insights from cognitive science into literary studies. Today, the enrichment of literary studies by a cognitive poetics is a feature of literary research internationally. There are several different strands within this emerging but increasingly influential tradition, and several different angles on cognitive science that are taken by different areas of literary studies for different purposes, but it is becoming apparent that many of the concerns that literary critics and commentators have struggled to express inarticulately and in an ill-disciplined way are amenable to a rigorous cognitive poetics. In this chapter I will set out some of this variety, while also arguing for the sort of necessary focus on language textuality and texture that has served stylistics so well.

The study of literature is an important area within cognitive science. Literature is the most prestigious form of language in use. It is both highly culturally valued (as "Literature") and widely influential (as "literature" in all the demotic forms of popular lyrics and verses, formula fiction, trashy novels, soap operas, favourite good-reads and personal self-published stories and poetry blogs). Literary analysis reaches from the considered and disciplined work of professional literary critics and commentators in scholarly articles and the literary press right into the online reviews of books and reading groups, lists of favourites and all manner of informal observations on literature through the ages. Literary analysis, in short, has often been the territory on which more general discussions of language forms and effects have been conducted. Literary works themselves often incorporate particularly subtle features of everyday discourse, as well as features at the experimental edges of what is possible in language; the proper study of literary language – in all its fully contextualised diversity – offers the opportunity for cognitive scientists to understand human communication properly as well.

2. Precursors to a cognitive poetics

Poetics – the explicit statement and exploration of the theory of literary works – has an ancient history, and though some modern cognitive linguists point to the disjunctive revolutionary advances in the current discipline (see Lakoff and Johnson 1999), there are aspects of contemporary cognitive poetics that address directly concerns of human

culture and expression that are centuries and millennia old. The earliest comprehensive theory of literary forms and effects was produced by Aristotle in around 330 BC as the *Poetics* (which mainly dealt with drama) and the *Rhetoric* (which, over three books, addressed poetry, persuasive speech and non-literary forms such as witness-statements, narrative accounts and the discourse of legal interrogation). While of course the ancient Greeks did not have access to neurological techniques nor what we might recognise as a modern scientific view of mind, their great innovation in intellectual human development was to bring an empirical sense to argumentation. Words of speech could be recorded in writing and examined for their forms; and the tangible effects of that language when performed could be observed in the audience, listener or court-room.

Crucially in Aristotle's work (and in that of other early theorists of poetics and rhetoric such as his precursors Plato and Isocrates, and later Roman writers such as Cicero and Quintilian, and for St Augustine in the 4th century AD), classical and early medieval Western rhetorical studies did not separate out the different facets of discourse: memory, knowledge, textual arrangement, word-choice and syntactic sequence, style of delivery, ideological intention, the immediate environment of the forum or culture of utterance, and the emotional, ethical and persuasive effects on the audience were all considered of a piece. The continuities between mind and body, embodiment and culture, and shared idealised cognitive models, frames and schemas that are at the heart of modern cognitive linguistics can all be discerned in these classical continuities.

For example, both classical poetics and rhetoric were concerned as much with performance and effect as with the structural content of the discourse. Aristotle (in the *Rhetoric*) arranges the nature of communication into three "appeals" rather than into formally-designated categories such as, perhaps, poetry, prose and drama, or fictional narrative and natural narrative, or political, romantic and pastoral topics, and so on. These "appeals" are meaning and informativity (*logos*), performative empathetic delivery (*pathos*), and the authority and moral credibility of the speaker (*ethos*). Cockcroft (2002) demonstrates how this Aristotelian scheme can be read through the lens of recent schema theory (from Schank and Abelson 1977 to G. Cook 1994), and he uses the cognitive scientific understanding of the classical scheme as an analytical tool for the exploration of writing in the English 16th century renaissance.

In the classical tradition, invention, text, and readerly effects were inextricably bound up with one another. However, as the study of rhetoric became instrumentalised by becoming a central part of European schooling in the later middle ages, the nature of human communication was partitioned. Informativity became the focus of study, for example in the five "canons" of rhetoric developed influentially by the 16th century writer Peter Ramus (also known as Pierre de la Ramée): *inventio*, *memoria*, *pronuntiatio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*. These categories of invention, recall of facts, accuracy of pronunciation, the topical organisation of ideas and, lastly, lexicogrammatical style shift the focus onto meaningful content in a performative frame, with the relative demotion of explicit matters of emotion or ethics. Ong ([1958] 2004), writing in the 1950s, argues that the rise of print after 1500 and the spread of mass literacy across Europe and the US in the 19th century (see also Ong 1982) also served to diminish the emphasis on the performative aspects of discourse. We arrive in the middle of the 20th century with literary scholarship constrained by the New Critical formalism that was outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

More generally, it can be argued that the last five centuries encompassing the Enlightenment and the rise of analytical and empirical science have mainly founded our intellectual achievements on a necessary partitioning of human experience and the natural world. The principle within the scientific method of experimentally investigating a feature by observing a contrastive “control” requires the object under investigation to be delineated, isolated from other objects and defined exclusively. Crucially, the object and its interrelation with other objects needs to be detached from the observing consciousness. The central expression of this lies in the Cartesian dualities that separate mind from body, reason from perception, logical deduction from intuition, artificial from natural, and human consciousness and experience from the rest of the world and universe (see Descartes 1985).

All of this has created a good science that has led to advances in almost every aspect of human life, but we are now in a position of requiring a better science that remembers that objects and consciousnesses that have been artificially though necessarily separated are in actual fact part of a natural and holistic continuum. The 5th century BC precursor of the Aristotelian philosophers, Heraclitus (see 2001) originally characterised nature as flux, but contemporary cognitive science is establishing the demonstrable reality that mind is embodied, experience is situated, rational decisions are embedded within emotional decisions, and humans are connected by sharing common frames of knowledge and patterns of mind-modelling.

It is commonplace to mark the origins of recent cognitive poetics in the last two decades of the 20th century, with Tsur’s (1992) coining of the phrase providing a home for several strands of work which brought together literary studies on the one hand and cognitive linguistics, cognitive psychology and neuroscience on the other. Pioneering studies of metaphor and conceptualisation (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987; Fauconnier and Turner 2003) often featured literary examples. Cognitively-informed accounts of narrative, such as Rumelhart’s (1975, 1977) story-grammars and Schank and Abelson’s (1977; Schank 1982) schema theory were adapted for application to literary narratives (for example by Cockcroft 2002; G. Cook 1994; and Culpeper 2001).

Cognitive poetics as a defined field and roughly common set of concerns and methods coalesced during the last decade of the 20th century. The polemical and demonstrative work of Turner (1991, 1996) in particular was instrumental in bringing the insights of cognitive science to the study of literature. Other key work from this period includes Spolsky (1993), Gerrig (1993), Fludernik (1996), Tsur (1992) and the work of Donald and Margaret Freeman (1995 and 2002, respectively). An influential textbook (Stockwell 2002) with companion volume (Gavins and Steen 2003), and a collection of papers (Semino and Culpeper 2002) served to bring the discipline to a wider and younger audience, and established it as a college and university course.

Though this work drew on the rapidly emerging insights from empirical cognitive science, West (2012) has recently pointed out that many of the concerns of modern cognitive poetics can also be discerned precursively in earlier work such as that of the English literary critic I. A. Richards. West argues that Richards was aiming at a science of criticism in much the same way as contemporary researchers in cognitive poetics. Of course, Richards did not have access to the recent insights into the mind that cognitive science is opening up today; he was scornful of the “monstrosities” of contemporary psychoanalysis (see West 2012: 8), but was enthusiastic about more empirical psychology such as that being developed at the time in Germany by the *gestalt* psychologists.

Similar arguments for precursors of modern cognitive poetics can be made for the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Jan Mukařovský, and even F. R. Leavis. Though much of the writing of these scholars is cast in the register of their own times and can thus appear dogmatic and merely opinionated to our eyes, nevertheless Bakhtin was at pains to describe the inter-relations of textuality, culture and readerly cognition (see Keunen 2000); Mukařovský placed the effects of foregrounding at the centre of his understanding of literary reading (see van Peer 1986); and Leavis' notion of "enactment" in literature, whereby formal patterning is assigned a contextual significance by readers, is recognisable to modern cognitive poetics as literary iconicity (see Fischer 2013).

The main difference between these early precursors and modern cognitive poetics lies in the empirical basis of the disciplines of cognitive psychology and linguistics, which were not available in earlier ages. Modern practitioners of cognitive poetics are also conscious of the movements in literary theory which have swept across the field over the last few decades. While some of the positions argued and adopted in critical theory are proving to be at odds with the insights of cognitive science, other aspects of their thinking can be understood more clearly with reference to the rational evidence offered within cognitive poetics. In philosophical terms, cognitive poetics represents a form of experiential realism in the sense that most researchers assume a tangible set of data is available for investigation (authorial choices, textual patterns and readerly organisation), but that reality is only accessible through perceptual and cognitive mechanisms which represent it in particular though describable ways.

3. Cognition and literature

The study of literature comprises several different aspects, and the cognitive turn in arts and humanities affects all of them radically. The dominant paradigm in current literary scholarship is concerned with contextual matters of authorial creativity, the history of different edited versions of the literary work, the cultural environment at the text's initial publication, and the relationship of the literary work to parallel or similar philosophical or theoretical arguments. Historiography and critical theory, in other words, continue to dominate scholarly practice. While it is obvious that the close stylistic analysis of literary texts would be informed by cognitive linguistics, it is becoming apparent that cognitive scientific insights and methods can also inform historiography. Sotirova's (2013) work on manuscript versions of D. H. Lawrence's prose fiction is a case in point.

However, the current flight to historicism – or the "history of the book" – can be seen as the literary establishment's attempt to find something new "after Theory" (Eagleton 2003). Where it might be said that the literary work itself (its textuality and texture) was often overlooked in much recent critical-theoretical discussion, the new historicism placed the text at the centre of things once again, but mainly as an opportunity for exploring the culture of production. Textual versions and the history of editing became a prime concern, and so readerly reception and impact became relatively devalued once again. One of the key scholars of literary historicism, and also a highly influential literary-critical figure, Stephen Greenblatt (see 1992) has also argued for a refocus of attention in literary scholarship on the practice of teaching literature, as a means of reconnecting the profession of literary scholarship with public understanding.

All of these moves are interesting from the standpoint of anyone working in a stylistics, discourse analytical, or reception-theory tradition. Textual analysis in particular comes out of an applied linguistics field in which pedagogic practice was often the driving motivation behind the close attention to textual detail: stylistics has always been strongly teaching-focused. Much of the original drive towards atextual Theory and subsequent cultural poetics (Greenblatt 1989) originated in a desire to move away from the New Critical sense of a text integral to itself; so the focus (in historiography or text-editing theory) on the literary work as an artefact is ironic – where stylistic variation is not explored for its effect on meaning or aesthetic response but only for its value in what it tells us about its cultural origins.

In any case, the most recent work in cognitive poetics (see section 4 below) is in the process of demonstrating that even research into cultural production and reception, variants of editions, authorial choice and creativity are all amenable to and improvable by some attention to cognitive science.

All aspects of literary scholarship can (and should) be evaluated and defined with regard to the way they treat evidence. However, the definition and treatment of evidence when it comes to the practice of literary reading can have various aspects and outcomes. These are closely aligned with the methodology adopted in each case, as outlined below. The point I will emphasise throughout this brief survey is that the cognitive turn in poetics has affected each of these approaches.

3.1. Reader-control

In general, the “empirical approach to literature” has a strong German and Dutch tradition (see Schmidt 1982 and Ibsch et al. 1991), and has been promoted particularly by the journal *Poetics* and by the learned society *IGEL* (Internationale Gesellschaft für Empirische Literaturwissenschaft – Society for the Empirical Study of Literature and the Media). Here, the definition of empiricism is largely drawn from a social science perspective; where, in philosophy, rationalism and empiricism are regarded as being in dispute with each other (Morton 2004), in social science research, rational argument on extant phenomena and the experiential sense of those phenomena are regarded as complementary.

The core “IGEL” approach might be characterised as “hard empiricism”, in which particular aspects of reading are controlled as rigorously as possible in order to discover measurable facts about the reading process and experience. This approach is very closely linked with the discipline of psychology, and indeed many of the studies in this tradition are undertaken by or in collaboration with psychologists (see, for example, Miall et al. 2004, or Bortolussi and Dixon 2003, or Louwerse and van Peer 2009). There is no question that this form of empirical investigation has yielded a host of valuable insights into literary reading, summarised most clearly by Miall (2012). Key questions concern the nature of literariness (what makes literary discourse singular), the nature of absorption (the extent to which readers feel themselves immersed in a literary work), and the nature of iconicity (the extent to which a literary text conveys patterns that also seem to embody or represent their meanings symbolically).

As mentioned, much of the methodology of this form of empirical poetics is drawn from psychology. So, typically, small groups of college students will be divided into a

control and a variable group, given a task that corresponds to a literary reading experience, and then either observed for particular effects or questioned in the form of a variety of elicitation techniques. The advantage of this approach is that it isolates particular features of literary reading and renders largely measurable, statistically validatable results. The findings can be published with a high degree of confidence in their generalisability to the reading community at large.

Of course, there are also disadvantages to the approach. Often, groups which would be considered of an appropriate size for a psychological study (generally numbering in single-figures or tens) might be considered inadequately small from a sociolinguistic perspective. Often the objective of the approach is to discover generalisable facts about readers and the reading process, rather than particular facts or phenomena about the singular literary work that serves as a stimulus in the investigation. Many studies in this tradition therefore feature white middle-class young-adult college students as informants, which means at the very least that this socio-ethnic group is over-represented in the findings. Finally, of course, there is an inevitable privileging given to studies and phenomena that are easily (or even possibly) measurable, and less emphasis on those aspects of literary reading that are extremely subtle, transient or idiosyncratic, but which many might consider to be essential elements in the literary experience.

3.2. Reader-response

It should be said that many of the practitioners of “reader-control” empirical poetics are aware of these potential limitations, and often work hard to mitigate them. Miall (2005, 2006), in particular, blends the strongly quantitative psychology-leaning research with other, more qualitative techniques. Reader questionnaires, reading task protocols, thinking aloud techniques and other methods are designed to avoid the “lab-effect” of strongly reader-controlled experiments and aim more towards the exploration of a naturalistic reading experience. At the same time, experiments have been conducted in which readers are given real literary works instead of carefully controlled texts invented by the analysts, or complete texts rather than extracts and decontextualised sentences or “textoids” (Vipond and Hunt 1989; Gerrig 1993). Inevitably these sorts of approaches make it more difficult to control for precise textual or psychological features or effects, which is the cost of a more naturalistic and holistic set of data.

Moving even further away from the psychological method paradigm, several researchers within cognitive poetics have adopted more sociological methods in order to investigate the natural processes of reading. A common technique here is to use either the recorded notes and articulations of non-professional book-groups, blogs and discussions that are already available, or to engage in fieldwork data collection with these groups (see Whiteley 2011; Peplow 2011; Swann and Allington 2009). One advantage of these approaches is that the reading experiences that are being explored are not those of professional literary critics but often of a wider population of literary readers.

The results of the research might involve analytical frameworks that have a strong tradition in sociolinguistics (such as discourse analysis or accommodation theory) or alternatively the readers’ responses can be analysed using models derived from cognitive linguistics or cognitive psychology (such as text worlds or schema theory). Often these sorts of studies are thoroughly qualitative, and are more particularly tied to the specific

literary work in hand. This means of course that they gain as a democratic form of literary criticism, though there is perhaps less generalisability in terms of psychological process. And, of course, there are many examples of cognitive poetics (see section 3.5 below) in which a close cognitive poetic textual analysis is presented either to elaborate or interrogate a set of professional published literary critical responses. After all, literary critics are readers too, and their articulated responses are appropriate examples of data available for systematic analysis.

3.3. Computational and corpus stylistics

Both the quantitative and qualitative forms of readerly empiricism outlined above aim to avoid or mitigate the effects of the *reader's paradox* (Stockwell 2012a), a form of the *observer's paradox* familiar in sociolinguistic research. The latter recognises that investigators are likely to affect by their presence or intervention the data or informants they are researching. In the field of literary reading, the reader's paradox is even more intractable, because reading itself is a form of consciousness, and so even the slightest form of awareness or direct consideration will cause the experience to be different from the ordinary process of natural reading.

The great developments in computational corpus linguistics and concordance techniques over the last few decades offer possibilities for empirical poetics that minimise the effects of the reader's paradox in research. As Stubbs (2005, 2013) points out, features and effects that are distributed across a literary work can be explicitly apparent and measurable only by a software program, but they can reasonably be adduced as evidence for the generation of particular effects in literary readers. It may be that many literary effects operate at the level of sub-conscious processing, and their effects are only felt cumulatively or when several features are aligned for a particular thematic effect. In these cases, there is little point looking for the articulation of such effects with any degree of precision in the mainly intuitive and impressionistic discourse of literary criticism, nor in the discussions of non-professional readers. Nor is it useful to use the sort of quantitative empirical methods referenced in 3.1 and 3.2 above, because the effects that we are interested in might be too subtle or rarefied for accessible measurement. Instead, features that are distributed and diffused across a large expanse of literary text might cumulatively have a very subtle effect that is only measurable or even detectable objectively with the aid of a computer program and corpus stylistic technique.

Most corpus stylistics is not primarily cognitive poetic in design nor intention, but the method is adaptable enough to operate in the service of a cognitively-informed poetics. There have been explicit polemical arguments in this direction (O'Halloran 2007), and an increasing recognition that corpus linguistics has much empirical validation to offer cognitive linguistics (Gries and Stefanowitsch 2007; Arppe et al. 2010), and therefore to cognitive poetics (see 4.4 below).

3.4. Textual analysis

It has long been argued from within the discipline of stylistics that rigorous and systematic textual analysis itself is a form of empiricism. This argument rests on the assertion that textual and stylistic facts that are describable about a literary work are undeniably

evidence for a particular reading or interpretation of that text. The commitment to clear description and openness of method in stylistic practice sets out the fruits of analysis for verification, adjustment or falsifiability by other readers. Aside from the reliance on textual evidence, this too represents a commitment to the empiricism of method.

Furthermore, there is a more indirect claim to evidential value in stylistic analysis, in the sense that the (usually) linguistic framework or insight that is deployed in the analysis at hand has almost always been tested and validated in another domain. So, for example, if a stylistician explores the effects of semantic prototypicality in a reading of a poem, the fact that there is a huge amount of evidence to suggest that semantic prototypicality is currently a reasonably safe hypothesis about language in general helps to underpin and validate indirectly the use of that model in the literary analysis. Of course, this indirect validation rests on the assumption that literary language is continuous with language in general, rather than being in itself formally different or special – most stylisticians today accept this fact: literary language is literary because of the deployment and framing, rather than for any inherent, essential properties of the text itself. It is this far that stylistics has moved from New Criticism.

Literary stylistics has been the discipline that has most enthusiastically embraced cognitive linguistics as a source for analytical frameworks. An early collection of articles (Semino and Culpeper 2002) was even entitled *cognitive stylistics*, and in general the most active part of literary analysis for the last couple of decades has been characterised by close textual attention. Sometimes this has involved radical reshaping of existing notions in stylistics; at other times, it might have seemed as if existing notions were simply being given a cognitivist gloss (see Tsur's 2008 criticism of Stockwell 2002 in this regard). However, it is important to recognise that both aspects of the revaluation were necessary, in order to establish a coherent single discipline and understand in a consistent terminology and mindset where stylistics could make its greatest contribution – as well as those areas in which it lacked adequate concepts.

The field of narratology has been a particularly vibrant area of revitalised research, with a postclassical or *cognitive narratology* now largely treated as mainstream in that field (see Bundgaard et al. 2012, Herman 2000, 2003, 2009). Narratology draws more on cognitive psychology than linguistics, exploring such notions as the creation of story-worlds, the nature and representation of consciousness, and the literary deployment, codification and recreation of emotion, for example. It can be regarded as empirical in the same sense as stylistics above, though of course there are similar problems of definition. Sternberg (2003) has argued, for example, that cognitive narratology needs to decide whether to adopt a social science methodology and ethos or an approach more suited to the humanities. It seems to me, again, that the use and status of evidence is at the heart of this distinction, and in fact I have argued elsewhere (Stockwell 2012b) for a characterisation of the ethos of cognitive poetics as an “artful science”. This is because in literary reading we are dealing not only with the quantifiable and measurable effects of textuality and cognition, but also with experiences that are delicate, difficult to articulate, subjective and perhaps only precisely accessible by introspection.

3.5. Introspection

Introspection is not a form of perception (nor even analogous to it); it is a form of peculiar (that is, particular) self-knowledge (Byrne 2005). It thus has more to do with

belief than with perception, but this formulation makes it more, rather than less, amenable to a cognitive scientific account. With the rise of behaviourism through the 20th century, the use of introspection as a scientific method became devalued (Lyons 1986), since it is by definition subjective and idiosyncratic. However, even the most highly-controlled reader experiments in cognitive psychology have often relied on informants' self-report of their own reactions, and introspective report, for all its flaws, remains the only direct access to consciousness.

Most recently, Jack and Roepstorff (2003, 2004) argued for a revaluation of introspection in the scientific method. In relation to literary reading and literary analysis, I have argued (Stockwell 2013) that it is impossible to read and simultaneously to watch and reflect on your reading, for good psychological and perceptual reasons concerning figure and ground differentiation. It is of course possible to reflect backwards on a prior reading experience, so introspection is apparently retrospection, but as Overgaard (2006) points out, this means that you are having a memory of something that was at the time unconscious. Instead, introspection seems more like a rationalization of your consciousness. This is philosophically complex but in literary terms relatively simple: it means that the articulated recount of a reading experience equates to the reader's belief about that experience. This is a combination of both aware and sub-conscious factors, but since the introspective recount is the only product of the experience, then that is to all practical purposes the reading in hand. On this argument, introspection remains a valid form of evidence, perhaps in fact the only direct form of evidence of literary reading, and therefore introspection can be included in a list of types of empiricism.

In practice, several cognitive poetic analyses (including many of my own) rely on an introspective sense of a key effect or feature in a literary text and reading that is then pinpointed for systematic linguistic exploration. Furthermore, the analysis is presented in as transparent and principled a way as possible, and comparison with other readers' introspective experiences is invited. This procedure certainly relies on subjectivity and self-consciousness, but it also maintains contact with the sorts of external empiricism outlined in sections 3.1 to 3.4 above.

Finally, of course, the most common pattern of cognitive poetic analysis involves a combination of several of these empirical methods. The consequence is a sort of triangulation of approaches in order to arrive at an account of literary reading that would remain otherwise ineffable.

4. Developments in cognitive poetics

Over the last two decades, work that has fallen under the term "cognitive poetics" has diversified a great deal. As Louwerse and van Peer (2009) point out, surprisingly most examples of cognitive poetics over this period have drawn more on cognitive psychology rather than linguistics, though of course the two are not entirely distinct in cognitive literary analysis. Popular areas include explorations of conceptual metaphor, the worlds of literary fiction, schemas of contextual knowledge, how elements of literary texts are foregrounded and thematised, how genre is delineated, and how blending and compression work to create connections between literature and life.

The first of these – the exploration of conceptual metaphor – arises from the earliest work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and studies on this topic remain popular. Identifying

conceptual metaphors that underlie literary works, especially plays and novels, can reveal extended tropes and themes across large bodies of text. Any particular idealised conceptual metaphor can be linguistically realised in a variety of ways, of course, and the most convincing work focused on this stylistic variation (see, for example, D. C. Freeman 1995, and the articles collected in Gavins and Steen 2003, and Semino and Culpeper 2002). The least convincing work simply listed the conceptual metaphors that featured in the text, falling into the old trap of neglecting to link the textual description to the interpretative level of significance. Another common flaw in some of these studies lies in analysing conceptual metaphors in a particular literary work that in fact are simply common conventional metaphors in the language system of English generally: so, for example, finding lots of LIFE IS A JOURNEY or IDEAS ARE CONTAINERS metaphors in a literary text is often not particularly significant for the text as literature. Mistakes such as this were often what motivated some literary critics to dismiss cognitive poetics as reductive or only interested in universals, rather than in the particularity or singularity of the literary work.

Many literary scholars have drawn with interest on the ways that cognitive psychology has accounted for mental representations, schemas, mental models and conceptual worlds. This tradition has become particularly strong in the area of cognitive narratology (see 3.4 above), which has essentially become paradigmatic in what Herman (2000) calls “post-classical narratology”. Interest in the “storyworlds” that authors construct in texts for readers to re-imagine has drawn substantially on cognitive psychological frameworks. Again, though, much of this research is conceptual and thematic in nature. An exception is the work which has been undertaken in *text world theory* (Werth 1999, Gavins 2007), which marries up a contextualised model of world-building with a close linguistic analysis of discourse. The most useful aspect of the approach, for literary critical purposes, is the convincing way in which the model accounts for attentional and deictic “world-switches” caused by metaphor, temporal disjunctions, embedded beliefs, wishes and other modalisations, and other unrealised possibilities.

A third major trend within cognitive poetics has been the way in which scholars have revisited the key research questions of past literary theory with new tools from the cognitive revolution. So, for example, the defamiliarising or estranging effects of literature, or literariness itself, or the functioning of foregrounding as a literary mechanism, have all been freshly addressed with the benefit of the empirical grounding of cognitive science (see, for example, van Peer 1986, van Peer and Louwerse 2003).

Overall, the history of cognitive poetics over the last two decades has been to complete one of the main objectives of stylistics, which was to offer a persuasive rational account of the generation of meaningfulness in literary texts. Though this work is of course ongoing, the systematic account of context, framing and readerliness that recent advances have provided has been striking. Furthermore, we have witnessed a principled reintegration – thanks to cognitive poetics – of aesthetics and ethics (*pathos* and *ethos*, see section 2 above) into the analytical study of literature. Now in the second decade of the 21st century, it is becoming apparent that cognitive poetics is becoming prominent as an influence in literary studies in general. Under a more broad *cognitive literary studies* heading, literary scholars are increasingly turning their attention to insights appearing across the range of cognitive science disciplines. This includes not only cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics, but neuroscience, consciousness studies, and evolutionary theory. While this is welcome in general, there is a risk (it seems to me) that

once again the linguistic texture of the literary work is in danger of being overlooked. Literary scholars often do not seem to realise that cognitive poetics is not simply the latest critical theory, but is a scientific method with empirical roots.

4.1. The return to linguistics

Having said that cognitive literary studies risks neglecting the stylistic dimension, it is worth observing that one of the current emerging projects within cognitive poetics proper is a return to cognitive linguistic proper. For most of its history, stylistics has drawn on a systemic-functional linguistic tradition for its close textual analysis. Given the emphasis on meaning and its interpretative effects, this is not surprising. It is also perhaps to be expected that a grammatical model most popular outside the US would be preferred in the discipline of stylistics within its European and British Commonwealth context. Moreover, the various generative grammars emerging in the US at the time were not usable for the stylistic analysis of “surface structure” or actual linguistic surface realisation.

Most recently, however, several varieties of cognitive and construction grammars have emerged, perhaps most comprehensively Langacker’s (2008) Cognitive Grammar. These provide a means of parsing and accounting for matters of transitivity and participant roles in a similar way as Halliday’s (and Matthiessen 2004) systemic-functional grammar, and are at least as effective in this dimension. Additionally, of course, these cognitive grammars have the advantage of being rooted in psychological plausibility, either by empirical testing or indirectly by sharing a set of basic paradigmatic principles in cognitive science. This makes them potentially very attractive to stylisticians of literary works.

As yet, the number of applications of cognitive grammar to literature has been fairly limited. Hamilton (2003) offers an account of a Wilfred Owen war poem in order to explain the depth of its poignancy. There is an account of the shifting strength and weakness of characters in a battle scene in *The Lord of the Rings* (in Stockwell 2009), and an analysis of apocalyptic science-fiction narratives to focus on human helplessness (in Stockwell 2010). What is noticeable about these applications is that their main concern is not meaning but emotional effect. The collected analyses in Harrison et al. (2013) all draw on Cognitive Grammar to account for a range of effects across literary works.

4.2. Enactment and dramatisation

Another recent trend in cognitive poetics develops the fundamental cognitivist principle of embodiment in order to revisit the iconicity effect of literary enactment. So, for example, the prototypicality scaling of phonetic features is used to identify sounds in a 19th century seduction poem by Robert Browning – sounds that make readers reading aloud form kisses with their mouths (Stockwell 2009). Many psychological studies report the empathetic effects on reading narratives of physical states: drinking from a warm cup makes you feel more warmly to a fictional character, sitting on a hard chair makes you feel less empathy, and so on (see Gibbs 2006, 2012), and readers report and are observed writhing uncomfortably in their own clothes while reading the passages in Dickens’

David Copperfield that feature the slimy, squirming character Uriah Heep. Embodiment and readerly relationships with literary characters is a strongly emerging interest in research in the field (see Vermeule 2010).

Similarly of literary critical interest is the notion of *simulation* that appears in both Cognitive Grammar and in neurological research. In the former, Langacker (2008) points out that every linguistic utterance is a representation that is attenuated to a greater or lesser degree from the actual experience; every piece of language helps to create a simulation in the user's mind that operates as a heuristic for understanding. Simulation at a global level is also important in empathetic relationships, feelings and the creation of a "Theory of Mind" (see Zunshine 2006 and Keen 2007 for literary applications). These slightly different instantiations of the notion of simulation promise a great deal of insight into the ways in which readers feel they are transported, immersed or absorbed by a literary fictional world.

Prose fiction and dramatic monologue in poetry are obvious places for an application of simulation to be researched. However, this work also suggests new avenues for study in relation to dramatic performance (traditionally an area of complexity for a text-based stylistics): see McConachie and Hart (2006) and A. Cook (2010).

4.3. Singularity and situatedness

One of the accusations levelled traditionally at both stylistics and cognitive poetics has been that they are interested in general patterns of readerly behaviour, language universals and overall principles and patterns. While perhaps overstated in the best work, it is important to recognise that a particular literary text – while having generic connections with other works by the same author, in the same genre or mode, from the same period, or on the same theme – is unique to itself. Attridge (2004) calls this the *singularity* of the text, and it is a common feature of a sense of literariness. Reducing a literary work to patterns and generalities risks neglecting this centrally important feature for literature.

As an antidote to the universalising tendency, the cognitivist notion of *situatedness* offers a useful corrective (see Barsalou 2008, 2009). A concept is understood as a set of particular instantiations which might share some aspects but are fundamentally dependent on the uniquely experienced situation at hand. Instead of pulling down a schematic template or idealised model for a particular concept or experience, these concepts and linguistic articulations are "soft-assembled" (Gibbs 2006) for the case in hand. The notion of situatedness neatly captures both the singularity and genre-definitions of literature. This is a promising route for cognitive poetics research; what is less clear is how the notion of situatedness in literary reading can be operationalised to produce accounts that are recognisable as literary criticism.

Until these ideas are fully worked out, my contention remains the traditional stylistic position that the leaning towards universalising reductivism can be successfully mitigated by a constant emphasis that ties literary analysis down to the linguistic specifics of the text. Ultimately, the text that readers share remains the source of evidential value.

4.4. Subtlety

The greatest difficulty for a discipline founded on precise analysis and evidential value lies in those aspects of literary reading that are at or below the level of measurement. It

is relatively easy to conduct a psychological or a cognitive poetic experiment to discover literary texts that generate empathetic grief, sadness, laugh-out-loud comedy, and so on. These effects are either easily physically observable or are clearcut examples that can be intuited and reported in a carefully designed protocol. But more subtle aesthetic reactions (wry melancholy, poignant nostalgia, perhaps?) are more difficult to articulate, define and explore systematically. And yet these are exactly the sort of rich effects that characterise literary reading, and that feature particularly in the writing of literary critics. It seems to me desirable and possible for cognitive poetics to address issues like these of subtlety, delicacy and bareness, where the experienced effect that is reported by readers is rarefied, barely conscious or so highly diffused in the experience that it is difficult to articulate in conventional descriptive terms.

For a simple, as yet unexplored example, I have recently been trying to account for the notion of *aura* in literary text (Stockwell 2014). This is the atmospheric or tonal sense of a vague association, often reported by readers and usually described by literary critics in poetic terms themselves. For example, in Philip Larkin's (1974) poem "The Explosion", a mining accident is described in highly subdued terms. The features of the industrial landscape and nature are given agency and animation, while the miners are described by their bodies and clothing, chasing rabbits, collecting lark's eggs. The underground explosion itself is narrated simply as "a tremor" that disturbed the cows grazing above. The poem ends with an imagined scene in which the wives of the men see them again, brightly walking towards them, still alive:

for a second
Wives saw men of the explosion

Larger than in life they managed –
Gold as on a coin, or walking
Somehow from the sun towards them,

One showing the eggs unbroken.

Philip Larkin (1974: 42)

Almost all readers – both professional literary critics and others who have read the whole poem – report the poignancy in this closing passage. Part of this effect, it seems to me, arises from the echoic value of elements that recur throughout the text. These repetitions are not simply examples of lexical or semantic cohesion, but are more subtle and delicate. Features from domains that are not usually linked (clothing, faces, the natural landscape, and industry) are placed in close proximity, and weave between each other.

I have had some success in using Langacker's (2008) notion of *dominion* and Evans' (2009) work on *lexical concepts and conceptual models* to understand how words and phrases in the first part of the poem generate a set of expectations and associations in the minds of readers, only some of which are lexicalised again later on. The unrealised associations, it seems plausible to me, constitute a set of non-instantiated but fleeting meanings and feelings that pervade the rest of the text on the border of conscious awareness. This is where the subtle effects that readers report in the poem are located.

It would be very difficult to devise a controlled experiment to verify these ideas (though of course probably not impossible). However, triangulating a finding like this

in any literary text can be effective. In corpus linguistics, the notion of *semantic prosody* (Louw and Milojkovic 2013) captures the shading or mood (in the non-linguistic, emotional sense) that is inherent in particular collocations and larger structures: certain phrases are always used negatively, for example, regardless of their semantic or dictionary content traditionally conceived – this is their semantic prosody characteristic. It strikes me that this sort of diffused semantic analysis (which in corpus linguistics can be measured) is a useful way of trying to pin down the same sorts of subtle effects that are captured in the cognitive grammatical account. This loose example is a preliminary illustration of the necessary triangulation that will be needed to catch such notions.

5. Futures

Cognitive poetics is inherently interdisciplinary, with researchers typically possessing a high awareness of both the scientific method and the state of current scholarship in social science. However, the natural home of cognitive poetics is clearly in arts and humanities, and an assertive emphasis on integrated linguistic form and effect offers discipline, rigour and insight where these have traditionally been rather neglected. A study of literature that is informed by cognitive linguistics seeks to broaden the potential of the cognitive revolution by encompassing the most culturally-valued form of language in use, and finally refuting the claim that cognitive linguistics is insufficiently social or critically aware in its practices.

On the other side, literary texts, literary readings, and poetics offer a great deal to cognitive science in general and cognitive linguistics in particular. Cognitive poetic analyses are always founded on whole texts in context, rather than isolated or invented fragments of language; the concerns that interest researchers in cognitive poetics serve as a reminder of the social world in which minds and bodies operate, and offer demonstrations in practice for how an extended embodied cognition works.

Finally, the field itself embodies a return to a time when a scholar could be interested professionally both in an engagement in the arts and a commitment to science and rational thinking. Cognitive poetics offers a practical means of achieving this integration.

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