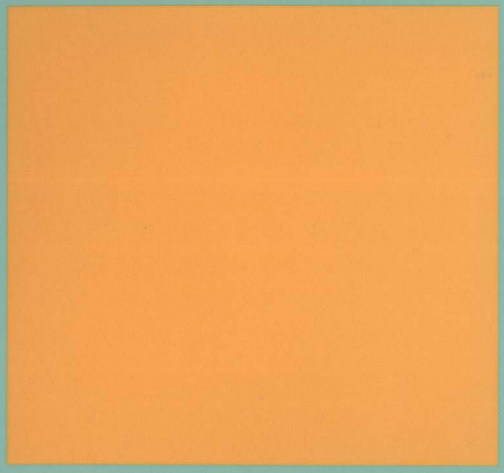

Cognitive Stylistics

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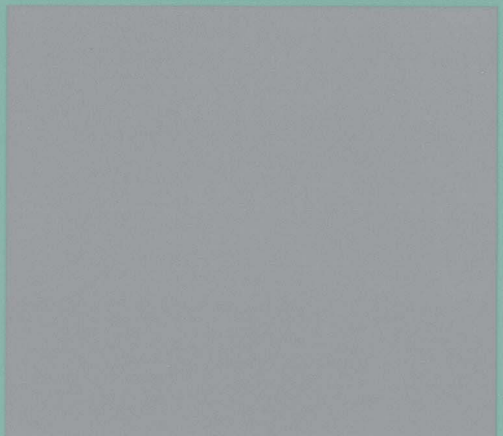

Cognitive Stylistics

Language and cognition in text analysis

Edited by

Elena Semino
Jonathan Culpeper
Lancaster University

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Foreword

Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpeper
Lancaster University, UK

This collection aims to represent the state of the art in cognitive stylistics — a rapidly expanding field at the interface between linguistics, literary studies and cognitive science. Cognitive stylistics combines the kind of explicit, rigorous and detailed linguistic analysis of literary texts that is typical of the stylistics tradition with a systematic and theoretically informed consideration of the cognitive structures and processes that underlie the production and reception of language.

Cognitive stylistics, as we have just defined it, is both old and new. It is old in the sense that, in focusing on the relationship between linguistic choices and effects, stylistics has always been concerned with both texts and readers' interpretations of texts. It is important to remember, for example, that Foregrounding theory (Mukařovský 1970), which played a major role in the development of modern Anglo-American stylistics, is concerned with the cognitive effects of particular linguistic choices and patterns (and this in spite of the fact that it stemmed from a school known as Formalism). It is therefore no coincidence that van Peer's seminal book on the empirical investigation of Foregrounding theory was entitled *Stylistics and Psychology: Investigations of Foregrounding* (van Peer 1986). Similarly, work in stylistics has been influenced by theoretical and methodological advances in Reader Response Criticism (e.g. Fish 1973) and the Empirical Study of Literature (e.g. Short and van Peer 1988).

Traditional stylistic analysis, however, tends to make use of *linguistic* theories or frameworks in order to explain or predict interpretation. What is new about cognitive stylistics is the way in which linguistic analysis is systematically based on theories that relate linguistic choices to cognitive structures and processes. This provides more systematic and explicit accounts of the relationship between texts on the one hand and responses and interpretations on the other.

What is shared by all of the twelve chapters included in the volume, therefore, is (a) a concern for specific texts or textual phenomena, (b) the adoption of analytical approaches that explicitly relate linguistic choices to cognitive phenomena, and (c) the claim that a satisfactory account of the text or phenomenon in question can only be arrived at by means of a cognitive stylistic approach. More specifically, a recurrent goal in most of the chapters is that of explaining how interpretations are arrived at, rather than proposing new interpretations of texts. In several chapters the analysis is partly aimed to account systematically for how the same (stretch of) text can give rise to different interpretations (notably Freeman, Hamilton, Popova, Stockwell, Tsur).

While the commonalities between the twelve chapters justify their inclusion under the umbrella of what we call cognitive stylistics, our choice of contributors also aims to represent the variety of work that can be subsumed within this field. A relatively minor aspect of variation lies in how contributors prefer to label the enterprise they are involved in. Some use "cognitive stylistics", others "cognitive poetics", yet others explicitly present the two as synonymous (see also Wales 2001:64). We also regard the two labels as largely overlapping, but have adopted "cognitive stylistics" in the title of this volume in order to emphasise a concern for close attention to the language of texts. The term "cognitive stylistics" was also used as the title of a section of Weber's *The Stylistics Reader: from Roman Jakobson to the Present* (Weber 1996). This section included a chapter by Donald Freeman, who is the author of the "Afterword" of the present collection.

A more significant aspect of variation within this book is to do with the particular cognitive approach adopted in each chapter. Not surprisingly, most chapters are influenced by cognitive linguistics as associated with the work of Langacker, Lakoff and others. Indeed, it could be argued that the rise of what we call cognitive stylistics at this particular point in history is partly due to the increasing influence of cognitive linguistics and, more specifically, of cognitive metaphor theory in the Lakoff tradition. However, those contributors who draw from this particular paradigm differ in how exactly they position themselves in relation to it. Freeman, Hamilton, Popova and Steen see cognitive stylistics as part of the cognitive linguistic paradigm. Others treat cognitive linguistics as one of the cognitive theories or paradigms that can feed into cognitive stylistics — a position which we also share. The chapters by Semino, Stockwell and van Peer & Graf draw both from cognitive linguistics and from other theories from psychology and cognitive science generally. Emmott, and also Steen, assess the potential of cognitive linguistics in accounting for the phenomena they discuss,

and point out some of its weaknesses. Emmott emphasises the lack of proper consideration for discoursal and narratological phenomena, while Steen claims that cognitive linguistics needs to take better account of the psychology of text processing. The remaining chapters are largely independent of the cognitive linguistics paradigm. Shen develops and tests out his own cognitive theory of figurative language use in poetry, but spells out its relationship (and compatibility) with cognitive metaphor theory. Attardo and Culpeper propose their own frameworks for the study of humour and characterisation respectively, drawing from the tradition of text processing research. Finally, Tsur presents his theory of "cognitive poetics" as "a far cry from" or, in some respects, "even diametrically opposed" to "what goes nowadays under the label 'cognitive linguistics.'" The ordering of chapters in this volume roughly follows this account of their respective theoretical positions.

Finally, the twelve chapters included in this collection cover a wider range of literary texts, literary periods, and phenomena, including poetry, fictional and non-fictional narratives, and plays. Some of the chapters provide innovative approaches to phenomena that have a long tradition in literary and linguistic studies (e.g. humour, characterisation, figurative language, metre), others focus on phenomena that have not yet received adequate attention (e.g. split-selves phenomena, mind style, spatial language). There is also variation in the particular analytical methodology used, and in the way in which the linguistic analysis is related to possible interpretations of the relevant (stretches of) texts. While some contributors hypothesize about likely or possible responses on the basis of their own personal readings, several refer to the reactions of literary critics (notably Popova and, to a lesser extent Freeman, Hamilton, Semino, Stockwell), and some make use of informant testing in order to test out specific hypotheses (Shen, Steen, Tsur).

Outline of chapters

In the first three chapters of the book, some of the central concepts and insights from cognitive linguistics are applied to the analysis of specific texts. In Chapter 1, Craig Hamilton shows how "conceptual integration" or "blending" theory can explain the use and interpretation of metaphor, analogy and allegory in Christine de Pizan's 15th century text *The Book of the City of Ladies* (*Le Livre de la cité des dames*). His analysis accounts systematically for readers' intuitive understanding of de Pizan's book, and for both similarities and differences in

the ways in which it has been interpreted across different historical periods and cultural groups. Hamilton claims that "many scholars today see that literary criticism needs to make the cognitive turn lest it become an entirely bogus and meaningless enterprise", and exposes what he sees as the lack of proper scientific foundation for fashionable notions such as "the female reader" and "gendered memory". In Chapter 2 Margaret Freeman argues that the cognitive linguistic emphasis on the embodied nature of mind and language leads to a reevaluation of the physical shape of texts, and poems in particular. Freeman analyses the original hand-written versions of two poems by Emily Dickinson, which were significantly altered in existing printed versions and which have generally been regarded as obscure by critics. Freeman shows how an adequate reading of both texts can only be arrived at by taking into account the cognitive import of all their original visual characteristics, as well as the particular knowledge domains and conceptual metaphors that make up Dickinson's conceptual universe. Freeman emphasizes that "cognitive poetics has explanatory power," in that it is able to explain how meanings are created in the production and reception of texts. In Chapter 3 Yanna Popova discusses Henry James's *The Figure in the Carpet* — a story which has often been claimed to be highly ambiguous, and which has given rise to a range of different interpretations on the part of literary critics. Popova's aim is not to resolve the ambiguity, but to use insights from cognitive linguistics to explain why the ambiguity cannot be resolved, i.e. why the text is inherently ambiguous. Her analysis traces the cause of the ambiguity to the presence in the texts of two main, and partly incompatible, metaphorical conceptualisations of the "secret" which is at the centre of the plot. Popova also considers around thirty published discussions of James's tale, and shows how her analysis can account for the two main interpretative lines in the story's criticism. Popova claims that a cognitive linguistic approach can distinguish between a basic, "archetypal" level of interpretation and other less basic levels, and also account for interpretative variability on the one hand and, on the other, the fact that not all interpretations are equally acceptable. This, she argues, "constitutes a much needed middle ground between pluralism and objectivism in theories of interpretation."

Chapters 4 to 8 draw eclectically from cognitive linguistics and other cognitive theories and approaches, while Chapters 7 and 8 also point out some of the limitations of the cognitive linguistics paradigm. In Chapter 4 Peter Stockwell analyses four sonnets by Milton in terms of their "texture" — a combination of formal and psychological features that contribute to "how we feel our way through the reading of a text". Stockwell takes a cognitive approach

to linguistic phenomena such as deixis, syntax and negation, and draws on a range of cognitive notions in order to explain their possible effects, including conceptual metaphors, the concepts of "attraction" and "distraction", and the contrast between "figure" and "ground". In his analyses, Stockwell accounts for different possible on-line readings of the four texts and shows how their different types of texture can only be adequately captured in terms of the relationship between textual features and cognitive processes. In Chapter 5 Elena Semino argues that the phenomenon known as "mind style" can only be properly accounted for by relating linguistic features to cognitive structures and phenomena via relevant cognitive theories. Semino differentiates the notion of "mind style" from that of "ideological point of view", and claims that the former "is to do with how language reflects the particular conceptual structures and cognitive habits that characterise an individual's world view." She draws from schema theory, cognitive metaphor theory and blending theory in order to show how two particular mind styles are linguistically created, namely those of a minor character in Louis de Bernières's *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, and of Frederick Clegg in John Fowles's *The Collector*. In Chapter 6, Willie van Peer and Eva Graf also start from the cognitive stylistic assumption that linguistic patterns in texts reflect cognitive processes, and investigate this assumption by analysing the linguistic realisations of spatial concepts in the language of children and adults in Stephen King's novel *IT*. The analysis shows that the use of spatial language in the speech of the main characters as adults is more complex, both linguistically and conceptually, than that of the same characters as children. This, the authors show, is consistent with what is know about real-life cognitive development in the conceptualisation of space and of other areas of experience which are related to it via conceptual metaphors. The discussion of the textual samples draws from the cognitive linguistic account of spatial metaphors, but also from the psychological literature on the understanding of space and cognitive development. On the basis of their analysis, Van Peer & Graf evaluate King's achievement in realistically creating a contrast between children's and adults' language and cognition.

In Chapter 7 Catherine Emmott analyses a small corpus of "split selves" narratives, including both fictional and non-fictional examples (e.g. Doris Lessing's *Children of Violence* novels and the autobiographies of two stroke victims). Emmott highlights the wide range of split selves phenomena contained in her data, and proposes a preliminary typology. She shows how some of these phenomena have been recognised and accounted for by cognitive linguists (using notions such as the CONTAINER metaphor, etc.), while others require the

contribution of narratological and discoursal approaches. These can better account for plots, narrative voices and the way in which readers keep track of characters and characters' selves while reading. In Chapter 8 Gerard Steen argues that the notion of genre as a type of mental representation needs to play a central role in a cognitive account of text production and interpretation, as well as of the linguistic make-up of texts themselves. He focuses specifically on metaphorical language and its relationship with genre, and analyzes in detail the use of metaphor in the lyrics of Bob Dylan's song "Hurricane". On the basis of his analysis, Steen proposes eight variables that could affect metaphor recognition on the part of readers, and discusses the results of an informant-based study aimed at investigating the role of these variables. The results show that the some of the variables that were shown to have significant effects can be related to the structure of the text as a song lyric. Steen draws from the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor, but, like Emmott, he argues that cognitive linguistics needs to be complemented by insights from other disciplines, notably work in the psychology of reading and text processing. Steen also proposes his view of "empirical" research, including both text analysis and informant testing, and highlights the need for cognitive stylisticians to be aware of relevant methodologies in the empirical sciences.

Chapter 9, 10 and 11 propose independent cognitive theories aimed at explaining particular phenomena. In Chapter 9 Yeshayahu Shen introduces and demonstrates his Cognitive Constraints Theory (CCT) in order to provide a cognitive account of specific structural patterns in the use of figurative language in poetry. The CCT states that the structural regularities shown by figures of speech in poetry reflect a "compromise" between the aesthetic goals of novelty and originality on the one hand and the communicative goal of comprehensibility on the other. Shen presents the results of a linguistic analysis of zeugma, synaesthesia and oxymoron in a range of poetic corpora, spanning different languages, historical periods and literary movements. In each case he identifies two main options in the realisation of each figure of speech, and shows how one option is significantly more frequent than the other in his data. He then reports the results of informant tests which show how the most frequent structural option is also the one that is cognitively most "basic", i.e. easier to understand, recall and so on. These findings can be explained by Shen's CCT, and are compatible, as Shen shows, with relevant aspects of cognitive metaphor theory. Shen emphasizes how his work differs from other cognitive approaches to literary language in that it demonstrates the existence of cognitive constraints on creativity in verbal art, rather than arguing that the latter goes against or

disrupts "normal" cognitive processes. In Chapter 10 Salvatore Attardo focuses on humour — a phenomenon which is relevant to a wide range of discourse contexts and text types. The notion of humour captures the effects of some communicative stimulus on interpreters, and therefore requires an approach that includes both the stimulus (language in our case) and the cognitive structures and strategies used by the interpreter. Attardo introduces his *General Theory of Verbal Humour* (GTVH), a framework whose components include both linguistic choices and patterns on the one hand, and cognitive structures and processes on the other. Attardo shows how the GTVH is able to account for a range of humorous effects and to distinguish between different types of humorous texts. A detailed analysis of Oscar Wilde's short story "Lord Arthur Savile's Crime" shows how the GTVH can identify the particular type of humour that characterises a text, highlight different patterns of humour in texts, and help address questions of interpretation and aesthetic value. In Chapter 11 Jonathan Culpeper deals with another phenomenon that is central to a wide variety of text types, namely characterisation: the incremental construction of mental representations of characters in text processing. Culpeper describes and demonstrates a model of characterisation that explains how the words in a text create a particular impression of a character in the reader's mind, and how that impression may change in the course of processing a text. Culpeper locates his work in the realms of text comprehension, particularly as represented by van Dijk and Kintsch's (1983) influential work. In addition, he integrates into his model aspects from social cognition, specifically work on social schemata (or cognitive stereotypes). He demonstrates how his model can explain a wide variety of characters in a variety of text-types, and lead to testable hypotheses about reader's interpretations of texts. Culpeper argues that his approach is a corrective to those critical lines that have treated characters as either purely linguistic or purely cognitive phenomena, and a response to those structuralist critics who have acknowledged that both language and cognition must be taken into account in the study of characterisation.

Finally, in Chapter 12 Reuven Tsur presents some central aspects of his own theory of cognitive poetics, which, he argues, "offers cognitive theories that systematically account for the relationship between the structure of literary texts and their perceived effects" and also "discriminates which reported effects may be legitimately related to the structures in question, and which may not." Tsur uses his approach to explain how poems can convey emotional qualities, or, in other words, how poets create verbal equivalents of the structure of emotions. He focuses particularly on poems that convey what he calls "altered states of

consciousness," and explains how different responses to the same stretches of text may arise as a consequence of different reading styles and different degrees of tolerance for ambiguity and disorientation on the part of readers. Tsur ends by providing a cognitive account of the perception of poetic rhythm, focusing particularly on how metrical regularity is perceived by readers in cases where a stretch of verse contains very few metrically regular lines. Throughout, Tsur refers informally to readers's reactions to the examples he discusses, and, in his discussion of poetic rhythm, he tests his hypotheses by analysing different oral performances of a particular poem. As we mentioned earlier, Tsur contrasts his own approach to cognitive poetics with that proposed within the cognitive linguistic paradigm. His main contention is that, while cognitive linguists emphasize conventionality, his approach emphasizes creativity, and focuses on what is individual and unique to each poetic expression. In this respect, he argues, his theory provides a systematic cognitive account of phenomena that were dealt with by New Criticism, Structuralism and Formalism "sometimes quite brilliantly, in a pre-theoretical manner."

Finally, in the "Afterword" Donald Freeman provides an overview of all twelve chapters, and reflects on the potential contribution of cognitive stylistics to the future of literary studies.

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CHAPTER 1

Conceptual integration in Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*

Craig Hamilton
Nottingham University, UK

1. Introduction

Literary criticism often comes in two general forms. First, there is the contextual line, which is concerned with historical or political issues that form the context (however defined) in which a literary text is produced and consumed. Here criticism works from the outside inwards, taking, in the form of the new historicism, the view that context is as important as text, that historical and literary texts are co-equals as means for reaching interpretative goals. Second, there is the rhetorical line, which is concerned with hermeneutics and poetics, with what texts stand for and the devices used for signification. Here criticism works from the inside outwards, taking, in the form of the new criticism, the view that words on the page tell us all we need to know about what a text means and how to relate it to the world. These two critical lines go back before terms like "new criticism" and "new historicism" were coined. As they get packaged and repackaged, their popularity rises or falls from one generation of critics to the next. Whereas a research paper written by a new critic will cite almost no secondary sources, a research paper written by a new historicist will cite many. Comparing bibliographies from random essays by F.R. Leavis (1955) and Stephen Greenblatt (1983) suffices to conclude that there is a fundamental methodological difference between the two lines of criticism.

Interestingly enough, in ways that nobody would have predicted, the two lines are coming together. The rhetorical line has inspired new interests in what is called cognitive poetics or cognitive stylistics. The historical line has inspired new concerns in literary study involving materialism. It is with materialism that there is common ground because the essential material for literature is the human brain. This is where attention is now focused for many critics, signalling

a cognitive turn in literary study that has led to a new understanding of materialism. Texts are material anchors for linguistic forms of communication that span time and space. Stories are objects produced by evolved human minds performing hard-to-explain yet easy-to-do mapping tasks. The medium is language, the visible material for literature, but the referents and interpretations are all conceptual.

To understand that stories result from principled mental processes is to confront old-fashioned questions that went the way of humanism a long time ago. How is reading possible? How do we make connections? How do we understand the world? In the cognitive approach to literary study, rethinking interpretation is central to finding answers to these questions. For reasons too numerous to list here, many scholars today see that literary criticism needs to make the cognitive turn lest it become an entirely bogus and meaningless enterprise. Those still interested enough in basic questions of interpretation have once again begun pursuing "cognitive" research into literary analysis. The tenets of this approach are relatively few (with, as always, varying degrees of consensus) but they help point to what is "cognitive" about the approach. First, the literary language/everyday language dichotomy is false since basic mental processes for language production and perception are not context-specific. Products or interpretations are context-specific, but our mental mechanisms are not. Second, directly studying the mind is not possible, not even with fMRI devices that shows pictures of brains but not brains themselves. However, because indirectly studying the mind is possible, to study literature is to study language, and to study language is to study the mind. Thus, language is a window onto the mind and offers the literary critic the best place to start should understanding the mind be the goal. Third, embodied cognition directly influences language and erases divisions between the mind and the body. The mind is in the body, for as the late neurologist Francisco Varela famously put it, the mind is not in the head: "l'esprit n'est pas situé dans la tête" (Varela 1999: 10). Fourth, interpretative connections can be accounted for by metaphorical models describing cross-domain mental mappings. Such interpretative mappings regarding Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* are the focus of this chapter.

Critics working within the framework spelled out here are investigators into age-old issues. They find it more fruitful to do cognitive poetics so as to engage with the epistemology of our intuitive interpretative practices rather than add yet another interpretation of a text to the MLA bibliography's database. In that sense, their research engages more with poetics than with hermeneutics even if

doing poetics usually requires reference to a specific text. The approach is new in the way that insights from cognitive science are now brought to bear on literary criticism. For instance, researchers like Mark Turner (a literary critic) and Gilles Fauconnier (a cognitive scientist) have proposed a theory of blending or conceptual integration (Turner 1996; Fauconnier and Turner 1995, 1998, 1999, 2002) to make explicit some of the principles behind our everyday capacity to make connections across domains. This capacity is visible in many contexts: humour, visual art, grammatical constructions, figurative language, literary discourse, mathematics, scientific concepts, religious symbols, and so on. What does all this mean for literature? When reading a text like Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*, for example, our imagination works effortlessly to grasp many of de Pizan's metaphors, analogies, or allegories. However, theories like conceptual integration suggest that we can get out of the prison house of intuition by examining some of our interpretative processes in detail. Doing so first involves paying close attention to the reading process, which itself entails noting when we begin to make vital connections, and asking why we project as we do when we come across figurative prompts in *City of Ladies*. The reward for this effort is learning how we make feasible interpretations in the first place, an idea this chapter explores directly with regard to metaphor, analogy, and allegory in *City of Ladies*.

2. Metaphors in *City of Ladies*

Written between December 1404 and April 1405, Christine de Pizan's *Le livre de la cité des dames* has now become a canonical text in French and Women's Studies. *City of Ladies* is a treasure for readers, a counter-portrait of women as depicted in the *Roman de la Rose*. Forgotten for ages only to resurface briefly in the 19th century and disappear again until recently, *City of Ladies* is a fine example of the medieval belief that there were two distinct worlds in life: the material and the spiritual. *City of Ladies* forges an alternative world to the terrestrial misogynistic one de Pizan finds herself in circa 1405 in France. This protofeminist text elevates and highlights exemplary heroines from history. Throughout the text, de Pizan argues that women are virtuous. To prove her point she offers many examples of honourable women from the past. The book itself is divided into three parts with a total of 136 chapters (all references here are to the 1982 English edition of de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies*). The main characters of the story are Christine (the protagonist) and three ladies: