

The background is a painting of a night scene. It features a bridge over a river, illuminated by lights. The scene is dark, with a blue and purple color palette. There are two figures in the foreground, one standing and one sitting. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Literary stylistics: the cognitive experience of reading

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Cognitive Poetics

Stockwell (2002) (2009), Semino and Culpeper (2003)

Applies insights from the cognitive sciences

(cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics...) to literary reading.



Assumptions:

- Patterns of everyday language structure and use reflect wider mental organisation and processing.
- Cognition is 'embodied' -- inseparable from our physical, bodily experiences of the world.

Analyses linguistic creativity

Combines this psychological focus with detailed textual analysis of linguistic patterns in a range of texts.

'A science of reading' (Stockwell, 2002)

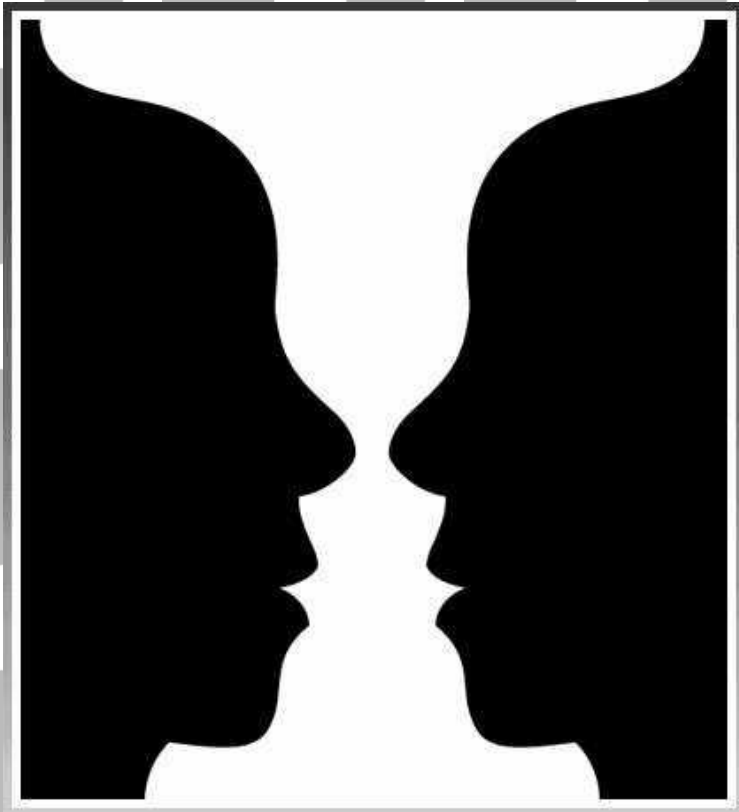
What experiences do we share as readers?
What differs in our experiences? ...And why?

A type of literary appreciation

Some Cognitive Linguistics...

Evans and Green, (2006)

- Attention in visual perception.
- 'Figure and Ground'



Construal

The ability of speakers (and writers) to *conceptualise* and *linguistically portray* a scene in multiple ways.

Dimensions of Grammatical Construal (Langacker, 2008):

- **Focusing**- what we ‘look’ at, or the content we select from our conceptual knowledge for representation.
- **Prominence**- which elements we pay most attention to.
- **Specificity**- how closely we examine it, or how much detail we include.
- **Perspective**- where or what position we choose to ‘view’ it from.

**Focusing
Prominence
Specificity
Perspective**



- A) The woman looked at a chimp in the zoo.
- B) The chimp was watched by a woman in the zoo.
- C) The two mammals examined one another through a vertical pane of glass.
- D) Another large, hairless creature looked down gormlessly at me while I was thinking about cognitive grammar.

Linguistic Prototypicality

Certain construals appear more 'natural' or prototypical to us..

Application to literature

The background of the slide is a painting of a night scene. It features a thatched-roof hut in the foreground, with two figures standing near its entrance. The scene is illuminated by warm, yellow and orange lights, possibly from lanterns or a fire, which cast long, shimmering reflections on a dark, reflective surface. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and evocative, with a deep blue and black color palette.

- The impression of deviance, distinctiveness and ‘defamiliarization’ in literature- a means of making us see the world in a “new light”.
- The cumulative experience of a different worldview or ‘mind-style’ in narrative fiction.



References

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- Langacker, R. (2008) *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.