



Style and Reader Response

Minds, media, methods

Edited by Alice Bell, Sam Browse,
Alison Gibbons and David Peplow



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Style and Reader Response

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CHAPTER 1

Responding to style

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1. Introduction

All texts utilise linguistic style and all texts generate a response. What is harder to capture are the ways in which style generates response and what response can reveal about a text's style. This book aims to do both: by combining the stylistic analysis of texts with the systematic analysis of response, the chapters in this volume contribute to an emerging paradigm within stylistics in which verifiable insights from style and response are used to generate new stylistic models and new understandings of texts across media. In this introduction, we show that while stylistics has always been committed to evidenced and verifiable analysis, the recent empirical turn in stylistics has transformed the discipline with integrated reader response research leading to new ways of theorising, analysing, and codifying “readers” and their “responses”. In this introduction, we also offer a historical overview of the importance of the “reader” to, and in, stylistics before showing how the three areas of this volume's subtitle – ‘minds’, ‘media’, and ‘methods’ – are central to reader response research both in terms of how they have historically informed stylistics and where the field is now. We end by suggesting ways in which empirical research should form a central focus of stylistics in the future.

2. Stylistics and the reader

Readers have always been central to stylistics. The discipline's roots in reader response criticism (e.g. Culler 1975, Iser 1978, Fish 1980) and its commitment to showing precisely *how* texts produce meanings has resulted in an approach in which the reader and their response to a text has always formed a fundamental part. Yet while readers and their theoretical responses to texts have been central to stylistics at least since the 1970s, the nature of the “reader” in stylistics has changed over

the last decade. Rather than exclusively using the analyst's introspective response (as an exemplary reader) or hypothesising assumptions about the attitudes and experiences of a theoretical or 'ideal' reader, empirical research has begun to emerge in which responses from real readers as well as players, listeners, and viewers are collected and analysed. The diversity of text types and their audiences means that the term "reader", at least in this opening chapter, refers to individuals who do more than read printed verbal text. Within stylistics, responses to all kinds of texts are now used as a starting point for analysis, to verify or problematize theoretical conclusions, and/or to provide insight into the cognitive processes, sociocultural dynamics, and interpersonal benefits of reading (e.g. Peplow et al. 2016, Whiteley & Canning 2017). The analysis of style has thus become increasingly and more explicitly informed by the analysis of response.

Acknowledging the growing use of reader response data in stylistics, Whiteley and Canning (2017) claim that it has become a discipline in its own right: 'a developing strand of stylistic research that gives equal attention to the text and data evidencing the text's reception' (2017: 72). They further suggest that reader response research in stylistics is 'characterised by the application of ... [reader response] datasets *in the service of stylistic concerns* in order to contribute to a stylistic textual analysis and/or wider discussion of stylistic theory and method ... [and] enable[] the testing and development of stylistic methods and theories' (2017: 73, original emphasis). What distinguishes reader response research in stylistics from other forms of empirical literary research therefore is both the commitment to close textual analysis – of the primary text and/or the reader data – and the use of reception studies in the development of stylistic theories, methods, and analyses.

Building on what Whiteley and Canning see as a burgeoning field of enquiry and responding to their call for the 'development of a reader response "toolkit"' (Whiteley & Canning 2017: 82), *Style and Reader Response* showcases the diversity of reader response research in stylistics. In what follows, we provide an overview of existing research on minds, media, and methods in relation to stylistic approaches to readers and show how the chapters in this volume contribute to those debates.

3. Minds

As the status of the "reader" has gained prominence, cognitive stylistics emerged as a discipline that combines insights from the cognitive sciences and from stylistics to account for the ways that readers process texts (e.g. Brône & Vandaele 2009; Gavins & Steen 2003; Semino and Culpeper 2002; Stockwell 2002/2019). The ideas at the heart of cognitive stylistics are taken from cognitive linguistics (e.g. Evans & Green 2006; Ungerer & Schmidt 1996) – namely, that our use of

language is embodied and experiential. According to this embodied approach, our language faculty is integrated with, and relies upon, other cognitive capacities, rather than operating within a separate module in the brain. From this view it follows that language is experiential because it is grounded in real, concrete instances of use; the meanings indexed by linguistic forms are experientially linked to the embodied physical, social and cultural contexts in which we have previously encountered them.

The embodied and experiential nature of language has important consequences for analysing the interpretative practices of readers. Reading is subsequently understood as a heteronomous activity (Stockwell 2002/2019) wherein textual meaning does not exist independently of the cognitive processes of an embodied, experiencing reader. It is thus a form of ‘text-driven’ cognition (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999) in which readers, responding to textual cues, construct meaning from their own experiential knowledge. For that reason, in order to talk systematically about the knowledge implicated in our participation in discourse, work in cognitive stylistics has drawn heavily on psychological and cognitive linguistic accounts of the way it is structured and recalled.

One of the most influential cognitive frameworks is schema theory, which originates in the work of the gestalt psychologist Bartlett (1932), and came to greater prominence in the 1970s due to growing interest in Artificial Intelligence (Minsky 1975; Schank & Abelson 1977). Schemata are ‘mental representations of typical instances’ of a particular event or situation (Cook 1994: 11). Schank and Abelson’s (1977) famous example is a restaurant schema which includes expectations about the activities and their order (being seated, ordering drinks, reading the menu etc.), the participant roles and their relations (waiter, customer, chef etc.) and patterns of behaviour one might associate with each of these. Importantly, given the experiential nature of the theory, the expectations prototypically encoded in a schema are subject to the cultural context (Rosch & Mervis 1981) and the situated uses to which we put our schematic knowledge (Barsalou 1991, 2003; Gibbs 2003). In cognitive stylistics, schema theory has been used to investigate a variety of issues, including literary language (Cook 1994), characterisation (Culpeper 2001), multimodal genre indicators (Gibbons 2016a), and intertextuality (Mason 2019) as well as to analyse a range of text types and genres, including poetry (Jeffries 2001; Semino 1995, 1997), Old English verse (Stockwell 2002/2019), science fiction (Stockwell 2003), love stories (Steen 2003), hypertext fiction (Bell 2014) and political discourse and rhetoric (Browse 2018a, 2018b; Cockcroft 2002).

A central insight from cognitive linguistics is that human cognition also involves the ubiquitous and creative combination of disparate knowledge structures in order to understand more abstract concepts (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999;

Lakoff 1993; Gibbs 1994). Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) examines how humans map one more concrete ‘source domain’ of experience onto another more complex or phenomenologically removed ‘target domain’ better to understand it (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Lakoff & Johnson (1980) point to conceptual metaphors such as *LIFE IS A JOURNEY* or *GOOD IS UP* which scaffold the production of utterances such as ‘my career has hit a dead end’ or ‘I feel over the moon’. Stylisticians have been at the forefront of developing both the theory (e.g. Stockwell 1999) and rigorous methodologies for analysing conceptual metaphors in language (e.g. Crisp et al. 2002; Sullivan 2014). Analyses have investigated metaphors in novels (e.g. Heywood et al. 2002; Popova 2003; Sullivan 2013), memoir (Senkbeil & Hoppe 2016), poetry (Gibbs 2002), allegory (Crisp 2001, 2005, 2012), journalism (Browse 2016a, 2016b), and across genres (e.g. Caraciolo et al. 2019). Given the importance of conceptual metaphors in thought, analyses have also played an important role in investigating ‘mind style’, the representation of characters’ and narrators’ ideological perspectives and idiosyncrasies of thinking (e.g. Black 1993; Semino 2002, 2006, 2007; Semino and Swindlehurst 1996).

While CMT has focussed on the ubiquity of metaphor in discourse, cognitive stylisticians have also utilised more complex theories of conceptual integration to analyse novel metaphors that involve a variety of different conceptual domains. Unlike CMT which involves only two domains, Blending Theory posits at least four ‘mental spaces’ (Fauconnier 1994) which are integrated in a ‘conceptual integration network’ (see Fauconnier & Turner 2002). The more complex conceptual apparatus of Blending Theory has facilitated cognitive stylistic examination of novel and creative language use (see Lakoff & Turner 1989). For example, the journal *Language and Literature* hosted a special edition featuring analyses of conceptual blending in poems (Sweetser 2006), short stories (Semino 2006, Tobin 2006) and novels (McAlister 2006).

The ideas and concepts outlined above originate from cognitive psychology and linguistics but perhaps one of the most developed cognitive perspectives on discourse has emerged from cognitive stylistics itself. Text World Theory is a cognitive discourse grammar that describes the rich mental representations – text-worlds – that discourse participants produce when they engage with a text (see Gavins 2007, Werth 1999). Text-worlds are created in the interaction between the reader’s embodied, experiential knowledge – theorised as ‘frames’ (see Fillmore 1982, Werth 1999) – and the linguistic and multimodal features (Gibbons 2012) comprising the text. These text-driven mental representations are defined by a set of deictic parameters: time, location, objects and enactors. When these parameters shift, or when the ontological or epistemological properties of the text-world change – through the use of, say, modality (Gavins 2005, 2007) or negation (Hidalgo-Downing 2000, 2002; Nahajec 2009) – readers

enact a world-switch to a new text-world. Text World Theory thus facilitates the description of the complex matrices of mental representations created by discourse participants, and the deictic, epistemological and ontological relationships between them (see Gavins and Lahey 2016).

Whereas cognitive stylisticians have often drawn upon functional grammatical models (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014) in their analyses (e.g. Gavins 2007: 56; Gibbons 2012: 91–92), Cognitive Grammar (CG, Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008) has been used more recently to investigate how texts ‘construe’ the text-worlds they cue (e.g. Harrison 2017, Harrison et al. 2014). In CG, linguistic choices both evoke conceptual content – as per the heteronomous account of meaning – but also presuppose a particular view, or ‘construal’, of that conceptual structure; for example, the language used might focus in on one area, depict it with a greater or lesser level of detail, or highlight or background an area of the conceptualisation. Thus, not only does CG account for the knowledge structures involved in meaning construction, but also how stylistic choices construe that knowledge. In addition to bringing new cognitive insights into how texts represent imagined states of affairs (Browse 2018b; Harrison 2017; Giovanelli, Harrison, & Nuttall forthcoming), the framework has also influenced analyses of the more rarefied emotional effects of texts, such as how they create a tone and atmosphere (Stockwell 2014, Browse 2018a), or emotional resonance for readers (Browse 2018a, Stockwell 2009, Whiteley 2016).

Cognitive stylistics thus offers a range of theories and concepts for investigating the interaction between texts and readers’ mental representations, knowledge structures and cognitive processes. The philosophical view presupposed by these frameworks lends itself to an empirical methodology: if reading is embodied and experiential, it follows that analysts should investigate the real-life contexts and people involved in the construction of meaning in discourse. Empirical methods, we argue, are therefore a natural extension of a cognitive stylistic perspective on reading and the mind. It is therefore not surprising that some of the earliest examples of empirical research in stylistics comes from that area (e.g. Whiteley 2011, Gibbons 2012). The chapters in the ‘Minds’ section of this volume make significant contributions to our understanding of reading and cognition.

Chapter 2 opens the section by offering a cognitive stylistic analysis – primarily using conceptual metaphor theory – of Simon Armitage’s poem “Upon Opening the Chest Freezer”. Through the analysis of a reading group discussion of the poem, Peplow and Whiteley demonstrate that reading is never truly a solitary or isolated activity. Rather, it is fundamentally dialogic: patterns of engagement, parallelism, and resonance across conversational turns in reading group talk provide evidence that reading is always a process of interaction between readers, texts, and authors.

In Chapter 3, Jessica Norledge similarly shows reading group discussion to be interactive and dynamic with readers co-constructing fictional worlds and fictional minds. Specifically, Norledge considers the representation of the unethical mind of the narrator of Paolo Bacigalupi's dystopian short story "Pop Squad" as well as how readers "mind-model" and respond to this character. Ultimately, her analysis shows how the focalising mind of the narrator is essential to readers' individual and collective accounts of the dystopic world.

Departing from the reading group methodology employed by the preceding two chapters, Chapter 4 uses a "think aloud" task to examine reader responses to an opinion piece by the former British Prime Minister, Theresa May. More specifically, Sam Browse examines how readers construct a critical interpretation of the Conservative politician's writing. To that end, he draws on Text World Theory and Cognitive Grammar to pinpoint two forms of hostile response to the article by 39 members of the Labour Party. The chapter emphasises that critical forms of reception are an inherent potential in all forms of reading because what readers already know – their pre-existing knowledge structures and their preferred construal of them – are always already implicated in the act of discourse processing.

In Chapter 5, Julia Vaeßen and Sven Strassen focus on a relatively neglected area of reception research: character. They critique previously dominant models of text processing (e.g. van Dijk & Kintsch 1983), arguing that these models fail to account for differences between readers when responding to character in literary texts. Vaeßen and Strassen propose that cultural models can be drawn upon to better understand how different readers, according to subculture, respond to literary character. They elucidate their claims with analysis of two novels: *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel (2002) and *Written on the Body* by Jeanette Winterson (1992).

4. Media

In addition to reader response research, the discipline of stylistics has strong roots in text linguistics (e.g. Bloomfield 1984 [1933]; Fowler 1971, 1977; Halliday 1973). As a result, early stylistic applications predominantly focused on written language, even when analysing text-types such as drama, the performance of which necessarily entails a variety of semiotic modes. Mick Short (1981, 1998), for instance, explicitly argues that the written play-text is the only valid dimension within the analysis of drama since all other modes are comparably unstable. Yet, while stylistics traditionally explored the language of fiction, poetry, and plays, the concurrent rise of multimodality studies (e.g. O'Toole 1994; Kress & van Leeuwen 1996, 2001; Baldry & Thibault 2006) alongside the cognitive turn across the Humanities led stylisticians to increasingly broaden the scope of analysis in order to account

for other modes and media experiences beyond that of language and the written literary text.

In his seminal introduction to cognitive stylistics, Stockwell maintains that the approach ‘is only worth anything if it is to be addressed to more than just literary texts that seem amenable to it’ (2002: 10; 2019: 14); specifically, this means ‘tackling more difficult and challenging texts’ (2002: 11; 2019: 14). Although Stockwell does not identify these challenging texts as multimodal or as non-print media, Oatley – in Gavins and Steen’s (2003) complementary edited collection – explicitly characterizes cognitive stylistics as a discipline interested in ‘literature, including texts that are read, movies and plays that are seen, poetry that is heard’ (Oatley 2003: 162). He positions cognitive stylistics as an approach that can be used to analyse various modes and media, and is thus capable of accounting for different sensory experiences. Yet in 2003, at the time of that publication, Oatley’s statement was, perhaps, under realized and thus also somewhat over exaggerated: in general, written language remained the focus of stylistic analysis. Stylistics has since expanded its borders, however, and is now applied to explain the multimodal dynamics of a wealth of different media and text-types (cf. Ringrow & Pihlaja 2020), including: multimodal and digital fiction (Bell 2010, Gibbons 2012, Nørgaard 2019); music (Morini 2013; see also the special issue of *Language and Literature* edited and introduced by West 2019); drama, theatre, and performance (McIntyre 2006, Cruikshank 2014, Gibbons 2016b); film and television (McIntyre 2008; Piazza et al. 2011; Sorline 2016; Bednarek 2018; Hoffmann & Kirner-Ludwig 2020); digital non-fiction, such as news, blogs, and YouTube videos (Pihlaja 2014, 2018; Browse 2020; Ringrow 2020); and political discourse (Browse 2018a).

Like stylistics, early reader response criticism was concerned with literary meaning above all (cf. Tompkins 1980). However, reception research across communication, cultural, and media studies has been instrumental in broadening the remit of audience research into areas such as film, TV, theatre, radio, and print journalism. It has likewise undergone what Napoli (2011: 25–53) calls a process of ‘rationalization’; that is, a transition from an early intuitive (that is, abstract and subjective) model of the audience through the use of crude marketing information (e.g. sales and circulation figures, quantity of fan mail, demographic information) and towards a more empirical, or as Napoli phrases it, ‘scientific and data driven’ (2011: 26) approach (for details of this history, see Napoli 2011: 32–42). Such empiricism has two stages: audience research first became more systematic in the 1930s with the introduction of ratings systems and audience response diaries; then, in the 1970s, more detailed demographic information and quantitative measurements became central to audience information systems (Napoli 2011: 35–42). Since the 1980s, qualitative audience research has also gradually taken hold across media studies (Schiappa and Wessels 2007), though scholars writing in the first

decade of the twenty-first century continued to call for more empirical accounts of engagement (for instance, in theatre and performance studies, see Brown & Novak 2007; Freshwater 2009; Radbourne et al. 2013).

The founding of the open access journal *Participations* in 2003 greatly influenced audience and reception research across media, not least because it provided an academic outlet at a time when many journals seemed ‘unsympathetic, sometimes plain hostile to work on audiences’ (*Participations* 2017), despite the fact that scholarly interest in aesthetic response appeared to be increasing. The journal showcases empirical response research of TV news, social media, theatre, and film amongst other media but its wide disciplinary scope means that the methodological approaches of much of the research published in *Participations* is not necessarily linguistic. In stylistics specifically, two special issues of the journal *Language and Literature* broke new ground: the issue edited by Allington and Pihlaja (2016) considered reading in digital contexts whilst Whiteley and Canning (2017) edited an issue on reader response research in literary stylistics. A tendency in stylistics nevertheless persists whereby empirically driven applications are delimited through focusing primarily on literary texts or predominantly on the written mode. Empirical stylistic studies of more diverse media and containing composite multimodal analysis thus remain the exception rather than the rule. Such exceptions include investigation into the reception of multimodal fiction (Gibbons 2012: 183–197), digital fiction (Bell et al. 2018, 2019; Ensslin et al. 2018), and political discourse (Browse 2018).

Style and Reader Response: Minds, Media, Methods therefore represents an important and much-needed contribution to empirical work in stylistics: it not only unites stylistic analysis with empirical response research but it also investigates the interrelation between style and response across different modes and media from poetry and literature to political discourse and children’s play, amongst others. The three chapters within the ‘Media’ section consider an art exhibition, digital fiction, and live and online news. Chapter 6 investigates Andi and Lance Olsen’s art exhibition ‘there’s no place like time’. The exhibition is, in fact, an ontological hoax because the exhibiting artist is actually invented. Alison Gibbons is primarily interested in whether unwitting visitors to the exhibition realise that the artist is fictional. In her chapter, she unites cognitive stylistic models of attentional resonance and Text World Theory with qualitative response data to investigate the influence of exhibition design on visitors’ assessments of fictionality as well as to explore the effect of fictionality judgment on experience in reception.

In Chapter 7, Isabelle van der Bom, Lyle Skains, Alice Bell, and Astrid Ensslin investigate the cognitive effects of hyperlinks in digital fiction. They show that while hyperlinks in non-fictional hypertext are designed to guide the reader through the text unambiguously, hyperlinks in digital fiction do not always indicate clearly

where they will lead: semantic associations between a link and its destination are therefore often made after the link has been followed. Through their empirical investigation, the authors offer a new typology which more accurately represents the different structural and cognitive functions of hyperlinks. They synthesise a stylistic analysis of *The Futographer* by Lyle Skains (2016) with reader responses to the text and suggest ways in which readers of digital fiction employ specific cognitive strategies to parse hyperlinks within multi-linear hypertext narratives. In particular, they propose that readers process the potentially disruptive effect of hyperlinks in digital fiction by reading for the plot.

In Chapter 8, Martine van Driel interviews readers to examine how they evaluate two forms of news media – online articles in a ‘traditional’ format, and live blogs. She uses Appraisal theory, specifically the elements of the framework that focus on ‘appreciation’, to track systematically the differences and similarities in the way her participants responded to the two online news genres, mapping these responses against scholarship on news values. Thus, not only does her chapter provide new insights into contemporary forms of news media, it also offers a rigorous methodology for analysing participant responses to this discourse type.

5. Methods

Like other analytical and applied approaches to language, stylistics has been centrally occupied with methods in terms of the practical application of analysis and the theoretical grounding on which an approach is based. Crucially, stylisticians have long been committed to conducting analysis that conforms to the “three Rs” principle, namely that stylistic analysis should be ‘rigorous’, ‘retrievable’ and ‘replicable’ (Simpson 2014: 3–4). This means that analyses of texts are underpinned by a shared understanding of terminology across the discipline and can in principle be recreated by other stylisticians. Ultimately, the aim is to avoid analytical impressionism and vagueness. These three principles are as important to the stylistic method today as they were 20 years ago. Building on more traditional, non-reception oriented stylistics, this edited volume further develops the emphasis on analytical rigour that Simpson advocates. By focusing on response, the work presented here either actively engages with reader perspectives beyond than the analyst’s own, or dynamically reflects on the analyst’s own evidenced reading of a text. In this section, we briefly consider the different methods – practical and theoretical – employed by researchers who work within style and reader response, before summarising the chapters within the Methods section of the book.

Like any form of empirical research, stylistics researchers need to make important decisions regarding methodologies and methods including whose response is

being considered, how it is collected, and in what context. Primarily, the object of inquiry can be cognitive phenomena or sociocultural phenomena (or both). Studies with a cognitive focus (e.g. Giovanelli & Harrison 2018; Stockwell 2009) will typically consider how the brain, or mind, processes textual elements, and will therefore seek to explain how a given text creates meaning through its engagement with a reading mind. The “brain” or “mind” in this instance will often be a singular person, and may be the researcher as the super-reader or a number of people who are reading a text in private. If the object of inquiry is the *sociocultural* then researchers are likely to be interested in how a text is experienced by a group of people who, in some way, are in interaction with one another, whether that be readers of a novel who are debating the meaning of a novel on an online book forum (Peplow et al., 2016) or a group of theatre-goers who are discussing a play they have just watched.

A second, related distinction can be made between what Swann and Allington (2009) call ‘experimental’ and ‘naturalistic’ studies with Carter and Peplow (2014) making a similar distinction between ‘the empirical study of literature’ and ‘the naturalistic study of readers’. Experimental methods are typified by the researcher having some degree of control over the data that is being produced. The experiment may take place in quasi-laboratory conditions and involve reading very small chunks of a narrative, perhaps using think-aloud data, structured interviews, and/or the collection of written responses from readers (e.g. Alderson & Short 1989, Bell et al. 2019, Jeffries 2002, Norledge 2016, Short & van Peer 1989) or readers completing a questionnaire (e.g. Bray 2007; Burke 2011; Gibbons 2012). The focus of these experimental investigations range from understanding text comprehension (e.g. Graesser et al. 1998, Zwaan 2004) to gaining an appreciation of how stylistic concepts affect readers’ interpretations of texts (e.g. Fialho 2007; Miall & Kuiken 2002; van Peer 1986; Sotirova 2006). Experimental approaches tend to test hypotheses and generate data that is analysed quantitatively, although qualitative analysis can form part of interpreting the data. Studies drawing on these experimental methods may also seek to investigate the role played by reader background in the reading process or the effect of contextual factors on reading (for a review, see Dixon & Bortolussi 2008).

By contrast, naturalistic methods try to remove the influence of the researcher from the reading process, studying reading in its ‘natural habitat’ (Peplow & Carter 2014: 441). Within sociology, and the social sciences more generally, there have been a number of notable studies focusing on reading practices, such as Long’s (2003) account of all-female reading groups in the US, Collinson’s (2009) investigation of individual reading practices, and studies within the field of bibliotherapy that have stressed the interpersonal benefits of shared reading (e.g. Dowrick et al. 2012, Hodge et al. 2007). With the exception of the latter bibliotherapeutic studies, research in this field tends to take an

ethnographic approach, studying objects and events that are expected to exist and occur if the researcher was not present. In Peplow's (2016) study of reading groups, for instance, the groups were free to interact in their usual ways: conducting meetings in ways they wanted, and reading texts of their choice (cf. Swann & Allington 2009). What constitutes "data" for these studies of reading groups has tended to be transcribed recordings of meetings, and other observations of group behaviour. Data is thus analysed qualitatively generating different analyses than those associated with the more experimental studies. If a problem for experimental studies is 'ecological validity' (Hall, 2008) – that is, their ability to tell us about reader response in its natural context – then a problem for naturalistic studies is often the question of what these investigations reveal about the links between style and reader response, as this research sometimes places greater emphasis on the communicative practices of the readers than on the style of the texts under discussion (Allington 2012; Allington & Benwell 2012; Benwell 2012; Peplow 2016; Swann & Allington 2009).

The aforementioned objects of inquiry – *cognitive* and the *sociocultural* – have been associated with these two practical methods: scholars interested in *cognitive* processes underlying reception often use *experimental* methods to produce and analyse data, while those focused on *sociocultural* phenomena will generally use *naturalistic* methods in order to investigate reading practices.

The chapters in this volume utilise a range of methods associated with both naturalistic and experimental approaches including: reading group data, questionnaires, Likert scales, structured and semi-structured interviews, think-aloud protocols, online reviews and discussion fora, ethnography, introspection, and written material generated from workshop tasks. All methodologically justified, they show the benefits of different methods for different research questions. Departing from these methods, in Chapter 9, Peter Stockwell argues for introspection as an empirical approach in stylistics. He defines introspection whilst reading as the quality of self-consciousness with the property of subjectivity, making the case that introspection is the only means by which a researcher can directly access the responses of a reader. Stockwell draws on corpus linguistics in order to situate the singularity of introspection within a broader body of language use. The reference corpus is taken to be a collection of multiple subjectivities, and so the reader's own personal introspection is able to be seen according to general language usage. The focus of Stockwell's analysis is a Thomas Hardy poem that is, in itself, highly introspective.

Chapter 10 reflects on the ethics of reader response methods by exploring her own experiences of researching online communities. Arguing that online reading communities and social media present researchers with an alluringly rich source of data about readers and reading, Bronwen Thomas suggests that these digital spaces should be approached with caution and sensitivity. While reader response

data is conveniently archived, curated and easily searchable online, Thomas shows that the seeming ease with which this data can be accessed masks multiple ethical issues and dilemmas facing researchers. Exploring the ethics of access, authenticity and anonymity, she makes some important recommendations for researchers examining readers online, suggesting in particular that researchers should work with readers to provide richer and more rounded accounts of the kinds of reading practices online spaces help to make visible.

Chapter 11 highlights important methodological issues relating to the nature and status of reading in scholarly work on style and reader response. Hugh Escott points to the expanding purview of recent stylistic research – which has gone from analyses of textual features to the cognitive, affective and even physical contexts in which readers interpret them – and argues that it raises challenges for what constitutes ‘a text’ and ‘reading’. Escott suggest that insights from literacy studies on affective intensities might provide a way of meeting these challenges. Rather than focus on text and reader alone, he draws on his field notes to demonstrate the ‘coming together of people, places and things’ that produces meaning for young participants in a literacy workshop on punctuation.

Chapter 12 offers a Postscript where Moniek Kuijpers reflects on the contributions to the volume and suggests ways forward to unite all researchers working on empirical reader response research.

6. Conclusion

Defined by its commitment to the systematic analysis of texts, stylistics has always been ‘*evidential* and *textually grounded*’ (Stockwell & Whiteley 2014: 4, emphasis original). The research in this volume adheres to these same principles. It productively unites linguistic style and reader response to produce new cognitive insights into a range of texts. Methods of data collection, of data analysis, and of synthesising insights from reader response into the stylistic analysis of a primary text are developed. The affordances of different media are addressed both in terms of how different texts operate and how they are received with medium conscious empirical methods that uncover the effect of all kinds of texts on different kinds of audience.

Style and Reader Response ultimately show the importance of empirical research for theoretical, methodological, and analytical advancements within and beyond stylistics. In order to become a fundamental part of the strongest stylistics traditions, empirical reader response research must be medium-conscious and methodologically justified. Researchers working in this burgeoning area will inevitably utilise a range of methods to provide insight into the way that readers process texts across media. Whatever the approach and whatever the focus, the

chapters in this volume are at the interface between and cutting edge of style and reader response.

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SECTION I

Minds

CHAPTER 2

Interpretation in interaction

On the dialogic nature of response

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1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on reading group discussions and the insights they can provide for the study of style and response. In particular, our aim is to emphasise the dialogicality and intersubjectivity inherent in response. Reading has long been recognised as a dialogic activity as it involves a number of entities in interaction with each other: texts, readers, authors and the wider socioculture (Bakhtin 1984). This dialogicality is present in solitary, silent reading and becomes highly visible in ‘social’ reading (Peplow et al. 2016: 30), where texts are discussed by groups of readers. Our specific focus in this chapter is a reading group discussion of a poem by contemporary British writer Simon Armitage. Our analysis of this naturalistic interactional data builds on our previous work on the discourse of reading groups (e.g. Peplow et al. 2016; Peplow 2016a) by presenting a new example of reading group talk and by bringing together recent developments from dialogical theory (Du Bois 2007, 2014; Linell 2009) and cognitive stylistics (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Stockwell 2002). We claim that minds are fundamentally dialogic and that ‘interpretation’ and ‘meaning’ must be seen as products of intersubjectivity (Linell 2009). Studies of style and response in cognitive stylistics often model the processes involved in silent, solitary reading, despite the methodological difficulties involved in accessing this form of response. In this chapter, we demonstrate that reading group discussion, as a partly overt (and thus more accessible) form of reading, not only has lots to offer studies of style and response but also can emphasise the highly dialogical nature of all reading practices. After offering a cognitive stylistic analysis of Simon Armitage’s poem “Upon Opening the Chest Freezer”, our analysis demonstrates dialogic intersubjectivity operating at sociolinguistic and conceptual levels across the turns in a reading group discussion.

1.1 Reading groups

Also known as book groups or book clubs, reading groups are collectives that come together to talk about texts, and often specifically literary works. They are a popular social activity within the UK and many other countries. Since the 1990s, reading group talk has been attracting academic interest from a number of fields. Researchers in cultural studies were among the first to recognise the potential of such groups for the examination of literary reading practices which are socially and culturally situated and distinct from those of the academy (e.g. Long 2003; Radway 1991; Rehberg Sedo 2004; Hartley 2002). Linguistic interest in reading groups subsequently developed (e.g. Allington & Benwell 2012; Allington & Swann 2009; Benwell 2009, 2012; Swann & Allington 2009), with reading groups receiving particular attention from sociolinguists and stylisticians seeking to better understand the interpretative and evaluative activity which takes place in such meetings. From a sociolinguistic perspective, reading group talk is an interesting arena for the study of both ritualised and potentially competitive group interaction, in which matters of identity and taste are often at stake. The interpretative and evaluative activity of such groups is regarded as a product of shared norms established by the group, and there is often a focus on the interactional practices of specific groups and the role of language in the management of group dynamics. From a cognitive stylistic perspective, reading group discourse is interesting because of the insight it can provide into people's responses to specific literary works in particular social contexts. The interpretations and evaluations constructed in reading groups provide a way of broadening the range of responses for which cognitive stylistic analyses seek to account. There is a focus on the way in which literary opinions are expressed and a consideration of what this may reveal about the way readers conceptualise literary works. Reading group talk is therefore highly relevant for the study of style and response in a number of ways: on the one hand, it can be used to reflect on the style of a literary work and the responses provoked by that style as well as content; on the other hand, it can also be used to consider how reader response is generated by the discursive norms of a particular interactional context, in this case a pre-arranged group discussion.

Interactional sociolinguistic and cognitive stylistic approaches to reading group talk were combined by Peplow et al. (2016). One of the key arguments in this work was that the language used in reading groups should be seen as having conceptual functions as well as social and interactional ones. The authors argued that, through talk, group participants can be seen to construct collaboratively developed conceptualisations of literary works, which are wholly embedded within the interactional dynamics of the group (Peplow et al. 2016: 173–194). As such, the interpretative activity of reading groups can be seen as an act of reading in itself (Swann & Allington 2009), as members come together to collaboratively “read” books they have initially

read in private (Peplow et al. 2016: 179–193). In this way, reading group talk does not simply share or summarise prior reading experiences; it also involves the generation of collaborative interpretations which are contingent upon the context of the discussion. Peplow et al. (2016: 91) called this jointly constructed interpretive activity ‘co-reading’ and discussed how interpretations are co-constructed across sequential turns in discourse. The fundamentally collaborative nature of reading group talk is exemplified by the extracts we discuss in Section 4 below. The analysis in Section 4 continues the examination of co-reading with reference to conceptual metaphor theory (see Section 2) and dialogic theory (see Section 3).

1.2 Data collection: Andy’s group

The reading group studied in this chapter, Andy’s group, is one of six groups who participated in the ‘Creative Writing in the Community Project’ run by the University of Sheffield in 2011. Part of the project was an exploration of the ways in which poetry is discussed in different contexts across Sheffield, and involved the recording of group discussions from both within and beyond the University (see Whiteley 2011). Each group involved in the project was asked by the researcher to read and discuss the same three poems, which enabled the collection of comparative data across a range of groups. Here, we consider Andy’s group’s discussion of one poem: “Upon Opening the Chest Freezer”.¹ This is an all-male reading group comprised of retired and middle-aged men based in an affluent neighbourhood, who meet monthly to discuss, in their words, ‘a rotation of modern and classic novels, poetry and factual books’.

2. Style: The poem under discussion

‘Upon Opening the Chest Freezer’ comes from Armitage’s (2010) *Seeing Stars* collection which features several narrative poems about domestic marital relationships. This poem represents an artist, Damien, before revealing his wife’s decision to leave him.

Upon Opening the Chest Freezer

- 1 From the last snowfall of winter to settle on
the hills Damien likes to roll up a ginormous
snowball then store it in the chest freezer in
the pantry for one of his little stunts. Come

1. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants.

- 5 high summer, in that thin membrane of night
 which divides one long day from the next,
 he'll drive out in the van and deposit his
 snowball at a bus stop or crossroads or at the
 door of a parish church. Then from a discreet
- 10 distance, using a telescopic lens, he'll snap
 away with the Nikon, documenting the
 awestruck citizenry who swarm around his
 miracle of meteorology, who look upon such
 mighty works bewildered and amazed.
- 15 Damien, I'm through playing housewife to your
 'art' and this brief story-poem is to tell you
 I am leaving. I am gaffer-taping it to the inside
 of the freezer lid; if you are reading it, you're
 staring into the steaming abyss where nothing
- 20 remains but a packet of boneless chicken thighs
 and a scattering of petit pois, as hard as bullets
 and bruised purple by frost. At first it was just
 a scoop here, and a scraping there, slush puppies
 for next door's kids, a lemon sorbet after the
- 25 Sunday roast, an ice pack once in a while for my
 tired flesh, then margaritas for that gaggle of
 sycophants you rolled home with one night,
 until the day dawned when there wasn't so
 much as a snowflake left. And I need for you
- 30 now to lean into the void and feel for yourself
 the true scald of Antarctica's breath.

Stylistically, this poem features an interesting shift in point of view. The first stanza describes a habitual annual stunt in which Damien, an artist, preserves some winter snow in a chest freezer and dumps it in a public place in summer in order to photograph people's reactions to it. Whilst the use of the third person suggests an external narrative viewpoint, deictic markers (such as the definite reference in 'the chest freezer in the pantry') and evaluative lexis (such as 'one of his little stunts') are indicative of a characters' voice. A clash of literary (e.g. 'the thin membrane of night') and prosaic (e.g. 'snap away with the Nikon') registers in the poem also suggests that there is a blending of character and narrator voices, typical of Free Indirect Discourse. It does not become clear *who* the focalising character is until the second stanza, where there is an abrupt point of view shift to a first person direct address: 'Damien, I'm through playing housewife to your "art"'. The inverted

commas around 'art' signal the same disparaging tone that was present with reference to the 'little stunt' in the first stanza. This offers some resolution to the ambiguity of point of view in the first stanza, and suggests that the wife's voice is present throughout the poem.

Stanza 2 also creates several shifts in temporal location. Lines 15–18 use the present tense to refer to the wife's actions in the narrative present: 'I'm gaffer tapping it to the inside of the freezer lid'. There is also some textual deixis (that is, language which draws attention to the text) which implicates the poem we are reading, 'this story poem', in the world of the text. The conditional in lines 18–22 refers to a future hypothetical timezone in which Damien is reading the note: 'if you're reading it you are...'. The use of the second person here combined with a 'literary performative' (Kacandes 2001: 183–185) implicates the reader to some extent, because both we and Damien are being addressed as readers of the poem. This creates a sense of increased proximity to the depicted events in this section of the poem. Lines 22–29 depict the snowball being used up for various household purposes and there is agency deletion in the syntax ('At first it was just a scoop here, a scraping there...'), which means that the wife's responsibility for decimating Damien's snowball is implied rather than stated. Finally, the poem returns to the narrative present: 'I need for you now to lean into the void' (29–30). The temporal shifts across stanza 2 create an association between the gradual reduction of the snowball in the past, and the wife's current action of leaving.

Participants across all the reading groups involved in the project expressed interpretative difficulty with 'Upon Opening the Chest Freezer', and there were differences in comprehension concerning the details of this poem. These difficulties are likely to be the result of the ambiguity created by the blending of voices, shifting timezones, and agency deletion, all of which mean that interpretation is highly dependent on readers' inferences about the situation that is being portrayed. In the face of interpretative difficulty, Andy's group decided to focus on the metaphorical aspects of the poem as a way of understanding the scenes portrayed.

The cognitive approach to metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) regards metaphor as a conceptual process involving the mapping of features from one conceptual domain to another, from a source to a target domain (see also Stockwell 2002). Thus, rather than simply being an ornamental feature of language, metaphors are the products of thought processes in which two concepts are compared and related. Although 'Upon Opening the Chest Freezer' contains several metaphorical expressions, it does not initially appear to be a highly metaphorical poem. The most visible metaphor is the simile 'hard as bullets' (21), which creates a mapping from the source domain of BULLETS to the target domain of the PETIT POIS left in the freezer (small capitals are used to represent conceptual domains; see Stockwell 2002: 107–8 for discussion of metaphor visibility). Through interpreting

this metaphor, properties such as the hardness and coldness of metal bullets are mapped onto the frozen vegetables. Although the poem also creates metaphors that draw on a traditionally poetic register through expressions such as ‘bruised purple by frost’, ‘that thin membrane of night’ and ‘citizenry who swarm’, the majority of the actions described in the poem are quite literal. The chest freezer, for instance, is referred to as an actual object in the couple’s home: into which Damien puts his snowball (3) and to which his wife gaffer tapes her note (18). Interestingly, despite the literality of the text, metaphorical connections between the chest freezer and the couple’s relationship are a key part of the interpretations developed in Andy’s reading group discussion, examined in Section 4 below. Participants in the reading group established a metaphor which connects the target domain of the couple’s RELATIONSHIP with the properties of the source domain CHEST FREEZER; extending and elaborating the RELATIONSHIP IS A CHEST FREEZER metaphor across their discussion. It could perhaps be argued that aspects of the poem invite such metaphorical connections. For instance, the poem establishes a strong narrative connection between the contents of the freezer and the wife’s decision to leave (exhibited in lines 28–30), and the chest freezer is also featured in the title of the poem, which further signals that this object could function metaphorically in an interpretation of the text. The manipulation of this metaphor (see also Whiteley 2019) becomes part of the groups’ dialogic interpretation of the poem. Section 3 introduces dialogism in more depth, before going on to outline one analytical approach from this tradition: dialogic syntax.

3. Dialogism

Dialogical theory has its roots in the work of Bakhtin (1984), and dialogic concepts have more recently been applied to language, mind and interaction in the work of Linell (2003–2009). Linell characterises dialogism as an epistemology based on the notion that ‘Dialogicality is more fundamental than, or at least as fundamental as, language’ (Linell 2003: 5). In dialogical theory, human sense-making, semiotic practice, action, interaction, thinking and communication (2009: 5) are understood as fundamentally interactional and intersubjective. Dialogism is opposed to ‘monologism’, an approach which is characterised by the transfer model of communication, or the code model of language. Monologism sees understanding and meaning as resulting from individual mental functioning, whereas, for dialogism, cognition takes place ‘in the world rather than in autonomous...individual brains’ (Linell 2009: 12). If thinking necessarily takes place in situated contexts and between people who are participating in ‘culture and communication’, then

meaning is always intersubjective, following ‘shared procedures of interpretation and negotiation’ (Linell 2009: 47).

Like everything else that exists in a socioculture, literary production and reception can be seen as a dialogic act (Bakhtin 1984). Indeed, reading could be regarded as an inherently dialogic activity because it involves a reader making meaning through ‘interaction’ with an author’s construct, parts and wholes of a printed text, and the readers’ prior knowledge and experience of other texts (Linell 2009: 15–16). We would argue that reading group talk is doubly dialogic because participants in these groups are not only reading ‘privately’, but are also engaging in overt dialogue with other, co-present readers in order to debate meanings of texts, share experiences, and (ideally) reach some understandings of the text under discussion.

In order to investigate the dialogicality of the reading group discourse, we will be applying dialogic syntax, an approach to interaction developed by Du Bois (Du Bois 2007, 2014; Du Bois & Giora 2014) and extended in the work of other discourse analysts (e.g. Anward 2004; Köymen & Kyratzis 2014; Nir et al. 2013; Sakita 2006; Siromaa 2012).

3.1 Dialogic syntax

Dialogic syntax aims to account for the complexities and nuances of spoken grammar in interaction, going beyond the bounds of traditional syntax by considering patterns and rules across multiple turns at talk produced by various speakers. The concepts of engagement, parallelism, and resonance are central to the approach. At a fundamental level, dialogic syntax is concerned with how speakers display engagement with, or understanding of, one another’s utterances in talk (Du Bois 2014: 363; Du Bois & Giora 2014: 352). This engagement is most clearly demonstrated in interactional parallelism, occasions when one speaker builds on some aspect(s) of another speaker’s utterance. This parallelism can be found in repetition, when one speaker echoes the syntax, prosody, and/or lexical choices of another speaker (Tannen 1987). This parallelism creates ‘mapping’ across utterances and ‘the recognition of analogical affinities between matching elements’ (Du Bois 2014: 370), which, in turn, creates resonance between speakers. Resonance occurs when speakers in a conversation recognise ‘affinities’ between their utterances and those produced by other people (Du Bois 2014: 372). It is produced when ‘relationships between comparable linguistic elements’ are highlighted (Sakita 2006: 468) – for example, on occasions when linguistic repetition is evident. Although resonance is usually found across turns at talk that are adjacent or at least near to one other, such affinities can also be found across longer stretches of talk, extending over ‘longer distances’ (Siromaa 2012: 541; see also Anward 2004; Nir et al. 2013).

Engagement, parallelism and resonance are not just interlinked, but rather exist in a cyclical relationship, with resonance simultaneously resulting from *and* heightening engagement. One way of representing these phenomena in talk is for analysts to produce diagraphs of utterances that display resonance (see Section 4, Figures 2–6 for examples). The diagraph is an important part of dialogic syntax, allowing us to see how the syntactic, semantic and prosodic elements of sequential utterances relate to each other. Diagraphs aim to demonstrate how conceptual alignment occurs between speakers' utterances, and diagraphs are particularly adept at showing the jointly-constructed nature of interaction and how turns at talk, adjacent or separate, resonate with each other.

Dialogic syntax aims to describe how interlocutors achieve common ground in talk, whether they are agreeing or disagreeing with one another (Du Bois 2014: 397). The approach also aims to account for what happens in the 'dialogic moment', and to consider the implications for speaker cognition (Du Bois 2014: 401). In this way, dialogic syntax has a clear cognitive focus and, as such, can be applied alongside other cognitive approaches. For instance, Sakita (2006) demonstrates that dialogic syntax can be productively combined with cognitive linguistic theory: specifically, she focuses on how dialogic parallelism and resonance can be seen as evidence for schematization taking place across turns at talk. In her analysis, Sakita shows that interlocutors often 'share the ability to spontaneously abstract a schema from other speakers' utterances and build extensions in spontaneous ways' (2006: 475). Our analysis develops Sakita's productive application of a dual dialogic and cognitive analysis by combining dialogic syntax and conceptual metaphor theory to account for dialogic interpretation in an excerpt from a reading group discussion.

4. Response: Dialogic interpretation

'Upon Opening the Chest Freezer' was the last of the three poems discussed by Andy's group and so, by this point in the meeting, they had been talking for over an hour. They focused on the poem for around fifteen minutes. Our analysis examines three extracts from this fifteen minute section: the first two extracts appear at the start of the discussion, and Extract 3 takes place towards the end (shown in Figure 1).



Figure 1. The location of the extracts within Andy's group's fifteen minute discussion of 'Upon Opening the Chest Freezer'. The dotted arrow represents time

In Extract 1, some participants report experiencing difficulty in understanding the poem, before the group goes on to co-construct ways of comprehending the text that rely on metaphor. In particular, Mike and Simon admit to experiencing confusion. As the group talk about the poem, however, Mike and Simon increasingly contribute to the discourse and appear to attach meanings to the text. By the end of the meeting these two participants report that they have developed important understandings of the poem, that they 'get it more than they did', as a result of discussing the text with others.

Extract 1. (01.10.30 – 01.13.08)

- 1 Mike I ha- (0.5) had diff-difficulty with this one heh
(0.5) I didn't (.) <get it> really
2 Wes = well the first part is a direct reference to Andy
[Goldsworthy's work
3 Mike [Andy Goldsworthy yep yeah
4 Wes in fact °I don't know if anyone is interested xxx
I've got it with me° <rustling papers>
5 Ron did you see them at the sculpture park
6 Simon oh seriously ((group talks about Andy Goldsworthy
installation))
7 Joe I thought it sounded like Banksy stunt actually
8 Many [yeah
9 Simon [oh right
10 Ron [yeah it was brilliant though
11 Simon oh excellent OK good alright well that doesn't
detract [for me
12 Mike [well that's where [his inspiration is
13 Simon [yeah that's good
14 Mike and there's nothing not to get there (.) but it's
this (1.5) it's this (0.5) what seems to be a
diminishing snowball being used for other things
(0.5) erm (1.5) you know (.) >"a scoop here and
scraping there slush puppies for next door's kids a
lemon sorbet< an ice pack margaritas" (.) it's all
the use of ice for other things other than the art
(0.5) until it's all gone and I (1.0) I (.) didn't
get that bit
15 Andy I wondered actually- this is about the 17th time
I've read it I think probably (0.5) because I
didn't get it first time at all (0.5) >other than
it sounded quite funny< (1.0) erm my foc- (0.5) I
was focusing first of all on the idea of him (.) you
know (.) photographing people being amazed about
this snowball
16 ? mm

- 17 Andy that's- and then I wondered about the freezer
really and erm (0.5) it's another couple isn't it
by the way [it's another couple
- 18 ? [yeah yeah
- 19 ? [mm
- 20 Andy err someone's leaving by the sound of it she
[leaves him a note
- 21 Ron [his wife yeah
- 22 Andy >I imag- I imagine that it's a she anyway but maybe
not< but it says "I'm through playing housewife"
but you know but um she's leaving so let's say
(0.5) and she's fed up with his fooling around (.)
which she's kind of tolerated but
- 23 ? yeah
- 24 Andy >she's just so fed up of it< (.) and erm (.)
it feels like the er (.) the chicken thighs
and the petit pois (.) are all that remains of
the relationship (.) or you could say that the
diminishing snowball (.) as it disappears (.) is
all that's left you know until there's actually
nothing left and then she leaves (2.0) and then
there's that [other thing about the col-
- 25 Simon [there's nothing left in the chest
freezer which represents their (.) [relationship
- 26 Ron [relationship
- 27 Andy yeah
- 28 Simon is that what you're saying
- 29 Andy yeah and then there's something about coldness
isn't there and the ["the true scald
- 30 Simon [oh yeah
- 31 Andy = of Antarctica's breath" you know (1.0)
- 32 Simon and that's anger [xxx
- 33 Andy [that's anger
- 34 Simon that's a [great line
- 35 Andy [yes (laugh) I [suppose it is yeah
- 36 Simon [fantastic <ending> to the
piece

At the start of this extract Mike reveals the difficulty he experienced with the poem (turn 1). Following Mike's admission, the group talk about the connections between Damien's art and the art of real artist Andy Goldsworthy. Simon expresses some surprise at this news at turns 6 and 9, which perhaps shows that he had a slightly different understanding of the poem from the others and had not spotted this allusion. In spite of his original interpretive difficulty, Mike agrees that Damien could have been modelled on Andy Goldsworthy and 'there's

nothing not to get there', but he identifies 'the diminishing snowball being used for other things' as the bit that he 'didn't get' in his extended utterance at turn 14. Andy then offers an account of his own difficulty of understanding the poem, describing his movement from his position of ignorance: not 'getting it' on the first reading (turn 15), to a relatively enlightened position, where he thinks about the dysfunctional couple in the poem (turn 17) and the wife leaving the artist a note (turn 20). Andy then goes on to paraphrase some lines from the note (turn 22), before offering a gloss on these lines of the poem: firstly, interpreting that the wife is 'so fed up with his fooling around' (turn 22) and secondly, presenting the events and images in the poem as a metaphor for the relationship (turn 24). Simon presents what he takes to be the gist of Andy's point: 'there's nothing left in the chest freezer which represents their relationship' (turn 25), before issuing a clarification request to make sure that his understanding is correct (turn 28). Andy confirms that Simon is correct at turn 29, and then the two share turns until the end of the extract, pulling out another metaphor in the poem: the 'coldness' that represents 'anger' (turns 29–33), which Simon describes in superlative terms as 'great' (turn 34) and 'fantastic' (turn 36).

Interpretations of the poem are built and shared across the different speakers and their turns. In this way, the meaning, as produced in the group, is intersubjective; that is, meaning is created across multiple speakers and multiple turns at talk. Our analysis shows how this intersubjectivity is reflected in the reiteration of grammatical and metaphorical expressions by multiple speakers. There is a great deal of repetition across this extract, with the participants recycling elements of others' talk – both in terms of form and content.

The extent of parallelism across this extract of talk is quite striking. The analysis begins with a consideration of the last section of Extract 1, from Andy's turn starting 'she's just so fed up of it...', until the end of the extract (turns 24–36). There are several examples of parallelism towards the end of the extract in the utterances of Andy, Simon and Ron, and these examples are also represented as diagraphs across Figures 2 and 3. There is:

- a clustering of parallel existential clauses towards the end of the extract with almost verbatim repetition: 'there's actually nothing left', 'there's nothing left' (turns 24 and 25) – see Figure 2;
- the grammatically echoic yet semantically opposite 'there's something' (turn 29) – see Figure 2;
- parallelism in the repetition of the pronoun + copula verb + noun phrase structure of 'that's anger' (turns 32 and 33) and 'that's a great line' (turn 34) – see Figure 3.

Figure 2. Diagram for turns 24, 25, 26, and 29 (Extract 1)

Andy;	there	's	actually	nothing					
				left					
Simon;	there	's		nothing	in the chest	which	their	relationship	
				left	freezer	represents			
Ron;								relationship	
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Andy;	there	's	something						

Figure 3. Diagram for turns 32–34 (Extract 1)

Simon;	that	's	anger
Andy;	that	's	anger
Simon;	that	's	a great line

This dense clustering of parallel syntactic structures shows that the group members are closely monitoring each other's talk and producing utterances modelled in part on what has been said before. The repetition of forms of the verb 'to leave' is also striking – with three uses of 'left' in the participial adjective form (turns 24 and 25) and one use of present tense 'leaves' (24) – where 'left' refers to the absence of food in the freezer and, by extension, the absence of feeling in the relationship, and 'leaves' refers to the action taken by the artist's wife.

At a broader conceptual level, Andy is the first to propose a metaphorical interpretation of the poem which creates mappings between the concept of the CHEST FREEZER and the concept of the participants' romantic RELATIONSHIP (24). Andy suggests that CONTENTS OF THE FREEZER can be mapped onto the notion of the QUALITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP, and so an empty or emptying freezer is equivalent to a damaged relationship. At a wider level of schematicity, both the freezer and the relationship are being conceptualised as containers (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 29–30; Lakoff 2014), and this underpins the connections between these concrete and abstract domains. In his clarification request, Simon reiterates the metaphor established by Andy to make it even more visible: 'There's nothing left in the chest freezer that represents their relationship is that what you're saying'. Resonance is also produced by the parallelism in the use of these metaphors.

Extract 2 follows very shortly (24 seconds) after the end of Extract 1. Ron is giving his interpretation of the poem:

Extract 2. (01.13.32 – 01.14.15)

1	Ron	for every bit of creative work outside
2	Andy	ah
3	Ron	there's something that happens at home and essentially
4	Andy	mhm

- 5 Ron the person who's actually with him at home >and
let's say it's his wife for the sake of argument<
erm (1.5) has got sick to death of the fact
that (2.0) wh- (1.0) what is in the freezer (.)
essentially in the heart (.) the heart of the
relationship (.) is his thinking about the outside
world
- 6 ? mmmm
- 7 Ron and she's been looking after some of the domestic
things and gradually she's drawing and drawing
and drawing away from this until there's actually
(.) there's actually nothing left as far as she's
concerned so she's leaving
- 8 Simon = well she's been supporting him in doing that
[housewife things to his art
- 9 Ron [supporting him in doing that yeah ye

In describing the relationship depicted in the poem, Ron recycles some of the phrasing that has appeared in the talk already: 'there's actually nothing left... so she's leaving' (7), with the 'left' and 'leave' ordering repeated from earlier. The diagram in Figure 4 shows the recycling of utterances that occurs across Extracts 1 and 2. In turn 7, Ron also reiterates the metaphorical mappings established by Andy and Simon in Extract 1 – the wife's 'drawing away' from the contents the freezer symbolises the reduction in the quality of the couples' relationship. As before, participants in the group causally link the lack of food in the freezer ('there's nothing left') to the wife leaving ('so she's leaving').

Figure 4. Diagram showing turns 24, 25, and 29 (Extract 1), and turn 7 (Extract 2)

Andy;	there	's	actually	nothing left				
Simon;	there	's		nothing left				
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Andy;	there	's		something				
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Ron;	there	's	actually	nothing left	so	she	's	leaving

Ron also extends the metaphor by creating mappings between new elements of the metaphor domains. His utterances at turns 5 and 7 establish comparisons between the CHEST FREEZER and the RELATIONSHIP based on both as important, private spaces which form the basis of activities in a wider public or social context. The couple's interactions with the freezer come to symbolise the resources or effort being put into the relationship, constructing the metaphor INTERACTION WITH FREEZER IS EFFORT PUT INTO RELATIONSHIP. Ron implies that by filling the freezer with a snowball Damien has let his concern with his wider public life take over this private space, and therefore damaged the relationship. Conversely, Damien's wife's interactions with the freezer are portrayed more positively. There is

Extract 3 occurs near the end of the discussion of the poem, about 8 minutes after the end of Extract 2. Prior to this extract Mike, who began by saying he didn't 'get' the poem (turn 1, Extract 1), has been holding the floor significantly for the first time in the discussion. He continues to offer his interpretation of the poem at the start of this extract:

1 Mike and (0.5) i- (.) if you take one of his (.) big
snowballs in the freezer as (.) as (0.5) as
representing their relationship (0.5) she's then
saying actually rather than revere it and she's
already [criticised his work
2 Andy [yeah
3 Mike rather than revere that she's actually been
nibbling away at it she's had a couple of scoops
out for slush puppies for the kids
4 Andy haha
5 Mike she's used (.) made a lemon sorbet out of a bit
of it and she's used it for an ice pack and then
<suddenly> she's realised there's not even any
of it left not even a snowflake and that's like a
metaphor for their (0.5)
6 Andy = mm
7 Mike = relationship
8 Andy mm
9 Mike and (0.5) you know opens the freezer one night and
there's just a few bruised peas and some (1.0)
10 Andy mm
(1.5)
11 Mike over date err (0.5) chicken thighs and she's like
'right I'm off' hehe you know (.) >it's almost
a metaphor for there's nothing left< in [the
relationship
12 Andy [in the relation[ship yeah
13 Mike [yeah yeah
14 Andy = exactly yeah I think so (2.0)
15 Mike but [but
16 ? [bitter?[yeah
17 Andy [she's angry she's angry

- 18 Simon [I- agh - I think I've had a
different perspective of this thank you
[that's helped me a lot I I I think that was
- 19 Mike [I've only I've only
- 20 Simon the one I err yeah that I wasn't quite there
with but err no it's err put all of that [into
perspective
- 21 Mike [well earlier I said I didn't get it and it's only
[while weve been discussing this
- 22 ? [yeah
- 23 Simon [yeah
- 24 Mike that I've thought of that and it seems to fit for me
now
- 25 Simon yes
- 26 Mike so I get it more than I did
- 27 Simon = yes yes
- 28 Mike = when we started talking which is (.) always shows
its worth talking about it as well as rereading

There is the reuse of the expression 'there's nothing left' in Mike's utterance at turn 11 (see the diagram in Figure 5), and Mike reiterates the metaphor first established by Andy in Extract 1, and then continued by Ron in Extract 2, with CONTENTS OF THE FREEZER signalling the QUALITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP. Andy correctly projects the end of Mike's turn, producing 'in the relationship' at almost exactly the same time as Mike in turn 12, something he is able to do perhaps because of the ubiquity of the phrase across the discussion so far. 'Anger' is also recycled from Extract 2 as a way to describe the artist's wife, although this time it is used in the adjective form 'angry' (turn 17) - see the diagram in Figure 6.

Figure 5. Diagram showing turns 24, 25, 26, and 29 (Extract 1), turn 7 (Extract 2), and turns 11 and 12 (Extract 3)

Andy;	there	's	actually	nothing				
				left				
Simon;	there	's		nothing	in the chest	which	their	relationship
				left	freezer	represents		
Ron;								relationship
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Andy;	there	's		something				
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Ron;	there	's	actually	nothing				
				left				
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Mike;	there	's	nothing	in the				relationship
			left					
Andy;				in the				relationship

Figure 6. Diagram showing Diagram for turns 32–34 (Extract 1), and turn 17 (Extract 3)

Simon;	that	's	anger
Andy;	that	's	anger
Simon;	that	's	a great line
...	...	...	...
Andy;	she	's	angry

Interestingly, Mike does not reiterate the interpretation developed by Ron and Simon in which the female character uses resources from the freezer to *contribute* supportively to the relationship. Instead, he represents the female character as ‘nibbling away at’ the snowball rather than ‘revering’ it (turn 3), and therefore implies that she is responsible for emptying the freezer and damaging the relationship. Though grounded in the INTERACTION WITH FREEZER IS EFFORT PUT INTO RELATIONSHIP metaphor established by Ron and Simon, Mike offers a slightly different construal of the situation portrayed in the poem.

Looking across the talk about this poem, we can see that certain ways of talking about the text re-occur, producing resonance between the members of the group. These resonances are not just in a dense cluster but are visible across a 15 minute stretch of talk. Across the three extracts, participants can be seen developing various configurations of the RELATIONSHIP IS A CHEST FREEZER metaphor (see also Whiteley 2019). The mapping scope of the metaphor is rich, as evident in the multiple potential mappings between the domains (Stockwell 2002: 108). There is alignment visible in the repetition and elaboration of the metaphor, and the group seem to agree that this metaphor is an appropriate interpretative resource for understanding the poem.

5. Conclusion

All reading, and all literary reading especially, is necessarily dialogic. Readers enter into a web of meaning-making that involves interaction with various other, real or imagined, entities: authors, textual features, and other readers. In this chapter, we have focused on the latter two entities, specifically how readers construct meaning from the features of a text and how meaning is co-produced alongside other readers. The ‘other readers’ in this instance are not imagined, and the reading that gets done in the reading group setting is performed collectively and in the dialogic moment. In being doubly interactive, reading group talk offers an example *par excellence* of making overt the highly dialogical nature of this act.

We have demonstrated the ways that, across this reading group discussion, interpretative resources are developed and recycled by the group. There is remarkable parallelism across multiple disparate turns, and this parallelism is found

at morphosyntactic, lexical and metaphorical levels. This parallelism creates resonance across the conversation, with shared ways of understanding and interpreting the poem reverberating through the talk. This is seen most clearly in the use and reuse of conceptual metaphors in turns produced by various readers. This resonance developed organically as a way for the group to understand a text that initially had left many of the readers confused.

We started our analysis by pointing out Mike and Simon's interpretative difficulty with the poem. By the end of the discussion, these readers reported reaching new understandings of the text, with Mike saying that although he initially 'didn't get' the poem, the process of 'discussing this' helped him to 'get it more than I did'. Simon similarly reported awareness of a different 'perspective' on the poem, which he said 'helped him a lot' in his understanding. Of course, these readers may not have ended the discussion by sharing exactly the same interpretation of the poem, but it is clear that collectively the group has developed a frame of reference for understanding the text, while still allowing for divergent interpretations to co-exist. The readers' movement from a shared lack of understanding to a position of relative enlightenment is a recurring feature of reading group talk (Peplow, 2016b), and this is an important reason why readers choose to participate in such groups, as such levels of understanding are often unlikely to be achieved by solitary readers.

Researchers who are interested in reader response are all in some way or another involved in modelling reading as an activity, and making tacit assumptions about what it is and how it works. Based on our extensive work with reading groups, we suggest that other researchers in this field should aim to avoid 'methodological individualism' (Linell 2009: 148), which in this instance involves taking the individual, solitary reader as the only starting point for any 'real' explanation of literary meaning. Instead, we would urge researchers to be more open to the consideration of acts of reading which are overtly (or covertly) dialogic. Studying individual readers in solitary contemplation of text is focusing on just one manifestation of reading, and perhaps encourages us to regard a very social act as something largely or entirely introspective. While the interpretative activity of reading groups may appear to be messy or complex, we believe that analysis of this interaction shows fundamental things about the nature of reading, in particular that it is always a dynamic, intersubjective, dialogic act.

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CHAPTER 3

Modelling an unethical mind

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1. Introduction: The dystopian imagination

On writing of the contemporary dystopian impulse, Margaret Atwood observes that ‘it’s a sad commentary on our age that we find dystopias a lot easier to believe in than utopias’ (2005: 95). Utopias, she argues, ‘we can only imagine; dystopias we’ve already had’. Atwood recognises the necessary interaction between futuristic dystopian worlds and the real world experienced by the reader, a dialectic which characteristically fuels the dystopian imagination. Regardless of the time period in which they were written, dystopian narratives have continued to reflect upon ‘the cultural zeitgeist and fears of the era they were created’ (Tulloch 2009: 13), projecting challenging literary responses to a socio-historical ‘moment’ and reflecting upon a range of social, cultural and political concerns as inspired by their authors’ world-views. Societal fears for technological development, scientific advancement, theocracy, infertility, ecological decline, urban decay, and the growing power of the internet have all played a significant part in modelling the modern dystopia, with such topics moving in and out of focus in line with contemporary affairs, consequently highlighting salient political or cultural ‘trends that need to be averted’ (Stockwell 2000: 211).

Dystopian worlds are therefore purposefully refracted, depicting events and places that are necessarily recognisable yet fundamentally different to our own in one or more meaningful ways. These differences, which are typically realised as fantastical elements or features of the non-real, draw attention to those aspects of the narrative which signal the political, social or cultural concerns addressed by the text. Dystopian narratives are, as a result, defamiliarising and invite ‘cognitive estrangement’, a phenomenon rooted in Russian Formalism, which denotes the process of ‘making strange’ (Suvin 1979: 6–7; see also Shklovsky 1965[1917] and Bloch 1972). For Suvin (1979), this process separates science fiction (and consequently dystopian fiction) from the mimetic and realist narratives of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by presenting the reader with a familiar yet transformed

imaginary world. The world presented, although alternative to the world from which it stems, maintains a level of believability and is developed with ‘totalizing (“scientific”) rigour’ (Suvin 1979: 6). It is the ‘factual reporting of fictions’ (Suvin 1979: 6) which produces cognitive estrangement and creates fictional spaces that are both hypothetical and unrealised, yet which pertain to real-world logic (see Suvin 1979: 63).

The ability of the reader to make connections between ontological levels, between the worlds of a dystopia and their discourse environment, relies on this sense of estrangement. Suvin (1979: 71) refers to the readerly experience of moving between the fictional future worlds of the text and a reader’s real-world present as a ‘feedback oscillation.’ This is a transitional process which moves ‘from the author’s and implied reader’s norm of reality to the narratively actualized novum’ (the ‘strange newness’ [Suvin 1979: 4] foregrounded in a storyworld) ‘in order to understand the plot-events, and now back from those novelties to the author’s reality, in order to see it afresh from the new perspective gained’ (Suvin 1979: 71). For Suvin then, science fiction and associated dystopias are characterised by the ‘essential tension’ of reader-fictional world relationships. As argued by Moylan, in ‘stepping away from a known world and yet always in creative connection with it, the [...] reader must take seriously the alternative world of the text before her or his eyes’ (2000: 24). The necessity for readers to respond seriously to dystopian texts is therefore an imperative aspect of dystopian reading, for in presenting worlds, which are ‘close, clear and unambiguous’ (Stockwell 2000: 211), dystopias are at once a reflection of our own society and decidedly displaced worlds, offering disturbing hypothetical conclusions to real-world anxieties.

Many of these anxieties are illustrated in the collected works of Paolo Bacigalupi, a twenty-first-century writer recognised for his hard-hitting social criticism and his commitment to ecocritical concerns. As a noted environmentalist (see Nijhuis 2008, Selisker 2015), Bacigalupi is known for his contributions to various political and environmental magazines and categorises himself as a writer of ‘extrapolations’ (Bacigalupi 2015: n.p.), concerned with what could happen should eco-social crises continue. It is unsurprising, then, that ecological and eco-social concerns are of prominent focus across his work, with *Pump Six and Other Stories* (the focus text for this chapter) posing no exception. Comprising ten dystopian and post-apocalyptic short stories, the collection reflects upon a diverse range of social, political and environmental affairs including ‘the politics of food’ (“The Calorie Man” [2005]), water management (“The Tamarisk Hunter” [2006]), waste management (“Pump Six” [2008]), de-evolution (also “Pump Six”), and the manipulation of bodies [...] (“The Fluted Girl” [2003], “Pop Squad” [2006], and “The People of the Sand and the Slag” [2004])’ (Tidwell 2011: 94–95), in order

to fully examine the contemporary 'relationship between the environment and bioethics' (Tidwell 2011: 95).

On initial publication, the collection as a whole was well received, winning the 2008 Locus Award for Best Collection and being deemed best book of the year by *Publisher's Weekly*. Reviewed as a hybrid combination of 'cautionary tale, social and political commentary and poignantly poetic, revelatory prose' (*Publisher's Weekly* 2008: n.p.), *Pump Six and Other Stories* invites readers to respond critically to contemporary real-world anxieties and challenge a future in which, as a result of our sociocultural ignorance, 'we're all going to shit' (Bacigalupi 2015: n.p.). As summarised by one *LibraryThing* reader, Bacigalupi's dystopias 'are premised not on any cataclysmic war or political revolt, but simply on the world choking on the waste of our technological "progress" [resulting in] the end of fossil fuels, the flooding of the environment with chemical by-products [and] the long-term effect on the human organism of the pharmaceutical revolution' (kvrfan 2015: n.p.). It is this latter concern that will be of central interest to this chapter, as I move on to analyse the representation of unethical characters in the chemically-charged dystopian world of "Pop Squad".

Taking an empirically-driven, Text-World-Theory perspective (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999), I consider the consciousness of the homodiegetic narrator, examining the apparent apathy of his character when facing actions and events which contradict or refract real-world socio-cultural norms. In support of my introspective analysis (see also Chapter 9 in this volume), I draw upon stylistic methods of reader response to examine how 'real' readers discuss character and infanticide in "Pop Squad". I analyse the discussions of a small-scale reading group, comprising three PhD students studying at the University of Sheffield, who, in responding to the narrative, placed particular focus on their mind-modelling of the narrator and the mind-style and ethics of "Pop Squad" society.

2. Reading dystopian minds

As outlined by Swann and Allington (2009: 247), one of the primary motivations for investigating reading group discourse 'is that reading groups provide an example of how "ordinary readers" – i.e. readers other than academic critics and professional reviewers – interpret and evaluate literary texts'. In analysing the discourse of 'ordinary' readers (also termed 'real' readers [see Whiteley 2011]), reading group discourse moves away from the sole study of student readers, who are often recruited to partake in experimental studies for course credit or as part of seminar activities (Swann & Allington 2009: 247). Instead, studies of reading

groups focus on reading that occurs outside of ‘artificial’ experimental contexts and typically include a broad range of discourse participants. It should be noted, however, that reading group members (as in this study) are often academics and students too and such studies present equally valid accounts of reading experiences. As a naturalistic method of reader response, reading group discourse is also participant-led, with conversation developing a natural flow in line with habitual discourse practices, rather than their being structured or imposed by the researcher (see Chapter 2 in this volume). In this way, the particular ‘preoccupations’ of readers are emphasised, and discussion focuses more on interpretations of ‘meaning’ and ‘value’ than on purposefully primed narrative features (Swann & Allington 2009: 248–249).

Much of the work on reading group discourse concerns reading as a social practice, as new readings and interpretations are ‘collaboratively developed’ during group conversation ‘rather than being the property of individual speakers’ (Swann & Allington 2009: 262; also see for example, Fuller 2008; Peplow 2011; Peplow 2016; Peplow et al. 2016; Whiteley 2016b). In a reading group context, reading becomes a group practice, ‘a joint, collaborative activity, in which people share interpretations and create new ones within their interaction’ (Peplow et al. 2016: 1). Reading group data is particularly interesting as a result of this joint collaboration, as it stands in clear opposition to the generalised view of reading ‘in the abstract’ (Allington 2011: 319), or reading as a silent, private and individual experience. It also raises interesting questions, not only in terms of what readers talk about in relation to a particular text, but also how they recount and express such responses, altering their opinions and adopting new points of view as they talk. As such, a reader’s engagement with particular fictional worlds ‘is, in various ways, embedded in the here and now of their particular context’ (Peplow et al. 2016: 1), for as they converse, participants form new, mutually negotiated mental representations. Such collective interpretations will be addressed within my analysis of “Pop Squad”, although it should be noted that focus is placed on the content of such interpretations rather than the process of collaborative interpretation itself.

2.1 Text World Theory and mind-modelling

In order to address the reading group’s responses to “Pop Squad”, the language of the text itself, and the socio-cultural context of the narrative, my analysis throughout this chapter is presented in terms of Text World Theory (Gavins 2007, Werth 1999). As a holistic model of discourse processing, Text World Theory works to account systematically for the semantic, syntactic, experiential and contextual aspects of all language events. In setting up a discourse-as-world metaphor (see Lakoff & Johnson 1980), a typical text-world analysis separates a given discourse into a series of

ontological, conceptual layers: the discourse-world, the text-world, world-switches and modal-worlds. The first of these, the discourse-world, represents the physical and pragmatic discourse environment of discourse participants, in the case of most fictional texts, an author and a reader. The discourse-world marks the temporal and spatial location of participants, in addition to their linguistic, cultural and social knowledge. Emerging from the discourse-world is the text-world, which is constructed from the key world-building information provided during a particular discourse, categorised as either world-building elements (such as objects, setting and characters) or function-advancing propositions. Function advancers, which propel a discourse forwards, can be perceived of as ‘person-advancing’ or ‘character-advancing’; ‘plot-advancing, scene-advancing, argument-advancing, and so on’ (Gavins 2003: 131; see also Werth 1999: 191). They are typically subject to systemic functional analysis, being categorised in terms of Hallidayan ([1985] 2013) transitivity processes based on their representational content. The final two conceptual layers of Text World Theory extend beyond the text-world to identify shifts in temporal or spatial conditions, which trigger world-switches, and expressions of attitude, which create modal-worlds (see Gavins 2007).

In mapping the world levels of a given discourse, Text World Theory offers a dynamic and definite examination of mental representation that can account for both text and context. This dual perspective has proven particularly useful in literary practice, as shown by the multiple applications of Text World Theory to fictional texts. However, it is only in recent years that the study of fictional minds has been addressed by text-world theorists (see Gavins 2013; Lugea 2016; Norledge 2016, 2019; Nuttall 2014, 2018; Stockwell 2009; Whiteley 2011, 2014, 2016a, 2016b). For example, Gavins (2013) applies Text World Theory to character minds in texts of the literary absurd to examine character emotion and point of view (58–97) whilst Nuttall (2014) draws upon Text World Theory and aspects of Cognitive Grammar to examine mind-style in *The Handmaid’s Tale* (‘mind-style’ is here taken from Fowler [1986: 103] ‘to refer to any distinctive linguistic presentation of an individual mental self’). Lugea (2016) also takes a mixed mind-style and text-worlds-approach in the examination of senile minds in the play *You and Me*; and Whiteley (2011, 2014, 2016a, 2016b) and Norledge (2016, 2019) combine text-worlds and character analysis with reader response data to examine real-world responses to the works of Ishiguro and dystopian literature respectively.

In this chapter, I expand upon the above research to examine the presentation of apathetic or amoral dystopian minds. I investigate both the mind-style of the internal narrator and his representation of “Pop Squad” society so as to effectively gauge the impact his projected perceptions have on world-building and readerly engagement. For this reason, I draw particularly upon the cognitive theory of mind-modelling (Stockwell 2009), a bespoke cognitive process that readers engage

with in response to a particular mind-style. Mind-modelling allows the analyst to account for the attribution of minds to literary characters, both those with distinctive mind-styles and otherwise, taking into account the ‘beliefs, desires and emotions of that textual entity, often over the course of an entire text’ (Gavins 2013: 69). The modelling of character minds in this way recognises an individual process of characterisation that goes beyond the linguistic representation of mind-style to reflect the active conceptualisation of character minds, a practice which is dependent upon mental representation in the mind of the reader. According to Gavins (2007: 6), the mental representations with which we understand minds in the real world ‘are based not just on the language we use, but on our wider surroundings, our personal knowledge and our previous experiences.’ Following Palmer’s (2004) assertions that we process fictional minds as real minds, the readerly representation of character must be based upon similar cognitive and pragmatic notions of individual experience (see also Stockwell & Mahlberg 2015).

Text World Theory can account for both the linguistic cues within a text that delineate characterisation and the cultural and ideological knowledge of the reader that impact upon the conceptualisation of character minds. As observed by Stockwell (2009: 140):

a text world account also allows mind-modelling to be extended to non-belief domains such as the imagined desires, wishes, physical needs (hunger, lust, thirst, sleepiness and so on) of others. It can also include a consideration of the respective feelings of characters towards each other, filtered through narration or authorial voice, and in relation to the reader (as Miall 2005 advocates).

In the analysis that follows, I systematically address each of these features in my examination of dystopian minds to present a rigorous analysis of the authorial characterisation of dystopian character and the readerly construal of dystopian consciousness. Before moving on to focus on the representation of dystopian consciousness and the responses of the reading group, I offer a brief introspective analysis of “Pop Squad”, mapping out the parameters of its refracted text-worlds so as to fully contextualise the reading group discussion.

3. The refracted text-worlds of Bacigalupi’s “Pop Squad”

“Pop Squad” takes for its focus a futuristic world recovering from ecological disaster. As a result of severe climate change and gross overpopulation, the society described has become geographically isolated and its surviving population are unable to reproduce. The characters actively take a substance called ‘rejo’, an injected supplement, which halts the aging process, provides perfect health,

eternal beauty and temporary infertility. Society has consequently reached a state of immortality and the bearing of children is illegal as a result. In order to ensure the continuation and stabilisation of this ostensible utopia, the society described is monitored by a civil police force, the eponymous “Pop Squad”, who are employed to trace and imprison non-conformist rebels and their offending children. The text, which is narrated in first-person, present tense, is focalised from the perspective of one of the squad members, detailing his spiralling mind-style following the murder of four young children. Haunted by images of the children’s deaths and the women who dare to conceive them, the unnamed narrator becomes obsessed with one particular mother and on interacting with her child for the first time, experiences emotions which significantly oppose his societally prescribed worldview.

“Pop Squad” begins *in medias res* on a non-specific day in an unknown year, zoning-in on a domestic incident which the narrator has been called to attend. Consider the opening paragraph:

The familiar stench of unwashed bodies, cooked food, and shit washes over me as I come through the door. Cruiser lights flicker through the blinds, sparkling in rain and illuminating the crime scene with strobes of red and blue fire. A kitchen. A humid mess. A chunky woman huddles in the corner, clutching closed her nightgown. Fat thighs and swaying breasts under stained silk. Squad goons crowding her, pushing her around, making her sit. Another woman, young-looking and pretty, pregnant and black-haired, is slumped against the opposite wall, her blouse spackled with spaghetti remains. Screams from the next room: kids.

(Bacigalupi 2008: 137)

Based on the language of the extract alone, the text’s dystopian genre is unidentifiable at this point. Instead, the narrative presents as prototypical detective fiction, with the illustration of a crime scene. Multiple world-building elements within the passage have observable counterparts within the real world, with objects such as ‘spaghetti’ and ‘nightgowns’ being decidedly ordinary. Even text-world specific elements such as ‘squad goons’ and ‘cruisers’ can be easily overlooked as a result of the ‘reality principle’ (Walton 1990) or ‘the principle of minimal departure’ (Ryan 1991) which presupposes that readers imagine fictional worlds to be mimetic and only alter their interpretations when driven to do so by the text. For instance, the reference to ‘squad goons’ is recognisable as North American slang (‘goon’ being defined as a ‘stupid person’ or one ‘hired [...] to terrorise workers: a thug’ [OED, 2018: ‘goon, n’]) and the noun ‘cruiser’ can be easily conceptualised as either an American police cruiser or a contemporary vehicle like a Chrysler PT Cruiser rather than the futuristic car that, it transpires, is actually depicted in the short story.

The nature of the crime itself is also unclear, with the women's role and the children's screams being ambiguous function-advancing propositions. It takes two full pages of world-building before it is revealed that the children are the threat to society and the 'logic and consequences' (Moylan 2000: 25) of Bacigalupi's world become clear. The first execution, which is reproduced below, is therefore particularly emotive and stands in notable contrast to the opening paragraph (Bacigalupi 2008: 139):

The kids race back in, chasing each other all in a train, laughing and shrieking. They stop and look around, surprised, maybe that their moms have disappeared [...]

"Sorry, kids. Mommy's gone."

I pull out my Grange. Their heads kick back in successive jerks, bang, bang, bang down the line, holes appearing on their foreheads like paint and their brains spattering out the back. Their bodies flip and skid on the black mirror floor. They land in jumbled piles of misaligned limbs. For a second, gunpowder burn makes the stench bearable.

The contrast between the children's entrance and their sudden unease, marked by the shift from the present-continuous tense verbs 'chasing', 'laughing' and 'shrieking' to the present-tense verbs 'stop and look around' is particularly foregrounded, as their mirth is cut short by the disappearance of their mothers. The violence, which follows, seems disturbingly cold given the narrator's indifferent action, 'I pulled out my Grange' ('Grange' is used here generically as a form of de-properized antonomasia to refer to a particular brand of futuristic fire-arm). The description of the children's deaths following this action is equally neutral given the lack of emotional adjectives or *verba sentiendi* to describe the feelings of the narrator at this point. The off-hand tone of the narrator combined with the lack of evaluative expressions, and limited access to his thoughts and feelings produces a disturbingly neutral viewpoint through which to experience such graphic events.

The agency of the narrator is also removed from the actual shooting with the actions being described through the repetitive sound of the gun, 'bang, bang, bang down the line', and the effects of the bullets on the children. The two are almost unconnected as the firing of the gun is only inferred based on the sound and the successive effects: for example, the children's heads 'kick back in successive jerks', 'their bodies flip and skid on the mirror floor' and they 'land in jumbled piles of misaligned limbs'. In systemic functional terms, it is the children's bodies which are placed in the actor role of the above material action processes (which denote physical action) though, even then, as hyponymic parts of a de-personified body. Furthermore, the actions themselves are described in isolation to the cause

(the gunfire) as supervention processes, which lack intention and seem to occur without deliberate cause. The children's bodies 'kick back', 'jerk', 'flip' and 'skid' as if by accident rather than as a result of the inferred shooting. The narrator's apparent indifference to the murder of the children is then evidenced further by the closing sentence 'for a second, gunpowder burn makes the stench bearable' as his concern is for the olfactory assault on his senses; it is the 'stench' rather than the bodies themselves which is inferably *unbearable*, 'bearable' being the only evaluative adjective in the entire passage.

Despite being a particularly violent extract, the violence illustrated here is subsequently neutralised, with the presentation of infanticide, though consistently graphic, being almost staid. The character appears fully detached from his role of executioner, with the grammatical forms occluding the agency of his actions and obscuring his emotional response. On a base level, such detachment is in keeping with the logic of the text-world, with children being both illegal and insignificant in the eyes of society. However, the projected agential distance which is represented by the narrator (given the internal, first-person focalization) goes on to question the absoluteness of such logic. Indeed, unless the deletion of agency here simply reflects a sense of indifference towards an assumedly familiar professional occurrence, it remains unclear why the narrator would distance himself from what the culture of the text-world dictates is a successful endeavour. As such, it is possible here that the narrator suppresses his affective orientation to text-world events and in so doing effectively undermines his projection of an indifferent mind-style.

In fact, the apparent impassivity of the narrative voice does shift as the narrative progresses: the narrator takes on agency for the shootings ('I shoot the thing'; 'I put a bullet in the little sucker' [Bacigalupi, 2008: 148]); his accounts become increasingly emotive ('I can't breathe. I can barely stand. The kid screams and screams and screams: screwdrivers and glass and icepicks in my head' [Bacigalupi, 2008: 148]) and there is a notable increase in epistemic modality ('it *seems* like I should wait for her to make her mistake before I pop her kids'; 'I let myself *pretend* I *don't know* about her' [Bacigalupi 2008: 154, my emphasis]), acknowledging an increased sense of doubt and uncertainty in his role. The evolution of the narrative perspective and the shifts in the narrative voice were consequently of particular interest to my reading group participants who questioned the developing ethics and viewpoint of the narrator throughout the narrative whilst comparing their emotional responses to the text as a whole. In the following two sections, these responses will be further explored, with particular focus being placed on the spiralling mind-style of the narrator and in turn his projection and later questioning of text-world ethics.

4. Mind-modelling the narrator

Following Phelan's (1996, 2013) work on narrative interpretation, Peplow et al. (2016) contend that there are three specific forms of response that readers may experience during reading: mimetic, thematic and synthetic. Mimetic responses are particularly interesting to consider in relation to the emotional experience of reading literary texts, for such responses 'involve an audience's interest in the characters as possible people and in the narrative world as like our own, that is, hypothetically or conceptually possible' (Phelan 2013: 29). Throughout this particular reading group, participants reflected upon both of these facets, contemplating the attitudes of "Pop Squad"s' society (in terms of the characters' attitudes towards infanticide and immortality), and questioning whether or not the world as a whole is believable – within the parameters of the genre – as a futuristic projection of their contemporary real-world environment.

Participants offered detailed accounts of their interpretations of the narrator's thought processes and actions throughout the story, whilst also considering the thoughts of minor characters such as the narrator's partner, Alice, and an old lady who runs an antiques store, so as to comment on socially defined thought. In doing so, participants engaged in processes of mind-modelling, both reflecting upon their personal modelling of these characters during the reading process and expanding such interpretations through the formulation of a collective model of character, co-constructed during group discussion. For instance, when discussing the representation of society, the participants considered the characters to be 'really robotic', zoning in on their desire to 'perfect everything' and questioning whether or not they were truly indifferent to the actions of the pop squad. As Participant 2 astutely notes:

P2: they spend a lot of time talking about well you know how could you possibly not be on rejoo (.) how could like (.) it's so weird [...] but if you're constantly reinforcing that to each other you're saying it because you want to believe it [...] they spend so much time talking about how they're all so ok with it that they're clearly *not* ok with it

The 'it' Participant 2 is referring to here is the characters' belief that society cannot function without rejoo, and that all consequent infertility and infanticide is a worthy price for immortality. In attempting to understand this perspective, Participant 2 contends that the characters are in fact 'reinforcing' a socially upheld belief, a belief they need to accept in order to carry on with their lives.

The desire to understand how this reinforcement might work and how the characters in the text can continue to rationalise their amoral actions is then further picked up by Participant 1:

P1: I think one way they justify themselves is that in the way that they are the kind of assumptions they have about the women who do this so urm you know that Alice keeps saying aw I can't understand why you wouldn't take rejoy and all that kind of stuff

P3: and he keeps calling them dumb

P1: but they they physically look unattractive or they're kind of sagging or there's something

P3: despite the later hard-on

P1: [laughs] yeah

P2: but do you think they're not really though that's just

P1: but I mean this is how the pop that most people they justify it by imagining them as like subhuman

Participant 1 places significant attention on the cognitive processes of the characters in the text, evidenced by her repeated use of 'justify' ('justify themselves'; 'justify it'), and 'imagining' ('imagining them as like subhuman'), which recognises her modelling of the characters' internal reasoning. When paired with the noun 'assumptions' (which also indicates thought – 'to assume' being a mental cognitive verb), and her representation of Alice's direct speech (that in itself expresses a negated mental process – 'I can't understand'), her reflection on the imagined beliefs and ethics of the characters is clearly emphasised. Participants 2 and 3 then develop Participant 1's topic, contributing to a collectively defined model of character minds in "Pop Squad". For instance, Participant 3 draws upon the narrator's verbal processes – 'he keeps calling them dumb' – as evidence for society's 'assumptions', emphasising his descriptions of the women as physically unattractive and 'sagging', which Participant 1 believes contributes to their being conceived of as 'subhuman'. In doing so, the participants build a mental model of the conforming members of "Pop Squad" society as prejudiced and exclusive, evidenced further by their switch between endophoric and exophoric 'they' to describe 'legitimate' members of society and the women respectively.

However, Participant 3 also references the narrator's 'later hard-on' to evidence the potential unreliability of his narration, as despite the women's physical appearance, which is so unnatural in comparison to societal women ('a contrast to Alice with her smooth smooth skin and high bright breasts' [Bacigalupi 2008: 157]), the narrator becomes aroused when conversing with one of the mothers in person. Although Participant 3 introduces this topic in jest, Participant 2 builds on this point, asking the group 'but do you think they're not really though', which recognises a potential tension in the presentation of the text-world. Is it that the narrator is unreliable in his portrayal of the mothers, either

as a result of social conditioning or denial, or is it simply that his arousal during this interaction is involuntary?

During the interaction itself, the narrator's metalanguage to describe the woman is not particularly complimentary, with noun phrases such as 'a damp Gaia creature' and evaluative adjectives such as 'fecund' being ascribed to her character (Bacigalupi 2008: 157). Indeed, the narrator himself questions his arousal and the conflict in his emotions on interacting with her up close (Bacigalupi 2008: 157):

I should be cuffing her. I've got her and her kid. I should be shooting the kid. But I don't. Instead, I've got a hard-on. She's not beautiful exactly, but I've got a hard-on. She sags, she's round, she's breasty and hippy and sloppy; I can barely sit because my pants are so tight.

There is evident conflict in this extract between the narrator's desire, his visual and mental perceptions and his duty. The repeated use of the verb phrase 'should be' ('should be cuffing'; 'should be shooting'), for instance, triggers two successive deontic modal-worlds in which these ideal actions are conceptualised (see Gavins 2007). These worlds, which detail obligation following Simpson's (1993) terminology, are only fleeting and although unrealised, are immediately negated – 'but I don't'. Returning to the originating text-world in which the narrator has caught the mother and her child, attention is drawn instead to his state of arousal and focus is given to his appraisal of the woman's appearance. The list of character-advancing propositions presented – those propositions which advance character construal, e.g. 'round'; 'breasty'; 'hippy'; 'sloppy' – develop the reader's mental representation of the woman, as filtered through the narrator's perspective, and emphasise his contrasting mental and physical responses towards her. All of the propositions are contextually derogatory; even the appraising adjective 'beautiful' is negatively modified ('[s]he's not beautiful exactly'), thus recognising his mental perception of the woman as unattractive, despite his being physically affected by her presence.

In this way then, the character-advancing propositions used to describe the woman serve a double function: on the one hand, they enhance the description of the female character with each relational process enriching the reader's conceptualisation of her physical appearance; on the other hand, the conflict between the narrator's physical response to the woman's body and the propositions used to describe her character further suggest the unreliability of the narration, implying a disconnect between the idealised expectations of beauty enforced by the text-world society (as epitomised by propositional choice) and the reality of the narrator's true perspective (as inferred from his unintentional physical response). As such, the use of character-advancing propositions here feed back into the characterisation

of the narrator, and, in line with broader processes of mind-modelling, flesh out the conceptualisation of the text-world itself.

The narrator's interaction with the woman during this scene, and indeed his modelling of child-bearing women throughout the story, triggered emotional mimetic responses from the reading group. Participant 3 actively reproaches his character, with her use of second person reaching across the discourse-world-text-world divide: 'they're everything that is human *you're* ridiculous.' In reacting to the moral ambiguity of his character, Participant 2 also focuses on her dislike of the narrator as a real person, similarly blurring ontological boundaries to contend: 'I'd shoot him, I think he's a real twat'. Participant 2 here conceptualises a physical reaction to his character, proposing projected action at text-world level in response to his being 'just horrible'. Interestingly, Participant 1 responds synthetically to the narrator (acknowledging 'the constructed and artificial nature of literary texts' [Peplow et al., 2016: 64]), bringing the discussion back to the narrator as a fictional construct and opening instead a debate concerning ontological authenticity and the effectiveness of the text-world as a hypothetical refraction of the group's discourse-world environment.

P1: I didn't think he was horrible because he's part of that world where that's normal and they've all obviously got past a point where you question the morality of it

P3: but in order to be there if you're somebody who's been taking the rejoy stuff you've also //been a person who's been aware that children are born and grow//

P2: //part of that decision//

P3: yeah cos he said he was 40 when it changed

P2: yeah

P3: exactly so he's seen kids before I'm not sure how you can get to 40 and then think this is a great idea anyway

P2: but I think that's what's a bit wrong with this story it just doesn't seem realistic that people would take this rejoy stuff and then not care about children anymore

As can be seen from this interaction, Participant 1 did not experience the same negative response towards the narrator as her co-participants, noting that unlike Participant 2 she did not find his character 'horrible'. In modelling the mind of the narrator, she is instead able to view him as simply, 'part of that world', and in that world both his job and impassive attitude towards infanticide are normal and socially expected. Participant 1 subsequently positions the narrator as an extension of collective society, acknowledged by her switch from third-person singular to third-person plural: 'they've obviously got past a point where you can question the morality of it'. In doing so, she is able to accept the represented values of the

dystopian world, effectively backgrounding her own discourse-world knowledge of real-world ethics and legal practices.

Participant 3 goes on to oppose Participant 1's response, however, setting up a conditional scenario in which the group must imagine a version of the text-world that existed prior to the opening of the story. The conceptualisation of this earlier time is dependent upon Participant 3's world-building of the text-world proper alongside her expectations of social functioning derived from her discourse-world knowledge. The oscillation between the two allows Participant 3 to imagine life before rejoy as being a mirror to her real-world existence in which the murder of a child deviates from assumed and enforced social practice, leading her to question: 'how can you get to 40 and then think this is a great idea?'. Participant 2 agrees, noting that for her the misalignment between the discourse-world and the inferred past of the text-world causes the story to be unrealistic, as based on her modelling of minds in the real-world it is improbable that fictional 'people would take this rejoy and then not care about children anymore'. The refraction of the text-world for these participants (in contrast to Participant 1) is consequently 'a bit wrong', resulting in disbelief for Participant 2, and distaste for Participant 3, feelings which impact both upon their conceptualisations of the narrator and on their idiosyncratic readings of "Pop Squad" more broadly.

5. Conclusion: Projecting and resisting text-world ethics

As can be seen through the delineations of the reading group participants and the corresponding analysis of "Pop Squad" presented throughout this chapter, there exists a clear and indissoluble link between world-building and mind-modelling, with the two processes impacting synchronously upon reading experience. This is particularly true in the case of first-person or focalised narration in which world-building and function-advancing processes are coloured by the consciousness of the narrator and/or focaliser. In exploring the relationship between world-building and characterisation, I placed particular attention on the role of character-advancing propositions in text-world construction and more significantly in the readerly conceptualisation of character and character minds. I analysed a selection of the reading group's responses to several such propositions, arguing that through their engagement with particular character-advancers they were able to challenge the representation and authenticity of text-world practice and question the unethical mind-style of the narrator himself. Moving beyond existing analyses of character-advancing propositions, then, such as those put forward by Gavins (2001) and van der Bom (2010), which focus on character names and foreign language lexis respectively, I contend that

character-advancers play a nuanced role in the representation of mind-style, detailing not only character-building information but, through mind-modelling, also offering subtle insights into a focalising consciousness and the world which that consciousness perceives.

In engaging with character and the underlying socio-cultural message of “Pop Squad”, the reading group worked collaboratively to understand the logic of Bacigalupi’s dystopian world, negotiating the relationship between the text-world and the discourse-world through their individual modelling of the narrator’s unethical mind. By questioning the indifferent perspective of his character and challenging his impassive attitude towards infanticide, Participants 2 and 3 projected typically resistant dystopian readings, acknowledging their defamiliarisation and estrangement from text-world events. In contrast, Participant 1 noted throughout the group discussion that she was ‘too much in his [the narrator’s] head the whole way through and having the same intrusive thoughts that he [had]’. As a result, Participant 1 experienced a more neutral reading; in projecting into the mind of the narrator (exemplified by her shift in spatial deixis, ‘in his head’), she was able to detach herself from real-world social practice and accept the amorality of “Pop Squad” minds. Participant 1 consequently presented contrasting views regarding the narrator’s mind-style from her co-participants, responding to his actions in light of surrounding text-world logic rather than in terms of her own discourse-world ethics.

The opposition in these two perspectives, alongside the group’s discussion of collective “Pop Squad” society, offer detailed insights into the relationship between mind-modelling and world-building as the group’s individual and shared responses were very much determined by their reading of character: it was during their discussion of the narrator’s desire that they questioned the authenticity of the text-world space; in responding to the narrator’s beliefs that they questioned the text-world’s inception; and in debating his likability that they reflected upon the text-world as a refraction of contemporary society. Mind-modelling as a process can therefore be conceived of as an extended form of world-building, for not only are characters in themselves world-building elements but also – in terms of focalising characters in particular – rich and textured frames through which text-worlds are shaped and conceptualised.

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Towards an empirical stylistics of critical reception

The oppositional reader in political discourse

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1. Introduction

On Sunday 6th October 2018, the British Prime Minister, Theresa May, published an unusual comment piece in *The Observer* newspaper. The broadsheet's stereotypical readership comprises middle-class professionals on the liberal left of the political spectrum, making it a noteworthy choice for the Conservative politician. In the piece, entitled 'Labour voters should look afresh at the Conservatives', May urged 'moderate' supporters of the Labour opposition to break with the party and lend their support to her instead, arguing that under its new leader, Jeremy Corbyn, 'antisemitism has grown, the party's response to threats to our country's security has become equivocal, and moderate Labour MPs have become targets for deselection and harassment' (May 2018). With the exception of a final sentence claiming that her 'pitch for the centre ground will enrage many Labour supporters who see her as a supporter of eight years of austerity and the architect of a hostile environment for immigrants' (Helm & Savage 2018), *The Observer* reported the piece on its front page in relatively uncritical terms. However, the reportage attracted opprobrium from a number of left-wing journalists. Aaron Bastani (2018), senior editor at the alternative news and opinion provider, *Novara Media*, tweeted 'Christ this is embarrassing. The [Prime Minister] giving a press release comment piece (which is basically her conference speech) makes the Observer's front page. [*The Observer*] look like plonkers.' Jeremy Corbyn's former communications officer, Matt Zarb-Cousin (2018), similarly tweeted 'shout out to the Observer's front page for accelerating the decline of print media by attempting to lose any last remaining readers the paper has'. Both responses to the newspaper presuppose hostility to May and her overture to Labour voters. The tweets, then,

represent a rhetorical failure on behalf of the Conservative politician, at least insofar as these commentators are concerned. Indeed, Zarb-Cousin's remarks suggest that he thought his opposition to the Prime Minister's comment piece would be shared by the majority of *Observer* readers.

Hostile responses such as Bastani and Zarb-Cousin's – or, indeed, readers' interpretative processes more generally – have been under-researched in critical forms of stylistics and discourse analysis (Browse 2018a: 8; Fairclough 1996: 51; Jeffries, 2010: 11). The main aim of this chapter, then, is to explain how readers of May's opinion piece construct these interpretations of the text – to explicate the readerly process of producing these critical readings. To do so, I investigate the "think aloud" data provided by 39 participants, all of whom were members of the Labour Party (see Section 3). This group of people were chosen because of the focus of this chapter on the unfavourable reception of the Prime Minister's article. Given their membership of an opposition political party, one would expect them to be predisposed to a negative assessment of the op-ed piece – an expectation that proved correct. I argue that their oppositional responses are productively analysed by combining two cognitive frameworks: Text World Theory (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999) and Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 2008; for application of the theory in stylistics, see also Harrison 2017; Harrison et al. 2014). In Section 2, I set out the extant research on critical reception alongside my own Text World Theory account of this kind of reading. Section 3 provides an overview of the protocols used to elicit the data. Section 4 offers an analysis of reader responses to the op-ed based on the framework in Section 2, and Section 5 supplements this approach with ideas from Cognitive Grammar. The original contribution of this chapter is therefore to outline a cognitive framework for the analysis of critical reception in political discourse and thus address an important missing element in Critical Stylistics and Critical Discourse Analysis.

2. Text World Theory and critical reception

Even before the contemporary proliferation of empirical reader-response research (for example, Whiteley and Canning 2017), postulated readerly processes of interpretation were long the focus of work in literary stylistics (for example, see Carter and Stockwell's [2008: 300] injunction to 'be reception-oriented'). The same is not true of critical stylistics, which has instead been positioned as a linguistic methodology or set of 'tools' for doing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Jeffries 2010: 15). As Fairclough (1996: 51), Jeffries (2010: 11) and Browse (2018a: 8) note, CDA has tended to focus on the ideological processes of discourse production rather than reception (although see Browse 2018a, 2018b, 2019 and Hart 2016 for

recent exceptions). As a methodological adjunct to CDA, then, critical stylistics has consequently focussed on the linguistic means by which texts encode an ideological representation of reality (Jeffries 2010: 14), rather than the interpretative processes by which readers actually make sense of and respond to texts. Indeed, this focus on production preponderates in linguistic research on political discourse beyond critical stylistics as most linguistic approaches to political text and talk are influenced by CDA (for example, Charteris-Black 2014; Fairclough & Fairclough 2012; Horan & Kranert 2018; van Dijk 1997: 11; Wodak 2009). This has resulted in an emphasis on how political texts instantiate broader ideological perspectives, instead of their reception by readers or audiences. This chapter redresses this imbalance by examining the latter (see also Browse 2018a, 2018b, 2019, 2020).

Whereas linguistic approaches to political discourse have backgrounded these interpretative processes, they have been the subject of extensive investigation in culture and media studies, beginning with Hall's (1980) theoretical work on encoding and decoding. In his discussion of television news, Hall (1980: 125) theorises that audiences might occupy 'three different hypothetical positions from which decodings of a televisual discourse might be constructed'. The first of these, the dominant-hegemonic position, involves the audience accepting un-problematically – 'full and straight' (Hall 1980: 125) – the message denoted and connoted by the television producers. The second, the 'negotiated position', involves accepting the global ideological perspective encoded in the television programme, "while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to 'local conditions'" (Hall 1980: 127). The third, which is most relevant to this chapter, is the 'oppositional position' in which audience members 'decode the message in a *globally* contrary way' (Hall 1980: 127, emphasis in original) i.e. they see perfectly well the message the television producers are trying to convey, but reject it in favour of their own conception of the events depicted.

Hall (1980) provides a useful typology of the ideological orientation readers might possess in relation to a text and a way of describing the oppositional position of readers like Bastani and Zarb-Cousin. However, work using this framework (for example, Brunsdon and Morley 1999) has tended to take the fact of an audience's opposition as its starting point, rather than relate the processes involved in constructing that reading directly to features of the discourse. This is important because the interpretative procedures involved in reading of any kind – oppositional or otherwise – are predominantly linguistic when reading is defined more narrowly as engagement with a (mainly) written language text such as Theresa May's newspaper article (see Carter 1982: 4). Linking oppositional, negotiated and dominant-hegemonic readings to the discourse structures that prompt them is therefore fundamental to understanding how these attitudes to the text are produced. This is the main aim of stylistic analysis; 'to help explain

why, for the analyst, certain types of meaning are possible' (Simpson 2004: 2). Significantly, a stylistic concern not only for categorising types of reading, but also the linguistic processes involved in producing them, can engender a re-evaluation of Hall's (1980) categories. For example, as I have argued elsewhere, audiences that are favourably disposed to a speaker can often be frustrated by what they perceive as the use of vague language in a speech – they want more information because they are unable to supplement with their own knowledge what is given by the speaker (Browse 2020). These readings are not oppositional in the way that Hall (1980) uses the term because they involve no 'recoding' (indeed, readers' frustrations are caused by their inability to 'recode'; they lack sufficient knowledge to do so). To call these responses negotiated or dominant-hegemonic, though, ignores their critical component. For this reason, in this chapter, rather than use the term 'oppositional reading', the term 'critical reception' is preferred because it better describes this more general sense in which readers might be dissatisfied with, hostile towards, or resistant to a text. An approach that seeks to link these negative attitudes to features of the discourse – that is, that provides a linguistic account of how they are 'possible' (to borrow Simpson's [2004: 2] phrase) – constitutes the stylistics of critical reception alluded to in the title of this chapter.

Text World Theory (TWT) provides the theoretical scaffolding for the stylistic approach taken in this chapter. It has been used in a variety of different contexts (for an overview, see Gavins & Lahey 2016), including the analysis of political or overtly ideological forms of discourse (for example, Browse 2016, 2018a; Filardo-Llamas 2019; Gavins 2007; see also Chilton 2004). Importantly, too, it has also been used in the empirical investigation of reader responses, often in the form of online reader reviews or discussion forums (Gavins 2013; Nuttall 2017; Whiteley 2016), reading group transcripts (Canning 2017; Peplow et al. 2016; Whiteley 2011), questionnaire responses (Gibbons in this volume) or "think aloud" data (Browse 2018a, 2019; Norledge 2016). These political and empirical applications of the theory make TWT highly suited to the analysis of critical reception in political discourse.

According to TWT, discourse participants interact in the discourse-world – their mental representation of the immediate, manifest context of the interaction plus the relevant knowledge required to understand the discourse (Werth 1999: 83). What is considered 'relevant knowledge' is determined by the exigencies of the discourse itself; 'from the vast store of knowledge and experience available to the participants, it is the text produced in the discourse-world that determines which areas are needed in order to process and understand the discourse at hand' (Gavins 2007: 29, *emphasis in original*). To model these knowledge structures, TWT draws on the notion of a frame. These are 'experiential models of (part of) human life which direct and influence human understanding of aspects of the world, as

mediated through human perceptions and cultural knowledge' (Werth 1999: 107; for further elaboration, see Fillmore 1982). The text cues discourse participants to access their frame knowledge in order to construct a mental representation of the state of affairs it depicts. This mental representation is a 'text-world': 'a deictic space, defined initially by the discourse itself, and specifically by the deictic and referential elements in it' (Werth 1999: 51).

A TWT perspective is useful to adopt in the analysis of critical reception because it suggests two points at which readers might form a critical attitude to the text. The first of these relates to the text-world itself. The reader's knowledge is always already implicated in the act of reading and making meaning; to create a text-world, readers must draw down the relevant knowledge frames associated with the linguistic forms they encounter. The potential for critical reception is therefore *built into* the process of world-building because there is always the possibility of a clash between the reader's pre-existing frame knowledge and the text-world they create from the linguistic cues they encounter (Browse 2019: 160). Following TWT, then, the first way in which a text might engender critical reception is if the text-world readers construct clashes with their existing and preferred knowledge frames for the subject in question. The second point at which readers might form a critical attitude to the text relates to the other discourse participants in the interaction. Importantly, according to the theory, text-worlds are not the only mental representations generated as participants engage in the discourse; the discourse-world is also a mental construct (Werth 1999: 83–84). We do not have unmediated access to our manifest context; rather, our sensory experiences are configured into an apprehension of our environment in accordance with our pre-existing knowledge structures (Werth 1999: 84; for more recent discussion, see Clark 2013). An important subset of this discourse-world knowledge insofar as critical reception is concerned is what the reader already knows about the other people participating in the discourse. These pre-existing frames for the other discourse participants interact with the identity the writer (or, indeed, speaker), attempts to 'index' (cf. Eckert 2008; Silverstein 2003) in the interaction (for full discussion, see Browse 2018a). This latter identity I will call the *target identity* of the speaker or writer – the persona that the audience/reader perceives the speaker/writer is trying to project. The second potential for critical reception, then, is when there is a clash between discourse participants' pre-existing frame for the author or speaker and the target identity they perceive the author or speaker is trying to project.

TWT thus suggests two forms of critical reception: the first involves resistance to the text-world proffered by the writer, by reference to the reader's pre-existing frame knowledge of the situation depicted in the text; the second involves resistance to the target identity indexed by the writer, by reference to the reader's

pre-existing frame for them. TWT is central to the approach taken in this chapter because these two theoretical characterisations of critical reception structure my analysis of the data in Sections 4 and 5. In Section 4, I analyse the ways in which May attempts to project a target identity in the op-ed which is rejected by the participants in the study. Section 5 focuses on how readers reject the text-world representation of the economy proffered by May. To conduct the analysis in Section 5, I supplement TWT with ideas from Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 2008), specifically the idea of ‘construal’. For ease of exposition, however, I outline this concept when it becomes relevant in the analysis. In the next section, I explain the empirical study used to generate the data analysed in this chapter.

3. Resisting “out loud”

The data used throughout this chapter is taken from a “think aloud” study involving 39 participants (for extensive discussion of “think aloud” methods, see Norledge 2016: 66–68; Short & van Peer 1989). The participants were recruited online through social media and all are members or supporters of the Labour Party. They were shown one paragraph of May’s opinion piece at a time and then asked to type their immediate thoughts and reactions into a comment box underneath the text. When they had finished, they would click “next”, which would take them to the next paragraph, and so on. There were 14 paragraphs, rendering a corpus of 546 comments. At the end of the exercise (to avoid influencing their commentary on May’s article) participants also answered the following questions along a five point Likert scale, with questions 2 and 3 also asking participants to explain their answers:

1. To what extent do you think Jeremy Corbyn is doing a good job as leader of the Labour Party? (1: extremely good job; 5: extremely bad job)
2. To what extent do you think you are the intended audience of this article? (1: I am not the intended audience; 5: I am the intended audience)
3. To what extent do you find the article persuasive? (1: I am persuaded; 5: I am not at all persuaded)

In the article, May appears to be pitching to supporters of the Labour Party who are unhappy with the Labour leadership (she says ‘millions of people who have supported Labour all their lives are appalled by what has happened to a once-great party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn’). Question 1 ascertains whether or not the participant belongs to this group of party members. Question 2 investigates the extent to which the participant identifies as the intended audience of the

speech. The third question asks whether or not the participant found the speech persuasive. All three questions were designed to determine the overall orientation of the respondent to the speech. Finally, participants were asked for any other comments on the article. Respondents in the study did not find the speech at all persuasive (the average answer for Q.3 was 4.95). Most of the participants also thought Jeremy Corbyn was doing a good job (the Q.1 average was 1.67). This perhaps explains why the majority did not identify as the intended audience of the speech (the Q.2 average was 3.92). Overall, then, the participants comprising the study represent a good example of a resistant readership. For reasons of space and ease of exemplification, rather than provide a discussion of the whole data set, my analysis focuses specifically on responses to paragraph 8 (reproduced in the next section). In addition to responses to that particular part of the article, I also consider responses to Q.3 and the ‘any other comments’ sections of the task.

4. Resisting the writer (...and the other discourse participants)

In paragraph 8 of her *Observer* article, May claims to understand the hardship that electors have experienced in recent years:

The second challenge [for any government] is to help people with the cost of living. Employment is up to record levels. But too many people have not had a decent pay rise. I know how hard people work to make ends meet and provide for their families. They want a government that is on their side. That is why Conservatives will always strain every sinew to help people keep more of their money. It is why we have cut income tax, introduced a national living wage, extended free childcare and frozen fuel duty. Later this month, the Chancellor will freeze fuel duty once again, helping everyone for whom the car is a necessity and not a luxury.

The Prime Minister begins by declaring that ‘too many people have not had a decent pay rise’. The premodifiers ‘too many’ and ‘decent’ both construct an ideological perspective which suggests that this is regrettable (although any accusation that this might be because of her government’s policies is mitigated by her assertion that ‘employment is up to record levels’). May then claims to ‘know how hard people work to make ends meet’. This claim to be familiar with people’s everyday financial difficulties is accompanied by a further assertion that people ‘want a government that is on their side’. These claims to know how “ordinary” electors experience the world – their adversities and desires – create a proximal relationship between May and the ‘people’, reflected in her use of a spatial conceptual metaphor (see Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) – she is ‘on their side’. To evidence this, she draws on an additional conceptual metaphor in which THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

is conceived as a PERSON engaged in a PHYSICAL STRUGGLE ‘to help people keep more of their money’. The Conservative politician subsequently outlines a number of activities, described with dynamic verbs – ‘cut’, ‘introduced’, ‘extended’ and ‘freeze’ – which all relate to how she and her party are attempting to help people in adverse financial circumstances. The closing clause of the paragraph, ‘helping everyone for whom the car is a necessity and not a luxury’, echoes the attempt to build a proximal relationship with ‘the people’ earlier in the paragraph; that she understands that some electors need, rather than want, a car is an implicit claim to understand their personal and financial circumstances. The overall effect of these discourse strategies is to construct a caring and compassionate target identity for May which empathises with people’s everyday difficulties and is actively taking steps to make their financial situation easier. This identity, indexed by the discourse structures highlighted above, is resisted by respondents in the study in four different ways.

First, when responding to paragraph 8, participants express doubt over May’s claim to know ‘how hard people work to make ends meet and provide for their families’ (‘P’, here, designates the participant number):

- (1) “I know how hard people work to make ends meet” no you don’t, you really don’t, and if you do you have no interest in helping them.
“They want a government that is on their side” lol (P1)
- (2) I doubt she really knows how hard people work (P6)
- (3) You haven’t got a clue how hard the average person works (P11)
- (4) She has no idea how people struggle. How could she? (P15)

In (1), P1 explicitly quotes the sections of the speech to which she objects, followed by a comment expressing her doubt. The use of ‘lol’ (‘laugh out loud’) suggests that she finds it amusing, or even ridiculous, that the Prime Minister might make such a claim. Although comments (2) and (3) do not quote the speech directly, they both echo the language used in it – ‘knows how hard people work’ (2) and ‘how hard... works’ (3) – to contradict the Conservative politician. Comments (1–4), then, all represent a flat rejection of the target identity that the Prime Minister attempts to proffer.

This rejection often involves invoking what participants know about her political record and her membership of the Conservative Party:

- (5) Tories have been in power for over 10 years now so why only now are they taking steps to give people a decent pay rise (P8)
- (6) The Tories are the party of capital and always have been [...] As for ‘those for whom the car is a necessity’, why did she remove the car allowance from so many disabled people who now cannot work? (P14)

- (7) Nobody believes Tory ministers “know how hard it is working to make ends meet” - they’ve never had to do it. (P16)
- (8) May is an expert can kicker, she says a lot but nothing gets done. (P27)

Comments (6) and (8) specifically invoke what the participants know about May’s personal political record, and (5–7) all raise her membership of the Conservative Party, in order to reject the empathetic target identity she projects. In all of these comments, then, The Prime Minister’s target identity – which readers construct from the linguistic cues in the text – is resisted on the basis of readers’ frame knowledge of her and the political party to which she belongs. These already established frames clash with the persona she projects, engendering readers’ resistance to the article.

Second, a by-product of this clash of target persona and pre-existing frame is that participants speculate about Theresa May’s underlying motives and mental states:

- (9) It’s rare to hear Theresa May talking about these things so when she does it feels ... unfamiliar. Like she’s not used to it. I wonder how much she actually thinks about these kind of issues. (P3)
- (10) She’s fooling no one (P18)
- (11) it is a con (P24)
- (12) She is trying to appeal to rural people (P25)
- (13) your dreaming if you think anyone believes that! (P37)
- (14) Why do you hate poor people Theresa? (P38)

Comments (9–14) can all be viewed as a form of what Stockwell (2009) calls ‘mind-modelling’. The term has emerged from literary linguistic analyses that employ insights from Theory of Mind research in cognitive and social psychology (for an overview of different perspectives, see Carruthers and Smith 1996; Apperly 2012). Theory of Mind is the human (and even primate – see Premack & Woodruff 1978) capacity to model the belief states of other people. The concept of mind-modelling expands the purview of Theory of Mind to include ‘non-belief domains such as the imagined desires, wishes, physical needs (hunger, lust, thirst, sleepiness, and so on) of others’ (Stockwell 2009: 140). In examples (9–14), the clash between the target identity performed by May in the op-ed piece and the frame knowledge readers possess of her gives rise to this mind-modelling process as readers attempt to explain the disjunction. In (9), P3 speculates about how often the Prime Minister thinks about these issues. Indeed, she connects this speculation to how ‘unfamiliar’ the op-ed ‘feels’ i.e. that to hear May speak sympathetically about financial

difficulties clashes with the kinds of things she is used to hearing the Conservative politician talk about. In (13) and (14) the participants also consider May's inner mental states. P37 says that May is 'dreaming' and P38 accuses May of hating poor people. In (10) and (11), the participants accuse the politician of attempting to con or fool people. Both these comments serve as implicit accusations of dishonesty – that May does not really believe what she propounds – and thus attribute inner belief states to her. Finally, (12) attributes the Prime Minister's concern to an attempt 'to appeal to rural people'. Presumably, the reason for this is the proposed freeze on fuel duty. Such a policy might appeal to people in rural parts of the country – especially those who are struggling financially – who rely on their car for transport. In this comment, P25 is appearing to explain May's apparent empathy for the less wealthy in terms of political strategy; she is trying to bring voters in rural areas into the Conservative electoral coalition (although it should be noted that in instances such as this where participants' comments are ambiguous or vague, interpreting the data also requires a degree of 'mind modelling' of the participant from the analyst too).

Third, mind-modelling by the participants not only extends to the Prime Minister's inner mental life, but to the imagined readership of the opinion piece as well. This works in two directions; readers imagine a similarly hostile audience, or they imagine the ideal or 'postulated reader' (Booth 1961: 177) addressed by the article i.e. a reader that is persuaded by May:

- (15) I doubt public sector workers believe you are on their side, they have been denied genuine pay rises (P22)
- (16) Cutting taxes for the rich always = helping keep more of their money in Tory rhetoric. And people fall for it so they keep saying it. (P39)

Example (15) mind-models the reaction of public sector workers to the op-ed, attributing to them the lack of a belief state – P22 suggests that these workers do not believe May is 'on their side'. In (16), instead of a hostile readership, a compliant audience is modelled. Indeed, the mind-modelling, here, is multi-layered; P39 models a reader who believes May (who 'falls for it'), and then suggests that this is May's underlying rationale for making the arguments in the article, thus also modelling the motivation of the Prime Minister and the politicians in her party.

Fourth, consideration of the wider discourse situation extends even further from the immediate interaction between May and the other discourse participants. Similar to Matt Zarb Cousin and Aaron Bastani's responses to the article, in qualitative replies to Q.3 and the 'other comments' question, some participants' responses spill over into criticism of *The Observer* for publishing the piece:

- (17) It was a disgrace that the Observer published such dreck at all, let alone that it treated it with such fawning reverence (P18)
- (18) The Observer should be ashamed (P32)
- (19) It's an embarrassment of an article. I can imagine some junior political aide thrashing it out on the train home. What's disturbing is that the Observer provided a platform for it. There's little or no media refuge for left-wing readers, or even to the undecided who would be receptive to new ideas and the Guardian/Observer stable is all we have. The Guardian published 101 articles about alleged antisemitism in Labour in just 8 months for instance. This wouldn't be so bad if they contained real indepth [sic] analysis. The same thing happened with the onset of austerity. Our media is, more often than not, failing us. That's disturbing for democracy whatever your political persuasion. (P35)

In all three of these comments, the newspaper is criticised for facilitating the Prime Minister's appeal to Labour voters – it is a 'disgrace' for publishing such 'dreck' (56), the newspaper should be 'ashamed' (57), and it is an 'embarrassment' (58). P35's comment in (58) is particularly complex because she also models the backstage processes that may have gone into writing the speech (see Browse 2018b). For this respondent, the article is so poorly pitched that she imagines 'some junior political aide thrashing it out on the train home' rather than May or a senior Conservative politician having written it. P35's criticism of *The Observer* is also such that it invokes more general frame knowledge of the broadsheet's journalistic output – its coverage of a recent antisemitism controversy in the Labour Party (which presumably P35 believes did not justify the column inches devoted to it) and of the government's 'austerity' policies. This demonstrates what elsewhere I have called 'the conceptual ecology of ethos' (Browse 2018a: 88) – political communication involves a complex ecology of interlinked knowledge structures representing not only the politician but the institutions, institutional actors and political relationships that facilitate their interaction with an audience. For P35, this inter-linkage results in a hostile response not only to May, but to *The Observer* as well.

There are, then, four different ways in which respondents provide a critical response to the article based on their knowledge of the other discourse participants. The first involves flatly rejecting May's proffered target identity on the basis of their pre-existing frame for her and Conservative politicians in general. The second involves using mind-modelling strategies to account for this cognitive dissonance. The third relates to the way in which readers mind-model other readerships, both hostile and receptive. The fourth consists of participants expanding criticism to the newspaper itself for facilitating the interaction.

5. Resisting the text-world

Following the TWT framework set out in Section 2, the previous section examined the ways in which participants mobilised their knowledge of the other discourse participants – May, the Conservative Party and *The Observer* – in order to produce a critical reading of the Prime Minister's op-ed. As I argued above, another trigger for critical reception is a clash between readers' pre-existing frames for a particular topic or subject area, and the text-world representation of that topic or subject area proffered by the writer. There are two ways in which the participants resist the text-world proffered by May in paragraph 8 of the article. The first, and simplest, involves an outright rejection of the truth-claims that the Prime Minister makes:

(20) This woman is seriously delusional (P31)

(21) Haven't had a pay rise in 8 years
On real terms worse off. Again lies (P33)

(22) Lies (P34)

In examples (21) and (22), the participants say that May is lying, thus suggesting that the text-world she proffers does not correspond to their own situation frames. In (20), such is the lack of correspondence between the proffered text-world and P31's own understanding that she says May is 'seriously delusional'. The above forms of resistance to the text are "top down" insofar as they involve the reader's pre-existing frames overriding the proffered text-world. A second, and perhaps more linguistically significant, form of resistance to the text-world involves some engagement with what the Prime Minister writes in this particular article, and for that reason they might be called "bottom up". I focus on responses to one specific claim in paragraph 8 of May's article that 'employment is up to record levels':

(23) "Employment is up to record levels" yeah if you include people on precarious zero hours contracts. (P1)

(24) Employment is up? Yeah, if you work at Cafe Nero. (P12)

(25) Employment at record levels? Well it will look like that if you count one hour per week of zero hours contract as employed. I know people working two jobs seven days a week and they still can't afford a house (P14)

(26) One hour's work, sub min wage is enough to get someone off the unemployment figures (P15)

(27) Employment is only up if you include people doing an hour a fortnight on zero hours (P18)

(28) employment is not at record levels if people are forced into zero hours contracts & are assumed to be employed if they work 1 hour per week.

- (29) When the unemployment figures have been manipulated so much over the years, nothing said will convince me that we have record employment (P27)
- (30) Record levels of employment. Yes, now that the definition of employment is a minimum of ONE HOUR per week (P30)
- (31) you should only count people that are in full time work to have true employment figures (P31)
- (32) 1 hour jobs count towards your record employment figure (P37)
- (33) Employment is not up record levels - anybody can see that. The figure-messaging is up record levels. (P38)

These forms of resistance to the text can be described in terms of ‘construal’, a concept taken from Cognitive Grammar (CG, Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008). According to CG, all linguistic forms evoke a conceptual structure (such as a frame) at the same time as they highlight, bring into focus, hide or background different aspects of that structure. Langacker (2008: 55) uses a visual metaphor to describe this process; the conceptual structure comprises a “scene” which can be viewed in different ways. Construal relates to the manner in which the scene is viewed – for example, the whole scene might be more or less in or out of focus, or one might choose to pay particular attention to only one part of it. According to CG, different grammatical choices made by speakers or writers differently construe conceptual structure. Langacker (2008) identifies four dimensions along which to describe the construal of conceptual content.

Specificity: this relates to the level of detail of the conceptualisation. For example, there are a number of ways in which I could refer to the pen on my desk. Describing it as ‘the expensive Parker fountain-pen on the wooden desk in my office’ provides a very fine-grained and highly specified construal of the object which is encoded by a complex noun phrase featuring relatively extensive pre- and post-modification. Conversely, the most schematic construal of the pen – i.e. the least detailed construal linguistically possible – would be to call it merely a ‘thing’.

Focus: when I look at the pen on my desk, only a limited portion of its spatial surrounding falls within the scope of my gaze, perhaps consisting of the pen and some portion of the desk around it. Due to the embodied limits of our optic system, our vision is necessarily bounded – we see the world through a delimited viewing frame. Langacker (2008: 63) argues that conceptual processes involved in understanding language operate in a similar way. Grammatical forms delimit the portion of conceptual structure in the viewing frame at any one time. The size of this viewing frame is called the scope. As I suggested, the immediate scope of the word ‘pen’ includes the whole pen and some portion of the desk around it. Compare this with ‘nib’, which evokes the same conceptual structure (to understand the term ‘nib’, I have to know what a pen is), but the immediate scope is much smaller, focussing instead on the tip of the pen and the surrounding area. As a part of construal, focus describes what parts of conceptual structure are in the metaphorical viewing frame.

Prominence: whereas focus relates to the size of the viewing frame and what it encompasses, prominence concerns what is foregrounded within it. This element of conceptual structure is called the ‘profile’. Although a portion of the desk appears in the immediate scope of ‘the pen’, the profile is the pen itself (and the desk is backgrounded). Profile is important in CG because it derives grammatical categories such as verbs and nouns – verbs profile processes and nouns, things. For instance, the term ‘writer’ evokes an underlying conceptual structure involving an agent who uses objects, like a pen, pencil or a computer, to produce a material or digital artefact – a piece of writing. In this conceptual structure, the word ‘writer’ profiles the agent, whereas the verb ‘to write’ profiles the activity they engage in.

Perspective: to continue the visual metaphor, not only are the granularity of the image, the size of the viewing frame, and what is foregrounded within it important, but so, too, is the position of the viewer – for example, whether they are stationary or moving. In CG, perspective captures this aspect of visual experience and maps it onto conceptualisation. It is a complex category, but the terms associated with it that are most germane to the analysis below are summary and sequential scanning. Compare the nominal, ‘the wires between my computer and the wall’ to ‘the wires running from my computer to the wall’. The first is a summary scan because it involves a stationary gaze suggested by the preposition, ‘between’; the second is a sequential scan as it involves a more dynamic construal of the event, cued by the participle, ‘running’.

These categories are usefully deployed in analysing participant responses to May’s use of the term ‘employment’ and her assertion that it is ‘up’. ‘Employment’ is a noun that presupposes the conceptual structure in Figure 1a, where the circles represent the employer and employee and the arrow represents the process of one employing the other.

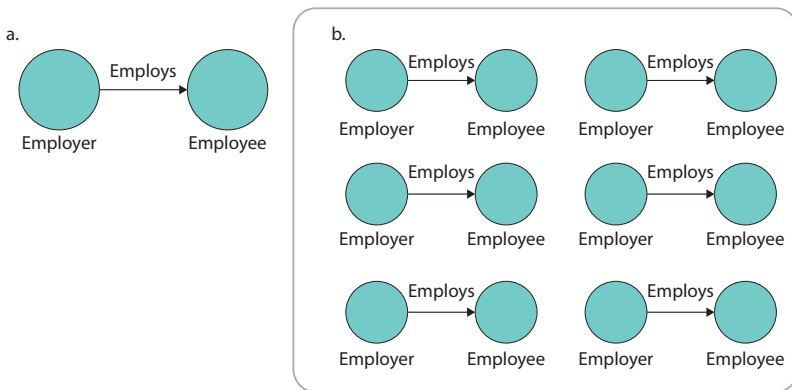


Figure 1. The conceptual substrate and proffered construal of ‘employment’

In the Prime Minister's use of the term, however, employment refers to no single relationship between employer and employee, but all instances in the economy where business owners enter into this relationship with workers. One could crudely represent this conceptual structure as in Figure 1b. The construal placed on this structure by the word 'employment' involves a summary scan of all these individual processes, profiling them all simultaneously in holistic fashion. The Prime Minister is referring in course-grained, highly schematic fashion to *all* those processes by which an employer (of whatever kind) employs an employee (of whatever kind).

Whereas May's proffered construal is a very schematic, course grained summary scan of all the processes of employment in the economy, comments (20–30) create a much more finely-grained representation by profiling the process of employment itself (in Figure 1a, the arrow), for example: 'if you count one hour per week of zero hours contract as employed' (22); 'One hour's work, sub min wage is enough to get someone off the unemployment figures' (23); 'the definition of employment is a minimum of ONE HOUR per week' (27); and '1 hour jobs count towards your record employment figure' (29). Some comments profile the employee and describe them with quite a high degree of specificity: 'people on precarious zero hours contracts' (20); 'I know people working two jobs seven days a week and they still can't afford a house' (22); 'people doing an hour a fortnight on zero hours' (24); 'people are forced into zero hours contracts & are assumed to be employed if they work 1 hour per week' (25); and 'you should only count people that are in full time work to have true employment figures' (28 – the implication, here, being that May is not). One comment, (21), instead profiles the employer – 'Café Nero', the coffee shop chain – to indicate something similar; one might stereotypically expect a worker at Café Nero to be working on a relatively low wage in comparatively insecure conditions.

This process of offering an alternative to the construal of employment proffered in the article can be described in terms of 'reconstrual' (see Browse 2018a, 2018c, 2019; Forrest 1996; Harrison 2017: 58). That is, the bottom up resistance to the proffered text-world arises because the Prime Minister's use of the word 'employment' evokes a conceptual frame with a proffered construal that jars with the construal preferred by the participants – the (poor) quality of the employment is too salient a feature of their own frames for the economy to ignore. Participants thus reconstrue the conceptual structure cued by the Conservative politician's use of the word 'employment' in line with what they think are the important aspects of their own frame. These reconstrual processes have been summarised in Figure 2.

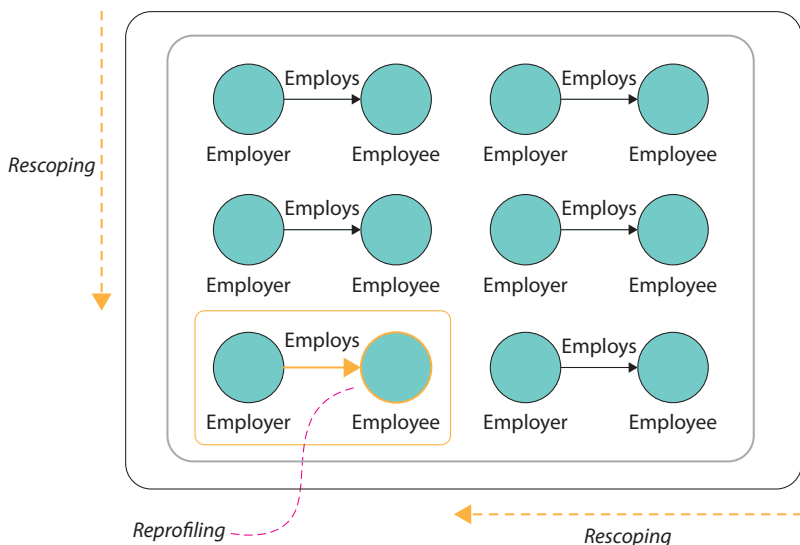


Figure 2. Reprofileing as bottom up resistance

The light grey box around all the processes of employment represents May's proffered construal – her use of the word employment offers a schematic, zoomed-out, course-grained, summary scan construal which conceives of all employment processes holistically. Conversely, the orange arrows, box and thickened lines represent the participants' reconstrual. They rescope the underlying conceptual structure, zooming in on a single employer/employee relationship that they see as exploitative (represented by the orange box) and – within that new scope – profile either the process of employment itself (represented by the thick orange arrow) or the employee (the thick orange circle). Thus, whereas “top down” processes of critical reception involved simply dismissing the proffered text-world as a false representation, this “bottom-up” process instead means reconstruing the text-world in accordance with a preferred construal of the reader's frame knowledge. In this instance, as a result of this “bottom-up” ability to unpack the construal May proffers, in (26) and (30), participants accuse the politician of ‘massaging’ the figures.

6. Conclusion: towards a stylistics of critical reception

Existing work in CDA and Critical Stylistics has largely ignored the responses of readers to political discourse. To address this neglect, this chapter has offered a cognitive stylistic model of one form of response – what I have termed critical

reception – using TWT (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999), supplemented with ideas from Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 2008). I have summarised this model of critical reception in Figure 3. (Note that while Figure 3 presents this typology in tree-diagram form, as the analysis showed, resistant readers often use the different strategies in combination).

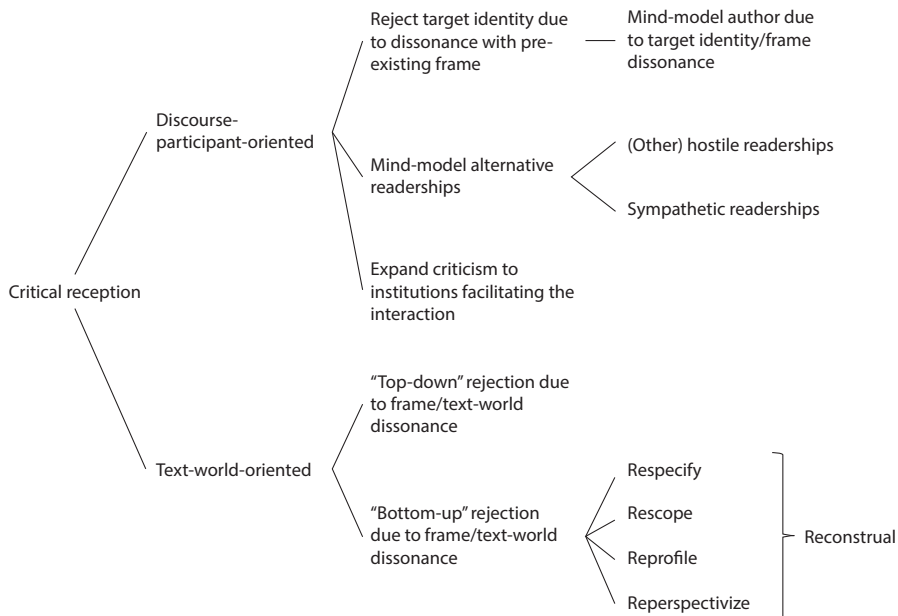


Figure 3. A cognitive model of critical reception

TWT provided the scaffolding for this approach insofar as it offers a way of characterising the cognitive processes associated with two forms of critical reception – that which is oriented towards the author (and other discourse participants), and that which is focused on the text-world. Cognitive Grammar allowed for a more detailed exposition of the conceptual processes involved in some of the “bottom up” processes comprising this latter type of reader resistance. TWT’s account of how reader knowledge is incremented into the discourse situation – and its focus on the readerly construction of meaning – makes it ideally suited to describing the process by which readers simultaneously construct text-driven mental representations of the discourse while comparing these representations to their own frames. According to this perspective, critical responses are not an exogenous part of interaction which occur after the fact, but an integral potentiality in any event of discourse.

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A cognitive and cultural reader response theory of character construction

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1. Introduction

Character is arguably the textual element that readers invest in and engage with most, and while the concept may never have been at the forefront of research, a number of monographs (e.g. Schneider 2000, 2013; Culpeper 2001; Jannidis 2004; Palmer 2004; Eder 2008) have firmly established character in theoretical discussion. Most of these studies draw on the cognitive sciences, and specifically text processing models like those proposed by van Dijk and Kintsch (1983). These models assume that readers draw on a store of schematically organized knowledge as well as textual information to construct literary characters. While these models are powerful in describing the reader's potential operations of information processing in character reception, they fail to address differences across readers and readers' cultural backgrounds and contexts.

Drawing on research from cognitive anthropology (e.g. Strauss and Quinn 1997, Bennardo & de Munck 2014), we suggest that the notion of culturally shared knowledge, in the form of cultural models, can fruitfully be integrated into cognitive reception theory in general (Strasen 2008a, 2008b, 2013) and reader-focused cognitive theory of character in particular. Cultural models are a particular type of schematic knowledge that is established through repeated (embodied) socio-cultural experience and are thus shared by people who belong to the same (sub) culture. Hence, they also can build a bridge between first generation (computational) and second generation (enactivist) approaches in cognitive literary studies (Kukkonen & Caracciolo 2014).

We will first discuss the concept of cultural models and its significance for the analysis of responses of flesh-and-blood-readers to literary texts. We will then sketch Vaeßen's (2018) model of (character) reception and argue that it:

- a. overcomes some of the earlier models' problems, like their overly computational view of cognition
- b. reconciles seemingly antagonistic first- and second-generation approaches in cognitive literary studies (CLS)
- c. significantly updates and extends existing research on character
- d. provides an integrated, holistic theory of character based on the notion of character itself as a cultural model
- e. is a suitable basis for empirical research on the process of character construction.

2. Context, literary reading, and cultural models

With the rise of pragmatics in the 1970s, the role of context in literary communication became increasingly problematized (Geeraerts 2003). If situational context was decisive for pragmatic meanings of utterances, how could that meaning be established in the absence of a clear situational context, such as in fictional communication, where the validity of the recipients' world knowledge, with which they might be able to construct a putative fictional context, is systematically put into question? For Iser, the supposed lack of a situational context in literary communication was a key element in his explanation of reception processes:

Although the literary text incorporates conventions that may provide a common ground between itself and the reader, these conventions tend to be organized in such a way that their validity is, at best, called into question. [...] The reader is compelled [...] to build a situational frame to encompass himself and the text. Unlike the situational frame presupposed by the speech-act theory, the fictional situation does not exist until it is linguistically produced, which means that it is bound to be different in character and consequences from one that is already given and defined. (Iser 1978: 66)

As Strasen has shown (2008a), it is one of Iser's major theoretical flaws that he overestimates the degree to which the situational frame (or context) is "already given and defined"; and, consequently, his theory underestimates the similarities between meaning attribution in literary and non-literary texts. Or, as Schmid (2003: 442f.) has succinctly put it in his survey of pragmatic research, context in all language processing is unitary, subjective, dynamic, reflexive, and potentially infinite. As the potential context of any given utterance is infinite, the question of how readers or hearers select and/or construct presumptive contexts from their total cognitive environment becomes essential and, at the same time, hard to answer. Schmid (2003) refers readers 'interested in the puzzling question of

actual context selection [...] to Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory (443)'. The problem with Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory (1986) is that it presupposes a degree of familiarity with the recipients' cognitive environments on the part of the sender that is impossible in anonymous one-to-many mass communication. They claim the sender tries to predict the cognitive environment of the receiver and the order in which s/he will search through it for a possible context for any given utterance. The sender will then choose that utterance that will take the receiver as little cognitive effort as possible to arrive at a context that will provide a relevant meaning. The receiver, in turn, supposes that the first context which the sender could have assumed to be part of the receiver's cognitive environment and which provides sufficient cognitive effects per processing effort is probably the adequate one (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 118–171). This may or may not be the case in one-to-one communication between people who know each other, but it is, at most, only partly true for mass communication because senders in those contexts can merely guess at the receivers' cognitive environments. Therefore, one of the central questions in reader-response theory since Iser could still not be answered: How does literary communication work in the absence of a "given and defined" common ground between sender and receiver?

Strasen (2008a, 2008b, 2013) has suggested that this problem can and should be solved with the help of the concept of cultural models, which are cognitive schemata that are shared between the members of a culture or sub-culture. Strauss and Quinn (1997) go as far as to claim that culture *consists* 'of regular occurrences in the humanly created world, in the schemata people share as a result of these and in the interactions between these schemas and this world' (7). Schemata are data structures that cognitively represent stereotypical situations, complete with necessary elements and default assignments, i.e. typical cases that are taken for granted as long as there is no contradicting evidence (Minsky 1979). To the degree that members of the same culture experience similar phenomena co-occurring simultaneously, their cognitive schemata will be similar, and these culturally shared frames are referred to as cultural models (Strauss & Quinn 1997). We would claim that this concept helps to solve many of the aporias traditional reader-response-theory has ended up in. Stanley Fish's (1980) intuitively plausible but only vaguely defined concept of the "interpretive community", for instance, can be much more precisely conceptualized if one assumes that culturally shared schemata are at the root of these communities. In the context of this chapter the concept of cultural models is so important, because it is an obvious candidate for accounting for the common ground between sender and receiver that the theories presented so far could not provide. The sender has to predict the content of an anonymous receiver's knowledge base to anticipate how his utterance will be contextualized and he can only use those parts of the receiver's knowledge base that the receiver could have

supposed the sender to know about. This means that cultural models that are by definition shared by members of the same culture are among the few elements conceivable to form the necessary common ground, because the sender cannot know other elements of the receiver's knowledge base. This is why cultural models are used for contextualization in anonymous mass-communication, regardless of what sender and receiver think about the content of the cultural model in question.

Since Strasen has attempted to integrate these basic thoughts into an overall model of literary reception (2008a, 2008b), the kind of model of cognitive processes that is used by Sperber and Wilson or Strauss and Quinn has met with stern criticism. Traditional schema theory, reaching back to early Artificial Intelligence research, is accused of holding on to a concept of cognition that is too computational and does not sufficiently take the embodied nature of cognition into account. Most prominently Kukkonen and Caracciolo (2014) have announced the advent of a new, second generation in cognitive literary studies that will overcome the first generation's overly computational mental model approach to text processing and will open the field to enactivist views of embodied cognition. Though the members of second generation in cognitive literary studies certainly do have a point when they state that the "first generation" has not focused as strongly on embodied cognition as necessary, Zwaan (2014) claims it is hard to see how language comprehension, decision making, and other complex cognitive tasks could be achieved with the help of embodied cognition and grounded symbols alone. Rather, according to Zwaan, there are good reasons to assume that symbolic and sensorimotor representations are in a complementary relation, and that 'activation flows both ways' (2016: 1030), although he also stresses that, on occasion, text comprehension 'may not involve detailed sensorimotor representations at all' (Zwaan 2016: 1030).

It is hard to see how discourse processing could work if we needed to form rich sensorimotor representations of all incoming information. What we need, consequently, is a concept that helps explain how symbolic and sensorimotor information interact and that retains the explanatory power of the concept of cultural models. As first proposed in Vaeßen (2018), we suggest that Barsalou's (2016) concept of the simulator provides exactly such an integrating idea. Those simulators are integrated patterns of conceptual and sensorimotor representations of repeatedly experienced situations on the basis of what Roepstorff et al. (2010: 1051f.) call patterned practices, i.e. repeated experiences members of the same culture share because their actions are coordinated by cultural models. What makes Barsalou's notion of simulators so exciting for a theory of character construction is that it combines the kinds of cognitive representations that are at the heart of the seeming difference between first and second generation cognitive literary studies and accounts for different plausible modes of character construction. He states that:

[M]ultiple neural systems process different situational elements in parallel, generating complementary streams of information about the situation. [...] Over time, each of these neural systems produces a continuous stream of perceptual experiences (qualia) for its respective situational content, along with corresponding situational interpretations. [...] As each system processes its respective situational information, association areas integrate these streams of “local” information “globally”. As a result of this integration, a coherent perceptual experience of the situation results, along with a coherent perceptual interpretation of the complex events occurring [...]. (Barsalou 2016: 6)

Such an enhanced concept of cultural models (be it under a different name) is capable of making up for the one-sidedness of traditional mental-model theories of reading processes, without falling into the trap of an exclusively enactivist theory of reading that cannot really explain the processing of longer stretches of complex discourse. To put it differently, this concept of cultural models is the most convincing answer to the question how contextualization works in literary communication in the absence of a situational common ground, because culturally shared cognitive activation patterns are the safest bet for the sender when it comes to the necessary prediction of the meaning attribution process on the receivers' side. Moreover, it can provide the necessary theoretical basis for an integrated treatment of the role of perceptual and conceptual experiences in the process of (character) reception (for more on this topic, see Vaeßen 2018).

3. A cognitive and cultural reader response theory of character construction

While thus far, our argument has emphasised the relevance of this updated understanding of cultural models and their significance in understanding reception on an abstract level, we also believe that an integration of the concept will significantly benefit research regarding elements at the core of traditional literary studies. In particular, we argue that, by drawing on the concept of cultural models as outlined above, we can both update and extend existing research on (the reception of) literary character, and make these reception processes accessible to meaningful empirical research. In recent years, the focus in research on literary character seems to have shifted from holistic discussions of the concept, in particular the seminal contributions by Schneider (2000, 2001) and Culpeper (2001), to more selected aspects, such as fictional minds (e.g. Palmer 2004; Zunshine 2006) or characters' and readers' shared embodied experience (e.g. Caracciolo 2014, Kukkonen 2016). Drawing on Vaeßen (2018), we now show that cultural models enable us to reintegrate these different research strands into a holistic theory of character

construction, while also allowing us to explicitly address aspects of culture ignored or side-lined by previous approaches. We also argue that the notion of character itself is a cultural model.

3.1 Cultural models in character construction: Categorical knowledge and interpretive patterns

Regarding the ontological status of characters, there is general agreement that the conception with the most explanatory power is an understanding of character as “representations of imaginary beings in the minds of the audience” (Eder et al. 2010: 8). Following Schneider (2000, 2013) and Culpeper (2001; Culpeper & Fernandez-Quintanilla 2017) we understand characters as sub-models within the overall text-world situation model, i.e. we assume that, as part of their situation model representing the fictional world as a whole, readers will construct character models by drawing on both, textual information and their knowledge structures. In the course of reading, these character models are then updated and extended to include all available character-related information. In contrast to previous, either purely mimetic or purely semiotic approaches to character, such an understanding allows us to recognise characters as textual structures that are nevertheless represented in the reader’s mind as fictional beings akin to “real people”, that is as entities with emotions, intentions and motivations of their own. As Toolan writes as early as 1988:

Character is an illusion in which the reader is a creative accomplice: [...] An iceberg principle is at work in the way most people read characters: we operate on the assumption that the evidence we are shown is a necessarily limited selection of material, that much more lies beneath the surface of the novel, in the rest of that ‘person’s’ life. (Toolan 1988: 91)

In other words, characters are, by definition, ontologically incomplete, and readers “fill in” additional information in order to be able to understand the respective character as a functioning being. Although the degree to which the resulting mental model of character is filled in may vary between individuals, readers in general build such models right away and in a relatively complete, if initially tentative manner (Schneider 2000: 72–74). They are able to do so, both Schneider (2000) and Culpeper (2001) argue, because they can draw on schematically-organised knowledge about both fictional characters and “real” people that allows for inferences that can flesh-out the character model. However, in contrast to Culpeper and Schneider, who both fail to explicitly address to which degree such knowledge structures are shared across readers, we argue that these are not any type of schematic knowledge but specifically cultural models. Above, we have already suggested that readers generally draw on cultural models and not individual

schemata in the construction of situation models, yet when looking at the issue from a more ‘traditional’ narratological perspective, such research emphasises the cultural dependence of character reception, whether it is by relying on knowledge structures “borrowed” from social cognition (e.g. Culpeper 2001; Eder 2008; Schneider 2000, 2013), which by definition are culturally and socially bounded, or by discussing social and literary conventions and codes underlying the reception process (Culler 2002 [1973]; cf. Margolin 1986; Phelan 1989; for more in-depth discussion, see Vaeßen 2018: 140–144). Conventions and codes, in turn, result from abstraction of repeated experiences in particular socio-cultural contexts and are nothing but cultural models. While, thus far, this may only seem like a “relabelling” of previous theories, understanding the categorical knowledge structures drawn upon in character reception as cultural models does have a clear advantage. As Catherine Emmott observes:

Although reader response and reception work vary in the role they attribute to the reader, their arguments have sometimes resulted in an over-emphasis on subjective interpretation. In extreme cases this can lead to the text dropping out of the equation completely, [...]. Although such influences are no doubt important, the tendency to view readers along these lines both under- and overestimate differences between readers. The general knowledge representation [...] suggests some unity, at least within a particular culture. (2004 [1999]: 70–71)

Conceptualising the relevant knowledge structures as cultural models, then, provides us with a systematic toolkit for analysing this unity within a culture, while still allowing for cross-cultural and individual differences between readings. What is more, cultural models in the form of simulators are multi-modal and embodied and thus can account for aspects of the reception process that go beyond first-generation, schematic categories. We suggest that cultural models not only serve as the basis for character construction in the form of categorical knowledge, but also as what we suggest to call *interpretive patterns* (Vaeßen 2018).

Character models result from a dynamic interaction between the text and the reader’s knowledge structures. If perceived, textual stimuli activate the schema best suited to contextualise these cues. The activated schema then fills in missing information through pattern completion, and on this basis guides both the processing of new as well as the interpretation of previous information. Cultural models in the form of categorical knowledge will be drawn upon for such inferencing processes, yet which category if any is activated depends on the textual stimulus and how easily the latter can be identified as belonging to and thus activating a particular category. Textual cues for characterisation can very broadly be grouped into two types: characterisation statements and character action (e.g. Margolin 2007: 77), which correspond to the traditional distinction between explicit and implicit characterisation (e.g. Pfister 1993 [1988]). Schneider (2000: 91) claims

that the distinction between implicit and explicit characterisation loses importance in cognitive approaches to character since the information eventually integrated into a mental model does not depend on the mode of textual presentation. We disagree with this point. Whereas the connection between textual cue and activated category is relatively straightforward in explicit categorisation since the category in question is directly named, implicit characterisation requires the reader to deduce the relevant categories from less salient cues. Why should readers encode similar or even the same categorical information if the link between textual cue and category is not as immediate as in explicit characterisation? They do, we argue, because they draw on cultural models in the form of interpretive patterns, i.e. knowledge structures that relate implicit characterisation cues to particular categorical knowledge structures such as group membership or personality traits. Whether we call it mind-reading (Palmer 2004, Vermeule 2010, Zunshine 2006) or mind-modelling (Stockwell 2009, Stockwell & Mahlberg 2015), readers always apply the insights regarding connections between behaviour and dispositions they have gained 'from [their] family, [their] friends, [their] education, and the general social and cultural consensus within which [they] have been socialized' (Palmer 2004: 143) i.e. cultural models – to make sense of characters' actions. Thus, following Bennardo and de Munck (2014: 25–32), we argue that our ability to mind-read/mind-model fundamentally depends on cultural models.¹ We propose that readers belonging to the same culture will be able to not only to understand implicit characterisation but do so with similar results because cultural models constitute both the categories readers draw upon for the construction of character models, as well as the personality theories that organise and explain connections between words, thoughts, and deeds, the corresponding beliefs, motivations, and goals, and underlying character traits or role assignments. Finally, due to the multi-modal quality of cultural models as proposed here, they can also account for readers' emotional and embodied responses to characters, including evaluation, empathy, identification and consciousness-enactment (Vaeßen 2018: 173–190).

Thus far, our discussion of the relevance of cultural models for character construction has primarily focussed on their role in allowing readers to assign characters certain personality traits and roles. However, cultural models also serve an even more fundamental function: the basic understanding of what constitutes a character.

1. Indeed, the notion of cultural models as simulators as proposed above may even help overcome the divide between the *theory-theory* and *simulation-theory* approaches. For more detailed discussion, see Vaeßen (2018).

3.2 The cultural model of character

At the beginning of this section, we referenced Toolan's (1988) metaphor of the iceberg in understanding character, i.e. the fact that just glimpsing the peak of the iceberg of potential character information suffices for the reader to build a relatively complete mental model. We then outlined the relevance of cultural models in providing and accessing categorical knowledge which can be used to flesh out the mental model. However, what if the text does not provide information that allows for immediate categorisation? After all, since the seminal study by Gerrig and Allbritton (1990), all cognitive approaches to character have stressed that both top-down processes in the form of categorisation and bottom-up processes in the form of piece-meal integration of textual information are at work in the reception of literary character, and that texts may actually inhibit an immediate assignment of characters into a clearly defined category (Fiske et al. 1999: 235, Jannidis 2004: 184–185). However, drawing on both the experience of readers and research in social psychology, we argue that at least one categorisation of fictional beings is always possible and will structure the following reception process: the categorisation as a literary character.

Jannidis develops what he calls the *base type* (Basistypus) of character, a minimal structure or framework of general properties which readers will activate as soon as they recognise an entity in the story world as a sentient being or character. The general properties included in this basic framework are the character's 'visible' outside, i.e. their outward appearance, and an 'invisible' inside, i.e. their mental states, thoughts, feelings, intentions and wishes, as well as the knowledge that both outside and inside features can be either stable or dynamic. According to Jannidis, this base type then serves as the starting point for any mental construction of fictional beings, although each of the individual aspects may be negated in a specific character (Jannidis 2004: 185–195). While we agree that the theory of literary character (a) is in need of a basic structure that serves as the starting point for mental model construction and (b) the properties he lists should be included in this structure, we believe his intent to reduce the base type to properties that are true for (almost) all characters results in a model that is too reductive and unable to account for very fundamental and frequent aspects of character reception, specifically in literary fiction. A short passage from the beginning of Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2016 [2002]), which introduces the reader to a character called Richard Parker, can illustrate this point:²

2. For this example, we are indebted to Stockwell (2009: 111–115).

Richard Parker has stayed with me. I've never forgotten him. Dare I say I miss him? I do. I miss him. I still see him in my dreams. They are nightmares mostly, but nightmares tinged with love. Such is the strangeness of the human heart. I still cannot understand how he could abandon me so unceremoniously, without any sort of goodbye, without looking back even once. That pain is like an axe that chops at my heart.

(Martel [2002] 2016: 7–8)

This Richard Parker is a Bengal tiger and the protagonist and narrator Pi reports to have spent more than 200 days with him (or it) adrift at sea. However, although Pi reports in detail his family's backstory and the moment of the shipwreck, including his attempts at saving Richard Parker from drowning, the first passage providing physical description beyond that of individual and generic body parts and thus revealing Richard Parker to be a tiger only comes after he has been saved and pulled into the lifeboat, more than 100 pages into the narration:

Ravi was right. Truly I was to be the next goat. I had a wet, trembling, half-drowned, heaving and coughing three-year-old adult Bengal tiger in my lifeboat. Richard Parker rose unsteadily to his feet on the tarpaulin, eyes blazing as they met mine, ears laid tight to his head, all weapons drawn. His head was the size and colour of the lifebuoy, with teeth.

(Martel [2002] 2016: 130–31)

Even then, as Stockwell attests (2009: 114), not all readers immediately make the connection between the name “Richard Parker” and the description of the tiger, but instead continue to believe Richard Parker to be a human. While the text is certainly constructed in such a way as to invite this categorisation – see the repeated use of the personal pronoun “him” as well as the description of purposeful (human) action in the verb “abandon” in the initial introduction – we argue that the simple identification of Richard Parker as a character suffices to explain this phenomenon. In other words, readers classify any character as a human being until or unless the text provides clear information to the contrary. This, however, cannot be explained by the minimal structure captured in Jannidis's base type, which explicitly excludes information that is not true for characters in general. Instead, the observation that the mere identification of an entity in the storyworld as a character brings about the attribution of other features is best explained by conceiving of character as a culturally shared, schematic structure i.e. a *cultural model of character (CMC)* including terminals (i.e. slots that must be filled), and default assignments (i.e. the standard expectations regarding these slots). These are built through our repeated experience of literary characters, but may also be actively taught, e.g. in the features we are asked to analyse in literature classes in schools or universities. What is more, drawing on research from social psychology (e.g. Fiske et al. 1999), we suggest that such cultural models of character also include terminals and default assignments beyond the basic categorisation

as human. These include, but are not limited to, the “privileged” social categories of age, gender, and ethnicity, as exemplified by the fact that large groups of European and American readers expect characters to be Caucasian unless informed otherwise,³ as well as making basic assumptions such as the belief that a character is alive, an expectation without which central effects of texts such as Jean Rhys’s “I used to live here once” (2017 [1976]) could not work. Finally, we assume that the CMC also includes terminals that may serve as “docking sites” for a character’s aesthetic or symbolic meaning (Eder 2008).

It is important to note, however, that we do not wish to suggest that there is one definite cultural model of character. Though the terminals just outlined draw on fundamental insight from both person perception and literary studies, and thus may be shared across cultures, whether any or all of the terminals are actually realised depends on additional contextual factors and may be subject to historical change. While the structure and content of the CMC thus remains flexible, such an understanding of characters still is beneficial for both our theoretical understanding of characters and the reception process in general. On the one hand, CMCs provide a structure that can serve as the basis for any characterisation process, even where other categorisation is not possible, and can thus explain Toolan’s iceberg phenomenon (1988, 91). On the other, we also have to consider that fictional characters can be seen as “model persons”, and as such, they shape our understanding of ‘what a person typically is and does’ (Herman 2011: 268). Identifying underlying basic conceptions of what constitutes the standard “model person” and how these are used in literature therefore sheds light not only on cultural influences on literature, but also on literature’s power to either fortify or call into question what we conceive of as “normal”. However, to truly understand such interactions between literature, culture, and actual readers, we must move away from purely theoretical considerations, and towards the investigation of actual reading processes.

4. Toward the (empirical) analysis of cultural models at work

The move away from theory to more concrete, analytical let alone empirical work often is a difficult one. Indeed, we would argue that abstract theories of reception,

3. A recent prominent example for such expectations despite the lack of corresponding textual information was the uproar at the casting of black actor Norma Dumezweni as Hermione Granger in the original London production of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (2016), the dramatic sequel to J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter*-series.

and in particular a model of reception that draws on cultural models, have not garnered more traction yet because their direct effect on actual readings of texts is difficult to trace. However, the cultural and cognitive theory of character reception presented in the previous section already helps to make the influence of underlying theories of reception on the actual reading process more tangible. In this last section, we will now offer an example of how cultural models may be fruitfully applied in the analysis of (readings of) literary texts and how this may also be investigated empirically. Note, however, that it is not yet empirically tested on a larger scale, but draws on the actual readers directly accessible to us (i.e. ourselves), with our readings compared to those of others in the form of secondary literature as well as reader testaments taken from online reviews.

A prime example to see cultural models and a cultural model of character at work is Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1993).⁴ The novel has garnered much critical attention because of its ungendered narrator and the resulting rejection of binary, heteronormative distinctions, yet few of the corresponding analyses provide detailed discussions of how the text manages to thwart definitive gender assignment. Instead, critics such as Brian Finney suggest that readers' and critics' 'ingenious detective work [regarding the narrator's gender] is rendered pointless' (2002: 25) because Winterson herself observes that the narrator's gender is both male and female, with this changing throughout the book. While Finney may be right in so far as the text does not allow a definite gender assignment, we disagree with his dismissal of the readers' "detective work". Especially when we are interested in the reception and mental construction of the protagonist as a character, the fact that readers (at least initially) assign gender must not be ignored. The indeterminacy of the narrator's gender only results from Winterson's smart play on clichés and gender stereotypes – in other words, cultural models – which, however, may be read and interpreted differently by distinct groups of readers depending on their contexts and cultural knowledge. Indeed, readers' commentaries on their engagement with the novel seem to suggest that those familiar with the author and her work – and thus with a 'WINTERSON' cultural model readily available – are likely to expect a female protagonist and a lesbian/queer story. Even readers who do not assign a gender based on their knowledge about the author, however, are soon tempted to do so. The narrator's gender may never be explicitly addressed in the text, yet the gender presentation is overdetermined (McAvan 2011: 439) by constant reference to conventional aspects of gender that suggest but do not prove a definite assignment. In other words, the text actively

4. A more detailed discussion of the role cultural models play in readers' engagement with Winterson's novel can be found in Vaeßen (2018).

plays on the fact that particular cues will trigger cultural models carrying a definitive gender assignment, just to immediately call this assignment into question again, causing an oscillation between genders and, potentially, the eventual questioning of normative gender assignments. Thus, for example, text-inherent cues initially suggest a male narrator, since the narrator not only refers to their love for Louise, a woman, but also repeatedly mentions sexual and love relationships with other women. Many of these are described as being married, and thus perceived as heterosexual. While these mentions of female lovers per se may not define the narrator's gender but their sexuality, both concepts are conventionally tied up with one another (e.g. McCabe et al. 2010). In other words, cultural models of sexuality in Western Culture still carry heterosexuality as default value, resulting in the gender assignment 'male' for Winterson's protagonist. However, other textual cues suggest a female narrator – from the mention of other, male partners to association with stereotypical female behaviour and traits via cultural models resulting in a destabilisation of the reader's mental character model. Ultimately, different readings of the text seem to fall into one of two categories: some readers eventually decide that the narrator is either male or female. In these cases, readers tend to ignore cues that would correspond to an alternative categorisation, or they personalise their mental model to accommodate perceived contradictions. Thus, for instance, Lindenmeyer (1999: 52) eventually categorises the narrator as "butch", a female with prominent, masculine traits. Other readers, however, accept the indeterminacy of the narrator's gender, perceiving them as either both male and female (e.g. Finney 2002) or neither (e.g. McAvan 2011). However, all readers seem to comment on the undeclared gender of the narrator as one of the central features of *Written on the Body*. This, we argue, can be seen as proof not only for the fact that CMCs exist, but that they include the expectation that a character's gender is identified, at least if they are human. Winterson's novel, then, draws attention to our standard expectations by refusing to comply with them. What is more, the novel continually plays on and calls into question gender-related cultural models, thus challenging readers' conceptions of gender as a clearly delineated and binary concept.

Of course, it is not our intention to suggest that this is an exhaustive systematic account of which and how cultural models are used, nor would we like to suggest that, even where the same cultural models are triggered, this happens at a clearly identifiable moment for all readers. Instead, we suggest that cultural models are activated by cue clusters and activation thresholds may differ across readers (Vaeßen 2018). Drawing on theories of contextualisation (particularly Gumperz 1982, 1992), we argue communicators are aware that not all cues meant to trigger particular information work equally well for all communicators and not all communicators monitor utterances to the same degree. Therefore, relevant

information is rarely cued only once but through clusters of related cues. Such a multiplicity of cues not only helps to avoid ambiguity often inherent in individual cues, but also allows for the cues to operate cumulatively, i.e. while a single cue may not be strong enough to trigger a particular knowledge structure, the cluster of cues in sum will be able to do so. Considering that cues may be of different strengths for different readers in the activation of cultural models, and that the same cultural model may have different activation thresholds across readers, this implies that even where the same cultural model is triggered, the exact moment of activation may differ across (groups of) readers and it may not be possible to identify one single textual element as trigger. To potentially identify such cue clusters as well as the corresponding cultural models, we must therefore turn to empirical study.

Thus far, empirical research into character reception that originates from literary studies or cognitive poetics has been relatively scarce. Still, where empirical research has been conducted (e.g. Culpeper 2001: 99–110, Zhang & Lauer 2015), the results provide corroboration for the ideas put forth in this paper. Our brief discussion of *Written on the Body* along with the more general claims made about cultural models in character construction above, i.e. their function as categorical knowledge, interpretive patterns, and CMCs, now provide both examples of empirically testable hypotheses regarding cultural models, such as the question of gender assignment based on textual cues, as well as a brief sketch of what this empirical research may look like. As a research perspective, systematic corpus-analyses of databases such as *Amazon* reviews and *Goodreads*, as well as already existing scholarly discussions of primary texts, can help us identify prevalent cultural models in the engagement with particularly literary texts and genres. Similarly, corpus-based analysis of characterisation in literary texts (see, for example, the research conducted in the CliC Dickens Project by Mahlberg et al. 2016; Stockwell & Mahlberg 2015) as well as working with focus groups (van Peer, Hakemulder, & Zyngier 2012: 86–89) may help discern additional cultural models of interest or specify the terminals and default assignments to be investigated. This initial identification of cultural models should then be followed by experimental observations of their role in the reading process, e.g. linkage between textual cues and specific cultural models as discussed above. Thus, analysing fixation time through eye-tracking can shed light on relevant textual features in schema-activation and -modification. For instance, Reali et al. (2015) have shown longer fixation times for textual features not conforming to the active cultural model (here: gender assignment in social roles). Alternatively, think-aloud protocols may provide insights in online processing, especially when participants are encouraged

to reflect on the discursive elements that elicit their response. These on-line measures should then be combined with off-line methods such as questionnaires or semi-structured interviews, to provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on their reception processes and provide additional material for analysis for the researcher. Pilot research conducted by the ART CogLit Research Team, which employs these methods, has already produced promising results. Thus, participant responses in one pilot study indicated that cultural models may even override textual information (here gender assignment in Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart" and a cultural model of women as primary caretaker in families) (Kutsch forthcoming), while another indicates discernible similarities and differences in readers' engagement with characters dependent on age (and thus the dominant cultural models in the respective age-groups) (Trienekens & Rosenow 2018).

In more general terms, we suggest that cultural models – in contrast to previous approaches, both first and second-generation – allow for an investigation of literary reception that equally considers the social (e.g. the cultural models), individual (e.g. individual sets of cultural models and individual schemas, intentions) and textual factors (e.g. stimuli that activate cognitive structures). By systematically connecting these factors and conceptualising reception as a process that may be shared among members of cultural groups without being universal, cultural models provide the theoretical framework to (a) articulate testable hypotheses about similarities and differences between readers and readings and (b) explicate such results of empirical study, which previous theories could neither grasp nor explain. At the same time, they offer a more finely grained terminology to describe groups of statistical readers by the cultural knowledge they share. Cultural models thus finally allow for a fruitful feedback loop between theoretical considerations and empirical testing. What is more, based on such research they may eventually even enable us to predict reception processes and outcomes for particular groups of readers. This empirical research will then allow us to show beyond speculation and anecdotal evidence not only how culture shapes literature and readings, but how, in turn, literature may also shape the individual and society as a whole.

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SECTION II

Media

“Why do you insist that Alana is not real?”

Visitors’ perceptions of the fictionality of Andi and Lance Olsen’s ‘there’s no place like time’ exhibition

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1. Introduction: There’s no artist like Alana Olsen

The American video artist Alana Olsen died in 2016. Her eclectic, experimental body of work has since been shown – in galleries across the United States and Europe – in iterations of an exhibition retrospective titled ‘there’s no place like time’. There is, however, no escaping one poignant yet problematic fact: Alana Olsen is not real. Rather, she is a fictional character, first imagined by Lance Olsen in his multimodal novel *Theories of Forgetting* (2014; see Gibbons 2019a, forthcoming 2021). The exhibition was subsequently created by Andi Olsen and Lance Olsen, accompanied by a catalogue (Olsen 2016). The ‘Alana Olsen’ whose work is discussed in the catalogue and exhibited in real-world museums/galleries consequently has a precarious ontological status.

Exhibition retrospectives, like autobiographies, narrativise the trajectory of a life and in this sense rely, experientially in reception, upon what Paul John Eakin calls ‘an existential imperative’ (1992: 30, 52) – a ‘will to believe’ (30) in their referentiality. Furthermore, Eakin claims, ‘reference lies at the heart of this felt difference’ (1992: 29) between autobiography/non-fiction and fiction. This chapter interrogates Eakin’s claim through a style-and-response analysis of Andi and Lance Olsen’s ‘there’s no place like time’ exhibition. The chapter is therefore characteristic of reader-response research in stylistics wherein, as Whiteley and Canning outline (2017: 73), insights from reception data shed light on stylistic concerns. Specifically, this chapter relates empirical insights to critical understanding of fictionality and the fiction/reality distinction.

In the next section, I introduce the concept of fictionality and review existing empirical research concerning fiction/reality distinctions. Subsequently, I offer a

cognitive stylistic analysis of the multimodal composition of ‘there’s no place like time’ in order to explicate signposts of fictionality within the exhibition and to track visitors’ potential attention to such signposts. The empirical review and stylistic analysis then informs my own response research, which reports on a questionnaire study. Ultimately, because this chapter’s empirical insights advance knowledge about the cognitive processes and experiential consequences of fictionality/referentiality, it bears significance for research conducted not only in stylistics and cognitive stylistics but also in narratology, autobiography studies, museum studies, and reception research.

2. Fictionality and empirical Research: There’s no reality like fiction

Fictionality, whilst a slippery term, designates discursive invention; that is, discourse that is not bound to referential accuracy but deals instead with imaginary events and/or persons (cf. Cohn 1999: 15). In the humanities, various approaches to fictionality exist (for reviews, see: Gorman 2005; Schaeffer 2012; Fludernik 2018; Browse et al. 2019; Gibbons 2019c) but, above all, they tend to be philosophical and/or theoretical. Consequently, they tend not to be grounded in, or supported by, cognitive or empirical evidence. In narratology, for instance, the dominant take on fictionality is Nielsen, Phelan, and Walsh’s rhetorical approach which, they argue throughout their 2015 article, is founded on 10 theses (my emphases):

1. Fictionality is founded upon *a basic human ability to imagine*;
2. Even as fictive discourse is a clear alternative to nonfictive discourse, the two are closely interrelated in continuous exchange, and so are *the ways in which we engage with them*;
3. The rhetoric of fictionality is founded upon *a communicative intent*;
4. *From the perspective of the sender*, fictionality is a flexible means to accomplish a great variety of ends;
5. *From the perspective of the receiver*, fictionality is *an interpretive assumption about a sender’s communicative act*;
6. No formal technique or other textual feature is in itself a necessary and sufficient ground for *identifying* fictive discourse;
7. *Signalling or assuming* a fictive communicative intent entails an *attitude* toward the communicated information that is different from *attitudes* toward nonfictive discourse;
8. Fictionality often provides for *a double exposure of imagined and real*;

9. The affordances of fictionality have - for better or worse – *consequences for the ethos of the sender* – and often for the logic of the global message;
10. The importance of fictionality has been obscured by our traditional focus on fiction as a genre or set of genres.

Generally, I agree with the sentiments expressed by these theses since they consistently gesture towards acts of cognition, perception, stance, and response (as my emphasis highlights). However, the rhetorical approach – underwritten by the concept of narrative as communicative act between discourse producer and receiver – nevertheless treats readers or receivers as hypothetical constructs (on the difference between rhetorical and cognitive approaches, see Phelan 2009). The rhetorical approach, like other existing approaches in the humanities, has not engaged with extant literature in psychology on fictionality. Previous humanities scholarship into fictionality does not, therefore, substantiate reader-responses using empirical evidence about how the mind processes and responds to ontologically different stimuli and thus lacks the critical apparatus to explicate the cognitive processes at work in, and experiential effect of, fiction/reality distinctions.

In my view, cognition is essential to fiction/reality judgment and thus at the heart of any felt difference between fictionality and referentiality. Herein, I conduct a systematic literature review of empirical findings in cognitive, experimental, and developmental psychology concerning the fiction/reality distinction (for other reviews, differing in emphasis, see Prentice and Gerrig 1999; Pettersson 2016; Consoli 2018). My review is divided into two parts: the cognitive development of fiction/reality distinctions and factors effecting fiction/reality judgments.

2.1 The development of fiction/reality distinctions

Distinguishing between reality and fiction is not an innate cognitive ability but develops with age: 3–4 years olds do not systematically differentiate between real and fictional characters (e.g. Abraham Lincoln and Batman) unless familiar to them whereas older children, from 5 to 8 years, do. A marked improvement in children's ability to categorise real and fictional characters and events occurs around 4 years old (e.g. Samuels & Taylor 1994; Sharron & Woolley 2004; Skolnick & Bloom 2006; Sayfan & Lagattut 2008; Corriveau et al. 2009; Bunce & Harris 2014). This critical period coincides with the development of Theory of Mind (ToM) – the capacity to attribute mental states to others (for a summary, see Leslie 2001). Moreover, greater ToM abilities positively correlate with increased fiction/reality distinction (Corriveau & Harris 2015). As Martarelli et al. elaborate, '[u]nderstanding that some mental states represent reality whilst others do not is linked with understanding that certain stories represent reality while others do

not' (2015: 112). This interconnection between ToM and fiction/reality distinction is especially meaningful for theories which ground fictionality assessments in readers'/receivers' interpretations about authors'/producers' intentions. Indeed, within cognitive stylistics, Stockwell (2016) and I (Gibbons 2019b, 2019c, forthcoming 2021) argue that ToM necessarily underwrites this process.

Because metacognitive skills are central to fiction/reality judgments, children under 4 years – whose ToM is not fully developed – are over-reliant on real-world experiences and related knowledge in assessing fiction/reality (Woolley et al. 2011; Woolley & Ghossainy 2013). This produces a bias of disbelief: across media representations including TV and Storybooks, children generally dismiss characters and events as unreal (Wright et al. 1994; Shtulman & Carey 2007; Woolley & Cox 2007). Consequently, Woolley and Ghossainy call children 'naïve skeptics' (2013). With the development of metacognitive skills comes greater awareness of the incompleteness of knowledge. Adults thus behave as discerning believers: 'children may be more likely to deny the existence of novel entities, whereas adults may be more willing to consider the possibility that they exist' (Van Reet et al. 2015: 90; cf. Cook & Sobel 2011; Woolley et al. 2011). Adults' credulity is explained as an automatic result of information processing: 'comprehension includes an initial belief' (Gilbert et al. 1993: 221; cf. Gilbert et al. 1990; Gilbert 1991). Disbelief occurs retroactively, with additional cognitive effort and motivation. Accordingly, Prentice and Gerrig describe readers as 'vulnerable to fictional information because they have (misplaced) faith in the truth standard to which authors subscribe' and 'in the absence of obvious cues to doubt, they will approach information in fiction with the assumption that it applies to the real world' (1999: 531). For adults, then, belief when processing information, including fiction, is the initial, default response.

2.2 Factors effecting fiction/reality judgment and processing

Whilst Hartung et al. claim, 'the belief a reader has about whether a story is based on a true event or not has no effect on the experiential aspects of reading' (2017: 12), several studies have investigated the influence of paratext. Prentice and Gerrig suggest that fiction is processed less systematically so assigned greater credulity (1999: 542) and Green et al. (2006) find readers more likely to scrutinize factual discourse. Using text comprehension studies, Zwaan (1994) found that non-fiction was processed faster than fiction and attributes the difference to mental representation: news discourse elicits stronger causal-situation representations whereas processing fiction prompts more detailed representations. Relatedly, Altmann et al. (2014) interpret brain activation patterns as evidence that whilst both non-fiction and fiction entail mental simulations of actions and events, reading fiction additionally involves simulating protagonists' mental states (e.g. ToM).

These conclusions fit with simulation theory, wherein fiction provides 'simulations of selves in the social world' (Mar & Oatley 2008: 173).

Text-based tasks have also been used to discover which parts of the brain are active when reading about fictional characters (e.g. Cinderella) compared with non-fictional/historical figures (e.g. George Bush). Neuro-imaging data suggests that, whilst there are overlapping activation patterns, 'one of the factors that guide our implicit knowledge of what is real and unreal is the degree of coded personal relevance associated with a particular entity/character represented' (Abraham & von Cramon 2009: 4; cf. Abraham et al. 2008; Abraham 2013). Personal relevance not only explains felt differences between real people we know intimately (e.g. our mother) and real people we have never met (Bush), but also why fictional characters of high personal relevance (e.g. encountered frequently, as in immersive videogaming or soap-opera watching) feel more real. Text-comprehension experiments in which discourse entities are ontologically consistent or inconsistent (e.g. 'Harry Potter was talking with Hermione and suddenly [Lord Voldemort/Bill Gates] appeared') demonstrate that clashes between fiction and reality are easily detected (Yang & Xue 2014, 2015). Clashes between different fictional ontologies (e.g. characters from different storyworlds meeting) are also distinguishable but 'reality/fiction mismatch is easier to detect than fiction/fiction mismatch' (Yang & Xue 2015: 170). Nevertheless, personal relevance can blur the fiction/reality distinction. In terms of experience, Sperduti et al. (2016) found emotional responses weaker for fiction than non-fiction but, regardless, emotional responses were heightened if the stimulus was personally relevant. Additionally, whilst fact/fiction labelling does not affect readers' transportedness (Green & Brock 2000) – their sense of being 'absorbed' or 'immersed' – or emotional response, greater transportedness correlates with greater emotional response (Green et al. 2012).

Finally, children and adults alike use narrative context in fiction/reality distinction: the more detailed and realistic the context, the more participants assume that novel entities are real (Woolley & van Reet, 2006; Woolley & Ghossainy 2013). Experience and knowledge are involved in fiction/reality judgment: van Reet et al. argue that 'there appears to be a hierarchy, in which direct experience is viewed as most reliable, then extant knowledge, and last, knowledge from indirect sources' (2015: 96). Factors such as perceived realism, personal experience, and identification with characters can also generate greater transportedness (Green 2004).

2.3 Summary of fictionality and empirical research

The preceding overview shows that, for adults, processing information necessarily entails initial, automatic belief, even for fiction. Disbelief may occur

retrospectively, based on motivation and narrative inconsistencies. Many cognitive processes underlying fiction and non-fiction overlap, such as mental representation; the primary difference is that fiction entails greater ToM simulation. Inconsistencies between fiction and reality can be detected, but personal relevance potentially disrupts accurate fiction/reality distinction, intensifying transportedness and emotional response. Greater transportedness as well as reliability and believability are granted to narratives with higher degrees of perceived realism, judgments about which stem from direct experience, extant knowledge, and indirect information.

This review of prior empirical research suggests that, without prior knowledge, visitors to ‘there’s no place like time’ are most likely to believe that Alana Olsen is a real artist, though some may retroactively interrogate this based on perceived narrative realism and external knowledge. If participants find the exhibition personally relevant, the exhibition will probably feel more real to them and be more enjoyable and transportative.

3. Modelling cognition in museums: There’s no methodology like cognitive stylistics

My analysis of ‘there’s no place like time’ synthesises models from cognitive stylistics and museum studies – namely Text World Theory, attentional resonance, and the attention-value model. Text World Theory (Werth 1999; Gavins 2007) is ideally suited to investigate visitors’ experience because it: uncovers the mental representations triggered by linguistic and multimodal cues (Gibbons 2012); makes a fundamental ontological distinction between *discourse-world* – representing the context in which *participants* communicate – and *text-worlds*, mental representations populated by imagined *enactors*. *World-switches* to new text-worlds are generated by changes in spatio-temporal coordinates, shifts in perspective, and shifts in ontological status as prompted by modality, hypotheticality, and negation. The fictionality or ontological status of text-worlds is cognitively assigned by readers, based on interpretations of textual features and authorial intentionality (Gibbons 2019c).

Because visitors’ attention is affected by exhibition design, I integrate the attention-value model in museum studies (Bitgood, 2011: 237–243) with the cognitive-poetic model of attentional resonance (Stockwell 2009). This combination is valuable since the former model was designed specifically for museum analysis whilst the latter is constructed from principles of visual perception. There are three steps of increasing visitor attention in the attention-value model:

capturing, which includes *orienting* to stimuli and motivated *searching* based on interest and perceived value; *focusing*, which – although an increased attention from orienting – involves shallow processing, exposed to potential *distractors*; and *engaging*, whereby deeper processing facilitates ‘sensory, intellectual, or affective immersion’ (Bitgood 2011: 239). Visitor attention is captured by *orienting* and *perceptual distractors*, such as sound, light, movement, as well as by *attention facilitators* such as proximity and line-of-sight placement, whilst focusing and engaging are self-motivated by visitors’ interest. The concepts of distractors and facilitators in the attention-value model complement Stockwell’s model of attentional resonance in which certain features create *figures* of attention (2009: 25). Figure-forming features that are relevant to the succeeding analysis are empathetic recognisability (the more human, the more engaging), brightness (vivid colours and light attract attention), and height (higher objects are deemed more significant).

In the next section, these frameworks are applied in analysis of ‘there’s no place like time’. The analytical synthesis provides a context-sensitive, medium-specific approach based on cognitive principles and psychological evidence. It resultantly explicates the influence of exhibition design and style on visitors’ experience and their self-reported responses, discussed in Section 5, about the exhibition’s ontological status.

4. Exhibition style: There’s no place like time

The ‘there’s no place time’ exhibition showed at the Snite Museum of Art (at the University of Notre Dame, USA) from 1 September–1 December 2018. Figure 1 shows the location of the exhibition in relation to the lobby and other galleries. As shown in Figure 2, two of the gallery walls are transparent glass, meaning that visitors’ can see into the exhibition from the outside. The exhibition title appeared on the glass in white text as follows:

There’s No Place Like Time: a novel you can walk through
A retrospective of video artist Alana Olsen

A multimodal installation by Andi & Lance Olsen

This provides paratextual orientation to visitors with the subtitle ‘a novel you can walk through’ marking ‘there’s no place like time’ as fictional. Whilst the exhibition is described as a ‘retrospective’ of ‘Alana Olsen’, an attribution to ‘Andi & Lance Olsen’ follows. The discourse-world context of the latter is foregrounded through metatextual reference to the exhibition as ‘installation’.

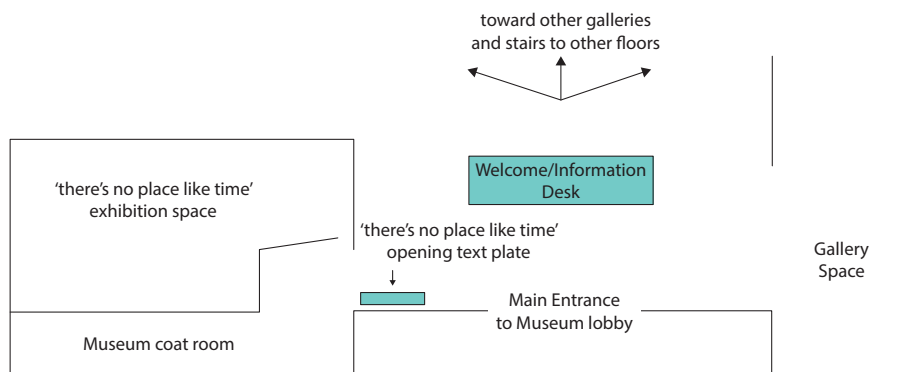


Figure 1. Partial Floorplan of the Snite Museum, showing location of 'there's no place like time' exhibition



Figure 2. External exhibition view

Viewers might, therefore, read that 'there's no place like time' is an exhibition of a fictional artist, created by Andi and Lance Olsen. Three attentional factors, however, mitigate this. First, the statement disclosing Andi and Lance Olsen's

authorship is less attractive because it is lower than the preceding text and less central in line-of-sight. Second, the brightness of the videos within the exhibition is more attention-capturing than the title's white type so visitors might neglect this information. Third, if visitors do attend to the title, shallow focusing might nevertheless mean that, because of the onomastic similarity between ‘Alana Olsen’ and ‘Andi & Lance Olsen’, they may not notice the different ontological attributions.

Visitors enter the exhibition through a glass door on the right whilst the opening text-plate, shown in Figure 3, was positioned on the left-hand wall outside the gallery. Museum studies research has consistently observed that visitors have a right-turn bias, particularly on entering an exhibition (Bitgood 2011: 332, 380–383). Moreover, ‘visitors who drift to the right sometimes omit to look at works of art exhibited on the left hand side of displays’ (Scharine & McBeath 2002: 64). I observed this tendency in visitors to ‘there's no place like time’, many of whom did not pause to read the opening text-plate before entering. The opening text-plate is significant in terms of the ontological hoax at the heart of ‘there's no place like time’. Thus, visitors with no prior knowledge of the exhibition's fictionality and who ignored the text-plate could be unaware (at least initially; some did revisit the text-plate) that the exhibition was an Alana Olsen retrospective.

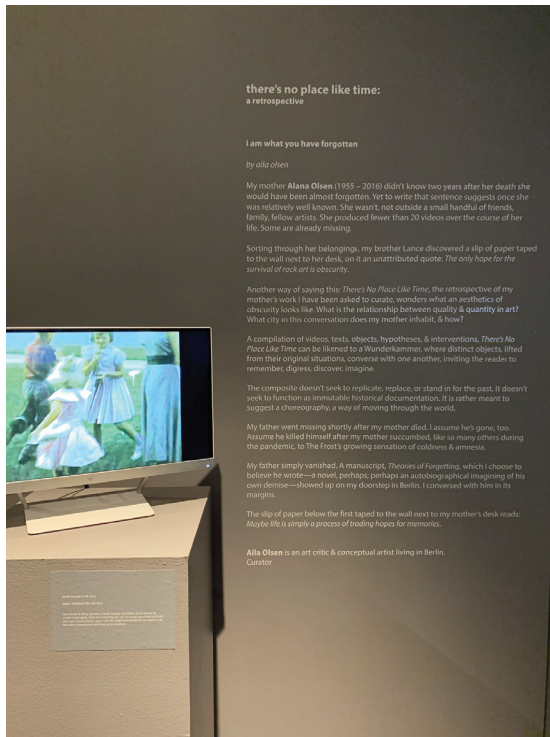


Figure 3. Opening Text Plate

The opening text-plate begins (emphasis original):

**there's no place like time:
a retrospective**

i am what you have forgotten

by aila olsen

My mother Alana Olsen (1955–2016) didn't know two years after her death she would have been almost forgotten.

Authorship is attributed here to Aila Olsen – Alana's daughter in the novel *Theories of Forgetting* – who is described at the end of the text-plate as 'an art critic and conceptual artist living in Berlin' and 'Curator' of the exhibition. Bal claims that museum discourse is *apo-deictic* (from Greek, meaning 'showing') in that it is 'affirmative, demonstrative, and authoritative on the one hand, opining, often opinionated, on the other' (1996: 3). The apo-deictic nature of museum discourse means that 'showing these objects is in itself taken to be a transparent gesture of presenting the object itself, its truth' (Bal 1996: 8). Combined with the default to believe information, the museum context and presentational authority of apo-deictic discourse increase the likelihood that those visitors without prior knowledge of the exhibitions' fictional status will conceive of Aila and Alana Olsen as real.

The text-plate is written from Aila's first-person perspective, creating an intimacy of tone, and making Aila an initial attractor through empathetic recognisability. Figure 4 shows the text-worlds triggered by the opening lines. The first text-world contains Aila as narrating-*I*. Because of apo-deictic address to visitor-readers, this text-world seems phenomenologically proximal to the discourse-world: visitor-readers may thus conceivably assign referential status to this text-world and interpret Aila as a textual counterpart of a discourse-world participant.

Alana Olsen is also an attentional figure in the opening text-plate, immediately attractive through the empathetic recognisability granted by 'My mother' and as grammatical subject. Negation – as an attentional and cognitive foregrounding device – sustains the attraction: the syntactic negation and epistemic verb in 'didn't know' prompts visitor-readers to build a second text-world, mind-modelling Alana's knowledge, before rendering this as Alana's ignorance in the original text-world. The adverbial phrase 'two years after' triggers a temporal shift to a third text-world wherein semantic negation ('her death', 'forgotten') intensifies Alana's attractiveness: visitor-readers must imagine Alana alive (in TW4) and remembered (in TW5) to then negate her. She thus becomes a *lacuna* (Stockwell 2009: 31–32), experienced by visitor-readers as a 'felt absence' (2009: 158).

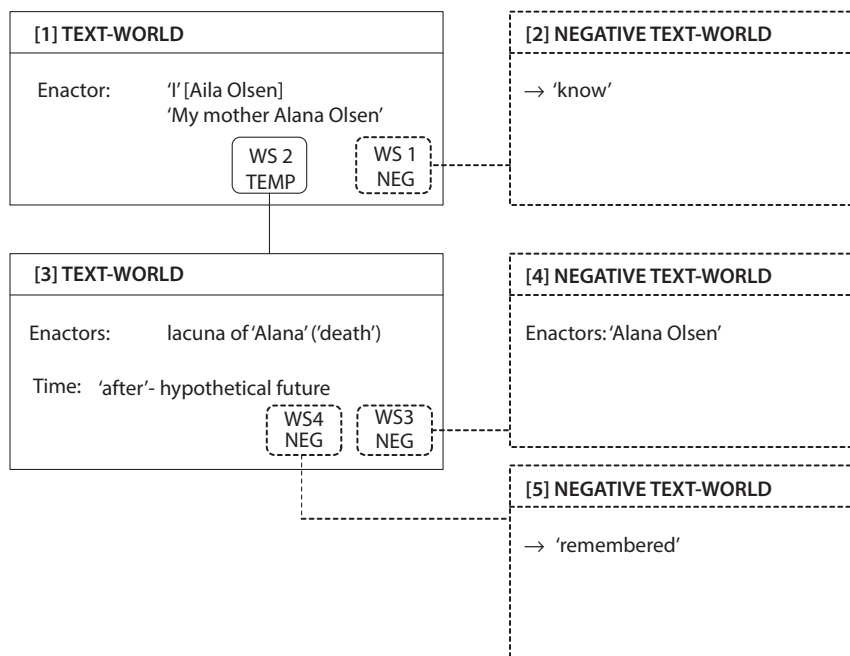


Figure 4. Text-World diagram of ‘My mother Alana Olsen (1955–2016) didn’t know two years after her death she would have been almost forgotten.’

Aila and Alana are therefore attractive, but nevertheless invented, figures. The opening text-plate, though, does contain signals of fictionality: Aila references her ‘brother Lance’ and a mysterious ‘manuscript, *Theories of Forgetting*’ which she describes as ‘a novel, perhaps; perhaps an autobiographical imagining’. For visitor-readers with prior knowledge of Lance Olsen’s *Theories of Forgetting*, this extends the world of the fiction; for visitor-readers without this knowledge, these references will either be used as world-building information in text-worlds they believe represents reality or will prompt retroactive disbelief.

Overall, ‘there’s no place like time’ discloses fictionality through generic terms (‘novel, ‘installation’) and real artist/author attribution, but this information is not attentionally salient. The opening text-plate constructs the ontological hoax of ‘there’s no place like time’ whilst hinting at the exhibition’s fictionality. Noticing fictionality signposts will depend whether visitors read the title and opening text-plate and whether their attention is focused (shallow-processing) or engaged (deeper-processing). Regardless of fictionality assessments, text-world analysis shows that visitors who do read the text-plate necessarily build mental representations in which both Aila and Alana are attractive figures. My ensuing

response analysis will consequently examine whether visitors without prior knowledge overlook the exhibition's signposts of fictionality, deem Aila and Alana Olsen to be real people, and experience Aila and Alana as attractive figures in terms of imaginative and emotional engagement.

5. Questionnaire response: There's no data like qualitative answers

To gain insight into visitors' assessments of fictionality, I devised a qualitative paper questionnaire to be completed after visiting the exhibition. This was deemed the most appropriate method because it was not intrusive (participants were allowed privacy, time, and space to complete the questionnaire) and because qualitative responses would best capture participants' experiences. The questionnaire was (optionally) completed by 46 participants (henceforth P1–46). During the data collection period (2–6 October 2018), an undergraduate class on experimental writing visited the exhibition, and a 'writing conference called '&NOW' took place at the University; some students and delegates are consequently among participants in the study, though neither group necessarily possessed prior knowledge of the exhibition's fictionality. Data was digitized, anonymised, and coded both manually and using NVivo.

Three questions gauged participants' prior knowledge of the exhibition's fictionality: 'Why did you choose to visit this exhibition?'; 'Had you heard about Alana Olsen before visiting this exhibition?'; 'Have you heard of *Theories of Forgetting*?'. Participants who answered 'no' to the latter two questions and whose responses to the first and throughout the questionnaire did not explicitly exhibit awareness that the exhibition was a work of fiction (e.g. P22 wrote, 'I knew nothing specific about it [the exhibition] before I arrived in the museum') were categorised as having no prior knowledge. Approximately 76.1% ($n = 35$) of participants were in this group; 19.6% ($n = 9$) of participants disclosed awareness that the exhibition was a work of fiction (e.g. P9 'knew that it [the exhibition] was a novel and that it was fictional'); 4.3% ($n = 2$) gave ambiguous responses (Both P34 and P37 were conference delegates: P34 thought the work belonged to 'Alana because so much of it is her' but attended the exhibition because 'it was done by those whom I greatly admire' whilst P37 hadn't heard of Alana Olsen or *Theories of Forgetting* but thought it might be possible to meet her 'at this conference').

The remaining questions sought to capture participants' experiences and assessments of fictionality, such as 'Do you think it would be possible to meet Alana Olsen?' In response to this YES/NO question, 31 participants answered 'No' (67.4%), 12 answered 'Yes' (26.1%), and 3 answers (6.5%) were ambiguous (P8 and P28 ticked neither YES/NO whilst P36 ticked both). Such YES/NO data is not

necessarily revealing of fictionality perceptions: in this case, it is impossible to meet Alana because she is fictional and because, within 'there's no place like time', she is dead. To gain greater insight into participants' judgments, all questions also requested qualitative justifications (e.g. 'Why/Why not?').

5.1 Is Alana Olsen real enough to meet?

Only 11 participants (23.9%) exhibited awareness that Alana Olsen was fictional (although this number matches the number of participants with ambiguous and prior knowledge, the participant groups are not the same; thus, more participants may have been aware of the ontological hoax). 9 of these participants deemed it impossible to meet Alana precisely because she wasn't real and were often secure in their knowledge: P9 uses an epistemic verb to assert certainty, writing 'Because I know it's fictional'; P16 categorically states 'Alana Olsen is a concept'. Other responses featured a degree of doubt, as in P32's question 'Isn't she a fictional person?'. The 2 participants who thought it possible to meet Alana whilst knowing she was fictional justified this by suggesting that fictional characters can be encountered through real people: P11 evoked the concept of performance – 'I know she is a fictional character but I'm sure somebody could "play" her and embody her beyond the exhibit' (original emphasis); P36 saw real artist-authors as gateways to fictional beings – 'Well I know Lance + Andi and can only imagine that Alana is some space between them. It may be possible to experience the vibratory field of Alana'.

32.6% ($n = 15$: 11 responses + 4 no answer) of participants gave ambiguous justifications (e.g. 'How can I know the answer to this?' (P8)). In this group, I included responses accounting for both ontologies, as in the parallel constructions 'Because she's dead – Because she's fictional' (P39) and 'If she is a fictional character, then I met her by watching these videos and reading the text. If she is real, then I met her the same way' (P28).

Participants who believed that Alana was real formed the largest group ($n = 20$; 43.5%). 11 of these cited Alana's death: e.g. 'Her daughter made it clear that she died in 2016' (P26); 'Because, as I understand it, Alana Olsen has died' (P7); 'Slightly confused by the question, as the exhibit makes it clear that she is dead and this is a retrospective of her work' (P2). P2's confusion interestingly suggests such intense belief that the question itself seemed nonsensical. Furthermore, P2's references to 'the exhibit' and 'a retrospective' indicate the influence of apo-deictic museum discourse, genre, and context. 2 of the 20 participants who believed in the conceit of the exhibition confused 'Alana' with Berlin-based daughter/curator 'Aila', showing shallow attentional engagement, though P31 did correct their misconception ('I don't live in Berlin. – I misread the name. Alana – no – she is not here'). 7 of these 20 participants, however, gave practical reasons for whether

they could meet her: 'I think I could meet almost anyone if I really wanted to' (P4); 'Artists are human' (P6); 'The likelihood that she and I might be in the same place at the same time and be free to meet is rather low, and I do not expect that she would have much interest in meeting me' (P22). These latter responses signify shallow attentional engagement with the text-plate's narrative.

Of the 35 participants without prior knowledge of the exhibition, then, 57.1% of participants ($n = 20$) interpreted Alana Olsen as real. Shallow processing seems particularly to result in belief because participants do not notice the exhibition's signposts of fictionality: paratextual markers, authorship attribution, and/or unrealistic/inconsistent narrative elements. Since such signposts were missed or overlooked by many participants, this data provides empirical evidence for my prior claim that fictionality is an ontological property of text-worlds, cognitively attributed by discourse-participants (Gibbons 2019c).

5.2 Retrospective disbelief

Effortful, retroactive disbelief is evidenced in 6 participants' responses. When asked 'Who do you think the work in the exhibition belongs to (and why)?', P39 wrote 'At first, I thought it belonged to the estate of Alana Olsen', the adverbial phrase signifying both initial belief and subsequent change of attitude. P44 thought that Alana was 'made up' and revealed 'I had to go back through a couple of times, and I'm not sure I figured it out, but I think the whole thing is "art" not a documentary or curation of someone else's work'. Whilst repeated epistemic modality ('not sure', 'think') expresses uncertainty, P44's disclosure of 'go[ing] back' demonstrates deliberate, motivated scrutiny of the exhibition's fictionality/referentiality. P43 made use of indirect knowledge, explaining that they 'did some googling while in the exhibit/looking @ the exhibition catalog (revealed Alana to be fictional)' and refers, in subsequent responses, to a 'moment of discovery'. What generated these participants' suspicions is less clear, though P19 reflects 'the whole story is very odd' and P35 notes, 'The description on the wall that details [Aila's] father's disappearance is curiously vague. It almost felt scripted': Therefore, the narrative may have seemed improbable when compared with real-world knowledge, particularly because it lacked detail.

5.3 Belief in the auto/biographical retrospective and emotional response

The exhibition's auto/biographical genre – as retrospective – appears to have influenced believability: P21 scribbled 'retrospective approach' as reason for not being able to meet Alana; P31 admitted that they'd be surprised if Alana wasn't real because '[t]he exhibition is set out about her life'; P19 emphasises '[t]he entire exhibit describes her'. Given Alana's centrality in attentional and imaginative engagement generated by the opening text-plate, it is perhaps unsurprising

that P22 claims to have 'looked for her in the self-portraits [a video work]'. Furthermore, P39 chose to visit the exhibition because '[i]t seemed very moving to see someone's life's work after their death' and claimed 'the life story framed my response'.

The museum context and opening text-plate were also cited by some participants to explain their potential surprise and change in feelings if Alana wasn't real. P28 explained: 'the text that is introduced before the viewer enters the exhibition [...] influences the viewers mindset. In this case, I am led to believe I'm about to view works by Alana Olsen, who's works were just discovered. I look for common themes, interests – I develop a fragmented identity in my mind and believe it to be true' [sic].¹ P28 continues [sic]:

The way the exhibition is set up, introducing Alana as a mother of the curator, the viewer becomes emotionally intrigued, A mother whose works were never seen before this exhibit pushes the narrative even further. Immediately, the viewer is led to believe they are viewing works that once belonged to someone and therefore transported into the past. If she's not real, it becomes about questioning the boundary between reality and fiction.

P28 suggests that the fiction/reality distinction does result in felt differences in narrative experience. Whilst theory of mind processes are supposedly more involved in fictional simulation, P28's repeated emphasis on Alana as 'a mother', description of visitors as 'emotionally intrigued', and first-person account of building Alana's 'fragmented identity' suggest an affective modelling of both Alana and Aila's intentions as curator. Moreover, the sense of being 'transported into the past' insinuates engaged attention to and resultant immersion in the text-plate's narrative. However, the verb phrase repetition of 'led to believe' and hypothetical statement 'If she's not real...' discloses uncertainty as to the ontological status of the exhibition, an indecision that perhaps motivates perceptual switches between first-person 'I' and impersonal, detached third-person 'the viewer'. Alongside recognition of the 'boundary between reality and fiction', this signals a psychological shift, entirely dependent on fictionality/referentiality, that shapes narrative experience: from immersion and belief in imagined (referential) text-worlds to a position of critical disbelief and reflection in the discourse-world.

An additional 8 participants ($n = 9$; 19.6%) reported emotional responses to the exhibition. P44 claimed: 'Once I started to read the booklet + descriptions, I was deeply moved' and described the exhibition as 'beautiful, sad, and haunting all at once. It moved me to tears, even though I can't articulate why'. Emotional response appears connected to the auto/biographical narrative of the exhibition:

1. Other than omitted struck-through words on the questionnaire, 'sic' here and subsequently signifies that inaccuracies in spelling or grammar are present in the original response data.

P20 felt that ‘so much effort and emotion is involved in the intro reading’ whilst P7 claimed that the exhibition ‘feels intensely personal as if Alana Olsen is trying to untangle memory and time’, the resonance of their ‘personal and immediate’ experience manifesting in the use of present-tense (‘feels’). P31 derived emotional affect from empathetic engagement with Alana Olsen: ‘Found it sad & felt sorry for her – felt she was lovely’. P2’s responses throughout the questionnaire demonstrated emotional response as a consequence of engaged attention and immersion:

I passed by the small explanation outside the exhibit and was moved by how easily Aila seemed to pour her emotions into the project. There was something complex and confusing that I sought to explore. [...] The emotions invoked in this exhibit have been raw and touching. It would shock me if Aila had created this whole story from her imagination. [...] The exhibit would lose some of its weight. It is confusing to engage with and jumps through many emotions. For me, it manifested in Aila’s desperate and confused search to understand her mother and the actions of her father after her mother’s death. If I learned these events were a phantasm of Aila’s mind, they wouldn’t have the same weight.

In ‘[seeking] to explore’ Aila’s emotions and understand her ‘desperate and confused search’, P2 undertakes ToM simulation, with their experience of the exhibition as ‘confusing’ echoing their perceptions of Aila’s mental state. The result is so ‘raw and touching’ that P2 would be ‘shocked’ to discover Alana was fictional. For P2, then, believing Alana and Aila were real coincided with ToM simulation and intense emotional experience.

5.4 Personal relevance and reality creating fiction

Four participants (8.7%) found the exhibition personally relevant, for instance: ‘some of the videos presented reminded me of my own experiences’ (P30); ‘I could relate to “scar” [video work] because I have a lot of scars on my body too’ (P40). Only 1 of these participants, P24, appeared, initially, to think Alana was real and all four participants answered ‘no’ to ‘If you discovered Alana Olsen was not real, would it change the way you feel about this exhibition?’. Interestingly, P24 cites personal relevance as the reason for the constancy of their feelings since ‘real or not, the insights are instructive and thought-provoking’ and ‘[t]he exhibition resonated with me personally and professionally’. Whilst personal relevance did not correlate with a belief that Alana Olsen is real, it did seem to increase enjoyment.

Events in the discourse-world affected fiction/reality distinction. P38, for instance, was a conference delegate at ‘&NOW’, during which Andi and Lance Olsen introduced ‘there’s no place like time’; responding to questions about Alana, P38 insists ‘I saw her’, ‘she introduced the project and talked about the process’, and ‘[i]t seems like she is approachable in her work as well as at her conference’. P38’s responses indicate shallow processing since they consistently mix-up fictional

Alana Olsen, referenced in the exhibition and questionnaire, with real artist Andi Olsen who P28 saw at the conference. Contrastingly, P42 appears influenced by the Museum context itself: meeting Alana seemed unlikely because they (P42) are 'not from here!', implying a perception of Alana as a local artist. Finally, observer's paradox manifests in the data, with P14 writing 'the exhibit said [Alana] was [real], and it seems like she is a plausible figure. I have no reason (before this survey) to believe she is not'. My presence as a visiting British researcher also impacted participants' imagined perceptions of Alana: P35 decides, 'I think [the work] belongs to [Alison Gibbons]'. These questions – the more I read them lead me to believe that the person who handed me the survey is assessing the believability of her work' whilst P25 didn't think it possible to meet Alana, writing 'I'll probably not be travelling to Great Britain at this point'. Whilst interpretation of Alana Olsen as Andi Olsen could be related to onomastic similarity, 'there's no place like time' lacked any textual suggestions that Alana was a local artist, British, or that I was Alana Olsen. Consequently, these responses expose the complex relationship between real-world experiences and imaginative engagement: discourse-world dynamics distort how participants' imagine and/or construct text-worlds.

6. Conclusion: There's no felt experience like referentiality

This chapter uses qualitative empirical research to investigate how people determine whether narratives are fictional or referential. Visitors' responses to 'there's no place like time' support prior research in psychology concerning default belief: visitors without prior knowledge predominantly interpreted Alana Olsen as real. For some, disbelief did occur retrospectively, arising from noticing lack of detail and narrative inconsistencies whilst (im)probability was judged in relation to discourse-world knowledge and fact-checked by reference to indirect (online) sources. The real-world museum context and autobiographical nature of the retrospective enhanced felt referentiality and emotional engagement. Whilst personal relevance increased enjoyment, real experience and context – even if irrelevant – impacted how Aila and Alana were imagined.

Many visitors ($n = 29$; 63%) to 'there's no place like time' dismiss fictionality as insignificant: P36, for instance, questions, 'Why do you insist Alana is not real? Why is this important?' P36, though, knew beforehand that the exhibition was fictional whereas P20, who had no prior knowledge, persistently asked in the questionnaire's 'any other comments' box, 'Is she real?'. Not only did some participants originally think Alana *was* real but some ($n = 13$; 28.26%) also believe it matters and alters their experience: As P22 writes, 'I would feel sort of cheated – some of the work would feel much less genuine, and it takes a lot of trust and effort, I think, to invest in an artist'. Ultimately, this chapter shows that fictionality judgments

do result in felt differences. For cognitivists interested in style and response, it is important whether or not Alana is real, precisely because, as P7 suggests, ‘that would complicate my feelings’.

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Data

The underlying research data is available from the Sheffield Hallam University Research Data Archive at: <http://doi.org/10.17032/shu-180018>.

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Reading hyperlinks in hypertext fiction

An Empirical Approach

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1. Introduction

Hyperlinks are a distinguishing feature of hypertext fictions, a form of digital fiction in which individual units of electronic texts – known as lexias – and/or other material, such as recordings and videos, are organised and connected (Ensslin & Skains 2017). Numerous studies have categorised the different types and functions of hyperlinks in digital fiction and various theories explain their cognitive effect on the reader. However, to date, very little research has taken an empirical approach to hyperlinks in hypertext fiction, with existing empirical studies prioritising the analysis of narrative comprehension over narrative experience. In this chapter, we present results from a reader response study developed as part of the AHRC-funded ‘Reading Digital Fiction’ project (Ref: AH/K004174/1), designed to examine both the different types and the associated cognitive effects of hyperlinks in digital fiction. We offer a new typology based on previous scholarship and report on our reader-response study using a purpose-built hypertext fiction by Lyle Skains: *The Futographer* (2016). Synthesising a stylistic analysis of *The Futographer* with results from our empirical research, this chapter suggests ways in which readers of digital fiction employ specific cognitive strategies to parse hyperlinks within multi-linear hypertext narratives. In particular, our results suggest that readers process their potentially disruptive effect by reading for the plot.

2. Hyperlinks in hypertext fiction

Since the emergence of hypertext in the 1980s, theorists have considered the significance of the hyperlink in both informational and literary hypertext in terms of agency and narrative coherence (Ensslin 2007). Initial theory argued that hyperlinks give readers narrative control and thus agency to navigate and co-construct the text because they provide them with informed choices (Aarseth 1997: 4). Most hyperlinks that appear in informational hypertext, such as on most websites, clearly and unequivocally indicate their purpose and directionality to the reader. They can, therefore, empower the reader insofar as they allow them to make informed choices about their pathway through networked documents. However, as Landow (2006) notes, 'in contrast to informational hypertext, which must employ rhetorics of orientation, navigation, and departure to orientate the reader, successful fictional hypertext and poetry does not always do so, with the result that its readers cannot make particularly informed or empowered choices' (222).

In hypertext fiction, hyperlinks are not always immediately indicative of their destination lexias. While readers might surmise where they will lead, they must often decipher connections between link and lexia content after the link has been followed. The semantic associations are thus often made not in anticipation of the destination lexia, but in retrospect. As Ciccoricco (2007: 80) suggests, 'the process of linking itself implies a rhetoric of repeated disorientation and reorientation'.

Existing research has considered the cognitive effects of hyperlinks in hypertext fiction on the reader. Tosca (2000) uses Relevance Theory to explain the way in which readers process them. She suggests they make inferences in advance of following a link in order to predict what they will find, subsequently searching for relevance once they reach the destination lexia. She concludes that a link has 'a sort of "suspended meaning" that ... [isn't] confirmed until we have seen where it takes us' so that 'from the point of view of pragmatics, links force us to make meaning *before* and *after* travelling them' (n.p., emphasis original). As such, hyperlinks do not interrupt the flow of meaning, but rather enliven it. Bell (2014) builds on Tosca's work and develops schema theory to show how individual links work with or against readers' existing schemata so as to either confirm or revise their predictions about what they will find when following one. She concludes that links express a relationship that can be denotative, where the meaning of the linked words clearly indicates the destination lexia, as is typical in informational hypertext. Alternately, the relationship might be connotative, where the links are only loosely associated with the destination lexia, requiring more considered interpretation; this is more often the case in hypertext fiction.

These theories attempt to explain how readers process hyperlinks, as well as their effects on the reader. To date, however, these hypotheses have not been

empirically tested. Existing empirical studies of hyperlinks in hypertext fiction largely focus on their universal defamiliarising effects (e.g. Gardner 2003; Pope 2006; Mangen & van der Weel 2017; Miall & Dobson 2001). Miall and Dobson (2001) conclude that, because readers in their study took longer to read and reported more difficulty processing a hypertext with multiple links per lexia, hypertext fiction distances the text from the reader. Consequently, the ‘absorbed and personal mode of reading seems to be discouraged’ (12). Pope (2006, 2010) similarly concludes that hyperlinks increase readers’ cognitive load and therefore might negatively impact text reading and comprehension. These empirical studies largely focus on measuring reading times and narrative comprehension; while they provide useful conclusions about the effect of particular hypertext fictions overall, they do not capture how readers approach and cognitively process individual hyperlinks.

Our research aims to empirically test existing theory that suggests readers anticipate where a hyperlink will lead and then retrospectively process the semantic associations they believe are implied by that link. Our central research question focussed on the relationship between what readers expect to find and what they do find when following hyperlinks in hypertext fictions. Not all links work in the same way and numerous typologies have been developed to capture the different hyperlinks that exist in hypertext fiction. Our empirical research thus also explores whether reader responses to hyperlinks can be categorised according to existing categories as well as what the reader responses reveal about hyperlinks that has not been captured so far.

3. Different typologies

In order to categorise hyperlinks according to their various functions, we developed a meta-typology that consolidates and builds upon existing typologies. Parker (2001: n.p.) distinguishes between two main types – ‘functional links’ and ‘emotive links’ – which he then subdivides into three and five subtypes respectively, as:

- Functional links
 1. *blatant*: ‘tell the reader exactly what information will be revealed when activated’
 2. *filler*: provide a reader with backstory if they have not yet reached a lexia in which this information is given, but which they need if they are to understand the current lexia
 3. *random*: ‘break readers out of [linking] loops’, which Parker suggests can occur in some hypertextual structures

- Literary links
 1. *emotive*: ‘inten[ded] to elicit a kind of emotional response from the reader’
 2. *lateral*: ‘take a sideways step in the trajectory of a narrative’ but unlike filler links ‘the fill is not necessarily needed’
 3. *complicating*: act as ‘a way of ... highlighting parts of the text’ and thus are intended as a ‘kind of emphasis’
 4. *temporal*: used to bring two moments in time together ‘simultaneously on the screen’
 5. *portal*: ‘act as a gateway between two nodes of a hypertext. On one end the link that goes to a page, comes right back’

Parker’s work has been criticised for focusing on his own personal motivations for implementing hyperlinks rather than the effect(s) they have on readers. As Rettberg (2002: n.p.) notes, ‘the notion of “literary effect” ... has its difficulties when moved from the plane of the author’s intention to that of the reader’s interpretation’. Parker’s typology is derived from his own writing practice, rather than being generated from a wider corpus. It may therefore not be generalisable. In addition, he makes no allowance for the fact that some links can be both ‘functional’ *and* ‘literary’; all ‘functional’ links can, in theory, ‘elicit a kind of emotional response from the reader’ and can therefore be classified as ‘emotive’ as well. Despite these methodological issues, however, Parker offers a useful sense of the different ways in which links can be used in hypertext fiction, and his concept of the ‘blatant link’ in particular has been largely adopted because it is seen to be a constituent of many hypertext fictions.

To remedy the issues associated with Parker’s subjective typology, Ryan (2006, 2015) draws on a wider body of creative and scholarly work (e.g. Bernstein 1998, Strickland 1997). In her first typology, Ryan (2006: 110–111) proposes six different links types:

1. *spatial*: ‘run against the grain of temporal development ... to create metaphorical relations’
2. *temporal*: ‘suggest that the events described in the connected lexia succeed each other in time’
3. *blatant*: ‘give the reader a preview of the target lexia, enabling her to make an informed choice’
4. *simultaneity*: ‘allow the reader to jump from one storyline to another, in order to find out what different characters in different locations are doing at the same time’
5. *digressive and background building*: ‘suspend momentarily the development of the story’ to give additional information
6. *perspective-switching*: like Parker’s *portal* links, ‘take us into the private worlds of different participants in the same episode’.

In subsequent work, Ryan (2015: 193–194) suggests hyperlinks can be classified according to nine functions. While she does not provide labels as in her first typology, she defines them as links that:

1. ‘let the reader explore many possible futures of the textual world’
2. ‘let the reader explore alternative versions of a reasonably solid core of facts’
3. ‘shift perspective on the textual world’
4. ‘control the reader’s progress in the discovery of facts’
5. ‘suggest analogical relations between segments’
6. ‘allow the user to blow up certain scenes or passages to get a close look’
7. ‘interrupt the flow of narration’
8. ‘provide background information, explanations, supporting material, and intertextual references’
9. ‘keep the textual machine going’ by generating text.

While there are some new link types in this 2015 version, some are derived from the 2006 typology (e.g. ‘perspective-switching’ in the 2006 version and ‘shift[s] perspective on the textual world’ in 2015).

As the preceding overview shows, commonalities can be found across the typologies. Both Parker (2001) and Ryan (2006) acknowledge that a hyperlink can be ‘blatant’, indicating in advance where it will lead. Each typology also includes link types that allow the reader to explore aspects of the storyworld in more detail, such as different points of view (‘portal’ and ‘perspective-switching’ links) or by providing background information to a scene (‘filler’, ‘digressive and background’ links). The typologies do, however, differ in terms of the way that they characterise the function of some links. Parker (2001: n.p.) proposes that complicating links act as ‘a way of ... highlighting parts of the text’ and thus are intended as a ‘kind of emphasis’ whereas Ryan (2015: 194) proposes similar functions in terms of links that ‘allow the user to blow up certain scenes or passages to get a close look’ and/or ‘interrupt the flow of narration’. What the typologies show overall is that Ryan is almost exclusively concerned with the narrative functions of links whereas Parker is also interested in links that serve a “literary”, aesthetic, or affective purpose.

4. Our empirical approach to hyperlinks

Existing typologies consider links in a rather limited sense because they do not consider the process of prediction and orientation that happens when a reader processes a link. Here we offer a categorization in terms of the overall function of links during the reader’s experience – i.e. the combination of their intended effect on the reader, what effect they imply to the reader in advance, and what effect they have on the reader once activated. Reader responses to the links (that is, what they

predict they will find and what they actually find when following the link) can then be evaluated against the hyperlink types so as to empirically test the categories.

Based on Parker, at first we distinguish between links that have a predominantly ‘narrative’ function and those with a predominantly ‘affective’ function. Whereas *narrative* links (e.g. Ryan’s [2006] perspective-switching) are functional in that they are designed to advance the plot or provide additional narrative exposition (e.g. characterization or backstory), the primary function of an *affective* link (e.g. Parker’s random link) is to provide a subtextual poetic effect on the reader that is left open to interpretation. With influence from all typologies, we then distinguish between links that allow the reader to *navigate* the hypertext and those that let them *explore* the text. This latter distinction is drawn from Persson’s (1998: 192) investigation of user behaviour in digital environments, in which he proposes that ‘navigation’ ‘refers to the situation where the navigator has a clear and quite precise goal or task, and [exploration] applies when the navigator only has vague notions of the goal or just want some general overview’. Thus, while *navigation* is goal directed, *exploration* is not. This distinction accounts for the difference between links that will advance the plot (e.g. temporal [Ryan 2006]) and those that provide information that is non-essential to plot development but that enrich the narrative in some way (e.g. that ‘let the reader explore alternative versions of a reasonably solid core of facts’ [Ryan 2015: 194]).

Our meta-typology therefore comprises four categories:

1. **Narrative Navigation (NN):** Links that lead the reader down a narrative path. The link term is designed to clearly indicate the destination to which it leads. The context and the term used lead readers to expect that the link is ‘blatant’ and will therefore lead to material that is implied by the link term and that will be related to the host lexia. When followed, the reader’s expectations will be confirmed.
2. **Affective Navigation (AN):** Links that lead the reader down a narrative path, but do not unequivocally indicate the destination to which they lead. The context and the term used give readers some sense of what they might find when following the link. The relevance of the link term becomes clearer once the destination lexia is reached, although meaning can remain obscure.
3. **Narrative Exploration (NE):** Links that offer the reader additional layers of narrative such as parallel storylines, backstory, perspective-switching, and revisited passages of text. The link term usually indicates that it leads to some kind of material relevant to the narrative, but it may not unequivocally indicate its destination. The reader will anticipate that the destination will have meaning relevant to the narrative, plot, and/or character. If a link’s destination is not initially apparent, its meaning generally becomes clear retrospectively.

4. **Affective Exploration (AE):** Links with the sole purpose of eliciting an affective response, with no navigational or narrative purpose apparent, either initially or in retrospect, these instead generate a more ambiguous aesthetic/poetic effect. The link does not clearly indicate the content to which it leads, and readers may well have difficulty forming an expectation. Once followed, readers often cannot conclusively assign meaning, even retrospectively. The result is that readers will attempt a connection which is more open and reflective of the poetic intent.

Our categorization aims to capture both the purpose of the link (from the writer's point of view, they progress from blatantly functional to the more playful, poetic, and/or experimental affective links) as well as how the reader cognitively processes those links both in anticipation of and retrospectively following activation. Clearly, some types are more difficult for readers to process than others, and individual links may overlap two or more categories; for the purpose of this study, we focus on those most easily identifiable in one category or another. While *narrative* links offer readers some clarity about the shape and content of the storyworld, *affective* ones may confuse the reader because their ambiguous reference and purpose often counters the familiar schema of links (Bell 2014); following them requires retrospective interpretation to determine their meaning (Tosca 2000). *Affective Exploration* links, which neither signal in advance where they will lead nor offer a quick and clear subsequent meaning, can be seen to cause the most schema disruption, while *Narrative Navigation* links, designed to be the clearest form, will cause the least schema disruption (see Figure 1).

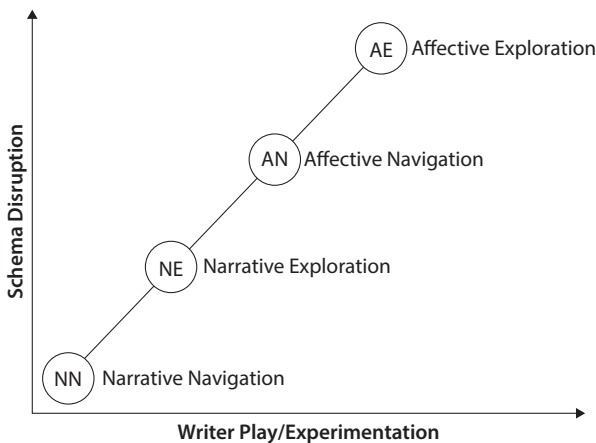


Figure 1. Disruption of schema in relation to writerly/poetic experimentation with links in hypertext fiction

To provide a hypertext fiction to house the link types, project Co-Investigator Lyle Skains wrote *The Futographer* (2016). Skains is an established author who has been writing hypertext fiction since 2008. The short story was produced using Twine, a web-based hypertext authoring software. Typical of hypertext fiction, *The Futographer* is comprised of lexias connected by hyperlinks that often allow readers multiple pathways through the text. It is written using second-person narration and explores issues around social media, online anonymity and privacy, and computer-mediated communication: the narrative ‘you’ receives pictures of their future self from a stranger on social media and makes choices about what they want to do about it. While *The Futographer* was written with this study in mind, it was also written for a wider public audience and has since been published online (Skains 2016).

Given that the study aimed to test reader responses to hyperlinks, Skains incorporated a range of links according to our meta-typology. Once the text was complete, two members of the project team independently categorised the links according to our meta-typology. Links were classified as NN (65%), as NE and AN each (13.75%), and as AE (7.5%). Any links whose classification did not reach a consensus between the team members were discarded from use in the reader interviews. This composition should mean that the text was relatively easy for the readers to navigate overall because the most schema-disruptive link type – AE – makes up a relatively modest proportion of the text and the least schema-disruptive type makes up the majority. This particular ratio of link types aided in ensuring that readers were not overwhelmed with schema disruptive hyperlinks that might detract from their overall understanding of the narrative and thus cause them to lose focus on the hypertextual reading process overall.

Nineteen readers (nine male, nine female and one gender not defined), all Creative Studies and Media students at Bangor University, participated in the study in October 2016. The participants were told that we were interested in how people interpret hyperlinks in digital fiction. They then read *The Futographer* at a desktop computer in the presence of a researcher. The researchers chose eleven lexias in the hypertext story that would offer the reader experiences of all four link types, and that would be visited by all participants regardless of variations in their reading path. During the reading, the researcher isolated the hyperlink(s) shown on the screen and, if there was more than one in the lexia, asked ‘How do you decide which link to click on?’. Participants were always asked ‘What thought processes do you go through when you see and/or decide to click on this hyperlink?’, and finally ‘What in the text or context influences your decision?’. For each tested hyperlink and subsequent lexia read, participants were then asked:

- What is this part of the text about?
- Does this relate to the previous part of the narrative? If yes, how so?

- Did you expect it to lead to this kind of thing?
- In what ways does it confirm or contradict what you expected to find?
- What in the text or context makes you think this?

The combination of questions was designed to prompt participants to provide as much information as possible about: the thought processes they went through when they encountered links, how these thought-processes affected their decision making, how they cognitively processed and interpreted the links, how the links affected their reading experience. Seven NN links, four NE links, six AN links, and five AE links spread across eleven lexias were tested per participant. In total, participants were asked eleven times about the selection of hyperlinks on the screen, and each reading session took around 50 minutes.

The reading session concluded with a short structured interview in which participants were asked about hyperlinks in the text in general. Both reading sessions and interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded using NVivo. The NVivo coding of the qualitative data focussed on identifying specific cognitive strategies participants adopted to parse the hypertext, to what extent participants felt influenced by the text or context when selecting a link to follow, and which type of links were preferred by participants when given multiple types.

5. Analysis

Our analysis focuses on two lexias in which a variety of different hyperlink types were tested. Our methodology is grounded in Bortolussi and Dixon's (2003: 37) psychonarratological distinction between 'textual features', which are 'objective and identifiable characteristics of the text' and 'reader constructions', which are 'subjective and variable' responses to the text (cf. also Bell et al. 2018). We maintain that the function of hyperlinks can be identified systematically via our meta-typology but that readers' responses can also be analysed stylistically to show how this feature is conceptualised. Based on our analysis, we consider how these responses provide insight into how readers process and respond to hyperlinks.

5.1 New Pics, Rain, Danish

Figure 2 depicts the link structure of the first lexia in *The Futographer* in which we paused the readers. This lexia is comprised of three sentences, each containing one hyperlinked word. The hyperlinks 'new pics', 'rain' and 'danish' are represented in Figure 2 in bolded and underlined font. The arrows connected to the different hyperlinks show which lexia readers see if they click on the respective links.

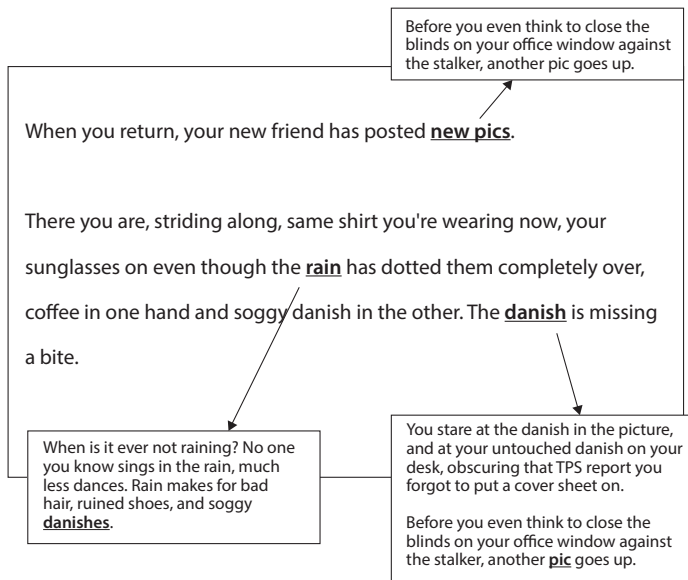


Figure 2. Link structures of hyperlinks 'new pics', 'rain' and 'danish'

Since this lexia takes place relatively early in the reading session, readers are likely still familiarizing themselves with the protagonist and potential plotlines. They have just read that a stranger called 'Tiresias Goodfellow' has tagged the player-character 'you' in a photo on social media, and that subsequently 'you' decides to take a short coffee break away from the office.

The noun phrase 'new pics' is linked to a lexia in which 'you' discovers they have been tagged in another picture on Facebook. We therefore classified it as a NN link because it advances the narrative, is designed to indicate its destination relatively clearly via the use of a common noun and, once followed, there is an association between the noun phrase and the material about photographs in the destination lexia. In the remaining two sentences, the photograph is described. Both destination lexias here – 'rain' and 'danish' – provide information about the objects in the photo. However, because 'danish' explores something from the present scene in more detail, it is defined as an NE link; whereas as 'rain' offers a philosophical reflection on rain that neither advances the narrative plot nor offers additional exposition, it was classified as an AE link.

In terms of link choice, fourteen participants clicked on 'new pics', three followed 'rain', and two clicked on 'danish'. Most participants (7/14) who chose 'new pics' explained that they did so because it seemed to be the most relevant link to the narrative. A few participants (3/14) said they were curious about the pictures or interested in seeing them. Further three stated they were both interested in the pictures and felt that the other links were not relevant. One participant stated that

it was a combination of curiosity and visual prominence that made her click on 'new pics', as it was the first link she saw. This latter justification supports existing theory (Stockwell 2009: 25) suggesting visual prominence results in attracting readers' attention and also that the order of the links 'seems to be the determinant factor for choosing a hyperlink' (Protopsaltis & Bouki 2005: 165). However, the fact that only one participant out of fourteen decided on this basis does not provide universal support for such theory.

In Extract 1, Holly¹ discusses why she opted for ‘new pics’:

Holly, lines 143–159

- 143 Holly: Okay, well um I think I'm gonna click on the new pics
145 thing because I mean, it doesn't matter to me that there was
rain, doesn't matter to me that, you know, the Danish i- is a
thing (hehe)
- 146 Researcher: Okay
- 147 Holly: Um, that's not really that relevant, it's the //pictures that I
- 148 Researcher: //Right, okay
- 149 Holly: Think are more important, because that's like the evidence,
really
- 150-151 Researcher: Okay, so what is – what in the text or context would you say
influences your decision to go for that one?
- 152 Holly: Um well – um firstly, like layout-wise, it's the one that's split
apart from the others, so
- 153 Researcher: //Mm, yeah
- 154 Holly: //Which – you notice it straight away
- 155 Researcher: Yeah
- 156-157 Holly: Um and secondly, um yeah, like I said, the rain – the fact that
there was rain and the fact that there's a Danish really isn't that
important
- 158 Researcher: //Mm, okay
- 159 Holly: //I'm more interested in seeing all these photos I'm supposed
to be in, you know

Like most participants who found 'new pics' most relevant, Holly notes that it seemed to be the 'most important' link, referring to it as 'the evidence' (line 149) and arguing that it 'doesn't matter' to her that there is 'rain' and a 'danish', as these are not 'relevant' (lines 143–147). Relevance here seems directly linked to what is directly impacting the narrative element of character. She also states that 'new pics' is visually more salient because it stands apart from the rest of the text, which 'you notice...straight away' and that she is more interested in 'seeing all these photos I'm supposed to be in' (lines 154, 159). This latter justification shows Holly has

1. All names are pseudonyms.

adopted a first-person, internal perspective and thus a high degree of identification with the protagonist ‘you’ (cf. Bell et al. 2019).

Participants who clicked on ‘rain’ did so because they felt that: ‘new pictures would seem to be quite an obvious answer’ whilst ‘rain’ gives potentially significant information ‘about the possibility of the photo being taken at – at a certain time of day’ (Josh, lines 144 & 137–138); ‘new pics’ seemed to have been explained already, and that it was more interesting in terms of ‘why there’s ... sunglasses when it’s raining’ (Katie, line 92); it allowed the reader to ‘explore a different way – different method’ (Luke, line 78). Readers who followed ‘danish’ chose to do so because it seemed salient, and therefore most relevant to them: Laura mentioned that she found it funny and intriguing that emphasis had been placed on the fact that the danish ‘is missing a bite’ (Laura, lines 136–138); Jack decided to click on ‘danish’ because it was also mentioned in the previous lexia, and the repetition suggested it might be important (Jack, lines 130–139). The arguments for picking ‘rain’ or ‘danish’ rather than ‘new pics’ suggests that despite not opting for a denotatively clearer NN link such as ‘new pics’, readers tended to also choose links that seem most relevant or interesting to them.

After following the hyperlinks, participants were asked to explain what the destination lexia was about, whether – and if so, how – it related to its source link, and how it contradicted or confirmed what they expected to find. With ‘new pics’, ‘rain’ and ‘danish’, all nineteen participants, regardless of the link they had clicked on, felt that the destination lexia related to the activated link, but not all participants had expected what they encountered. Of those who opted for ‘new pics’, one participant felt he had expected it, two did not provide a clear answer, and eleven felt the destination lexia was unexpected. Four of the latter group explained that they had expected to see actual pictures, implying that they interpreted ‘new pics’ as a NN link but that the actual material did not match with their expectations. Others were surprised by the change in tone and/or atmosphere (4/11); had anticipated more talk about different pictures (1/11); for the pictures to stop (1/11); or thought they would see a more gradual appearance of pictures (1/11).

In Extract 2, Alfie justifies his selection of ‘new pics’:

Alfie, lines 169–190

- | | | |
|-----|-------------|--|
| 169 | Alfie: | Uh, this part of the text is finding out that I definitely–this |
| 170 | | character, me, potentially, uh also interesting that it’s second |
| | | person, um it - it - yah, I’ve got a stalker apparently |
| 171 | Researcher: | Okay |
| 172 | Alfie: | Just finding out that suddenly this person is posting pictures |
| | | of you |
| 173 | Researcher: | And so does it relate to the previous part of the narrative? |

- 174 Alfie: Yes, it's - it's very blatantly clear that everything follows
 175 Researcher: Okay
 176-177 Alfie: I wouldn't say follows a structure as it were, but it definitely
 follows on from the previous
 178 Researcher: Right
 179 Alfie: Lexia, so there's
 180 Researcher: //Right
 181 Alfie: //There's a definite link there, there's no confusion about it
 182 Researcher: Okay, so did you expect it to lead to this kind of thing then?
 183-184 Alfie: I mean, narratively, I'm kinda - I'm kinda - what - what's the
 phrase I'm looking for - preparing for the worst, hoping for
 the best
 185 Researcher: //Okay
 186 Alfie: //I don't want this character, who is ostensibly me
 187 Researcher: Yeah
 188 Alfie: To have a stalker, but I'm - yeah, yeah, it it - there's a stalker
 coming
 189 Researcher: Okay
 190 Alfie: I feel it, just inside me

Alfie does not say whether he expected the content in the destination lexia. However, he conceptualises the hyperlink 'new pics' as 'very blatantly clear' (line 174), that there was 'a definite link [between the two lexias]', and that 'there's no confusion about it' (line 181). The lack of modality at the beginning of this extract (lines 169–181) in combination with his use of the adverb 'blatantly', the grammatical modifier 'very', and his use of negative assertion ('there's no confusion about it'), suggests that Alfie was certain that the hyperlink was semantically indicating its destination. He thus recognises the function of 'new pics' as a NN. When asked whether he expected the 'new pics' hyperlink to lead to this lexia, Alfie answered that 'narratively', he was 'preparing for the worst, hoping for the best' (lines 183–184), but that he 'feel[s]' (line 90) 'there's a stalker coming' (line 188).

Of the three participants who followed 'rain', Josh and Katie said they had not foreseen the content of the destination lexia (which aligns with its AE designation as schema-disruptive), whilst Luke felt it was 'sort of' expected because the following lexia provided more context (Luke, 118). Josh thought that clicking on 'rain' would give him further information related to the picture the protagonist was tagged in, and thus might be significant to the narrative; retrospectively, he did not anticipate the destination lexia based on its link. He noted that although the new lexia seemed related because it referenced the 'soggy danish', he could have just as well clicked on 'danish', because that was the only hyperlink on the lexia he had arrived at after having followed 'rain' (Josh, lines 148–150). Katie also explained that she felt the lexia following 'rain' was

linked to its activating link, because it ‘relates to the picture, I guess’ (Katie, lines 109–110). By explicitly describing her mental cognition process in hesitant terms (‘I guess’), Katie hedges her statement, conveying an element of uncertainty. She also notes ‘I dunno, maybe something shows that there shouldn’t have been rain, I dunno [...] ‘cause there’s sunglasses when it was raining, I thought maybe it was Photoshopped’ (Katie, lines 117–123).

Of those who followed ‘danish’, Jack says he anticipated only one hyperlink in the destination lexia: ‘Maybe I expected just the one’ (Jack, line 200). His expectation, though, is hedged by the epistemic modal adverb ‘maybe’, suggesting uncertainty. Laura indicates that ‘she didn’t know what to expect’, and that the destination lexia therefore neither confirmed nor contradicted her expectations (Laura, lines 159–161). This aligns with our classification of ‘danish’ as an NE link: the readers were not certain what this link would lead to, confirming the element of exploration, though retrospectively it moved the narrative forward.

5.2 Last Summer, Thing

Figure 3 depicts the link structure of a lexia that readers encounter towards the end of their reading session, in which two different types of hyperlinks were tested.

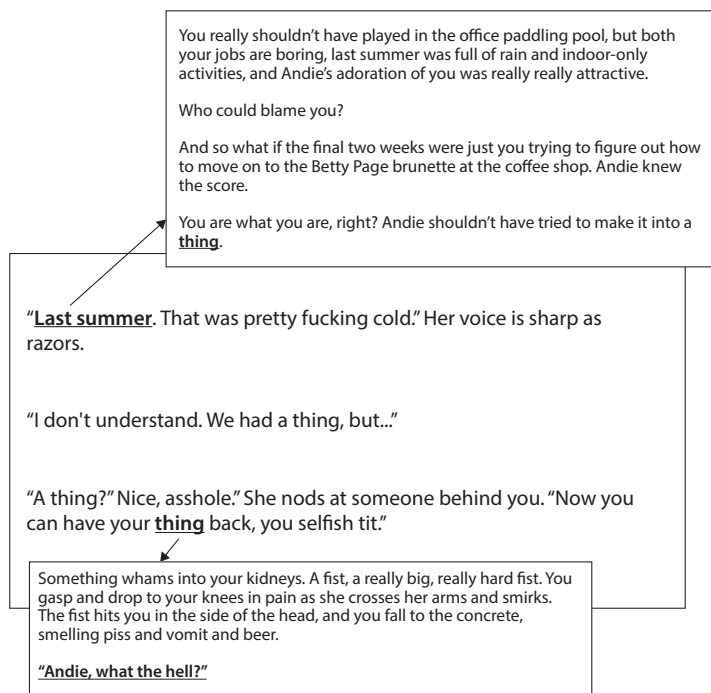


Figure 3. Lexia with hyperlinks ‘last summer’ and ‘thing’

At this point in the narrative, readers have read that ‘you’ has travelled to London in order to help their friend ‘Andie’, who has been mugged. There is a confrontation between Andie and ‘you’. Part of the text is comprised of direct speech. Andie accuses ‘you’ of having mistreated her ‘last summer’, which is denoted as a hyperlink in bold and blue. Readers are likely to interpret the past temporal reference of ‘last summer’ as indicative that the hyperlink will lead them to a backstory or a flashback, and thus (correctly) expect it to be a NE link. Furthermore, ‘last summer’ echoes a hyperlink readers encountered several lexias earlier in the story, ‘Five weeks last summer’; this repetition might therefore give additional weight to the reader’s expectation that ‘last summer’ will lead to a lexia of narrative significance. The second hyperlink in the lexia is the noun ‘thing’, which is part of Andie’s direct speech. The ‘you’ acknowledges a ‘thing’ with Andie, to which Andie reacts by repeating the word and telling ‘you’ that they can now have their ‘thing’ back. This latter ‘thing’ is hyperlinked. Its positioning in Andie’s direct speech might suggest that it will relate to the ‘thing’ from Andie’s perspective and therefore be NE in so far as it will give the reader information about the ‘thing’; as the destination lexia does not, however, deliver on this expectation, ‘thing’ is classified as AE.

The participant group was roughly split in their choice of hyperlink in this lexia: out of nineteen, ten chose ‘last summer’; nine opted for ‘thing’. Readers who selected ‘last summer’ did so either because they wanted ‘more detail’ or ‘backstory’ (5/10), because it had been mentioned in previous lexias (4/10), or because of a combination of these (1/10). Nathan’s explanation, shown in Extract 3, illustrates the ways in which participants negotiated their choice of hyperlink ‘last summer’.

Nathan, lines 673–684

- 673 Nathan: Okay, so my options are last summer and you can have your thing back
- 674 Researcher: Oh yes, thing – yes
- 675-677 Nathan: Here’s the thing, last time I clicked last summer, it took me to what I expected and then straight after that it took me to what I didn’t want to happen, I think – I’m worried the same thing will happen here
- 678 Researcher: //Okay
- 679-681 Nathan: //But my other option is thing, after she nods at someone behind you, which has to be Tiresias (2) I don’t know, I don’t know, oh (5) I feel like either – I feel like either way I’m gonna end up face to face with Tiresias
- 682 Researcher: Yeah
- 683-684 Nathan: I feel like thing – clicking thing will make it happen immediately, clicking last summer will give us more backstory, so I’m gonna click last summer again

Nathan explains he is ‘worried’ that the same thing will happen as last time, when he clicked on ‘Five weeks last summer’, which then took him to ‘what I expected and then straight after that it took me to what I didn’t want to happen’. Nathan’s explanation also suggests he conceptualised the function of the hyperlink ‘thing’ as driving the plot forward, and that because he is hesitant of the expected confrontation between ‘you’ and Tiresias, it is therefore better to click on ‘last summer’. Interestingly, the hyperlink ‘thing’ is thus conceptualised by Nathan as more of an NE or AN link than an AE link.

This conceptualisation was shared by several other participants. Alfie, who clicked on ‘last summer’, also stated that he wanted to ‘avoid confrontation’ (Alfie, line 641). Ravi, on the other hand, decided to click on ‘thing’ exactly because of ‘[Andie’s] actions...[l]ike she knows someone behind [the “you”]’ (Ravi, lines 395–397). Kieran also opted for ‘thing’ because ‘you get to see what happens to... [the] “you”’, which then allows you to ‘probably work out what happened last summer anyway’ (Kieran, lines 495–500). This again suggests that ‘thing’ is seen by participants as NE rather than AE.

In general, participants who chose ‘thing’ did so for varying reasons. Some were curious to know what the ‘thing’ was (3/9). Others, including Ravi and Kieran, felt ‘thing’ was more current or involved action and was therefore more important (3/9). Three participants clicked on ‘thing’ because they felt they had already been to ‘last summer’, having previously clicked on ‘Five weeks last summer’, whereas ‘thing’ was new and therefore more relevant. One participant, Laura, also added that “‘last summer’ is a whole stretch of time...thing is – it’s one thing’ (Laura, lines 535–537). Interestingly, Laura’s conceptualisation of ‘thing’ also shows that this hyperlink was not necessarily seen as less specific and therefore as an AE link by some participants, but rather as a more immediate, plot-driving action link. All participants who chose ‘thing’ felt the destination lexia related to its link, but only five of nine felt it was expected or ‘sort of’ expected. Nine of the ten participants who picked ‘last summer’ felt the next lexia delivered on expectations, and almost all participants indicated they had at least minimally expected the destination lexia based on its link (9/10). This demonstrates the disruption of the schema particularly in exploration-type links: the researchers classified ‘thing’ as AE based on the writer’s intent and the disassociation between ‘thing’ and its destination lexia, while readers expressed more confusion over the link’s function and attempted to fit it within their schema by assigning it retrospective narrative significance.

6. Conclusion

Our analyses show that readers have varying reasons for opting for different hyperlinks, but they are largely narratively driven. Readers indicated they

followed certain hyperlinks because those seemed most relevant or important, and, having followed them, would almost exclusively see them as related to the activated link. The perceived significance and relatedness of the chosen hyperlinks and subsequent lexias seem at least partly related to narrative navigation and/or exploration for these readers. Participant comments also support this interpretation. Kirsty indicated that she 'just [picked] the [hyperlink] that I think will progress it more' or 'would probably make most sense in this plotline' (Kirsty, lines 57, 130) while Jack chose a link that would 'advance...the story' (Jack, line 615). Such 'reading for the plot' (Brooks 1984), aiming for narrative resolution, is perhaps unsurprising: Brooks defines 'plot' as that which makes us 'read forward, seeking in the unfolding of the narrative a line of intention and a portent of design that hold the promise of progress toward meaning' (1984: XIII), and argues for the importance of plot for our reading experience, since it is a product of our drive for meaning making in general. Although the mystery genre of *The Futographer* also encourages 'reading for the plot', reader focus on narrative resolution seems all the more relevant in hypertext fiction, given the potentially disruptive nature of hyperlinks.

Our data supports previous research arguing that readers do make inferences in advance of following a link, and retrospectively search for relevance once they reach the destination lexia (Bell 2014, Tosca 2000). We note, however, that – although in a few instances participants indicated they had no expectations – our methodology explicitly asked them about their expectations and might therefore have prompted readers to consider this aspect of the reading more strongly than they would have otherwise. In order to answer our research question regarding how readers parse hyperlinks both before and after following them, we necessarily had to ask what expectations they had; by doing this, however, we by and large precluded the option of not having expectations at all.

By devising a reader response methodology for and empirically testing hyperlink types in hypertext fiction, we have offered original insight into how readers perceive the function of hyperlinks, make predictions, and engage in meaning-making. Our analyses suggest that readers did recognise different types of links in several instances during the reading session, and that they displayed a tendency to opt for the one that seemed most clear and relevant, leading them to often prefer a NN link over other types. However, readers also conceptualised some links differently than anticipated, particularly by attempting to reconcile schema-disrupting AE links within the narrative schema. This finding bolsters the conclusion that hypertext readers preferentially choose links that will further the narrative plot, even to the point of making narrative connections between links and their destination lexia that were designed by the writer to have none.

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Data

The underlying research data are openly available from the Sheffield Hallam University Research Data Archive at: <http://doi.org/10.17032/shu-170007>.

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CHAPTER 8

Evaluating news events

Using appraisal for reader response

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1. Introduction

Reader response studies have been developing significantly within the field of stylistics and literary studies (see for example Allington & Swann 2009; Hall 2009; Nuttall 2017; Whiteley & Canning 2017). The field has received less attention through the lens of news media linguistics. While many linguistic studies of news media are concerned with the influence of the text on the reader, this reader is often merely theorised. Critical Discourse Analysis, a commonly used approach to studies of news media (see for example Van Dijk 1988, Fowler 1991, Fairclough 1995, Teo 2000), is concerned with the uncovering of ideologies in the news as these may influence readers, but has focused on news texts and neglected news audiences. In the current climate of online news and considerations of the influence of news reporting on socio-political events, it is crucial to examine the responses of real readers to different forms of news.

Following recent developments in digital journalism (Witschge et al. 2016; Franklin & Eldridge 2017), this chapter concentrates on live blogs and ‘traditional online news articles’ (Bunz 2010; Thurman & Schapals 2016). Live blogs are defined as news texts which consist of ‘a single blog post on a specific topic to which time-stamped content is progressively added for a finite period – anywhere between half an hour and 24 hours’ (Thurman & Walters 2013: 2). The format emerged on the internet from the resources and formats available online instead of being based on offline texts. Traditional online news articles are news texts that are uploaded as one complete text, bar minor edits, and use an inverted-pyramid structure exemplary of print news texts. These texts resemble their print antecedents with minimal changes to accommodate their online format. Live blogs are also prime examples of a shift within digital journalism to a more personal reporting

style with an increased use of audience input through social media and online reader comments (see for example Witschge, Anderson, Domingo & Hermida 2016; Franklin & Eldridge 2017). This chapter analyses how this change in news reporting impacts reader responses to the reported news events.

In the introduction to their special issue of *Language and Literature* on reader response in stylistics, Whiteley and Canning (2017) provide an overview of the field. They refer to different empirical studies using terms such as ‘evaluation’ (75), ‘perceptions’ (75), ‘emotional response’ (75), ‘emotion’ (76) and ‘interpretation’ (77) to describe the responses that readers may give to texts. Each of these terms overlap in that they are concerned with language that is evaluative in nature. This is related to the idea that reading is interpretive and therefore inherently evaluative. In this chapter, I show how the study of evaluative language through the Appraisal framework (Martin & White 2005) can provide a new methodological approach to reader response studies.

2. Reader response to news media

Peplow and Carter (2014: 441–2) use the term ‘naturalistic study of reading’ to encompass qualitative studies of readers who are discussing reading in a natural environment while empirical reader response studies use experimental data collected in a controlled setting. While naturalistic approaches to reader response are invaluable (Allington & Swann 2009; Hall 2009; Peplow & Carter 2014; Eriksson Barajas 2015; Nuttall 2017), these studies focus on natural occurring reader response data, such as book groups, online book reviews or discussion forums. This chapter is concerned with studying the impact of live blogs on reader response as compared to traditional online news articles. The specificity of this concern mandates a more experimental approach than naturalistic reader response studies provide. While we may have regular conversations about breaking news events, we rarely relate them to one specific news text or even one news format. To fully understand the influence of news format on news evaluation, it is therefore important to adopt an empirical approach to reader response.

Empirical research into reader reception developed in the late 1970s as a response to the theoretical approach taken to reader response studies. While researchers acknowledged that the initial response to reading was internal (Klemenz-Belgardt 1981: 360), they argued that ‘expressed response’ (Cooper 1976) provided enough information about effects on readers to warrant further study. These types of behaviour and utterances were studied in experimental settings where participants were asked to read extracts of stories (Van Peer 1983) or short stories (Miall & Kuiken 1994), and were subsequently prompted for evaluations of the text. In a recent overview of the state of literary empirical work,

Miall (2006) found that this method continues to be used in controlled and monitored circumstances. Used texts tend to be specifically selected or constructed for the purpose of the research and different reading conditions can be compared. These types of experiments are concerned with investigating the effects of 'specific aspects of the reading process, such as the influence of features of literary style, the effects of empathy in reading narrative, or the impact of significant reading experiences on a reader's memory and self-concept' (Miall 2006: 292). This style of research is mainly quantitative as it investigates effects of reading on groups of participants (Peplow & Carter 2014).

Quantitative investigations of real readers in online news media have seen a recent resurgence in the field of digital journalism. Most research has taken an empirical approach (Steensen 2014; Li 2016), because, as the majority of online news readers interact passively with online news stories (Steensen 2014: 1203), there is no 'natural reading habitat' as exists in literary studies (Peplow & Carter 2014), and therefore there exists no obvious site from which to collect naturalistic data. Research conducted within news media reader response has focused primarily on the effect of the format of news stories (Thurman & Walters 2013; Thurman & Newman 2014; Li 2016), or the impact of social media on news reporting (Hermida 2016; Myrick & Wojdyski 2016).

On the format of news, Li (2016) found that the inverted pyramid structure aided readers in their recollection of the 'gist' of the news stories. This implies that news format may have an effect on reader recollection. Additionally, Thurman and Walters (2013) found that readers rate live blogs as more trustworthy than traditional online news articles due to the variety of sources presented to the reader; in addition, readers liked the tone of live blogs more than that of traditional online news articles as the reporters tend to write more informally in live blogs (14). While most reader response research into digital news as described above takes a quantitative approach, the current research aims to investigate news media reader response through a qualitative analysis of respondents' use of evaluative language. By pre-selecting news texts for readers, withholding the specific purpose of the study as being interested in evaluative language until after the interview had finished and only sharing the general purpose of the study as reader response to news texts prior to the interview, and using semi-structured interview techniques, the effects of different news formats can be studied and compared.

3. Evaluative language analysis

Evaluative language can be defined as language that expresses 'the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about. That attitude may relate to certainty

or obligation or desirability or any number of other sets of values' (Thompson & Hunston 2000: 5). Research into evaluation has evolved from a variety of (sub)disciplinary traditions, which have recently been brought together due to a recognition of shared concern (Thompson & Hunston 2000; Englebretson 2007) and have also been joined in the development of Appraisal theory (Martin 1995; White 2003; Martin & White 2005). These areas of concern include stance, affect, intersubjectivity (DuBois & Kärkkäinen 2012: 446), modality, evidentiality, hedging, vague language, and attitude (Precht 2003). Each approach assumes that evaluative language by nature is dialogic and interpersonal: the idea that each utterance is based on or shaped by previous utterances either from the same speaker or different speakers (Bakhtin 1981: 278). Additionally, speakers can align themselves with each other through evaluation of the same object creating a stance triangle (DuBois 2007). Therefore, every text must be approached as part of a larger context, and as referring either implicitly or explicitly to that context. This also implies that evaluative language is subjective to the speaker, as each evaluative utterance carries the context of the speaker's perspectives (Martin & White 2005: 1; Goźdz-Roszkowski & Hunston 2016: 131).

The Appraisal system focuses on both the interpersonal and the ideational evaluative functions of language, combining stance with discourse analysis. It accounts for both modality and affect, which Thompson and Hunston (2000: 20) identify as 'the two main types of evaluation'. Appraisal emphasises lexical realisations of evaluation, not accounting for grammatical realisations of evaluation. This leads to a focus on semantics, which can create subjective analyses as each researcher carries their own interpretation of their reading of evaluative instances. As categories within Appraisal are dependent, at least to some extent, upon the field of the analysed text, further specification of categories is necessary and unavoidable when applying Appraisal to different topics and genres. Appraisal has been adapted to a variety of fields such as news reporting (Coffin & O'Halloran 2005; White 2012; Sabao 2016), online forums and discussions (Don 2009, 2016; Drasovean & Tagg 2015), and wine reviews (Hommerberg 2015; Hommerberg & Don 2015). Recent research has set forth methods of intra-coder and inter-coder agreement to combat this subjectivity (Read & Carroll 2012; Fuoli & Hommerberg 2015; Fuoli 2018).

The Appraisal system is divided into three main categories: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. This chapter focuses on Attitudinal evaluation and will therefore only expand on this category. For more information on Engagement and Graduation, see Martin and White (2005). Attitudinal evaluation is concerned with three types of evaluation. 'Emotional reactions' constitute the sub-category of Affect, 'judgements of behaviour' constitute the sub-category of Judgement, and 'evaluations of things' constitute the sub-category of Appreciation (Martin & White 2005: 35). Attitudinal appraisal is realised primarily through the use of evaluative lexis, and is therefore highly dependent upon the field of the analysed text.

Appraisal was in part developed through the analysis of reader positioning within texts (Martin 1995). Specifically, in the application of Appraisal to news texts, researchers used the analysis to speak to the possible effects of the evaluative language on an imagined reader (Martin 1995; White 2003; Martin & White 2005). Martin (1995) states that although a specific reader position may be created through attitudinal language, this does not imply automatic acceptance of this position by the reader. However, he does not attempt to investigate the possible acceptance of the created stance and attitude by the reader. Similarly, Coffin and O'Halloran (2005) used Appraisal as a replacement for CDA in the analysis of dynamic reader positioning, focusing on how the text's shifting evaluative prosody altered the reader positioning throughout. They suggested that the use of Appraisal as a systematic framework would remove the 'guessing' found in CDA analyses of reader positioning (Coffin & O'Halloran 2005). Again however, they stressed that a created reader position by the text does not imply an accepted reader position by real readers.

3.1 Appreciation

The category within Attitudinal Appraisal that my analysis in this chapter focuses on, Appreciation is concerned with the evaluation of objects. It is divided into Reaction; 'do they catch our attention (Impact); do they please us?' (Quality), Composition; 'Balance and Complexity', and Valuation; 'how innovative, authentic, timely' (Martin & White 2005: 56). Table 1 shows an overview of the categories including lexical examples of each category.

Table 1. Appreciation sub-categories in appraisal (Martin & White 2005: 56)

Category		Definition	Example (positive, negative)
Reaction	Impact	'Does it catch our attention?'	<i>Interesting, boring</i>
	Quality	'Does it please us?'	<i>Good, ugly</i>
Composition	Balance	'Is it balanced?'	<i>Harmonious, irregular</i>
	Complexity	'Is it complex or simple?'	<i>Precise, simplistic</i>
Valuation		'Is it worthwhile?'	<i>Profound, ineffective</i>

For reasons I outline in my analysis, this chapter concentrates on the use of Quality in reader response texts. Quality is part of the subcategory of Appreciation called Reaction, which analyses the 'semantics of an affective experience' (Hommerberg and Don 2015: 167). This subcategory of Appreciation contains evaluations that reveal the speaker's evaluations about the affective characteristics of the evaluated target (Martin & White 2005: 56). Quality includes positive evaluations such as 'good', 'appealing' and 'lovely' and negative evaluations such as 'bad', 'ugly' and 'repulsive' (Martin & White 2005: 56). Bednarek and Caple (2012: 55) argued that the news values negativity, impact, novelty, personalisation and superlativeness

can be constructed through ‘references to emotion’, indicating a similarity between these news values and Quality.

The flexibility of this framework can cause research to become overly subjective. However, by staying as close to Martin and White’s (2005) categorisation as possible and making definition and categorisation decisions explicit, linguists can use Appraisal to create a replicable analysis. Appraisal’s adaptability also has positive consequences. It allows for reader response researchers to adapt the framework for evaluations of different response texts. By identifying the values surrounding the topic of evaluation, Appraisal categories can be adapted for texts such as literary works, movies, and news media.

3.2 Appraisal and news values

News events are generally evaluated through news values (Galtung & Ruge 1965; Bell 1991; Cotter 2010; Bednarek & Caple 2014, 2017). Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) early and influential study found that frequency, unambiguity, meaningfulness, unexpectedness, references to elite persons or nations, and negativity are all important news values (Galtung & Ruge 1965). Their research used a content analysis, focusing on what characteristics reported news events shared in order to determine what makes an event ‘news’. Within linguistics, news values have not received much attention over time (Bednarek & Caple 2014). Most notable are Bell (1991), Cotter (2010) and Bednarek and Caple (2014; 2017). Bell (1991) was the first to establish that news values can be highlighted through discourse choices in news texts, equating news values to the ‘often unconscious criteria by which news workers make their professional judgements’ about the newsworthiness of an event (1991: 155). Bell (1991: 156) also emphasised that news values are inherently ideological. Bednarek and Caple (2017) extended this assumption by considering how news values can be constructed in news discourse. Their analysis includes considerations of how evaluative language is used in news texts to construct newsworthiness (Bednarek & Caple 2017: 55–56). This suggests that the analysis of evaluative language may be used to reveal how news is valued and can therefore be important in establishing how audiences judge newsworthiness. This provides a new perspective on news value research, as most research has concentrated on how news producers judge news values and how texts construct news values (Bell 1991, Cotter 2010).

Of specific interest to the study of live blogs is the news value personalisation. Bednarek and Caple (2017: 41) define personalisation as ‘the personal or human interest aspects of an event’. The tweets in live blogs include tweets attributed to ordinary news actors involved in the news event, a key linguistic feature of personalisation (Bednarek & Caple 2017: 56). This is in line with studies of

live blogs (Thurman & Walters 2013; Tereszkievicz 2014), which have suggested that the inclusion of social media in addition to the informal tone of live blogs increases the personalisation of the news as compared to traditional news articles. Through the analysis of evaluative language in the reader responses, this chapter investigates if and how readers respond to the increased personalisation in live blogs as compared to traditional online news articles.

4. Methodology

4.1 News texts collection

The selection of the news texts was determined by the live blogs, as breaking news live blogs are published less frequently than traditional online news texts. As the aim of this chapter is to compare reader responses to live blogs and traditional online news articles, I collected two pairs of news texts between 1 July 2014 and 31 October 2015. The criteria used to choose these pairs were the following:

1. Each pair had to consist of one live blog and one traditional online news article.
2. Each pair had to be published and produced by the same media outlet.
3. Each pair had to cover the same news event.
4. Each pair had to have been published on the same date.

These criteria were established to control as many variables as possible in each pair, and to therefore also allow for maximal comparison between the reader responses to each text.

To increase internal validity, allowing for a comparison between the two news events, and cover the full domain of the research questions, the following criteria were used to select the news events:

1. The news event must have been covered through a live blog and a traditional online news article by at least one news institution.
2. The news event must be considered breaking hard news (Lehman-Wilzig & Seletzky 2010; Harcup & O'Neill 2016).
3. The two selected news events must be different types of news events, i.e. the two events cannot both be terrorist attacks.
4. Two different news institutions must have covered the two news events.
5. The two news events must have been unlikely to have directly impacted the United Kingdom to limit the impact of strong personal connections from the participants.

In order to limit the number of news texts to select from, I initially selected the news institutions. UK residents most commonly find their news via websites of established news institutions (Newman et al. 2017). BBC.co.uk is visited most by UK residents, with 47 per cent of people visiting at least once a week. TheGuardian.co.uk is in second place, with 14 per cent of people visiting at least once a week (Newman et al. 2017).

Following the selection procedure, the news texts selected from the BBC were: 'As it happened: Gaza conflict intensifies' (BBC 2014a) and 'Gaza shelling by Israel leads to deadliest day of conflict' (BBC 2014b). These news texts covered 20 July 2014, a particularly deadly day in the Gaza conflict. This event was part of the larger 2014 Israel – Gaza conflict, which was also known as 'Operation Protective Edge' (Lynfield 2015). This conflict lasted from 8 July 2014 until 27 August 2014 during which time over 2,100 Palestinians were killed, 66 Israeli soldiers and 7 Israeli civilians (BBC 2014c).

The news texts selected from *The Guardian* were: 'Oregon college shooting: gunman identified as Chris Harper Mercer – as it happened' (*The Guardian* 2015a) and 'Another mass shooting in America': Oregon killings a grim familiarity for US' (*The Guardian* 2015b). The news texts cover a college shooting at Umpqua College in Roseburg, Oregon in the United States. The shooting happened on 1 October 2015. *The Guardian* published a total of 69 articles on this shooting between 1 October 2015 and 21 October 2015 with most published between 1 and 5 October. This number was influenced by the presidential primaries campaigns taking place at the time as 17 articles covered presidential candidates' responses to the shooting.

4.2 Interview collection

To obtain the richest data for linguistic analysis, I collected interview data. By using one-to-one interviews, I was able to control the content of reader response to remain focused news events. I followed grounded theory guidelines for conducting interviews (Charmaz 2006) as well as qualitative linguistic guidelines provided by Dörnyei (2007). Question numbers 1 and 3 (see Table 2) functioned as 'event questions', which asked for descriptions of the news event without explicitly asking for an evaluation (Dörnyei 2007). Question numbers 2 and 4 (see Table 2) functioned as 'perspective questions', which explicitly asked for evaluations of the news event (Dörnyei 2007). The 'event questions' were asked first to not influence the descriptions with explicit questions for evaluations. This meant that evaluative language used in response to event questions was unprovoked and the 'perspective questions' functioned as follow-up questions instead of clear inquiry into respondents' evaluations.

Table 2. Interview questions

	Question	Domain coverage	Rationale for wording
1.	Can you tell me about the news you just read?	News event description, possible news event evaluation	A request for the interviewee to speak freely. No evaluative language within the question, which could influence responses.
2.	What do you think of this event?	News event evaluation	Open-ended to allow news evaluations without priming.
3.	Tell me about the people involved in this news.	News event description, possible news event evaluation	Open-ended to allow respondents to speak freely. Specific about the people involved in the news event to create more detailed discussion of the news event and to possibly evoke evaluations of quotes and social media.
4.	How do you think this news is affecting people?	News event evaluation	Open-ended to allow respondents to speak freely. Encourages more explicit evaluations – in pilot interviews this evaluation was lacking.

To select participants, I used convenience sampling (Dörnyei 2007). My pool consisted of University of Birmingham students. I controlled for age, education, location and level of English. Respondents were between 18 and 30 years old, corresponding to the age-group of 16 to 24 year olds that uses the internet most for news consumption (Ofcom 2018: 8), students at the University of Birmingham, and native English speakers. In total 20 responses were collected. Each person was randomly assigned to either a live blog or a news article. Responses collected during the first round of interviews were related to the Gaza news event; those collected during the second round of interviews were those from the Oregon news event. To increase standardisation across all interviews, each was conducted following the same interview procedure.

4.3 Analysis

In this research I have taken a manual approach to the Appraisal analysis, which allows for a full and detailed analysis of the text (Fuoli & Hommerberg 2015; Bednarek 2008). Manual analysis also allows for easier adaptation of the Appraisal framework to the field of the text as each evaluative instance is assessed and coded separately. This is important as Macken-Horarik (2003: 309) states, ‘linguistic analysis needs to account for distinctive addressivity in genres and institutionalised

reading practices for different text genres'. By using a manual approach, I was able to code evaluative instances based not only on their stable meanings, but also based on the context within news media, their co-text, and the texts' overall evaluative prosody.

5. Results

It should be noted that Appraisal can also be used to create dual analysis of both the response text and the source text (Van Driel 2020). However, this chapter will only apply the Appraisal to the response texts.

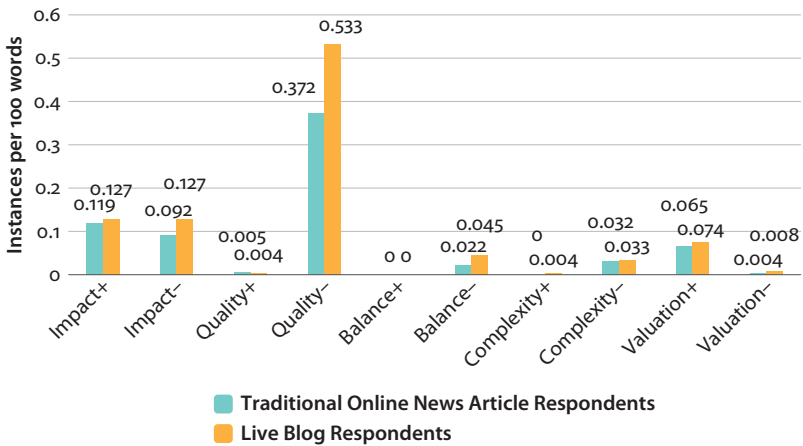


Figure 1. Appreciation and news event evaluations

Figure 1 shows the use of the different Appreciation categories in evaluations of the news events. Both the traditional online news article and the live blog respondents used negative Quality most often, followed by the positive and negative Impact. For this reason, I focus on quality in my analysis. Quality, as part of the sub-category Reaction, is concerned with affective characteristics that are ascribed to the topic of evaluation. By concentrating on this category, I aim to investigate how readers evaluate the news events' affect. However, before analysing these responses, it should also be noted that the use of the different categories of Appreciation is consistent between the traditional online news article and the live blog respondents. This suggests that irrespective of the news format, news events may be evaluated along similar standards. By first separating evaluative instances into

categories, I am able to focus my analysis on: (a) the most common instances of evaluation, and (b) the instances of evaluation that I am concerned with. Appraisal analysis can therefore help reader response researchers to focus their research on one aspect of reader response, while still acknowledging the existence of other evaluative instances.

5.1 Reader response through negative quality

The traditional online news article readers used negative Quality to evaluate the affective characteristics of the news events and the personal experiences of news actors created by the news events.

Out of 83 instances of negative Quality, 45 instances contained lexical terms related to emotional states: *traumatic, upsetting, sad, saddened, scary, scared, emotive, emotional, horrendous, horrible, horrifying, alarming, concerned, shocking*. While expressions of emotions, such as ‘I am scared’ or ‘the scared child’ should be categorised as Affect, the evaluative instances discussed here were presented as characteristics of the news events. For example, A12 stated about the Gaza news event: ‘I think it’s horrible’. ‘Horrible’ is presented through a copular construction as an aspect of the news event, ‘it’. This type of construction is typical of evaluation (Hunston & Sinclair 2000). The classification of this construction as Quality rests on two assumptions. First, evaluations of entities should always be classified as Appreciation. Martin and White (2005: 57–8) specifically comment on the reference to emotion in Appreciation: ‘we think it is important to distinguish between construing the emotions someone feels (**affect**)¹ and ascribing the power to trigger such feelings to things’ (**appreciation: reaction**).² Secondly, while this type of construction may indicate that the participants feel this emotion, this is not clear from the text. To achieve replicable results, this analysis takes each evaluative instance at ‘face-value’ (Thompson 2014) meaning that these instances must be categorised as characteristics of the news event (Quality), not as feelings belonging to the speaker or any other person (Affect).

Similarities in negative quality use

The traditional online news article and the live blog respondents used negative Quality to evaluate the number of people affected by the news event. In evaluations

1. Emphasis added by original authors.

2. Emphasis added by original authors.

of the Gaza conflict, references were made to the death toll and to people having to flee in the case of the Gaza conflict.

Text Box 1. Negative Quality evaluations of the Gaza conflict

- (1) 'it says in the article the UN have something about 50,000 yeah the UN now supplies help to more than 50,000 Palestinians who sought shelter in schools in Palestine (.) so that's it's really **upsetting** to think that that's happening (.) so far away' (A13)
- (2) 'I think (.) in terms of numbers and it made it sound like it's quite eh (.) quite **horrific** event just the (.) eye witness report from the doctor the hospital and about the scenes that were going on' (A14)
- (3) 'it does show the magnitude of what (.) what's happening out there and the amount of conflict that's going on the amount of people that are being killed as well (.) it's quite (.) it's quite **unnerving**' (LB14)

In each of the examples in Text Box 1, the respondents presented their negative Quality evaluations as linked with the number of victims in the news events. A13 did this through the use of causal conjunction 'so' (underlined), A14's evaluation can be construed as linking the numbers and the negative Quality evaluations through the use of 'it made it sound like', which also acknowledged the role of the news text in the evaluation, and LB14's evaluation can be construed as a link through textual proximity. The scale of an event and the amount of people it affects are part of the news value impact, one of the news values expressed through references to emotive language (Bednarek & Caple 2012: 55). In this case, the dramatic consequences of the news event seemed to increase its perceived negative Quality.

In evaluations of the Oregon college shooting, negative Quality evaluations were linked to the consistency of mass shootings happening in the USA.

Text Box 2. Negative Quality evaluations of the Oregon shooting

- (4) 'it's really **sad** (.) eh (1) and it's like (.) becoming the norm in America and it **shouldn't be**' (A22)
- (5) 'it's **tragic** (.) eh (.) but I think what's **more tragic** is that (.) it's happened (.) again (.) like (.) and there's been so many cases in America so many chances that they could have taken to change it and they haven't' (LB25)
- (6) 'it's sad but kind of (.) it's **more sad** because it's not exactly a unique story (.) so the fact that it kind of (.) I've lost track of who which school you know has been attacked in America like they're listing off all these places (.) in the little (.) in the video' (LB23)

Each example in Text Box 2 shows that the respondents presented their negative Quality evaluations as linked to the consistency of mass shootings. A22 made this connection by repeating that these shootings ‘should not be’ the norm and LB25 and LB23 both explicitly linked their ‘more tragic’ evaluation with the fact that these mass shootings keep happening. These types of evaluations suggest a link between the typicality of a news event and negative Quality evaluations of that news event. The lack of uniqueness of a news event is also part of the construction of newsworthiness through news values. Bednarek and Caple (2017: 80) label this type of news value as consonance: a news event which is ‘discursively constructed as (stereo)typical’. Negative Quality was used to evaluate these news values suggesting that these news values invoked an ‘affective’ response from the respondents as Quality is part of Reaction (Hommerberg & Don 2015).

5.2 Differences in news event evaluations using negative quality

There was one distinction found in how the traditional online news article and the live blog respondents used negative Quality. Both groups referred to personal experiences of news actors when evaluating the news events. However, those who read one of the traditional online news articles referred either to more general groups of people such as ‘the families’ or they projected experiences onto news actors. Those who read one of the live blogs referred to specific individuals who had been mentioned in the news texts, mainly through embedded Tweets.

Text Box 3. Negative Quality evaluations by traditional online news article respondents on personal experiences of news actors

- (7) ‘I can only imagine it’s just absolutely so **terrifying** for (.) eh (.) and they’re probably thinking what is being done to help us (.) which is obviously very like for them they’ll be you know (.) they’ll be there thinking they won’t (.) they will be in like unknown (.) they’ll be in a state of not knowing what is going to happen and just sort of hoping that some- well something is gonna happen to help these people (.) yes so it’s very **scary**’ (A15)
- (8) ‘I think like me now (.) obviously it’s maybe (.) **shocked** (.) and you think about the people and about their families but after this then I’d just carry on with what I was doing so when I’m reading it (.) impact emotionally but then afterwards I would just carry on doing what I was gonna do’ (A21)

A15 stated in Example 7 (see Text Box 3) that the event was ‘scary’, which they seemed to connect to projected personal experience of the news actors in the reported events using the causal conjunction ‘so’ (underlined). The participant did not refer to a specific point in the article nor did the article provide any

information about the news actors' thoughts and mental or emotional states. A15 said they 'can only imagine' and used high epistemic modality to personalise the event: 'they will be in like unknown' and 'they'll be in a state of not knowing what is going to happen'. In Example 8, A21 also linked their negative Quality evaluation, 'shocked' with the personal experiences as they stated they would 'think about the people and their families'. Although they did not refer to any specific people, the use of the definite article 'the' preceding 'people' suggests that A21 was referring to the news actors affected by the news event.

Text Box 4 contains examples of how live blog respondents used personal experiences of news actors to justify their negative Quality evaluations.

Text Box 4. Negative Quality evaluations by live blog respondents on personal experiences of news actors

- | | | |
|------|---|--------|
| (9) | 'this I think like you know having sources in the area especially civilians like you know the Gaza resident I think seeing his tweets is (.) a pretty terrifying like you know breaking my home is shaking right now because of Israeli bombing' | (LB12) |
| (10) | 'I think all videos do give like (.) our emotive (.) emotive response (.) either because you're seeing like these children in this horrible area that had to be their homes eh (.) so it is saddening ' | (LB16) |
| (11) | 'I remember there was one guy from New Zealand I think it said (.) who's here doing eh (.) sports scholarship maybe (.) and he'd only been there two weeks eh (.) so (.) yeah it's pretty horrendous (1) eh (.) so he (.) there was his account he'd given he was running away with another boy and (.) the other boy he was running with was shot so that's pretty traumatic | (LB22) |

Each person referred to the use of different voices in the live blog in their evaluations. In Example 9, LB12 referred to the tweets of one specific 'Gaza resident' which caused him to evaluate the reported news event as 'terrifying' and LB16 in Example 10 referred to the videos of children in the affected area and linking those videos to their evaluation of the event as 'saddening'. Both referred specifically to the embedded media in the live blogs. Both negative Quality evaluations also function as invoked Affect. However, as each of the respondents ascribed the affective experience to the news event, Affect is only implied and therefore no conclusions can be drawn about the emotional response experienced by these readers.

In Example 11, LB22 spoke about a news participant from New Zealand and his account of the shooting. This account was presented as a direct quotation in the live blog, which LB22 refers to as 'his account'. They recount specific details from the account: 'he was running away with another boy' and that the student was

'here doing sports scholarship'. The respondent mixes direct speech markers 'here' with indirect speech marker 'there' further into the quotation: 'he'd only been there for two weeks', showing some blurring of repetition from the news text and LB22's own recounting.

I interpret these types of evaluations as influenced by the news value Personalisation. The evaluations of the news events made by the participants suggest a connection between the personal experiences of news actors, or the perceived experiences of news actors, and the use of negative Quality. Bednarek and Caple (2017: 88) state that the news value personalisation occurs when 'the [news] event is discursively constructed as having a personal or 'human' face (involving non-elite actors, including eyewitnesses)'. They (2017: 89) add that personalisation may include references to 'emotional experiences' of 'ordinary news actors'. In my collected data, the respondents discussed the experiences of ordinary news actors. Those who read a live blog referenced specific individuals from the live blogs suggesting that the personalisation found in live blogs (Thurman & Walters 2013) may be identified by readers as well, while those who read a traditional online news article did not reference the news texts. This suggests that in addition to news values being constructed within news texts (Bednarek & Caple 2017), readers may also construct news values in their evaluations of news events. Readers may draw on individual experiences presented in the live blogs or they may project experiences onto news actors in case of the traditional online news article respondents. Therefore this suggests that readers can evaluate news events based, perhaps unconsciously, on news values.

5.3 Summary of Results

Negative Quality was used most throughout the news event evaluations, meaning that the respondents' evaluations of the new events were primarily negative. This can be expected as both news events concern events containing high death tolls. The traditional online news article and the live blog readers both used negative Quality when they evaluated the number of people affected by the news events. I interpreted this as an evaluation following the news value impact. This was consistent across both news formats and both news events. Those who read about the Oregon shooting also used negative Quality when they evaluated the consistency of mass shootings in the USA. Both traditional online news article and live blog respondents negatively evaluated how common these types of news events were, and linked these reoccurrences to superlative negative Quality evaluations. I interpreted this as an evaluation following the news value consonance. This was again consistent across both news formats, but was not found to be present in the evaluations of the Gaza conflict.

A distinction was found in how traditional online news article and live blog respondents evaluated the personal experiences of news actors using negative Quality. Both groups evaluated personalised aspects of the news events using negative Quality. However, the traditional online news article readers referred to groups of news actors or projected appraisal onto news actors, while live blog readers referred to embedded external voices such as Tweets, videos and direct quotes. These evaluations also account for the quantitative difference in the use of negative Quality, as live blog respondents evaluated social media while traditional online news article respondents did not. These evaluations suggest a link between negative Quality evaluations of news events and the construction of the Personalisation news value. Evaluations from both groups can be interpreted in this way, with the live blog participants referring to specific individuals involved in the news events.

By analysing the Quality evaluations and interpreting them through news value analysis, I identified different Quality evaluations based on different aspects of the news events. Respondents referred to news events' impact, consonance, and personalisation in their Quality evaluations. The aspects of the news events that were evaluated using Quality constructed these news values. I therefore suggest that these four news values may influence evaluations of affective characteristics of news events.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how Attitudinal Appraisal can be used in the analysis of reader response data. This method of analysis hinges on the assumption that reading is an interpretive act, and is therefore inherently evaluative. As the news event evaluations were broadly similar both quantitatively and qualitatively between the live blog and the traditional online news article respondents, with the exception of negative Quality, I have shown that Appraisal analysis can provide not only consistent results but also a useful framework to illuminate reader response data. My analysis showed that the Appraisal framework is adaptable to reader response data such as interviews, as I was able to identify news values in reader responses and cross-reference each news value with the type of Appraisal used by participants. This helped identify the news values (personalisation, impact, and consonance), which increased readers' engagement (Quality) with the news texts.

Considering the wider implications of using Appraisal for reader response spanning beyond the breadth of this chapter, Appraisal can also allow for the ability to compare and contrast the evaluative language of the source texts with the evaluative language of the reader response interviews. This is of interest for researchers interested in investigating how evaluations may be influenced by the

original text and, while perhaps not appropriate for every research topic, it can widen the approach to Appraisal research. These implications are of particular relevance to reader response scholars as it allows us to use one framework adapted to the field of the text to study both the original text and the response text. By using one framework, this allows us to identify commonalities between the two texts to study not only readers' uptake but also readers' affective responses (Affect), evaluations of the text (Appreciation) and evaluations of the characters (Judgement).

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SECTION III

Methods

In defence of introspection

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1. The problem of observing reading

Introspection has had a bad reputation in literary linguistics. Even within early work in the discipline, some prior literary discussions were criticised for being overly ‘impressionistic’, based on implicit social and cultural biases, and subject only to the literary critic’s own heightened and expert sensibility (Carter & Simpson 1989); this characterisation was made in order to set up a contrast with a stylistic practice presented as a means of moving away from such subjective treatments. As stylistics has developed, the move to evidential and demonstrable data as a key factor in understanding literary reading has increased in pace. The term *stylistics* itself is often replaced by the more particular term *literary linguistics* to indicate a more evidential, empirical and scientific framing of the discipline within the context of literary analysis. Over time, this has also been accompanied by a shift from a pure consideration of the internal style of a literary text, to encompass matters of socially situated meaning and usage, cognitive perception and response, and the use of big data and digitised corpora to investigate ‘distant reading’ (for example, Miall 2006; van Peer et al. 2012; Moretti 2013).

I would like to begin by arguing that, in fact, introspection, intuition, interpretation and felt experience remain implicit even in the hardest of hard empirical approaches to literary reading. I will argue not for abandoning these other methods, but for remembering that introspection still has a place in modern stylistics. Furthermore, I suggest that introspection is not merely the primary phenomenon that these other methods treat as an object of analysis, but is in fact one of those methods available to stylisticians in our rich exploration of literary texts and reading. In reclaiming introspection as an empirical method, I should make it clear that I am not talking about ‘introspectionism’, the method of late nineteenth and early twentieth century psychology that relied on introspection as an exclusive exploratory device, and that is usually presented as giving way to

behaviourism as a scientific paradigm (Boring 1953, Lyons 1986). A re-evaluation of introspection(ism) is already in process (Beenfeldt 2015): the simplistic sense of a historical sequence from introspectionism to behaviourism to cognitivism has been criticised by, for example, Costall (2006) and Beenfeldt (2013). I will end this chapter by arguing for the introspective method not as an exclusive approach but as a key part of a multi-tooled literary linguistic exploration.

Across the field of modern literary linguistics, there have been various methodological techniques that aim to access the phenomenon of literary reading. (Examples of all of the approaches and traditions that follow can be found in Stockwell and Whiteley 2014; Burke 2014; and Sotirova 2015). At the most physical and material end of the spectrum, there is a tradition in the field of recording bodily reactions to the experience of literary reading. These can take the form, for example, of MRI scans of the brain during reading, demonstrating which regions of the brain are stimulated by different forms of literary experiences. It might be argued that techniques like this tell us some very general things about the brain, but perhaps less so about the mind, or about reading as a felt experience, or about the particular piece of literature that is being read. Indeed, such studies tend to treat literary works as generic, differentiating tragedy from comedy, perhaps, but unable to engage in the subtle tonal differences between, say, *Catch-22* or *Slaughterhouse Five* or *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

Similarly, a variety of techniques involving physical analogues of sensation, emotional response and immersive engagement have been used, such as eye-tracking during reading, or monitoring galvanic skin response. These are based on the assertion of, for example, processing time or stress-patterns as an index of the literary experience. The relationship between these two factors is complex, however, and bodily responses to reading might be as indirectly valid or invalid as brain scans. Crucially, again, such techniques suffer either from under-specificity as suggested by their generic nature above, or in fact from a massive over-specification: a study might show micro-reactions to individual words or phrases, but the framework has no theory of how those results can be set into a model of discourse and experience.

Less intrusively, there is now a longstanding tradition in literary linguistics in which readers are questioned explicitly about their responses, for example by questionnaires either during or after the reading experience, or by 'thinking aloud' as they read, or by a more open-ended interview conducted shortly after the reading experience. As we will see when we consider the nature of introspection in the next section of this chapter, there is a question around these sorts of explicit reflection: can we say that these retroflective rationalisations of reading after the fact are the same as the authentic reading experience itself? I have noted elsewhere (Stockwell 2011) that the familiar sociolinguistic problem of the observer's

paradox is even more problematic when it is a 'reader's paradox' – the object of analysis itself changes its nature when observed by the very same observing consciousness. A later self observing an earlier self is an altered self. Even attempting to capture the quality of the experience by asking questions throughout the reading, interrupting the reading flow to make the reader toggle rapidly back and forth from reading to self-consciousness, is still inescapably a shift in role and agency – simply a micro-retrospection in fact.

Alternatively, there is a tradition in literary linguistics that treats the notes, blogs and recordings of book-groups, focus groups, and reviews by online readers as the data for literary reader responses. This material has the advantage that it is empirical but not experimental data: the analyst often might not have generated or set up the reading or the response, and so the reading outcomes are in a certain way natural. This, of course, raises its own problems in that the responses cannot be constrained, focused, nor controlled experimentally. Furthermore, several such studies become explorations of social negotiation rather than of naturalistic reading.

Where traditional stylistics has relied heavily on a subjective reading, tempered by systematic, principled and explicit linguistic analysis, it is clear that a reader is being modelled that in some ways is imagined as an ideal or highly knowledgeable expert language user. In order to render the characterisation of this posited reader more authentic, several different approaches in the field have tried to systematise the nature of this reading role. For example, in the field of cognitive poetics, models that have already been verified psychologically by prior research are then applied to literary reading. They thus rely on an existing claim to psychological plausibility that allows a systematic analysis that appeals to validity by derivation. Such an approach also claims a posterior validity in that the results of the analysis are presented to the reader for recognition and agreement (or not). However, though these two principles might be seen to circle around the moment of reading, they are of course still indirect triangulations of that reading experience itself. In computational corpus stylistics, a method is used in which computer programs can find patterns and phrases across large bodies of texts which might act subliminally on readers. The use of a massive dataset of collocational patterns occurring across a language culture makes the linguistic corpus in effect an exponentially intersubjective distributed mental lexicon of a community of users. In some ways the outputs generated by corpus stylistics can thus be regarded as the likely connections that might be made by a super-reader. In traditional stylistics, cognitive poetics, and corpus stylistics, the nature of this imagined reader remains problematic. Though the model reader they each invoke might correspond to an individual mind or a diffused social mind, the fact remains that the conception is still idealised.

The difficulty with almost all of the methods outlined so far is that they are indirect ways of modelling readerly self-consciousness. Only introspection is direct: it might be idiosyncratic and subjective, but of course it remains the only direct way of 'getting at' the actual experience of reading. The problem with introspection as an analytical method, of course, is that it is only verifiable to the introspector. However, taken together, cognitive poetics and corpus stylistics offer triangulations that can, at least, present a possible way of mitigating each other. The key aim of validation is to capture both the subjective nature of reading while encompassing the social and cultural conventions within which any individual reading must occur.

2. The nature of introspection

The problem for any sort of external behaviourist or observational approach to studying reading is that there is almost nothing to see. Simply watching someone read tells you almost nothing about what is going on, unless you catch one of the moments in which they smile, laugh, cry, squirm or express facial reactions of disgust or irritation, and so on (I have tried this myself with poetic texts that seemed to make readers cry, in Stockwell 2009). Even then, it is not easy to align the textual moment with the response, let alone make the epistemological leap that connects rough responses to specific emotional and mental states. The difficulty in general with all the external empirical methods of investigating reading as set out in the section above is threefold: they are all indirect; they all involve a spatial displacement between different minds; or they involve a temporal displacement between different states of mind. Firstly, they are indirect because they necessarily involve observing or recording correlates, outcomes or associated responses to the actual direct internal experience of the reading. Secondly, they are spatially displaced because all empirical methods are fundamentally premised on the distinction between the scientific observer and the object of analysis, which in this case is the subjective experiencing mind of the reader in front of them. Lastly, even where the analyst is also the reader, switching between the primary experience and the analytical observation of that experience, this time-lag between different states of mind is potentially a problem. 'Introspection is always retrospection', says Sartre (1957: 11), echoing James' (1890: 187) contention that even inattentive perception can be subsequently recalled. You could then argue, along with Ryle (1949), that introspection of one's previous state of mind is no different from an observation of an external mind, and introspection should therefore not be treated as a privileged access at all. This position argues that introspection is not genuine: only retrospection exists.

There does, however, seem to be a significant difference between the near instantaneous online retrospection that we tend to think of as introspection and the more remote recall of a reading experience after the fact (Robinson & Clore 2002). The latter is more subject to social accommodation and reconstitution according to the situation. Ramsøy and Overgaard (2004) show how initial introspective reports are often vague, and become sharpened only under discussion, where they are raised to social consciousness. By contrast, the near-proximate articulation of self-awareness appears to be more direct, authentic and genuine, or at least feels that way, notwithstanding the philosophical nicety outlined above (see Koriat 2000).

Most discussions of introspection rely on a two-part or reflexive approach, in order to distinguish the felt experience of perceiving from the self-awareness that perception has happened (Blackmore 2010). This 'inner-sense theory' (see, for example, Armstrong 1981, Goldman 2006) imagines that self-consciousness involves a split between the perceiving self and the perceived self. Introspection, in this view, is a form of awareness of an imagined inner perception, just as perception is an awareness of one or more senses (taste, touch, sight, sound, smell). However, as Byrne (2005) points out, it is not clear what the sensing organ for introspection is, unlike the skin, nose, ears, eyes and tongue: unless you vaguely say that the brain is a sensing organ, but then it is also the top-level sensing organ for all those other organs too. Byrne argues that there is, in fact, no evidence for any sort of 'inner-eye'; instead, he suggests that the brain treats all perceptions (both external and internal) as evidence of the same reasoning we make about the world in general. In effect, he takes an embodied cognition view of consciousness (see also Rosenthal 2000). The notion that introspection is in a state of continuity with other senses is supported by the evidence that it seems to operate through other media, for example in listening to music (Temperley 2001, and see Shoemaker 1996; Overgaard et al. 2001).

Also challenging the notion of an inner-sense is an approach which argues for the existence of an 'interpretive sensory-access' (ISA), for example as set out by Carruthers (2009a, 2009b, 2011). He maintains that a single cognitive capacity for 'mind-reading' the motivations and beliefs of others is the same mechanism by which we model our own consciousness (see Leverage et al. 2011). Byrne (2005) attempts to reconcile the duality of inner-sense with the organic integration of ISA by noting that introspection has two unique aspects: you have privileged access to your own mind, and also peculiar access to it. That is, no one else has the same access to your mind, and the way that you know yourself and your motivations is specific to you. You might speculate that others operate and experience in the same way, but this is an extrapolation of your peculiar knowledge that amounts to a belief. (This is the arena of debate around the extended Theory of Mind that has

become known as ‘mind-reading’ – see Apperly 2011. When this psychological notion of mind-reading is further extended into a discussion of literary fictionality, I prefer to distinguish it as *mind-modelling* – Stockwell 2009).

Applying a cognitive linguistic perspective, it seems to me that this argument between dualism and continuity, and the threefold nature of introspection as displacement, timelag, and indirectness, together suggest that introspection is a figure/ground problem (Talmy 2000). The distinction between an inner sense and outer senses, or between perceiving and perceived self, seems to point to a dyadic situation in which one element is foregrounded in attention as a figure, and the other is unattended as ground. However, it is important to realise the experiential value of this notion: figure and ground are matters of subjective experience. You cannot simultaneously perceive figure and ground. (You can only even think in these terms if you are adopting an objective, external, view as an analyst of the situation, not involved in the perception). Indeed, you cannot perceive ground at all, strictly speaking, since ground is not a thing – it is simply not-the-figure. If you look at the ground, it becomes the figure.

This is a useful basic principle of cognitive science when applied to the experience of self-consciousness – and, for our purposes here, reading is a complex form of self-consciousness. The introspective experience exists in the area bounded between self-perspective (Vogeley et al. 2001), through self-report, and self-conscious awareness of subliminal perceptions, right out to perceptions on the point of subliminality (Macdonald 2014). The inner-sense dichotomy between perceiving mind and perceived mind is only a problem if viewed, as it were, from above, where both imagined minds exist simultaneously just like a sociolinguist might record a conversation between two other people. However, the experience of reading is involved and experiential, and while you are within it, you can only pay attention to the figural mind that is being perceived. All else is unattended ground that you literally cannot think about. The common feeling that introspection involves two minds or ‘selves’ arises because there is always and necessarily this displacement in perception, but the process of mind-modelling yourself, in order to ‘know your own mind’, is (as Carruthers 2011 and Byrne 2005 have it) indivisible and continuous with all other experience. This includes our ability to mind-model other people as well (Zunshine 2006, Stockwell 2015).

Drawing this together, we can separate out two dimensions of introspection, and address them specifically. Introspection can be understood as the quality of self-consciousness with the property of subjectivity. The former is the privileged access while reading, that is the basis for authoritative self-knowledge and belief (Macdonald 2014); the latter is the idiosyncratic and unpredictable singular part of the problem (its peculiarity). The first part of this requires a figure/ground attentional solution in the form of a readerly mind-modelling as we have

in cognitive poetics. The micro-retrospection of self-awareness is a perspectival shift between viewing position and that part of the mind which is viewed. It is the viewing itself that is key to the experience of self-consciousness. In Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 2008), subjective construal is associated with summary scan – a sort of compression of an observed phenomenon that is experientially and ideologically governed. Regarding your own mind is a compression of all of your situated behaviour and sense of self – but it is principally a feeling of identity and belief that arises from the process itself (see also Gibbs 2006, Barsalou 2009).

How then do we mitigate the other dimension of introspection: the peculiar singularity of subjectivity? The answer for a literary linguistic approach is to generalise it with reference to the language system as a whole. This is a conventional method in theoretical linguistics, where individual intuitions on well-formedness are systematised by corpus linguistics – where the large corpus stands as a rich idealisation of multiple subjectivities as evidenced by their usages. Essentially, it is a massive group consciousness based on intersubjectivity. This gives an approach to introspection that does not itself need to address the observer's paradox (the 'reader's paradox') inherent in self-consciousness, since it is addressed to the property of subjectivity instead. As set out in the first section above, the solution to the introspection problem involves a triangulation between a validated psychological explanation of individual experience from cognitive poetics and a generalised form of social and cultural usage from corpus stylistics (as in Stockwell and Mahlberg 2015). The aim is to combine these in order for an analysis driven by personal experience to avoid the charge of mere solipsism and whimsy.

3. Introspecting a poem

In thinking about my reading of the following poem, I will draw for analytical framing on some aspects of *Text World Theory* (Werth 1999, Gavins 2007). This is a model of discourse grammar which is particularly useful for distinguishing between ontological levels, termed 'worlds' in the theory. Certain linguistic features can serve as triggers to generate a switch in a reader's mind to a different world: modalisations like 'would' and 'could', for example, can cue up an alternate state of affairs or different worlds within characters' beliefs, wishes or fears. These alternatives might or might not come to pass, but they are introduced as unrealised possibilities. Similarly, deictic switches (as in the appearance of direct speech) can also signal a move into a different domain. Here is the poem:

I look into my glass,
And view my wasting skin,
And say, 'Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin!'

For then, I, undistrest
 By hearts grown cold to me,
 Could lonely wait my endless rest
 With equanimity.

But Time, to make me grieve,
 Part steals, lets part abide;
 And shakes this fragile frame at eve
 With throbbings of noontide.

(Thomas Hardy, from *Wessex Poems*, 1898)

This is a poem about ageing, and much of the literary criticism around it focuses biographically on Hardy's relationship with his first wife, and on the fact that this is the last poem in *Wessex Poems*, at which point Hardy was giving up novel-writing for poetry (Seymour-Smith 1994, Turner 1998, Tomalin 2006). Many of the critical treatments are biographical to the point of reading the poem as a direct confessional or unmediated authorial soliloquy:

A pen portrait by Henry Nevinston, drawn on May 30, 1903, shows what distressed Hardy when he looked into his glass: 'Face a peculiar grey white like an invalid's or one soon to die; with many scattered red marks under the skin, and much wrinkled – sad wrinkles, thoughtful and pathetic, but none of power or rage or active courage. Eyes bluish grey and growing a little white with age, eyebrows and moustache half light brown, half grey. Head nearly bald on the top, but fringed with thin and soft light hair. The whole face giving a look of soft bonelessness, like an ageing woman. Figure spare and straight; hands very white and soft and loose-skinned.'

(Bailey 1970: 111, referring to Nevinston 1941)

There is no doubt that the first-person and (literally) reflective tone encourage such a reading, and the 'hearts grown cold to me' is easily biographically decoded as a reference to Hardy's wife Emma, from whom he had become estranged by this point in his life (see Zietlow 1974, Pinion 1976, Paulin 1986).

It is, of course, an introspective poem in itself. I have chosen it for that very reason, but also because I have a history with the poem that involves a self-conscious awareness of myself too. I first came across this poem when I was a 19 year old student. I remember being struck by it 32 years ago, but at that point in my life the sentiment it conveyed could only be imagined. I am closer to the feeling now of the mismatch between bodily ageing and mental outlook, as I approach the age Hardy was when the poem was written. In what follows, I will use 'Hardy' as a shorthand for the poetic persona who is modelled in the poem, with the caveat that this entity is my own modelled version of the author, rather than being biographically authentic.

In introspecting about the poem, in this section, I am drawing on my analytical knowledge mainly in cognitive poetics and briefly in corpus stylistics in order to provide a principled means of articulating my own reading and feelings about the poem. Attentionally, the poem is interesting. It sets up two main text-worlds that are ontologically distinct but also differ tonally, and as a reader I have to cast my attention between these two states. The first text-world is set up in the beginning: it foregrounds the self-regard at the moment of looking in the mirror, and establishes a set of actions that centre on viewing and saying. There is a world-switch to a different state of affairs in the first stanza at the point of direct speech, 'And say, "Would God it came to pass..."' – in spite of the verb 'say', here, the effect might also be read as an example of direct thought, especially in the context of the gradual trajectory inwards across this stanza, not only perspectively but also from 'look' to 'skin' to 'heart'. This alternative text-world moves to an unrealised parallel past history, also cued up by the modal 'Would' (strictly, yet another world-switch within the deictic shift to direct speech, but I am keeping the analysis at the level of broad description). It is interesting that the famously agnostic Hardy puts God into the alternative, wishful world.

The second stanza remains in this modal world, governed by the verb 'Could', though there is a micro-lacuna of 'undistress' where the negation briefly points back to the distress which actually exists at the initial text-world level. The final stanza switches back to this first text-world level, signalled by 'But' and established by the return to an unmodalised present tense. However, since we have been somewhere else in the meantime, the feeling back at this initial world-level has changed: instead of looking and saying and thinking, the observing self has been delexicalised by being rendered into inanimate parts: 'Part ... part', 'this fragile frame'. At the same time, 'me' is placed into a patientive position, while 'Time' is given agency and of course is capitalised into personification. Overall, the sense I derive from this stylistic texture is that the first, framing text-world that corresponds to his real current life is exclamatory and emotional, whereas the imagined parallel world is cold, lonely, static and diminished.

However, my impression about the message of the poem overall is not a clear-cut feeling that the speaker's life is unremittingly awful and he wishes only for numbness. There is obviously a sense of painfulness, regret and nostalgia being conveyed, but there is also I think a sense that the felt experience of this inescapable aspect of ageing is part of what vivifies life and makes it intense and worth living. There is an ambivalence towards the experience of life, and it is this ambivalence in fact that creates the poignancy in the poem, for me. I can locate this stylistically in the switches between the two worlds, where any possible exclusively binary choice between active emotion on one hand and passive coldness on the other is in fact not sustained consistently. The tones of the two worlds are blurred

a little. The first, real-life world does not figure the speaker unambiguously as an agent, but moves the poetic persona from a viewer to a grammatical patient, and the embedded imagined world also gestures back to the framing feeling world with negational foregrounding: 'undistress' recalls the distress; 'lonely' recalls a time when there was a partner close by. The blurring is captured in the balance of 'Part steals, lets part abide'.

Tonally, though, the two worlds do lean in divergent directions. Compare the register of 'equanimity' (formal Latinate, calm, balanced, self-possessed, rational, abstracted) in the modalised world with 'throbbings' (possibly imitative from late Middle English, concrete, animalistic, uncontrolled) in the current, real-life world. The latter word is curious and anomalous, in this lexical context. It *feels* the most material and literal (compare 'throbbings' with 'heart / thin / cold / rest'). It *feels* sexual. This intuitive feeling can be verified through a consideration of its etymology and usage. It is attested in the lemma form *throb* as occurring first in 1450, and it then appears as both a noun and a verb, and in plural form 'throbs', and 'throbbing'. The OED lists evidence of all these, often in the co-text of blood and the arterial system, but only one occurrence of the plural form 'throbbings', from a 1739 medical text. More recently, the British National Corpus (BNC) of late 20th century English usage does not contain a single occurrence of 'throbbings'. In fact, a simple Google search of the word produces only the Hardy example itself, one mention in *Frankenstein* (1818), a line in Walt Whitman's 'One Wicked Impulse' (1846), and a nineteenth century translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. 'Throbbings' does seem to be a predominantly nineteenth century word. Indeed, Google's usage over time (derived from the OED data) shows 'throb' and 'throbbing' peaking in usage in the late nineteenth century, before diminishing in usage as the twentieth century progresses. In the BNC of modern English, there are 286 occurrences of singular 'throbbing': two-thirds (196) of these are from fictional prose, with 32 further examples from medical and natural science contexts. The semantic prosody of almost all usages is mainly concerned with sensual or tactile matters, or pain, heat and specifically sexual pain. In the context of the lexical choices of the rest of the poem, the word stands out, awkwardly. It contrasts for heat with the 'hearts grown cold' in the parallel world.

The switching at the world level is aligned with a parallel iconicity in the metrical arrangement of the text. Experientially, this feels like a slowing down and speeding up of momentum across the poem. In each stanza, the pattern is consistent. The iambic trimetres of lines 1, 2 and 4 in each verse are interspersed with a single iambic tetrametre in line 3. This gives the initial two lines a conversational tone, with the third line in each stanza carrying a lengthening or intensification of the sense, as if the speaker is carried away with his exclamation (verse 1), resigned

despair (verse 2), and frustration (verse 3). This patterning also encourages heavy pauses in the first two lines of each verse, slowing down the sense of pace and making these initial two lines feel reflective and considered. By contrast, the third lines in each stanza seem to run on because of their additional length, and the syntax in each one serves to link the line with the final, fourth line in each case in different ways. The metrical and syntactic effect aligns with the tonal effect where the intensification of emotion coincides with the increase in momentum at these points. The effect is cumulative: the first stanza has line 3 run on because the syntax of the sentence 'Would God it came to pass...' is incomplete. The word 'pass' also iconically points onward to the next line. In the second verse, the syntax is relatively complete: 'I... could... wait my endless rest'. The word 'rest' also iconically encourages a pause here, so that 'With equanimity' in the fourth line is a resigned afterthought. In the last stanza, the short phrases are stopped, finally and aptly, on the word 'abide'. The closing two lines at the end represent the most released emotional moment of the poem. The momentum is enhanced by the active agency and violence of 'shakes' in contrast with the 'fragile' body and the alliteration of the phrase 'fragile frame'. In the last line ('With throbbings...'), the final 'th' of 'With' makes the articulation emphasise and sustain the initial 'th' of 'throbbings' even more tangibly and intensively.

The effects overall that I have teased out in this short discussion are those that occurred, introspectively, to me. Some were vaguely or perhaps subliminally felt, and have benefited by being brought to articulation using this descriptive method. I do not feel, though, as if the analytical method has generated the effects, and I do not think that there were any moments of striking realisation at which I was surprised by the analysis. Of course, for this, it is not simply a matter of trusting what I say and believing that I am honest. The practice of this sort of stylistics ultimately ends with an appeal – whether implicit, or, as here, explicit – to you to recognise your own feelings in my account.

This is a poem that speaks to me, both at age 19 and 51. Yet I am aware that this personalisation of the poem is a peculiar and personal matter. Even so, I can apply the same principle of mind-modelling to an understanding of these two responses and also to my sense that other readers might respond differently. For me, the personalisation of the poem involves a mutually reinforcing metonymic move along a mind-cast – the thread between me and the speaking author. This is complex: the cast runs from 'me to poetic voice', and 'me to past self', and 'that self to future self' – but also, crucially, my analytic mind to my experiencing mind. Furthermore, I also have a sense of a mind called Thomas Hardy aligned with the poetic persona, and that is relevant here since it is part of my schematic input too. The poem gained in poignancy, for me, when I realised that Hardy was 58 at the time of publication of the poem – he was to live another 30 years.

4. A retrospective on the argument

This chapter has presented a defence of introspection as an empirical method in literary linguistics. In spite of its numerous drawbacks as an empirical technique concerning reliability, verifiability, objectivity and measurability, the fact stands that introspection remains the only direct access that an individual literary researcher has to the thought processes and responses of a reader. All other techniques are indirect or partial to varying degrees. Their usefulness can only be of any validity if they are triangulated, and do not displace introspection as the ultimate arbiter of value.

Introspection can be understood as the quality of self-consciousness (while reading) with the property of subjectivity. It is the latter aspect which causes the idiosyncratic and unpredictable singular part of the problem. The chapter mitigates the singularity of subjectivity by generalising it using the insights into the language system offered by cognitive poetics and corpus linguistics. Essentially, an individual's linguistic resources are calibrated according to cultural usage, and then mapped back onto the particular literary text in focus. The reference corpus and the cognitive framework are treated as a rich idealisation of multiple subjectivities as evidenced by their usages. This gives an approach to introspection that does not need to address the observer's paradox (the 'reader's paradox') inherent in self-consciousness, since it is addressed to the property of subjectivity instead. However, the use of cognitive poetics and corpus linguistics has been supportive and illustrative in my reading of the poem above: the core of that account has been introspective at heart.

I have been guided by principles and practice in modern literary linguistics – mainly cognitive science – but the illustrative account in this chapter is an attempt to recuperate a method that might look much like traditional stylistics. I think it goes beyond this, however, in privileging matters of personal salience and feeling, and insisting that these aspects are also important for stylisticians to discuss. I am not arguing for a lack of principle or systematicity, but I do think it is time for a small corrective to a view within literary linguistics that can often seem to fetishise measurement and quantification to the detriment of regarding literature as human communication.

Overall, my argument is to recommend a multi-tooled approach to literary analysis, with introspection as key rather than an embarrassing inconvenience to be theorised away. Introspection was the launch point for analysis for much of the history of the discipline of stylistics, and is often still the motivation for wanting to account for the power of certain literary texts. It seems to me that we now have the tools to be able to explore intuitions more systematically and rigorously, and a stylistic practice that recognises this is more likely to reconnect literary scholarship with literary readers in general. That is my defence.

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Reading the readers

Ethical and methodological issues for researching readers and reading in the digital age

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1. Introduction

The digital revolution has brought new opportunities but also dilemmas for researchers, particularly those attempting to engage with online users and communities. With the emergence of new methodologies such as digital ethnography or ‘netnography’ (Kozinets 2010) and new fields such as internet studies and fan studies, ethical and methodological issues have become the subject of recurring and often highly contentious debate. For example, a Special Issue of *Applied Linguistics Review* (2017) responded to key issues arising specifically from research on the language of online interactions, and concluded by highlighting the importance of transparency and self-reflexivity for researchers (Page 2017). The guidelines for conducting online research emerging as a result of these discussions are invaluable for individual researchers and for ethics committees, but as Page (2017) concedes, no one single policy or procedure can cover all eventualities, especially in such a constantly shifting media landscape. Another factor is that any advice or guidelines can quickly become outdated, for example with advances in internet search engines, and with constantly changing terms and conditions and affordances for social media platforms.

In this chapter, my aim is to focus specifically on the adjustments that researchers primarily concerned with the language used by readers in discussing their reading online may need to make in terms of responding to new methods and ethical practices. In particular, I will consider how we deal with written data about reading found online as ‘text’ and how we negotiate the freedom to be critical

of others' opinions, interpretations and creative efforts, with the need to be ethically observant and to build relationships with research participants. I also argue that methods based on anonymising and identifying broader patterns or trends in online 'data' may not do justice to the ways in which readers are often invested in defending what may be marginalised positions, or giving creative expression to complex and contradictory responses. My approach in this chapter follows the practice of other researchers confronting the challenges of working across on and offline environments (e.g. Page 2017; Fuller & Rehberg Sedo 2019), providing 'researcher vignettes' (Tagg et al. 2017) based on our own experiences so as to tease out the complex issues and compromises that experimenting with different methodologies and ethical practices so often exposes. The chapter will begin with brief overviews of key approaches to readers and audiences from multiple disciplines that have influenced my research, before discussing some of the specific ethical and methodological issues I have encountered and the ways in which I have attempted to resolve them.

2. Background to the study of readers and audiences

When I studied language and literature at a redbrick university in the 1980s readers were always abstract, generic and masculine, and even where this might have been briefly contested, for instance in discussing feminist approaches to literature, or reader response criticism, this generally meant replacing one abstraction with another ('s/he'; 'the implied reader'). Nevertheless, constructing an argument based on an interpretation of a literary work consisted primarily of critically evaluating readings produced by other scholars. Linguistic and stylistic studies from this period also tended to focus primarily on evaluating literary texts and their interpretation with reference to textual evidence, and although empirical approaches based on studying actual readers actually reading became firmly established with the setting up of the International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature in 1987, their methods tended to focus on data gained from reading tasks conducted under laboratory-like conditions.

Meanwhile, since the 1980s, media and cultural studies scholars have been exploring ways of engaging with 'active' audiences (Fiske 1987), seeking to understand the relationship between ideology and reading (Hall's 'preferred reading' theory [1980]) and conducting ethnographic research of audiences at home or in the workplace (Morley 1986, Hobson 1991). While some (e.g. Hartley 1987) have questioned the extent to which such approaches can ever go beyond treating audiences as 'invisible fictions' or discursive constructions reflecting the ideologies and

assumptions of researchers, the intent to engage with ‘real’ audience members and the specific social and political conditions in which they are situated clearly goes beyond most approaches to the study of literary readers and reading at the time. The disciplinary divide between media and literary studies in part reflects a seemingly clear distinction between a focus on mass practices and nuanced interpretations of specific aspects or themes of a specific work. These differences also of course in turn reflect assumptions about the nature of engaging in cultural activities experienced and shared with others (e.g. watching television or going to the cinema), versus the act of reading, conceived largely as a private, immersive experience enjoyed by the lone reader.

3. The impact of the digital

The ‘digital revolution’ has fundamentally unsettled some of these disciplinary divides, with the multiple modalities of ‘born digital’ (Bell et al. 2010) literary texts requiring new approaches for their study, and terms such as the ‘wreader’ (Landow 1997: 17) suggesting fundamental shifts in how we understand the power relations between writers and readers. Projects based on cognitive and empirical approaches (e.g. E-Read 2016, Reading Digital Fiction 2014–17) have provided important insights into the impact of the digital in terms of reading comprehension, the ergonomics of reading on digital devices, and how readers process particular linguistic and multimodal features within digital texts. Digitisation has also led to the emergence of a whole new field for the study of the ‘digital humanities’, facilitating large scale empirical studies based on mining data from both print and online sources. It has also given renewed impetus to approaches and methods from book history which has a long tradition of gathering empirical data about the ‘reading experience’ from a wide range of sources, including letters, journals and wills, often in ways which debunk received wisdom. For example, the discovery of papers relating to the publication of *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall has provided insights into how contemporary readers responded to the censoring of the novel, challenging the idea that the work was obscene and thanking the author for her ‘honest and sensitive’ approach to difficult subjects (Flood 2019). The digitisation of these papers will in turn allow increased access to the materials for critics of the period, and also ensure that the materials will be stored and preserved for future generations. Meanwhile, the Reading Experience Database (2006–) has relied on a team of volunteers to digitise content relating to reading from 1495–1945, with a second phase of the project to set up REDs in Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, and New Zealand.

4. Web 2.0 and online participatory cultures

As well as appearing to provide the legitimacy and validation associated with quantification and replicability, the digital revolution post Web 2.0 has also been hailed as fundamentally democratising access to and participation in the literary (Page & Thomas 2011). This opening up of the literary field includes increased opportunities for would be writers to publish their work online and gain immediate access to potentially vast audiences. It also includes the emergence of more and more forums for readers to come together to discuss their reading and to produce their own creative responses to those texts (for example in the form of fanfiction), as well as unprecedented access to authors via their websites or social media accounts. The question of whether individuals in these contexts identify as fans or readers can itself be problematic (Thomas 2011b), but the fact that online spaces provide a means for readers to come together and establish a strong collective presence certainly facilitates a sense of community and collective power. In some instances, for example The Harry Potter Alliance, this can even result in readers becoming social activists using the ‘power of story’ to influence opinion on equality and human rights issues, for example campaigning under the guise of Dumbledore’s Army to fight bigotry or using the ‘spirit of Neville Longbottom’ to fight back against various forms of bullying.

It was through my studies of fanfiction that I was first introduced to both the exciting possibilities and complex challenges of attempting to convey and represent the activities of fans as observed on various forums and fan communities. I was exhilarated by the tantalising prospect of being able to observe reading cultures in the wild (Nakamura 2013: 241) and fascinated by the fact that all this activity was taking place in the context of heated debates about the extent to which the emergence of digital cultures could be blamed for an apparent decline in reading. In addition, the kinds of readings of popular and canonical texts and authors provided in these spaces were often highly subversive, challenging critical consensus and providing insights from individuals whose ethnicity, age, or sexuality gave them distinctive perspectives on, and investment in, the fictional worlds under consideration (Thomas 2011a; 2014).

5. Going beyond text

My training as a researcher versed in close textual analysis led me to focus on specific case studies and relatively stable, defined communities, rather than on attempting to identify larger patterns or typologies of fan practices. My primary interest remained learning what the fans were doing with the source material of the

literary fictions, mainly in the form of writing about them (Thomas 2007, 2011a). However, from this initial interest in fanfiction based on the creative interpretations of existing literary texts, I found it increasingly necessary to move beyond the fanfiction works themselves to explore the interactions between fans taking place via comments or activities such as beta reading, and to examine the infrastructures of the sites where these activities took place. In many ways this reflected once again my training as a researcher of literary language, concerned to identify and unpack the discourse type and specific features and affordances of the contexts for interaction and discussion that I was dealing with. Moreover, the architecture and design of these forums seemed to invite just this kind of free ranging exploration, and the opportunity to see texts emerge from works in progress with access to the input of both author and reader. To some extent, my practice followed that later discussed by Giaxoglou (2017), as my stance towards my research subjects took into account not only the terms and conditions and policies of the sites they were engaging with, but also the ways in which their language situated them in relation to a possible audience or wider public for their contributions. In addition, by focussing on the semiotics of aspects of the sites' design, or the affordances of different platforms, I was also engaging in the kind of modular approach to online research advocated by Spilioti (2017). But in so doing these explorations clearly took me beyond the comfort zone of dealing with readers as 'invisible fictions' towards something much closer to ethnography and immersion in the lived experience of real readers' engagement with literary texts and authors.

Of course, the seemingly unfettered access to readers in the wild was in reality restricted to their written reports and reflections on reading, though in some instances reading activities were coordinated via the forums (e.g. the Group Reads of Jane Austen novels discussed by Thomas & Round 2016). In addition, most of the material that could be gleaned from these sites was textual, based on the written contributions and responses of community members, or the published terms and conditions of a particular forum. Apart from profile images or the occasional link to images or video content, most posts were text based. So my responses to the users I was observing was based largely on my observations of them as 'paper beings' (Barthes 1977: 111), and however much information they might disclose about themselves, I now realise that my relationship with them as research subjects was very different to that I might have working alongside participants in a workshop situation, or interacting via telephone or video messaging. I now know that I am not alone in coming to this kind of recognition late. Spilioti (2017: 13) warns of the dangers for language researchers of the 'deceit' that because writing is available for scrutiny and appears relatively stable and fixed even in an online context, this may lead to an objectification of research subjects and a neglect of the multimodal aspects of these spaces. Likewise, Georgakopolou (2017) writes about clashes in

her own research between approaching research data as text versus acknowledging them as ‘people’ and between adopting the position of a reader-analyst versus that of an interlocutor-analyst. Certainly, in the context of researching online communities, the question of how exactly we distinguish between ethnographic methods such as participant observation and the kind of close reading practised in the humanities becomes difficult when the object of study is solely the textual traces users leave behind.

6. Access and anonymity: Negotiating the public versus the private

Another potential ‘deceit’ in this context is where the sheer amount of activity taking place helps create the impression of almost minute by minute access to reader responses. Following ongoing discussions, and becoming more and more familiar with the participants who cultivated colourful pseudonyms or avatars, it could often be hard to draw absolute lines between on- and offline selves, or between discussion of the fanfiction or source ‘texts’ and discussion of other topics of interest including real world events. The fact that the vast majority of the sites I looked at allowed unrestricted access to content and the apparent anonymity afforded to participants by their use of avatars were sufficient to ensure that my analysis at that time raised no particular ethical concerns. My initial approach was therefore to engage in the same kind of close textual analysis of content for user comments and interactions as I would for the fanfiction.

However, once I started to engage more with controversial content involving ‘real people’ (Thomas 2014) and to want to dig deeper into who the fans were and why they kept coming back to these sites, I began to question whether in certain cases what I was writing might potentially impact negatively on people who had never volunteered or agreed to be part of my studies. In this respect, like many other researchers of online communities, I was slow to recognise that, as Giaxoglou (2017) puts it, ease of access does not mean ethical access. An ethical grey area opens up when it comes to the liminal space where discussion about an author or a book becomes a discussion about some aspect of the reader’s personal life, though this can be especially difficult to define where the reader’s interpretation of or investment in a fictional world is so intimately tied up with their sense of their own identity. Likewise, someone who participates in a forum as a reader may also self-present elsewhere on the same site as a writer, raising an important question to do with how we give credit to creative producers but also those who contribute so much to discussions and critical understandings whether or not they themselves publish creative content. Another complicating factor in this context is the degree to which content is co-created, and the extent to which users may

consider themselves to have the kinds of rights but also responsibilities associated with professional authors or producers. Certainly, in my early studies of fanfiction I assumed that authors of the published works would expect to be credited, and it seemed logical to extend this to the surrounding discussion. As Kennedy (2006) has demonstrated, the question of anonymity for participants in online spaces can be complex, particularly those for whom identity is something that is fiercely contested, so at the very least researchers should be aware of and sensitive to the particular ways in which anonymity may be conceived and understood within a specific community.

Nevertheless, reflecting back on some of these studies, I now realise that my use of personal details gleaned from the sites about some of the users I discussed could potentially be seen as revealing or intrusive, particularly where users might be unaware of how information about them may be used months or years later. These early studies also risked unwittingly 'othering' my research subjects and erecting a divide between them as the subjects of the research, and me as the researcher, bringing my knowledge and intuition to bear on their contributions.

Debates about how we differentiate between the public and the private in online spaces continue and are complicated by the culture of sharing and the idea of the relational rather than the individual self that are so intrinsic to the contemporary version of the social network (Giaxoglou 2017). Another complicating factor, especially for those committed to always consider language in context, is the phenomenon of 'context collapse' (as coined by Marwick and boyd 2011 and discussed in relation to linguistic approaches by Georgakopoulou 2017), which occurs, for instance, where a user posts something intended for an intimate audience but which goes 'viral' and is accessed and shared by millions. Anonymising content, for example by assigning a number or code to participants, risks stripping it of the kind of detail that can often be necessary for eliciting understanding or empathy, and for understanding context. In the case of online users who often expend quite a bit of creative energy constructing their profiles, it can also be said to detract from their attempts to imaginatively express their identity. Again, my training led me to always try to provide as much context as possible for understanding individual contributions or the interactions between users. Direct quotation provides the basis for my analysis and interpretation, and it seemed obvious to me that I should do all I could to enable my readers to be able to search for my sources and examine the 'evidence' for themselves. In the case of the communities I studied, while participants did disclose and discuss personal matters, their main reason for participating was to share their interpretations and opinions of specific texts or authors, and while overt criticism of others' views may have been dispreferred, some of the communities I looked at (particularly in Thomas 2011b) were much more demanding in terms of the level of knowledge

required to participate, and much more combative and adversarial in their interactions. So to some extent it could be argued that by participating in these kinds of discussion, community members could expect to have their views tested and challenged by others, as they themselves put forward theories and interpretations which might be provocative or controversial. Conversations between these 'citizen critics' (Eberly 2000) could thus be argued to be 'public acts of interpretation' (2) taking place in the public sphere.

However, when I was asked to contribute a humanities perspective to a study of the ethical implications of researching online health discussion boards (Bond et al. 2013), the need to protect participants and report responsibly on their activity seemed much clearer. This extended not just to anonymising sources but to exploring how the actual words of participants could (if at all) be used responsibly. Given the sensitivity of the topics under discussion we considered whether paraphrasing was preferable to direct quotation, and even explored whether changing verbatim quotations could work in order to preserve anonymity while capturing something of the tone of the contribution. While I could understand the argument that this might be necessary to avoid individuals being identifiable, I really struggled with the idea of interfering with the language of contributions in any way because of the possibility of misrepresenting the discussions and denuding them of their distinctive stylistic features. However, when I later came to write an article about the stories told by people living with dementia on social media (Thomas 2017), I reluctantly used this strategy as a compromise between my desire to protect the anonymity of participants for whom consent would be highly problematic, with the pressure from the journal editors to provide some concrete examples of the kinds of discourse I was purporting to discuss. Anonymity is also crucial for a research student of mine studying controversial content in online Chinese fan forums, where both her participants and the researcher herself could be at risk from the authorities if identified. Nevertheless, as Spilioti (2017) demonstrates, the question of exactly what information may be compromising remains problematic, especially when we come to consider metadata which is automatically disclosed.

7. Reflexivity and the responsibilities of researchers

In the field of fan studies, an important consideration is the extent to which the researcher identifies as a 'fan' and can be recognised as a full participant in a community with all the sense of responsibility and loyalty that may entail. The term 'aca fan' has been coined by leading fan scholar Henry Jenkins to convey the idea of a hybrid identity for fan researchers, and prompted debate about the compromises this stance may entail in practice (Evans & Stasi 2014). In her doctoral thesis

on the ethics of internet research in relation to fan sites, Whiteman (2007) reflects on her own experiences of negotiating with the subjects of her research, providing them with some sense of a right to reply and of her ongoing commitment to their communities. More recently, Page (2017) has written of the consequences for researchers of the increased discoverability digitisation brings both in terms of their published work but also for them as individuals easily contactable via email or social media.

The question of my own presence and visibility with regards to the communities I was studying only really became an issue for me when I moved from basing my research purely on material I found by ‘lurking’ on various sites, to attempting to engage with participants through online interaction and interviews. Of course, this presents its own ethical and methodological issues, particularly with regards to the impact that my presence as a researcher might have on the interactions and behaviours of those I was observing. Nevertheless, it also opens up the possibility of a productive ‘dialogic approach’ (Page et al. 2014) involving negotiation with smaller sets of participants and continual reflection and reassessment. In the first instance, therefore, my strategy was to contact a limited number of users whose fictions or posts had attracted my attention via the forums or direct messaging/email in order to try to get some sense of an insider view of the communities and also to learn more about the users than could be gleaned from their online profiles. Everyone I contacted seemed happy to answer my questions and to provide permission for me to quote from their responses, which I duly credited in the published pieces. In the case of one of these studies (Thomas 2011b), immediately post publication my chapter and the volume in which it was published themselves became a topic of conversation on the online forum for a short period of time, and some of the participants I had interviewed commented on their experiences and involvement. This experience, which coincided with more stringent oversight of the ethics of online research both within my own institution and in the academic fields with which I was primarily engaging, led me to reflect further on my own ethical and methodological practices and the extent to which these needed to be formalised and rationalised much more rigorously.

8. Mixed methods approaches

In my more recent work on digital reading, a key influence has been the practices of scholars primarily associated with the fields of book history and literary sociology. With digital tools offering new kinds of access to readers, mixed methods approaches (Fuller & Rehberg Sedo 2012) involving interviews, focus groups and so on, make it possible to combine analysis of what readers *do* with insights into

their motivations and reflections on their reading and the reading related activities they participate in. It also provides the opportunity to combine on- and offline research, mitigating the danger of 'digital dualism' whereby the on- and offline worlds are treated as though separated by an impermeable barrier. Moreover, a mixed methods approach is especially suited to understanding reading as something which takes place within an 'interpretive community' (Fish 1980) where the power relations and social interactions between participants may be crucial in understanding the kinds of interpretations they form and share with one another, and also for understanding how those interpretations may be valued and taken up by others.

Researching Readers Online (2012) and the Digital Reading Network (2013–15) were projects funded by the AHRC that I led in collaboration with my colleague Julia Round to explicitly engage with emerging approaches and methods for the study of digital reading, and encompassing reading practices across a wide range of digital platforms and devices. For Researching Readers Online we adopted a mixed methods approach, with an online survey of readers from online book clubs and discussions forums and focus groups with students, librarians, writers and teachers from the locality. Both the survey and the focus groups challenged our assumptions about 'digital natives' and the extent to which they were engaging with digital reading practices, and both also produced some rich qualitative data in terms of the emotions and passions aroused when our questions touched on some of the changes brought about by digitisation and how these might affect readers and reading. The Digital Reading Network brought together researchers of readers and audiences from multiple disciplines, and set out to explore emerging techniques for capturing 'big data' alongside public engagement activities and discussions with teachers of literature. For all of the research that involved dealing with members of the public or non-academic stakeholders we used participant information sheets and release forms, and always advised participants that they could withdraw from the project at any stage.

9. Moving from subjects to participants

Increased sensitivities about our online data in the aftermath of the Snowden and Cambridge Analytica controversies, and increasing concerns about the toxicity of so much of the discourse on social media platforms, have meant that many users are guarded and even suspicious about signing up to take part in research studies, thus making questions of consent and recruitment increasingly problematic. This clearly impacted on our online research activities as many of those we contacted directly queried the purpose and remit of the project. In addition, when we

sought permission to post our survey on various forums we often encountered hostility from site administrators and forum moderators. Another issue affecting the recruitment of participants online is the ephemeral nature of many people's involvement with online communities, which was another reason why we chose to focus on well-established and clearly defined groups and on users who featured prominently in discussions.

In a recent post on social media, a 'subject' who has participated in a number of online mental health research projects publicly announced that she would no longer be offering her services, taking issue with the ways in which her data had been collected and (mis)interpreted and the idea that 'giving voice' to people such as her in fact did the complete opposite. The anger expressed by this subject at her sense of broken trust was very powerfully expressed, but it also posed the question of how this could be avoided, given that some degree of interpretation of the data was inevitable, and that the need for some quantification and verification of findings might necessarily drown out the nuances of how specific experiences are shared and reported.

For our article on the roles of moderators in online reading groups and discussions forums (Thomas & Round 2016), based on the research from our first two projects, we analysed two specific communities, and conducted interviews with the moderators responsible for managing their various activities. We had been observing the activities of both groups online over a period of some years. In the case of one group we had met the moderator 'in real life' after contacting him over a period of time via email, while our relationship with the other moderator was based solely on email and direct messaging. Both interviews were conducted using Skype, combining the ease of access of the digital with the intimacy of an interpersonal interaction where we could see each other. This seemed suited to a study which sought to engage with the moderators and hear their experiences, setting this against our observations and analysis of the discussions taking place on the sites. Alongside *Researching Readers Online*, the interviews with the moderators in many ways fundamentally challenged our 'readings' of the conduct of the two communities and the roles of the moderators. However, another consequence of combining analysis and interviews in this way was that the relationships that we had established with the moderators and our gratitude for their participation resulted in our feeling a sense of responsibility to not only ensuring that their work was fairly represented, but also to avoid anything that could be seen as criticising them or the communities they worked so hard to sustain. Lambrou (2014) has written about how the relationship between an ethnographer and her subjects can raise difficult ethical and methodological issues, particularly with regards to the researcher's empathy for and responsibility towards participants. In the case of our study, the ethical and methodological issues we faced involved balancing the

expectation that research should be objective with our growing sense of affinity with the moderators. This conflict did not extend in the same way to the participants in the online discussion groups who we had not met or interacted with directly.

10. Creative participatory methods

Coming from a discipline (literary criticism) that has traditionally never particularly worried about the impact that our readings might have on others (e.g. the authors or real life subjects of a particular work) being faced with these stark ethical and methodological dilemmas can be profoundly unsettling. The very emergence of the field of the digital humanities perhaps speaks to the need for scholars to adapt and critically reflect on both the strengths and weaknesses of new and existing methods but also their impact and consequences and to reappraise how we approach the 'human' as the subject of research in the age of the digital and the virtual. One response has been to seek out creative methods which may entail an element of risk but which reposition and realign the roles of researchers and subjects and which allow space for serendipitous and complex or contradictory findings. In the field of media studies, David Gauntlett (2011) has been a key figure in developing creative research methods based on engaging participants as makers rather than consumers of media content. Such methods and approaches may be especially appropriate for the study of reading to counter the current focus on empirical studies of reading as comprehension or cognitive processing of information, but also to provide some evidence and insights into a whole range of readerly activities and practices that may be blindsided by abstract theoretical accounts. For example, a recent study by Fuller and Rehberg Sedo (2019) uses the Story Circle method to try to capture negative experiences of reading that they argue tend to be marginalised or overlooked in part at least because researchers of reading are themselves so heavily invested in the idea of reading as beneficial and transformative.

A creative and participatory approach to capturing the diverse experiences of contemporary readers underpins *Reading on Screen* (2017–18), the most recent project on digital reading funded by the AHRC which I led. For this project the research team worked intensively with small groups of participants over a three-day period to co-create digital stories reflecting on their reading lives and their responses to the changes affecting their reading preferences and practices in the context of digitisation. We relied on digital tools to recruit participants, to maintain group contact and communication (a Facebook group) and to share the stories produced by our participants with wider audiences (through the project website and YouTube). However, it was the facilitated workshops based on the

digital storytelling methodology that primarily contributed to fostering a strong sense of a group dynamic and bond between participants, and between the participants, the facilitators and the researchers.

As with Fuller and Rehberg Sedo's study, Reading on Screen's focus on storytelling produced rich data in the sense of powerfully communicating the lived, personal experiences of our participants. Yes, there were stories which recounted the benefits and transformative potential reading offered participants who were dealing with mental health issues, but other stories also offered insights into the experiences of reluctant readers and reflected on the feelings of exclusion and social stigma haunting those who had never learned to read at all. In this sense the project also contributed to taking research on reading into new territory in terms of engaging with diverse readers beyond the usual pool of students, book club members or self-identifying 'avid' readers. The digital stories allowed participants to express their diverse experiences of reading through images, music and animation as well as through their scripts and oral narration. The interaction between participants of different ages, social class and ethnic backgrounds produced some lively discussions but also unexpected creative collaborations, and the conversations around reading blended with personal memories, social histories of family and community, and contemporary politics.

The project was designed to ensure that participants' involvement would extend beyond producing the stories, and many of the participants have taken part in exhibitions and screenings as well as other follow up events. Much of the project design and delivery was influenced and shaped by the ethos and methodology of the digital storytelling movement as developed by arts practitioners and educators in the United States under the auspices of Story Center. Arguably, this methodology could not be put into practice without the digital, both in the sense of the tools needed to produce the films, but also in terms of the focus on user involvement and participation that is at its heart. Also at the heart of the digital storytelling ethos is the idea that participants have full creative control and ownership of the stories they produce, so there was no question of anonymising the process and in fact we included short biographies to provide context for the stories and for the individuals' reading lives as part of our website design.

The digital stories produced are multimodal and importantly feature the voices of participants as narrators. All materials and media used in the stories come from the participants themselves, are generated in the workshops, or are taken from open access online resources. The participants edit the stories with support from the technical facilitators and so as well as providing them with the opportunity to create their own short film, the workshops also introduce them to new digital skills. Many of our participants have continued experimenting with digital stories after the workshops, reflecting the central role of reading in their

lives. As part of the design for this project, we also created short films based on audio and video footage captured during the workshops to reflect on the process and to offer insights into some of the discussions that took place around the activities focused on producing the stories. This has provided another rich resource as these discussions often explicitly addressed issues around the impact of the digital in a way that many of the stories did not. To date, the project has yet to fully utilise this material. One option would be transcribe and code the contributions, but the danger here would be that the energy and animation of some of these impromptu stories and reminiscences would be lost.

As Fuller and Rehberg Sedo (2019) acknowledge, these kind of methods are very resource intensive, and require a fine balance between facilitation and direction when it comes to trying to meet project aims and objectives. Recruitment of participants was also challenging, mainly because of the requirement to commit to attending over three days. Although the digital storytelling method remains largely unchanged since the 1990s, practitioners continue to debate some of the ethical and methodological issues raised, particularly with regards to the notion of giving voice to marginalised groups which has recently been problematised and interrogated across a wide range of disciplines. In our project, we discussed the risks attaching to making the films publicly available and open to comment, opting to manage comments so as to filter out any abusive content (I am pleased to say we haven't had any as yet!). Another ongoing issue is that despite our best intentions we have lost contact with some of our participants, and our ability to provide ongoing support is in reality quite limited. So while this phase of my research was by far the most closely scrutinised in terms of ethics and methods, and the most rewarding in terms of the outcomes, I continue to reflect on the lessons learned and compromises chosen.

11. Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, research on reading in digital contexts poses numerous questions about how we define the object of study but also about how we approach the specific affordances and challenges of online spaces and negotiate the ways in which the on and offline worlds collide. While there are traditions and histories that we can fruitfully draw on from multiple disciplines, my concern is that we should not necessarily abandon or reject some of the ideas and approaches to reading that underpin our practices as researchers of literature. In particular, these involve our skills as professional or specialised readers in sifting through and making selections of illustrative examples and providing close analysis of language, while also recognising that those selections and interpretations are also subject to

constant revision and challenge. However, this has to be tempered with respect and sensitivity to research subjects and participants who agree to work with us who may not be familiar with the rough and tumble of academic debate and the ways in which their words and contributions may be taken up and interpreted by others. It can be tempting to hide behind institutional ethical approval rather than acknowledge the need for ethics to be constantly reviewed and embedded in practice. Where research projects are set up to work *with* participants and to allow them to express themselves creatively, this can be potentially beneficial in terms of both opening up lines of dialogue and ensuring that participants feel a sense of investment and even ownership of the project. Moreover, where the outputs emerging from a study are presented as a series of stories, it offers the possibility to engage with and revisit them more as part of an open-ended collaborative process rather than as data to be analysed and coded.

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Extra-textuality and affective intensities

Moving out from readers to people, places, and things

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1. Introduction

The text has historically been the focus of attention in stylistics research. However, with the rise of empirical, reader-response stylistics (cf. Whiteley & Canning 2017), the extra-textual is becoming more significant in stylistic analyses. As reader response work ‘moves’ out further in its consideration of how readers respond to texts, an abundance of phenomena are increasingly coming under the scrutiny of stylisticians; for example, the extra-textual (Bell et al. 2018), multi-modal (Gibbons 2012), and socio-cultural (Peplow et al. 2015). This broadening of the stylistic lens and the turn to work with real-readers raises methodological questions about how researchers orient towards these phenomena. Considering what exactly comes together for the materialisation of reading and writing in the twenty-first century has raised theoretical and methodological challenges for literacy studies researchers (Leander & Boldt 2013; Leander et al. 2017). Examining how literacy studies scholars are responding to these challenges provides a point of productive dialogue for stylistics researchers interested in the ‘extra-textual’ because in recent literacy studies research, the ‘extra-textual’ is not positioned as ‘extra’ but as core to understanding reading and writing activity.

In this chapter, I draw connections between current work in cognitive reader-response research and research undertaken in literacy studies to explore how ‘affective intensities’ (Leander & Boldt 2013: 22) are involved in the emergence and co-construction of meaning around reading and writing texts. These affective intensities are co-constituted through the ‘momentary coming together’ (Burnett & Merchant 2018: 64) of ‘people, places and things’ (67). This means that reading and writing are inextricably entangled ‘not just with text’ (Burnett and Merchant 2018: 67) but with a wider assemblage of bodies, materials, environments and

texts (cf. Ehret 2018). Orienting to the people, places, and things involved in the affective intensities through which literacy-activity emerges is important for literacy studies researchers because of the political and ethical implications of the boundaries drawn around reading and writing. At a time when digital technologies are facilitating rapid changes in literacy practices, and shifts in research focus are being facilitated by empirical, reception-oriented reader-response stylistics, it is of use to reflect on how everyday subjectivities, and knowledge, are being seen as legitimate objects of study by researchers interested in reading activity.

I begin the next section of this chapter by exploring how the ‘extra-textual’ has been framed in Bell et al.’s (2018) reader-response study on immersion and digital fiction. In the subsequent section, I examine how stylistic and literacy studies research considers the affective dimensions of reading. I then outline the shifts in literacy studies research that have led to socio-material relations and affective intensities featuring as the focus of Burnett and Merchants (2018) recent literacy studies research on reading for pleasure, immersion, and ‘enchantment’. I then report on an example of ethnographic data from a creative writing workshop with young people, in order to analyse the affective assemblage involved in the emergence of writing. I conclude by discussing some of the implications that framing reading activity in particular ways has for individuals. Throughout this chapter I argue that all literacy-related activity, whether reading or writing, emerges from the coming together of relational practices, contexts, and socio-material relations. This is of relevance to reader-response stylisticians as it situates what is being considered as the ‘extra-textual’ in reader-response research alongside the necessary complex relations involved in the emergence of reading and writing activity.

2. Extending reading and the extra-textual

Bell et al. (2018) employ an empirical cognitive stylistic approach to investigate how reader-players respond to and become immersed in a digital fiction installation called *WALLPAPER*. What immersion is seen to involve and look like in ‘relation to different media and different narrative experiences’ is diverse and dependent on the disciplinary lenses used to interpret it (Bell et al. 2018: 2). This means that the specific digital nature of the fiction explored by Bell et al. leads to the proposal of a definition of immersion ‘in digital media, and games in particular, as being a relocation and shift of attention into a storyworld’ (2018: 6). This definition emerges from ways of thinking about how immersion involves shifts in the attention of reader-players towards: the game space in which a narrative plays out; potential developments in the story or the development of characters; the ludic playful interactions that underpin engagement with the storyworld; and the

potentialities that these ludic elements present. Immersion here involves the consideration of readers' interaction with narrative, gamespace, the material means that facilitate interaction with the gamespace, and the spontaneous and undirected elements of the readers' immediate context (Bell et al. 2018: 17)

In this work, Bell et al. 'extend the analysis of digital fiction to include exhibited works' in order to 'consider the contextual and site-specific factors associated with a public reading experience' (2018: 2). In many ways, digital fiction is already an extension of what might be seen as the more traditional notion of a fictional text in that it can contain many modes, as well as ludic elements (see Ensslin 2012). As Bell et al. (2010) explain '[d]igital fiction is fiction, written for and read on a computer screen, that pursues its verbal, discursive, and/or conceptual complexity through the digital medium and would lose something of its aesthetic and semi-otic function if it were removed from that medium'. In the case of *WALLPAPER*, the reader is co-present in both a physical space (the gallery) and a digital space (through an avatar). They are 'doubly-situated' or 'doubly embodied' in physical and story worlds (Bell et al. 2018: 3–7, see also Herman 1994 on doubly-deictic *you*, and Gibbons 2012 on doubly deictic subjectivity). The experience of reading/playing *WALLPAPER* is therefore very clearly situated through a relational combination of reader, digital environment, and physical environment.

Bell et al. (2018) explore immersion through attention to deictic experiences: that is, whether reader-players feel 'pushed' in or 'popped' out of the physical and virtual worlds. For example, a reader-player's "spooky" experiences of *WALLPAPER* were augmented by the environmental setting in which the piece was played. As a participant navigated a digital "spooky" house environment, the sounds coming from upstairs in the physical gallery space influenced their sense of being pushed further into the storyworld: 'Oh yeah, I heard- I heard things on the ceiling and I thought it was in-game sound effects, that there were spooky things going on upstairs' (Bell et al. 2018: 15). Whilst arguing for a new theoretical framework for investigating the 'doubly-embodied' nature of this kind of multimodal reading experience, Bell et al. (2018: 17) make a significant claim about the extra-textual dimensions of reading:

[W]e have shown that extra-textual modes, such as extra-textual sound and the visual environment in which a reader-player sits when they experience a narrative, can also contribute to immersion. We therefore propose that immersive features can be extra-textual. While we have indicated where this occurs in *WALLPAPER*, we also suggest that analyses of all reading experiences, irrespective of medium, should account for this phenomenon.

Via a three way account of readers' responses (reader-players' experiences), an extension of what a text constitutes (digital fiction), and an extension of what

digital fiction involves (exhibited works), Bell et al. (2018) ultimately call for the extra-textual to be seen as central to the analysis of reading experiences, particularly when thinking about how immersive moments come to emerge. The boundaries drawn around what comes under the scope of the stylistician has shifted as the discipline has developed, with Bell et al.'s work inviting what can be seen as a further extension of these boundaries, in the consideration of a wider combination of material and social elements involved in the reading experience.

3. Assemblages of bodies, materials, environments, and texts

Rather than continuing to extend the boundaries of what should or can come under the scope of stylisticians in their analyses of texts, I take this opportunity to consider the extra-textual in relation to affective and socio-material orientations in literacy research. These approaches to literacy-research are involved in reorienting the boundaries that researchers draw around literacy-related activity. This reorientation is influenced by different theoretical perspectives towards what constitutes literacy (which influences what is considered to be a “text”), how we understand the embodied activity of readers, and how we understand the emergent and contextual aspects of reading activity (Leander et al. 2017: 1).

3.1 Affect and stylistics

Whereas stylisticians have historically emphasised the importance of textual structures, the extra-textual comprises the elements of the reading situation that are not in the text. In this section, I move from this text-focused orientation to one which sees the extra-textual as the necessary means through which reading, and writing, emerges. Research on ‘affective intensities’ (Leander & Boldt 2013; Burnett & Merchant 2018) provides a productive lens for considering the provisional coming together of elements, or influences, involved in reading and writing. Affect in this sense involves thinking about potentialities, emergence, and intensities. It is also a focus of research in stylistics research. However, these approaches differ significantly, as affect in stylistic research can be seen to be mostly tied up with thinking about how individuals appraise or evaluate texts, contexts, ambience or stimuli. Below I situate these differing approaches to affect in relation to each other in order to facilitate the consideration of affective intensities and extra-textuality.

Browse's (2018) work provides a good example of how affect and emotion are conceived in cognitive stylistics:

Emotions are tied to the meanings we attach to the situation we are in; they are a ‘cognitive appraisal of that situation’ (Lazarus 1999: 9). This cognitive appraisal is

oriented to the 'concerns' of the individual experiencing the emotion, or, as Frijda (1998: 351) puts it 'emotions arise in response to events that are important to the individual's goals, motives, or concerns'. (Browse 2018: 154–155)

Affect, here, relates to the physiological and psychological elements that are involved in an individual's cognitive appraisal of situations, and from which emotional responses emerge. Because of the emotive power that literary texts have, the appraisals that inform readers' emotional responses, and the way these responses emerge from reading and then feed back into the emergence of interpretive and emotional possibilities during (and after) reading, are of significant importance to reader response researchers. Miall (2014: 427) discusses how emotional responses to texts provide readers with almost narrative-like scripts, which embody previous understandings of this emotion, and support the consideration of future possibilities and meanings as they read. Gibbons and Whiteley (2018: 267–278) explore the complexity of how readers emotional responses to immaterial textual worlds emerge through the cognitive processes involved in: projecting oneself into a text; modelling the minds of characters; identifying with or resisting the fidelity of a narrative world or a character's behaviour; and the ways in which narratives position readers in ways that influence how they can empathise with narrative action. In these examples, texts, readers, linguistic features, and elements of cognition are involved in complex interactions that produce, or are fed by, emotional responses. Reading as an embodied activity is foregrounded in these discussions of emotion, with this embodiment also being explored in considerations of the context in which a reader is reading, or the lingering impact of a readers' interaction with a text (for example, Stockwell 2009).

In outlining a Text World Theory approach to text, Gavins (2007: 29) traces the combination of factors involved in how readers produce meaning from texts: '[t]extual meaning is therefore the product of an interaction between the text, the experiential knowledge of the discourse participants, and the manifest context in which the discourse takes place'. A central element of stylistic inquiry is the significant position that the text is given as the mediator of the meanings that a reader constructs. This is because the linguistic information it contains has a 'delimiting' impact on the potential meanings that a reader can create (Gavins 2007: 29). Stockwell's (2009) work, in particular, explores the resonance, intensities, and ambience that features of a text can produce. For example, in his discussion of literary resonance (2009: 17–55) he investigates how attention is drawn to particular striking elements of a text, and how literary discourse can create a 'tone, an atmosphere in the mind that seems to persist long after the pages have been put down' (17). Whiteley (2016) explores this further when she describes how a sense of suspense is created by the way textual attractors draw readers' attention

towards or away from various narrative elements in an extract from Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*. This analysis of attractors is used to account for why the novel is emotionally resonant for readers who variously describe their responses to it as haunting, tense, intriguing, transporting, affecting, frustrating, and dreamlike (Whiteley 2016: 166–168). In his work on literary ambience, Stockwell (2014: 365–369) also explores how texts create an ambient ‘cognitive effect of cumulative but diffused associations across discourse’ (2014: 365–366).

Browse's (2018) work on political discourse provides a productive illustration for the significant role that manifest context plays in providing the background for the emergence of meanings, atmospheres, resonances, and the cumulative emergence of associations:

Some of the most ambient effects of discourse are to be found not in the text itself, but in the mode the discourse takes [...] Reading a beaten-up paperback on a train is a very different ambient experience to reading a 16th century folio in a temperature controlled reading room [...] There is a world of difference between reading a speech on a computer screen, [...] and being in the conference hall, listening. At rallies, protests and other events of political discourse, the atmosphere in the discourse-world can be electric. (Browse 2018: 178)

Despite these remarks, in his cognitive stylistic analyses of affect in political discourse Browse (2018) maintains a focus on how *texts* produce resonances, intensities, and ambience. However, much of what he describes, here, can be understood not in terms of textual structures, but socio-material relations. For example, reading a beaten-up paperback on a train is influenced by ambiances created by:

- **People:** which necessitates the reader having a body and a mind, and an attendant ecosystem of micro-organisms living inside and on them, and for this person to be recognised as a person, and for other people to be involved in the writing and distribution of literature, as well as train journeys whether for leisure or for work
- A range of socially meaningful **signs:** orthography inscribed on paper, a book cover illustration, train carriage signage, advertisements, train manager announcements, various and varied conversations, and the socio-cultural socialisation and training to be able to find these visuals and sounds meaningful, the socially indexical meaning of a person recognisable as of a particular age, gender, race, and ethnicity publically reading a particular kind of book, say *Ulysses*, or *Fifty Shades of Grey*.
- The **social practices** involved in reading a literary text (as opposed to other forms of reading) which may or may not involve pre-existing or intended participation in discursive or educational spaces where things like genre, historical context, foregrounding, or narrative structure are privileged. Also

the social practices involved in travelling on a rail journey, such as interaction with ticket inspectors, recognition of the relevant behaviours in the quiet coach, toilets, station platform, and buffet cart etc.

- **Material objects:** A beaten-up paperback book, a train carriage, a train seat with a flip-down tray or a train table, maybe a bag to transport the book and other belongings, clothing, cash or credit cards, the possessions of other travellers, mobile phones, luggage, overhead cables, signal boxes, lights, windows, fuel, rails etc.
- **Places:** The train carriage itself and its movement from one location to another location, through other locations, which facilitates the unfolding of a journey, being in the quiet coach, first class, or a normal carriage, a train in the U.K. as opposed to one in Japan or elsewhere.¹

In this illustration, the textual is simply one part of the complex assemblage of elements involved in ‘reading a paper-back on a train’. Any one of them could potentially impact on the literary experience of a reader in terms of resonances, ambience, or immersion. Whereas the stylistic work on affect I have discussed, above, explores affect and context (in terms of ambience) in relation to cognitive appraisals of the textual features that provoke emotional responses, associations, or meanings, affect in the literacy studies research discussed below relates more to the atmosphere created by socio-material relations (the likes of which are illustrated by the reading on a train assemblage), through which potentialities, like emotional responses, can emerge. This work also attempts to attend holistically to the ‘manifest context’ from which reading and writing activity emerges, to avoid unnecessarily constricting how human action is framed.

3.2 Affect and literacy studies

Whilst the text can be seen as having a productive, but also delimiting, effect on meaning-making, socio-material relations can be seen as producing the potentialities through which meanings emerge, whether these meanings are emotional responses, or the creation of social meaning. The socio-material dimensions of affect are a significant aspect of any reading or writing – in other words, literacy – experience. Burnett and Merchant (2018) use ‘affect’ not to describe an explicit emotional response but, as in affect theory, to capture sensory experience:

We use the word ‘affect’ to point at the ways in which people and things come together and generate, perhaps by chance, something that interrupts a situation, and by doing so brings something new into play (Massumi, 2015, p. 8). Affect is

1. For more detail on these categories, see Lenters 2016: 281–289.

not in this usage the same as an individual emotional response (although that could well follow) but importantly, it captures the novelty and nuances of atmosphere generated by, and shared through, material–social relations. (64)

A “spooky” feeling, an emotional tone, the electric atmosphere of the political rally, and, as I will demonstrate below, the creation of a textual effect in a writing workshop, are all created through affective qualities brought about by socio-material relations. One term to describe such a process is ‘enchantment’, which Burnett and Merchant (2018) use to describe how ‘particular moods may quite unexpectedly and spontaneously take shape’ (64) because of the ‘inextricable’ way that reading is tied up with ‘people, places and things’ and the potentiality enfolded in this coming together of things (66–67). They argue that orienting to the affective intensities created by this potentiality and material-relationality ‘troubles the idea of reading as individualised and transportable; it presents reading as embedded in complex networks of people and things, as part of what happens from moment to moment’ (2018: 67). Although reading as a social and collaborative activity has been explored in Peplow et al.’s (2015) work on reading groups, and Bell et al. (2018) draw attention to how the environmental and material are involved in reader reception, Burnett and Merchant (2018) orientate reading (and writing) as fundamentally social, collaborative, environmental, and material. Moreover, this means that what is happening is always provisional as it is built on relations and emergence: ‘[i]t is sustained or disrupted from moment to moment, and as such, there is always the potential to shift’ (Burnett & Merchant 2018: 67). Considering historic shifts in the development of literacy studies research will help illuminate this position further, and provide a backdrop to see reading and writing in terms of socio-material relations and affect.

3.3 Literacy as ideological and multitudinous

Investigating how boundaries are drawn around reading activity is part of an important critical enterprise. Whereas autonomous accounts present literacy in technical terms and as ‘independent of social context’ (Street 1993: 4–8), Street (1993: 4–8) draws attention to the fundamentally ideological nature of these boundaries by focussing on the way social practices relating to literacy are ‘inextricably linked to cultural power structures in society’. Building on the ideological model of literacy in ‘A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies’, the New London Group argued for a multiplicity of ‘literacies’ in light of multimodal and socially semiotic ways of understanding meaning-making. In doing this they were working to critique how literacy pedagogy is ‘restricted to formalized, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language’ (New London Group 1996: 60–61). Leander and Boldt (2013: 23) summarise this critique as follows:

- There are a multitude of ‘literacies’, as opposed to one legitimate form of literacy, and this view reflects the multiple ways and modes through which we make meaning.
- Literacy practices constitute more than the passive consumption of texts
- Literacy activity involves individuals actively participating in processes of design to create meaning out of the multitude of resources available to them.
- Broadening out literacy and recognising a multitude of literacies, is motivated by the ‘cultural and linguistic diversity of globalized societies’ and the ‘burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies’ (New London Group 1996: 61).

In this framing, individuals are positioned as productive designers of meaningful signs. Leander and Boldt’s (2013) work recognises the New London Group’s broadening of literacy, but builds on this broadening to push for a move away from conceptualising literacy in relation to the rational design of meaningful signs by individuals, towards situating literacy practices as one means through which we relate to the world around us, and therefore towards the combination of things involved in the emergence of literacies.

3.4 Relational practices

In addition to critiquing the view that literacy is the rational design of meaningful signs, Leander and Boldt (2013) further argue that the New London Group approach is fundamentally based on a representational approach to literacy. In contrast, they suggest that literacy-related research needs to ‘reassert the sensations and movements of the body in the moment-by-moment unfolding or emergence of activity’ (2013: 22) by considering the non-representational in this emergence. This means moving away from considering literacy-related activity in terms of ‘rational design’ in order to examine how this framework for pedagogy presupposes how we come to interpret and analyse human activity. In critiquing the New London Group’s framing, Leander and Boldt (2013) thus shift the emphasis from ‘rational design’ towards the ways in which literacy practices are always tied up with the doing and feeling of everyday life and social interaction:

This nonrepresentational approach describes literacy activity as not projected toward some textual end point, but as living its life in the ongoing present, forming relations and connections across signs, objects, and bodies in often unexpected ways. Such activity is saturated with affect and emotion; it creates and is fed by an ongoing series of affective intensities that are different from the rational control of meanings and forms.

In this sense, reading becomes one, among many, of the relational ways through which we mediate our relationship with the world around us, and the relationality reading affords us is always played out simultaneously with these other ways (see also, Burnett & Merchant (2018: 66).

To illustrate this, Leander and Boldt (2013: 26) provide a description of ten-year old Lee and his friend Hunter's day spent reading *Naruto* and *InuYasha* manga. Throughout a 12-hour period Lee reads whilst:

- Touching: His *Naruto* toys and headband,
- Moving: Jumping up to practice movements or poses and making hand gestures
- Saying: Verbalising sound effects, and talking to his father and Hunter
- Hearing: Sounds from various media, the actions of his father and Hunter, and the ambient sounds of his environment
- Feeling: Various feeling states and desires that emerge and develop over time.

Throughout the day, the assemblage of things constituting the emergent processes of Lee's reading and playing of *Naruto* and *InuYasha* texts involved: cartoons on television, *Naruto* trading cards, a *Naruto* video game, food, on-screen TV guides, online shopping, online library catalogues, a friend, toy weapons, costumes, going outdoors, a porch swing, porch steps, sitting down, jumping up, the fridge, the basement, online fan sites, drawing, the dining room table, and Lee's father's subsequent involvement. This might seem like a baffling list of things to include in a consideration of a 12-hour period of 'reading', but Leander and Boldt foreground the fluid nature through which Lee's action emerged through his engagement with the assemblage of bodies, texts, places, and things, and how these were involved through responses to the 'rise and fall of needs and desires' (2013: 28).

As Leander and Boldt (2013) explain, much of the activity essential to Lee and Hunter's 'reading' is not recognised as such by dominant conceptualisations of literacy, and they argue not recognised in considerations of literacy in terms of 'rational design':

Rationally, and when removed from the differences and dynamics of its own unfolding, much of Lee and Hunter's activity makes no sense. One moment does not necessarily build on the next, and it is not fixed in purpose. In school parlance, Lee and Hunter are continuously "off-task". (38)

In order to address this lack of recognition, they propose that researchers shift:

[F]rom concerns about the particular meanings "coded" within activities or even the meanings given by them, post hoc, to explain their activity, toward an emergent mapping of affective intensities and their effects produced across texts, bodies, and interaction. (Leander & Boldt 2013: 38)

This emergent mapping of affects, desires, and effects involves the consideration of how assemblages of bodies, texts, environment, and material artefacts are involved in all literacy-related activity. The digital spaces that are involved in Lee and Hunters case (gamespace, tv menus, and online sites) are elements particular to this example, but which have become increasingly entangled in everyday literacy-related activity (Davies 2014; Burnett & Merchant 2015). Here then, the 'extra-textual' becomes central to the consideration of reading because all literacy-related activity is seen to emerge from a coming together of readers, texts, and extra-textual elements. How this is recognised has implications for how readers like Lee and Hunter come to be constructed in educational spaces and civic life (i.e. as being 'literate'). In this approach, reading is provisionally based on the affective coming together of bodies, meaning-making resources, material artefacts, and environment. This differs from the traditional stylistic positioning of 'text' and 'extra-textual', as it means that the 'text' is one relational means through which we mediate our relationship with the world, and the 'extra-textual' is the world we live in and the means through which the possibility of a 'text' can emerge.

Leander and Boldt (2013: 26) offer their detailed description of action as a 'strategic sketch' to invite alternative means of thinking about data. They do this fundamentally to explore how the reading-playing activity of someone like Lee 'is saturated with affect and emotion; it creates and is fed by an ongoing series of affective intensities that are different from the rational control of meanings and forms' (Leander & Boldt 2013: 26). In order to connect these ideas about 'affective intensities' back to the consideration of the 'extra-textual', we can turn to the ways in which both Bell et al. (2018) and Burnett and Merchant (2018) consider immersion.

3.5 Immersion, pleasure and affect

Commenting on the relationship between immersion and pleasure, Burnett and Merchant (2018) argue that:

[R]eading for pleasure is, more often than not, associated with the immersive reading of print text, and more specifically the immersive reading of fiction. In this way, the reading for pleasure debate has tended to sidestep the diversity of literacy practices in which we engage, including our multiple and varied uses of digital media. (62)

The immersion that is often seen as positive in relation to reading for pleasure is an 'individual's sustained or immersive engagement with a single text' (Burnett & Merchant 2018: 63). This differs greatly from our potentially 'rapid, mobile and/or social engagements with digital media' (Burnett & Merchant 2018: 63). Bell et al. (2018) emphasise that the combination of gallery space, digital apparatus, and

reader-player is something that is not typically accounted for in stylistic analysis, further arguing that the extra-textuality of *WALLPAPER* contributes to its immersive quality. In doing so, they bring under their scope the assemblage of bodies, gallery space, screen, mouse, keyboard, avatar, digital environment, text, audio etc. that is involved as the means through which a reader-player's 'spooky' (but pleasurable) immersive experience of *WALLPAPER* comes into being.

What Burnett and Merchant (2018) foreground, is the way that the digital, or immaterial, is another relational element involved in literacy activity. They argue that complex extra-textual assemblages that create immersion and involve digital media are part of mundane everyday meaning-making processes. Bell et al.'s (2018) extension of analysis to consider the extra-textual in relation to immersion, and their consideration of the doubly-situated nature of the reader-player, reflects what Burnett and Merchant (2018) have described, in some of their most recent work, as 'the multiple and complex digital media practices' (62) involved in pleasurable and immersive everyday encounters between 'readers, digital texts, and things' (62). These mundane meaning-making processes might involve using your phone on a night out, or playing with your phone at the kitchen table. These assemblages of the physical and digital may appear novel but can be seen to simply make visible the technologies, objects, and social practices involved in literacy-related activity, digital or otherwise.

To give an example, in Davies' (2014) study, a group of women on a night out use their phones to update their status before meeting, find a bar, and tag their location on arrival, before taking photos together at the bar, curating them and uploading them to social media sites. The women occupy and negotiate material and immaterial spaces through their engagement with their smartphones, which are involved in co-shaping their emergent action. Their action shares similarities with the doubly-situated nature of the reader-player involved in *WALLPAPER*. The most significant difference being that Davies (2014) describes a (reasonably) unremarkable spontaneous evening at a bar, and Bell et al. (2018) describe a highly coordinated art exhibition. Whilst there are different levels of novelty or occasion involved in these two examples, the complexity of the assemblages of people, material, immaterial, and the social involved in both are now commonplace.

Combinations of this type (textual, immaterial, environmental, material, and embodied) and the relational ways through which these combinations are understood are seen as centrally important in much literacy studies research (Burnett & Merchant 2016; Lenters 2016; Leander et al. 2017; Kuby 2017; Wargo 2018). In this sense, the 'extra-textual' is always central to traditional print-based and digital reading and writing activity.

4. The extra-textual in the analysis of writing

Throughout the previous section I reoriented how we understand reading and extra-textuality, by exploring how we can conceptualise literacy, seeing it in particular as something that emerges from the coming together of people, places and things.

To further illustrate this reorientation, and to situate the coming together of people, places and things as essential to literacy-related activity, I now turn to an example of these ideas in relation to the production of a text. If considering the coming together of the embodied, material, textual, environmental and immaterial is useful in the analysis of the reception of texts, it is also of use to reflect on this coming together in the production of texts. I do this to argue that the combination of textual and extra-textual phenomena is not an extension of what reading is, but is something that is always-already involved in literacy activity.

4.1 “Un-thinking” with Grimm & Co: Background and methodology

Grimm & Co are a literacy charity located in a magical apothecary on a Rotherham high street. They provide an immersive and child-led approach to literacy learning, that focusses on the confidence, self-esteem, and social interaction necessary for engagement with mainstream school-based literacies, and for the flourishing of individuals. In their creative writing workshops all ideas are generated by children and young people, and story mentors work closely in smaller groups, or one-to-one with mentees to draw out and develop ideas. Their provision is generally for children from the age of 7–18. The “Un-thinking” workshops are after-school workshops developed in collaboration between Deborah Bullivant and Sarah Christie of Grimm & Co, Professor Jane Hodson and Rebecca Hearne of the University of Sheffield, and myself. As a research team, we have delivered and researched three versions of these workshops since 2016. In each case, they have taken place in five or six week blocks after-school at Grimm & Co with Christie leading the workshops. The first two, which took place in 2016, involved what the charity call “un-thinking” generally, with the third “Unruly Rules” version of the workshops taking place over 5 weeks in 2017 directing this “un-thinking” towards punctuation specifically.

“Un-thinking” is presented by Grimm & Co as the ‘art of seeing things differently’ and involves children and young people being situated as expert “unthinkers”. This approach was influenced by research on participatory learning in museums (for example, Woodhall, 2015; Hackett et al. 2017). Fundamentally, “un-thinking”, as we conceptualised it and employed it in our workshops, involves

‘defamiliarisation’, a familiar arts-practice (Foster & Foster 2012, see also Shklovsky 1965 [1917]). Workshops involve children and young people working together to ‘unthink’ everyday objects, people, and their environment. These workshops are always directed towards the production of texts, but the emphasis is on imaginative play, positive social interaction, and confidence building. This approach to literacy learning foregrounds, in fun ways, the assemblage of materials, affects, environments, practices, discourses, norms, and values involved in the emergent activity that can lead to, or be directed towards, mainstream literacy practices.

One explicit aspect of mainstream literacy practices through which children are expected to relate to the world is through punctuation, an essentially entirely constructed system that is taught in technical terms. In the “Unruly Rules” workshops, children aged between 10 and 12 were asked to “unthink” punctuation. This was not done as part of a move for “more” or “better” punctuation education, but as a means through which children’s pre-existing meta-linguistic understanding of language could be surfaced, and used to motivate engagement with ambiguity and multiplicity of interpretation. At a time when Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar teaching is increasingly part of the literacy-learning provision in schools, we were also keen to explore how punctuation could be playfully reimagined by our participants.

Over the course of the workshops the children:

1. Reinterpreted punctuation marks as sounds or physical movements.
2. Imagined what personalities existing punctuation had, in order to create characters that were new punctuation marks.
3. Drew and modelled with clay new punctuation mark characters.
4. Collectively imagined the storyworld – called “the world of letters” – within which the punctuation marks lived and created a map of his world.
5. Wrote and performed scripts illustrating dramatic conflicts between different characters based on new or existing punctuation marks.

During the course of these workshops I undertook ethnographic research as a story-mentor and researcher, with informed consent being sought from children and parents for field notes to be recorded and examples of participants work to be displayed. The data extract I share below occurs after the activities described in points 1–4 had taken place and during the activities described in point 5.

4.2 The coming together of people, places and things, in the creation of a story

After the group was asked to create dramatic conflicts between the new punctuation-mark characters they had produced, I worked with one participant, M (a pseudonym), as he worked with another boy to produce this story about ‘Beep-Bop’ – a

floating character made of parentheses, and Sammy the Snowman – a snowman on its side that forms the three dots of an ellipsis. The story takes place as they enter their place of work in the ‘world of letters,’ ‘punctuation tower’:

As the lowercase t-birds were floating, the sun was at its highest peak and two of the most conflicted punctuation marks were in a disagreement. Swinging the door to the punctuation tower, where the most executive punctuation marks worked.

‘What?! you want to leave the most important sentence of the year on a cliffhanger?’ exclaimed Beep bop as an exclamation mark and a question mark walked by.

‘Yes! What would you do add some more information?’ Said Sammy the Snowman sarcastically, as another duet of exclamation mark and question mark walked by.

‘Of course, the head cicen is going to say it and make us millions of cicen coins.’
As a full stop walked by. (Conflict of the End)

In this text, whenever a punctuation mark is used in the text, that punctuation mark is described as walking by in the story. This effect emerges as one potentiality from a number of others, through an assemblage of people, places and things that come together in the moment of text production. Burnett and Merchant (2018: 64) describe how the coming together of affective intensities shape moods, such as, what they call, a ‘mood of enchantment’ whereby individuals become momentarily transfixed, or become caught up in the pleasurable experiencing of something. What is useful here, for the purposes of this discussion, is to illustrate the affective intensities that ‘enchant’ (Burnett and Merchant 2018: 64) M’s engagement with this moment of textual production, and can also be seen to be involved in the “enchantment” involved in “immersive” reading.

Below is a vignette based on my field notes relating to this episode, which evidences a coming together of people, places, and things that contributed to a ‘mood of enchantment’ (Burnett & Merchant 2018: 64–67) that played a role in the creation of this text:

I sat down with M and another boy to write a dramatic conflict. The other boy was forthcoming with suggestions about his character, Sammy, and M’s character, Beep Bop.

M sat quietly, even when I asked him for ideas. He began to be troubled by how his character was being described by the other boy. We had written very little and I started to worry that I was starting to ask leading questions.

I suggested we look at the map we made in a previous session, and so we got up and moved to where it was. We discussed the various areas of the map and M picked up his modelling clay model of Beep Bop. We sat back down and started to focus on dialogue. M began to contribute.

M suggested that whenever a bit of dialogue was said, the punctuation marks involved in that dialogue would walk by. He became very enthusiastic about this idea and made sure I was getting this down for every bit of dialogue. The other boy would suggest content, and M would develop the plot and the more 'meta' elements of the narrative.

The two punctuation marks were arguing over how to end an important sentence. They were debating whether to add more information in brackets (Beep Bops suggestion) or just to finish the sentence on a cliffhanger (Sammy). The story itself ended with a cliffhanger and then more information in brackets as Beep Bop came out on top in the narrative. By the time we drew our story together M was very animated. (Based on Escott Fieldnotes 30/06/2017)

M's idea and insistence on the repetition of punctuation marks walking past emerged from an assemblage of embodied, social, environmental, immaterial, and material things. Looking at the map of 'the world of the letters,' holding the model of beep-bop, the interaction between the three of us around a table, the writing down of the story in a digital environment on a laptop, my anxieties about asking leading questions, M's ideas, M's visible trepidation and enthusiasm, real punctuation, and characterised punctuation were all folded together and through this emerged a story containing a specific meta-textual event. The 'extra-textual' is the means through which this textual effect is realised and related to. We can see that this effect emerged because: looking at the map and picking up the model played a role in sustaining the unfolding of the writing event; our anxieties and excitement disrupted and sustained the moment-by-moment unfolding of action; and we coalesced around the creation of a story-world through the relational means afforded to us by the literacy practices associated with creative writing, and the varied ways in which we each related to our environment, material objects, and each other

The story and my field notes provide an emergent mapping of this process, through which the affective intensities and socio-material relations of the environment gave rise to a textual feature, which then fed back into these 'extratextual' intensities and relations. M's excitement about an idea emerged from a complex assemblage, created the possibility of a textual effect, and then the writing of this textual element sustained M's excitement, and invigorated the writing activity.

5. Conclusion

In Burnett and Merchant's (2018) framing, people, places, and things come together to produce affective intensities through which writing can emerge. In the kind of work that organisations like Grimm & Co undertake, getting others to take

note of the ‘extra’ involved in writing is significant because the boundaries which we draw around reading and writing have fundamentally ethical and political implications. According to Burnett and Merchant (2018: 68) ‘[I]f we accept that reading and pleasure are embedded in multiple material–social relations, then by implication, they can never be neutral or bounded (even if we intend them to be)’.

In the movement of stylistics research outwards towards readers and the extra-textual contexts in which their interactions take place, there is an opportunity to consider the ethical and political implications of the boundaries that are drawn around ‘reading’. Reading is not neutral or bounded, and what might be essential to reading or writing, may fall foul of being potentially situated as ‘extra’. I have argued elsewhere that attending to what is important within participants’ epistemologies involves a methodological flexibility on the part of the researcher (Escott & Pahl 2017). How we draw boundaries around the coming together of things within which reading and writing is situated, and through which immersion, resonance and moods of enchantment emerge, has a significant impact on the means through which the readers and writers we are responsible for are represented in our research.

In this chapter, I have considered the ‘extra-textual’ and affective intensities to explore how any textual production and reception are provisionally based upon a coming together of people, places, and things. I have argued that we can see the influence of the extra-textual on an individual’s interpretation of a piece of digital fiction installed in a gallery, and also on the experience of any other text, as a reflection of the relational means through which any literacy-related activity is produced and received. I have responded to Bell et al.’s (2018) invitation to consider the ‘extra textual’ in analysis, by reflecting on the boundaries drawn between ‘reading’ and the ‘extra-textual’, and worked to position the relational nature of literacy practices as situated alongside the other embodied and social ways through which readers, and writers, relate to the world. In doing so I have explored theoretical perspectives that see engagement with texts as provisionally based on a number of bodily, material, immaterial, and environmental elements ‘coming together’, and argued that one means of attending to this provisionality is through the consideration of affect, which provides a means of considering how the extra-textual is always-already involved in the co-shaping of meaning for individuals.

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Postscript

Toward a reconciliation of empirical traditions in the investigation of reading and literature

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1. Introduction

The present volume made me reflect on what it means to investigate reading and literature *empirically*, and what role we attribute to the reader in our work. The authors in this volume employ a wide range of terms to describe empirical approaches to the investigation of style: from ‘reader response methodologies’ (van der Bom and colleagues), to ‘empirical reader response stylistics’ (in Escott, Browse, and Norledge), to ‘style-and-response approaches’ (Gibbons, and Peplow and Whiteley), to ‘literary linguistics’ (Stockwell). And these are just terms that denote some of the research in contemporary empirical stylistics, which is but a part of the widely diverse range of possible empirical approaches to reading and literature. Within the field of the empirical study of literature, for example, the term *reader response* – which has its roots in reader-response criticism – is hardly ever used at all. This might be because traditionally, as Whiteley and Canning (2017: 73) have pointed out, ‘reader response criticism’s interest in readers was predominantly theoretical’, meaning it deliberated the conceptual role of a hypothetical reader and did not pay a lot of attention to actual interaction with specific texts. Instead, the mandate of the International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature (IGEL) is to ‘apply scientific methods to study the structure and function of literature’ (IGEL 2020) – a mandate that does not explicitly mention the role of the reader in literature either, but the inclusion of the term “function” introduces the reader into the equation. The emphasis in all of the above approaches is clearly on the reader or the reader’s interaction with the text, although it must be noted that terminology can take interesting turns when it comes to those readers as well, ranging from ‘actual or real readers’ (Norledge) to ‘statistical readers’

or even ‘flesh-and-blood readers’ (Vaeßen & Strassen). All these efforts to create new terms to describe readers are no doubt inspired by a desire to distinguish contemporary empirical research from more traditional work in literary studies where any mention of “the reader” usually referred to an idealized or “implied” reader (cf. Booth, 1961). Despite these different terminologies, the various avenues of reader-response research in stylistics, as well as the more broadly defined empirical study of literature, share ‘a commitment to rigorous and evidence-based approaches to the study of readers’ interactions with texts’ (Whiteley & Canning 2017: 73).

As a member of both IGEL (the International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature) and PALA (the Poetics and Linguistics Association), I have pondered how these academic communities use these terms for a while now. It sometimes seems that researchers are using them not just to clarify what kind of empirical research they are conducting, but also – and sometimes even predominantly – to signal to colleagues how they differ from one another. We seem to define ourselves in opposition to others. At a certain point in time there appeared to be a more fruitful on-going conversation between these two communities, as Whiteley and Canning point out in a recent overview of “Reader Response Research in Stylistics” (2017: 75). However, in the last couple of years, I have seen fewer and fewer members of both societies visiting each other’s conferences, while the overlap in research, conversely, seems to increase (see, for instance, the Special Interest Group in Reader Response symposium at PALA 2015). The research carried out within the PALA community, compared to the work conducted within the IGEL community, more often seems to take the text as point of departure and deploys a combination of mostly *qualitative* approaches to investigate readers’ responses to literature. Within the IGEL community, on the other hand, increasingly there seems to be a move away from the text and towards using more *quantitative* measures adopted from psychology and neuroscience.

These developments might indicate to members of these two communities that they are virtual opposites. Underlying this definition by opposition seems to be a belief that there is a certain degree of “empiricalness” to which these fields ascribe and aspire. One key example is a state-of-the-art review by Arthur Jacobs (2015) published in *SSOL* (*Scientific Study of Literature*), the IGEL journal, which strongly suggests that the use of *objective* measures over *subjective* ones is preferable, and that subjective self-report measures can be considered as less reliable.¹ Understandably, such views might dissuade members outside of the IGEL

1. I do not want to suggest that Jacobs is the only one who expresses these ideas, but his review is one of the very few recent examples where these ideas are put into print.

community who use qualitative measures from visiting an IGEL conference. However, Jacobs's view was not without its detractors and it has been criticized from inside the IGEL community itself. Don Kuiken, the current president of IGEL, responded to Jacobs's review by stating in SSOL that 'the apparent "objectivity" in Jacobs's recommendations [...] is costly if it unwittingly sacrifices conceptual precision in studies of literary experience' (2015: 174). Kuiken (2015: 175) furthermore describes the common tendency of cognitive scientists to construe phenomenological approaches to literature, such as introspection, as unreliable and invalid, and goes on to show why such approaches are vitally important, especially when it comes to the study of a subjective experience like literary reading.

The discussion of introspection as a research method is a theme that runs through the field of literary linguistics as well. In the present volume, Stockwell describes the view of early work on introspection in this field as 'overly impressionistic' (p. 165), which led the field towards favoring more evidential and demonstrable data. I think Kuiken, and a large part of the IGEL community, myself included, would agree with Stockwell's central argument that 'introspection, intuition, interpretation and felt experience remain implicit even in the hardest of hard empirical approaches to literary reading' (p. 165). When studying something as subjective as literary experience, there is simply no way around introspection; nor, I would argue, do we *need* any way around it. Introspection is a part of the experience we are trying to investigate and a study's "empiricalness" cannot be gauged by the inclusion or attempted exclusion of methods like introspection. The use of fMRI scanners in an experimental setting does not make a research project more empirical than using an interview protocol in a natural setting such as a reading group. Both of these instances are empirical; they just use different methods. One is not better than the other, nor is either able to find a "more objective truth". In fact, the data gathered with fMRI scanners would be easier to interpret when combined with methods of introspection; just as interview data could inform experimental research that employs physiological measures, by generating hypotheses based on readers' own accounts of reading.

The distinction between subjective and objective measures and methods in our field is an artificial one. In response to Jacobs's aforementioned review, Dixon and Bortolussi (2015: 179) note that the demarcation of some measures as "subjective" suggests that they 'may be less reliable or valid because they may be influenced by the readers' biases and expectations as well as situational variables'. However, they also point out that so-called "objective" measures 'generally require an inferential process to connect the measurements to aspects of experience' (Dixon and Bortolussi 2015: 179). Literary reading experiences are inevitably colored by readers' biases and expectations, and suggesting that it is at all possible to objectively measure such experiences (without any subjective interpretation) is fundamentally misleading.

In their article, Dixon and Bortolussi provide a very useful table of types of measurements that steers clear of the unhelpful subjective/objective divide. They argue that the types of measurements employed should be determined by the temporal extent of a literary experience the researcher is interested in and the access they require to such literary experience to answer their research question. This table features four measurement classes across two dimensions: measurements can be ‘online’ or ‘offline’ – referring to the moment of capturing a(n) (aspect of a) reading experience, i.e. during the act of reading or afterwards; and they can be ‘indirect’ or ‘direct’ – referring to whether a literary experience must be inferred from measurements or whether the measures directly pertain to it.

Table 1. Types of measurements

Inferential relationship	Temporal relationship	
	Online	Offline
Indirect	eye movements, pupil dilation, EEG, fMRI	recall, judgement response time
Direct	concurrent verbal protocols, probe responses, text annotation	questionnaires assessing reactions and experience

(Dixon & Bortolussi 2015: 180)²

The highly subjective nature of the literary experience requires careful consideration of (empirical) research methods. And all of the researchers published in the aforementioned *SSOL* issue – whether they originally come from literary studies, psychology, or neuroscience – agree that the methods one chooses should be informed by the question one seeks to answer, and not the other way around.

I would like to suggest that method triangulation – combining complementary measurements to “zero in” on one’s subject, preferably choosing methods from at least two different cells in Dixon and Bortolussi’s table – is the best way to investigate something as complex and (sometimes) elusive as the literary experience. Complementing different types of measures can bring researchers much closer to a comprehensive understanding of the aspects of the reading experience they are trying to capture.

In sum, both IGEL and PALA, both neurocognitive poetics and reader response stylistics, are involved in the *empirical* study of reading and literature, no matter what kind of approaches they take and no matter how they label these

2. Table reproduced with permission of the authors.

approaches or what they call the sub-fields where they tend to be deployed. In my view, the overall empirical study of literature and literary reading would be greatly furthered if we emphasise how these different methods can be combined to answer the complex, multi-faceted questions that the phenomenon of literary reading – in all its forms – inspires in us.

2. Overview

The current volume is a great illustration of how diverse empirical approaches to one and the same topic – style – can provide us with different but complementary perspectives on that topic. While reading it, I focused on the author's or authors' methodological approaches, and in this review I try to highlight the methodological diversity that this volume contains, as well as point out great examples of the method triangulation I referred to above and of method selection based on research questions. Overall, I think this overview will demonstrate that the communities of PALA, to whom I would attribute this volume, and IGEL, for whom I am an ambassador, are not as far apart as people might think. And where there are divides, I hope to be able to point out ways of rapprochement.

Two great examples of methodological rigor and an open interdisciplinary attitude in the present volume are the contributions by Gibbons and by Van Driel. In their individual research, both academics show a deft skill at letting the question they want to investigate guide the methods they will employ. Gibbons's chapter explores an interesting case of fictionality in the context of a museum exhibit, through survey data collected from visitors, in contrast to fictionality research in literary reading, which often takes a more experimental approach (see for instance Fitzgerald & Green 2017; Zwaan 1993). The qualitative nature of the methods Gibbons chose to use sheds light on *why* realism or a belief in realness is so important to people when perceiving art, and as such her research is a valuable addition, not just to museum studies, autobiography studies and reception research, but also to a growing body of empirical work on fictionality in literary experience.

In her chapter, van Driel equally lets the research question guide her choice for the selection of empirical methods. Although, as she shows, her field predominantly favours naturalistic approaches to reader response, she argues that the specificity of her question (it being concerned with a comparison between different formats of news presentation and their impact on readers) mandates an experimental approach. By using qualitative methods to investigate the evaluative language in reader responses to live blogs and online news articles, van Driel is able to gauge whether and how readers respond to increased personalization of news presented in live blogs. As she fittingly points out, her appraisal text analysis

allows for a comparison of language use in source text and reader evaluation. This in turn can influence further research on how the level of personalization in news stories affects not just the impact the story has, but also the way in which people talk about news events (e.g. whether they tend to mimic the language used in the news outlets they choose to attend to).

Another chapter that draws attention to the various ways in which findings can inform further research in adjacent fields is Peplow and Whiteley's contribution, which discusses the dialogic nature of reading through investigation of book club talk. As the authors themselves point out, the insights gained through their research do not only serve the study of style and response, but also show how all reading practices are highly dialogical in nature, making their results applicable to various different disciplines.

Text world theory is the basis Norledge uses in her chapter to analyze the naturalistic dialogic discourse of a small-scale reading group when discussing an unethical narrator in the context of dystopian literature. As such, this chapter can perhaps be seen as a case study of the kind of approach Peplow and Whiteley describe. Some empirical researchers with roots in psychology could consider the work Norledge presents here as too unreliable, as the sample size is rather small. Such views, however, are as reductive as they are unhelpful. The kind of study Norledge presents here is highly necessary for a better understanding of how people make sense of ambiguous literary features, such as unethical narrators.

Based on the results of Norledge's interview study and text-world-theory driven discourse analysis, we can design more finely tuned experiments on literary text feature processing, taking adequate sample size for the purpose of generalization into account. There are various positions one could take on how an empirical research process should be structured. Some would argue for starting with more qualitative hypothesis-generating work before commencing more quantitative hypothesis-testing work; others advocate a 'spiral approach' (Jacobs 2015: 162) whereby both qualitative and quantitative methods are involved in hypothesis generating and hypothesis testing. Again, I would argue that the question or topic at hand should inform the choice of methods. So little is known about phenomena like unethical character modelling that Norledge's case warrants in-depth qualitative research, before designing experiments to test claims on a larger scale and thinking about whether specific literary features have similar effects on broader groups of people.

Norledge's chapter, as well as Peplow and Whiteley's, show that reading, especially meaning-making during reading, is not necessarily a solitary exercise as is often supposed. Reading groups and book clubs are becoming more popular forms of engaging with literature, and these are perfect naturalistic examples of the dialogic character of reading. Peplow and Whiteley rightly recommend broadening

the scope of the empirical study of reading from something that is seen as a solitary contemplation of text, to something that is in essence a highly social act. This is particularly relevant in light of recent naturalistic studies into reading that are turning toward online social reading practices (e.g. Cordon-García, Alonso-Arévalo, Gómez-Díaz & Linder 2013).

The increased focus on online communities makes Thomas's honest and transparent discussion of the development of her ethical considerations in this line of research a very timely addition to the present collection. A key difference between experimental research and naturalistic reading research which uses data from online sources is that in the former there are real life participants for whom there are clear guidelines on how to treat them ethically, whereas in the latter, as the readers are not clearly present and cannot give consent, these ethical considerations become more problematic. As Thomas points out, 'ease of access does not mean ethical access' (p. 184). This is not to say that online testimonials should not be investigated. To the contrary, online shared reading and writing platforms provide us with a treasure trove of data about new forms of social reading (Rebora et al. 2018), which can be used as valuable sources of unprompted reader responses. Investigating these unprompted reader testimonials in turn can help counteract the criticism that most empirical results in our field are merely reactive (cf. Dixon & Bortolussi 2015: 181). As researchers venturing into such uncharted territory, we should take care to treat these testimonials with as much respect for people's privacy as we would participants' responses in our surveys or experiments. What makes Thomas's chapter so pertinent and illuminating is the description of her own exploration of these aspects, describing both the opportunities and the pitfalls, and leading to a meditation not just on methodology but also on the ethics of the researcher as individual.

The changing roles and responsibilities of the researcher are also vital elements in Escott's chapter on the importance of the extra-textual in reader response research. Escott argues that as the discipline has developed, the scope of what the stylistician investigates besides the text has broadened to include not just the reader, but also extra-textual elements involved in literacy practices. Escott's concluding statement about the impact that drawing boundaries around what constitutes reading and writing can have on how participants in our studies are represented can be extrapolated to doing empirical research on reading and writing as well. I have argued above that the boundaries we draw around the research we do – by opposing ourselves to what others are doing – hampers empirical research. Empirical research on reading and literature naturally comprises various disciplines, but the degree to which they are involved varies greatly. Escott's chapter is an example of what I would call *multidisciplinary* research: it draws on several different disciplines while staying within their boundaries. *Interdisciplinary* research, however, is

more interactive in that it synthesizes disciplines into one coherent whole. Empirical research on literature and reading so far has mostly been multidisciplinary but should, in my opinion, move more towards interdisciplinarity, which means establishing more collaboration amongst scholars and researchers from different fields. I will come back to this point in the conclusion of this postscript.

The fact that an increasing number of scholars from the Humanities are taking the step from theory and textual analysis to empirical reader response research requires a rethinking of how to formulate pertinent research questions. Scholars of the humanities are traditionally used to looking at concepts, experiences and artefacts from an all-encompassing bird's-eye view: they ask big questions. When conducting empirical research, however, a research question should ideally be succinct and very focused to allow for a clear and feasible research design. Zooming in on certain aspects of a theory like this requires either a lot of practice, or collaboration with colleagues who are used to operationalizing research questions this way.

In their chapter, Vaeßen and Strassen attempt to integrate the notion of cultural models in reader response research, arguing that such 'a model of reception that draws on cultural models, has not garnered more traction [for fostering empirical work] yet, because their direct effect on actual readings of texts is difficult to trace' (p. 92). While I agree that there is a need for more research on the reception of (literary) character, this cultural model raises challenges for empirical research because it uses a bird's-eye view on literary phenomena which is difficult to operationalize and test empirically. Ideally, this kind of model building should form the basis for generating hypotheses and forging collaborations with empirical researchers or media psychologists, who can operationalize a small part of a model to test its claims.

The chapter by Browse is a clear example of empirical research that was developed to construct new hypotheses, or rather to inform theory building. The author identified a gap in knowledge and empirical evidence in the field of critical stylistics and aimed to fill it in order to develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of critical reception in political discourse. The cognitive model of critical reception that Browse presents at the end of his chapter is a perfect example of hypothesis generating model building. For example, one might envision using this model to investigate how online reviewers critically discuss literary novels on websites such as Goodreads or, perhaps even more interesting, on fan fiction websites such as Wattpad, as such platforms engender more immediate interaction between reader and writer (cf. Rebora & Pianzola 2018). As Gibbons shows in her chapter, readers take the aspect of "realness" very seriously in their evaluation of a work of art. This sentiment is echoed when reviewers critically evaluate works of fiction: when something does not seem realistic – even within the context of, for example, a

fantasy novel – this can be cause for a negative judgment and rating score. Browse's use of Text World Theory to pinpoint ways in which people critically evaluate political discourse could perhaps be adapted to pinpoint ways in which readers critically evaluate fantasy fan fiction, by zooming in on the text-world oriented critical reception branch of his model.

The chapter written by Van der Bom, Skains, Bell and Ensslin presents empirical research on how the use of hyperlinks in digital fiction affects readers' *experiences*, rather than their *understanding* of a text. This chapter is a great example of the kind of mixed-method approach that Dixon and Bortolussi argue for above. Combining direct online and offline measures allowed these researchers to get closer to the decision-making process of the readers, which would not have been possible with only indirect measures or regular surveys. In addition, the chapter illustrates the importance of using qualitative methods to investigate relatively new forms of reading. It did not just confirm previous findings about retrospective searches for relevance when reading hypertext fiction – it was also able to explain why people choose certain links and why they ascribe relevance to them.

3. Conclusion

As I have tried to argue in this postscript, research questions should inform which methods are used, not the other way around. This certainly does not mean that every singly Humanities researcher should now be trained in all possible (neuro-) psychological methods, and every psychologist must learn the intricacies of a textual analysis. There are those who advocate for 'advising students of the scientific study of literature to try out all or as many as possible of these [methodological] options' (Jacobs 2015: 162). Even though I do believe it is important that more scholars from the Humanities familiarize themselves with empirical research methods – and I am heavily involved in training programs designed to that end (e.g. The Empirical Study of Literature Training Network [ELIT] and IGEL's training school initiative) – I do not agree with this advice. Ultimately, if everyone were focused on obtaining a little bit of knowledge of empirical methods, this would lower the overall standard of quality of empirical research in our fields.

Rather, I am arguing for more collaboration, for using each other's personal and professional expertise to come to a more comprehensive understanding of reading literature and how it affects different people. In the past, as Whiteley and Canning (2017: 75) note, there has been evidence of a 'productive dialogue between stylistics and the empirical study of literature', for example in the research on foregrounding and metaphor. However, as these conversations were mostly

between various literary scholars, and traditionally literary scholars are used to working individually, they did not seem to progress any further. Rather than just taking note of each others' work, researchers should strive toward increased collaboration where all partners can rely on each other's expertise to enable truly interdisciplinary research.

To illustrate and underline this plea for collaboration, I would like to draw on an example of an interdisciplinary and collaborative project I am currently involved in, where several different empirical approaches are combined in order to study reader response in online reader reviews. Our group focuses on one particular type of reading experience, namely the feeling of getting lost in a book, of being completely absorbed in a story. Until now, there have been quite a number of experimental studies on the experience of absorption during reading that have focused on: the textual determinants of such experiences (Green & Brock 2000; Kuijpers 2014); the individual differences predicting the occurrence of such experiences in specific types of readers (Kuijpers, Douglas & Kuiken 2019); and the outcomes of absorbed reading in terms of persuasive (Green & Brock 2000) or aesthetic effects (Kuiken & Douglas 2017). What most of these experiments have in common is that they were conducted in lab settings. Absorption is an experience, though, that is hard to simulate in a lab. Reader reviews on websites such as Goodreads contain a veritable cornucopia of information on absorbing reading experiences that occurred naturally and were reported on entirely unprompted by researchers. As this is something the absorption research field is lacking at the moment, my colleagues Simone Rebora and Piroska Lendvai and I started a project that explores the possibilities of using online reader reviews for the study of absorbing reading experiences.

The project's primary objective is to first convert Goodreads reviews into a usable corpus of reader response, and then further develop textual entailment methodologies to enable meaningful computational linguistics investigation of this corpus on a large scale. A secondary objective is to demonstrate how this corpus and these methods, once fully developed, can be put to use. The focus on reviewers' descriptions of absorption during reading in our project is just one example of how this corpus can be used. By matching the statements from the Story World Absorption Scale (SWAS; Kuijpers et al. 2014) – an instrument that aims to capture absorption during reading in experimental settings – to reader reviews posted on the Goodreads platform, we mean to not only validate the scale, but also to enable cross-genre comparisons of readers' absorption. Once we have taught a machine how to recognize absorption according to the different dimensions on the SWAS (i.e., attention, emotional engagement, transportation, and mental imagery), we can start to compare reviews from different genres, to see whether we find more matches of specific types of absorption in various genres.

A comparison between the genres of fantasy, romance and thriller, for example, can provide us with evidence for the theoretical assumptions that absorption is enhanced by fantasy's 'worldbuilding' (Wolf 2012), romance's 'empathic identification' (Koopman & Hakemulder 2015), or thriller's 'embodied simulation' (Gallese & Wojciehowski 2011; Gallese 2007).

This type of research relies heavily on close collaboration across the boundaries of several disciplines: (computational) linguistics, machine learning, and (empirical) literary studies. Our project group consists of three main researchers with expertise in three specific areas of research that, crucially, do not overlap all that much, meaning that we must learn from and rely on each other. In addition, this kind of research provides us with an ongoing opportunity to look at our own methods and ideas in novel ways. I bring expertise from literary and media studies, as well as expertise on the topic of absorbed reading. As the original developer of the SWAS, I lead a group of five annotators who are currently manually annotating a small corpus of reviews for absorption. This work is highly important, as we need to inform the machine learning algorithm what is and what is not absorption and this needs to be based on human expertise on the topic. Moreover, an inter-annotator agreement between six different people is much more reliable than the word of just one person who can be biased by her years of research on the topic – meaning me.

Simone Rebora from the University of Verona has a BSc in Electronic Engineering and a PhD in Foreign Literatures and Literary Studies, and he has expertise in literary theory and text-based Digital Humanities. Piroska Lendvai from the University of Göttingen holds a PhD in Computational Linguistics and she has expertise in algorithmic linguistic analysis for extracting domain concepts and semantic relations from large unstructured text collections. Together these two researchers are testing various methods to calculate inter-annotator agreement and developing machine-learning algorithms for detecting absorption based on the manual annotations our team of annotators is making in an ongoing process scheduled to take about eighteen months. By the end of the project, we hope to present: a) a so-called *tag set* with annotation guidelines which will help other researchers to annotate reviews or other testimonials for absorption; b) an annotated corpus of reviews that other researchers can work with or build upon; c) analyses using the corpus to answer questions about the nature of absorption when reading various genres.

As a literary scholar with nonetheless considerable experience conducting experimental research on reading experience, I would never have been able to unlock the types or amounts of data we have without collaborating with researchers with different trainings and backgrounds who bring a different kind of expertise to the table. As a matter of fact, each of the individual researchers involved in this

project would not have been able to conceive – let alone complete – this research project on their own. What is more, during our research, we have encountered reader responses and interactions with novels and fictional characters that we did not expect and that we simply cannot annotate using the approach we developed within the project up until now. Reading the present volume, it seems to me that stylisticians conducting qualitative close textual analysis using Text World Theory, for example, might be able to provide the fresh input necessary to steer the quantitative computational approach we are currently exploring into a new direction. This could be the first step in renewed collaboration across the boundaries of empirical stylistics and the empirical study of literature, in which researchers trust each other's expertise and together come to a better understanding of, in this particular case, the language used in online reader reviews.

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Style and Reader Response: Minds, media, methods profiles the diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches in reception-oriented research in stylistics. Collectively, the chapters investigate how real readers, players, audiences, and viewers respond to, experience, and interpret texts. Contributions to the book investigate discourse types such as contemporary literature, poetry, political speeches, digital fiction, art exhibitions, and online news discourse. The volume also exemplifies the variety of empirical approaches in reception research, with contributors drawing on a range of methods including discussion groups, interviews, questionnaires, and think-aloud protocols with data analysed from both online and offline sources. *Style and Reader Response* makes an important contribution to an emerging paradigm within stylistics in which verifiable insights from readers are used to generate new models and new understandings of texts across media, with each essay demonstrating the centrality of empirical research for theoretical, methodological, and/or analytical advancements within and beyond stylistics.

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