About the heart, where it hurt exactly, and how often

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Abstract

Stylisticians were among the first to draw on the insights emerging from cognitive science in order to explore literary works. Recent years have witnessed a wider diffusion of the cognitive turn across literary scholarship, with developments into literary cultural studies and historiography. Unfortunately, this has sometimes been accompanied by a relative neglect of textuality and texture. In this article, we argue again for the necessary centrality of stylistics in literary scholarship, and the continuing requirement to make textuality an integral part of cognitive poetic exploration. We demonstrate the value of Text World Theory (Gavins, 2007a, Werth, 1999) in requiring this integration as an inherent feature of the approach, in the process of exploring reading responses to an emotionally involving poem by Simon Armitage.

1 The evolution of modern stylistics

In recent times, the field of stylistics has experienced a flowering of innovation much like the initial excitements of its early years in the 1960s and 1970s. The field has been rapidly enriched by developments in social linguistics and linguistic anthropology, critical discourse analysis and social semiotics, by empirical methods and quantitative tools, and by the general cognitive turn in arts and humanities scholarship. There is a risk, of

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course, that in all of this progress some fundamental and essential parts of the discipline might be overlooked, taken for granted, or diminished by neglect. For example, within what is fast becoming a paradigm-shift towards a cognitive-science approach to literature, we have observed an eagerness amongst literary scholars and linguists to contribute to other fields in the social and natural sciences, and to adapt their insights in the field of literary scholarship. However, the centrality of textuality has not always been maintained in the rush for progress.

A whole set of approaches to literary research has emerged which is informed in different ways by the broad advance of cognitive science. Work around the turn of the millennium at first emphasised the close relationship between stylistic analysis and literary effects (Gavins and Steen, 2003; Semino, 1997; Semino and Culpeper, 2002; Stockwell, 2002, 2009a, 2009b; Tsur, 1998, 2008). As more scholars became interested in the possibilities for accounting for interpretation, emotional response, and the surprising interrelations of literature and mind, the emphasis has broadened and often become part of an apparently larger project (see, for example, the shift in emphasis from Turner, 1991 and, 1996 to his work in 2002 (with Fauconnier) and 2006a). This research has become more interested in mind than in text, with aspects of shared humanity and cultural consensus being viewed as perhaps more significant than the individual peculiarities and singularities of literary works. Examples of this fruitful and insightful tradition include Currie (2004) and Hogan (2003). Most recently, this trajectory has developed into a 'cognitive cultural studies' programme (see Zunshine, 2010).

At the same time and very recently, the interest of literary scholars largely working within the historiographic, critical theory and cultural studies paradigms has also been stimulated by such developments. In these hands, though, there has been an even greater move away from matters of textuality and a greater emphasis on issues of culture and evolution (see Boyd, 2010) and towards a 'literary Darwinism' (Carroll, 2004, 2011). Occasionally, some of us involved in cognitive poetics have been included in and criticised alongside these 'neo-Darwinists': see Kelleter's (2008) criticism of Stockwell (2008) and the response by Fricke (2008). Louwerse and van Peer (2009) have pointed out that even cognitive poetic approaches have traditionally drawn more on cognitive psychology than cognitive linguistics, a tendency that some recent work has tried to address (see Hamilton, 2003, 2007; McIntyre, 2006, 2007; and Stockwell, 2009a, 2010).

However, we perceive in the current expansion of cognitive approaches to literature an unfortunate neglect of textuality and texture that only a rigorous stylistics can provide. *Texture*, here, is used (as in Stockwell, 2009a) to mean the experienced quality of textuality; *textuality* is the sum of the lexicogrammatical choices and linguistic patterns in evidence across a literary work, which has traditionally been the raw material of stylistics. In this article, we will argue for the continuing centrality and necessity for stylistic analysis in literary scholarship of all kinds. In particular, we will argue that approaches within cognitive poetics are best developed with a stylistic analysis embedded within them, rather than 'bolted on' to a schematic, idealised, purely psychological or conceptual model. Specifically in this article, we draw on Text World Theory (see Gavins, 2007a and Werth, 1999 for full accounts) as a model for this necessary and principled integration of cognition and textuality. The framework has proven itself particularly useful for exploring the deep texture of poetry (Gavins, 2007a: 149–152, 2007b; Lahey, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007; Nahajec, 2009; Stockwell, 2005, 2009a, 2009b), especially when the text is

complex, rich, subtle and multivalent – as with the poem analysed later in this article. Furthermore, the poem analysed has prominent features of alternativity and negation, both of which are exceptionally well handled by Text World Theory (Gavins, 2003, 2005a, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Hidalgo Downing, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2003; Nahajec, 2009; Werth, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b, 1999).

2 About the heart

The text that forms the basis of this article is a complete poem by the British poet Simon Armitage. Our discussion and analysis arises from the 2010–2011 'Creative Writing in the Community' project at the University of Sheffield, which brought together academics, students, members of the public, arts organisations, teachers, schoolchildren and published writers including Armitage in the reading, discussion and production of poetry. The poem featured in seminar discussions with final year and masters students of cognitive poetics at the Universities of Nottingham and Sheffield, and was the primary focus of a workshop discussion run by Peter Stockwell at the Universidad Autonoma de Madrid in early 2011. The poem, 'To his lost lover', appeared originally in Simon Armitage's 1993 collection *Book of Matches,* a set of poems about failed relationships, family and marriage. It has since been widely reproduced and anthologised across numerous poetry appreciation websites and social network favourites lists, and it featured for several years in the final school-level examination (the 16+ GCSE) curriculum in the UK. The poem is reproduced in full here.[1]

To his lost lover

Now they are no longer
any trouble to each other

he can turn things over, get down to that list
of things that never happened, all of the lost

unfinishable business.
For instance… for instance,

how he never clipped and kept her hair, or drew a hairbrush
through that style of hers, and never knew how not to blush

at the fall of her name in close company.
How they never slept like buried cutlery –

two spoons or forks cupped perfectly together,
or made the most of some heavy weather –

walked out into hard rain under sheet lightning,
or did the gears while the other was driving.

How he never raised his fingertips
to stop the segments of her lips

from breaking the news,
or tasted the fruit

or picked for himself the pear of her heart,
or lifted her hand to where his own heart

was a small, dark, terrified bird
in her grip. Where it hurt.

Or said the right thing,
or put it in writing.

And never fled the black mile back to his house
before midnight, or coaxed another button of her blouse,

then another,
or knew her

favourite colour,
her taste, her flavour,

and never ran a bath or held a towel for her,
or soft-soaped her, or whipped her hair

into an ice-cream cornet or a beehive
of lather, or acted out of turn, or misbehaved

when he might have, or worked a comb
where no comb had been, or walked back home

through a black mile hugging a punctured heart,
where it hurt, where it hurt, or helped her hand

to his butterfly heart
in its two blue halves.

And never almost cried,
and never once described

an attack of the heart,
or under a silk shirt

nursed in his hand her breast,
her left, like a tear of flesh

wept by the heart,
where it hurts,

or brushed with his thumb the nut of her nipple,
or drank intoxicating liquors from her navel.

Or christened the Pole Star in her name,
or shielded the mask of her face like a flame,

a pilot light,
or stayed the night,

> or steered her back to that house of his,
> or said 'Don't ask me how it is
>
> I like you.
> I just might do.'
>
> How he never figured out a fireproof plan,
> or unravelled her hand, as if her hand
>
> were a solid ball
> of silver foil
>
> and discovered a lifeline hiding inside it,
> and measured the trace of his own alongside it.
>
> But said some things and never meant them –
> sweet nothings anybody could have mentioned.
>
> And left unsaid some things he should have spoken,
> about the heart, where it hurt exactly, and how often.

<div align="right">(from Book of Matches, Simon Armitage, 1993)</div>

The majority of the initial seminar responses made by the students in each of our three locations (Sheffield, Nottingham and Madrid) noted the tone of regret at the loss of a failed relationship in the poem. A quick online search revealed that this is also by far the most common response in comments and remarks where the poem is reproduced on webpages and in blogs. Following a Text World Theory approach, we can begin to examine the discoursal-cognitive dimensions which might underpin this reading. One of the first and most prominent features of the text to note in text-world terms is the deictic proximity of the world, which is established in the poem's opening lines. The temporal proximity of the adverb 'Now', along with the use of the present tense, helps to establish an immediate, immersive world even though the text is expressed in the third person. In this context, the definite articles in 'that list' and 'the lost unfinishable business' serve as proximally deictic. In particular, 'that', traditionally conceived as a distal deictic (see Levinson, 1983 and Lyons, 1977; see also Piwek et al., 2008 for a more recent and contrasting corpus-based explanation and Buhn, 2005 for a detailed discussion in relation to poetry), seems to be used here and elsewhere in the poem ('that style of hers') to mean an object familiar to or remembered by the speaker. Altogether, these introductory lines help to build a text-world that is close-up and emotionally raw, even though 'they' are never named in the poem and the 'things that never happened' are not yet specified.

All of our student respondents inferred from the first two lines a former partner absent from the text-world inhabited by the male enactor, as he turns things over in his mind and makes a list. However, the matrix text-world of the poem remains underdeveloped beyond these basic details, as the text begins to enact multiple shifts in time and space over the course of the following lines in order for the 'things that never happened' to be presented one by one. Many of these spatial and temporal world-switches are signified with 'how' (initiating an expository world of some sort), 'or' (establishing a contrasting hypothetical to an existing world), or 'and' (setting up a text-world in an additive relationship with its originating world). Lines 7 and 8 of the poem provide some typical examples:

how he never clipped and kept her hair, or drew a hairbrush
through that style of hers ...

Here, 'how' instigates an initial world-switch, shifting both the temporal and spatial parameters which have been established in the poem's opening lines. The tense first switches from the simple present ('are', 'can') to the simple past ('kept', 'clipped'), before a subsequent world-switch is created through the 'or' conjunction, signifying the alternativity of the new text-world containing the hairbrushing. Most significantly, both of these world-switches are negated; in Text World Theory terms (see Hidalgo Downing, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2003; Nahajec, 2009), they create text-worlds which become foregrounded in the discourse as a whole. Because the reader must conceptualise the content of negated text-worlds before being able to understand their negative ontological status, these worlds become highly prominent and conceptually resonant. Not only are we left with highly vivid mental images of a woman's hair being brushed, being cut and being kept, but the subsequent and necessary conceptual 'loss' of these images through negation echoes the poem's overall themes of romantic and emotional loss.

The poem contains a great many other complex discoursal structures and makes a pattern out of embedding one negated text-world within another, each time resulting in greatly resonant images. Consider the following lines, for example:

... and never knew how not to blush

at the fall of her name in close company

In this instance, the occurrence of the epistemic modal lexical verb 'knew' creates a new text-world, known as an epistemic modal-world in Text World Theory (see Gavins, 2007a: 110). However, the conceptual structure of these lines is complicated firstly by the fact that the modalisation is negated ('never knew'), and secondly by the fact that a further negated world-switch is embedded within it, signified by 'how not to blush'. The important point here is that, despite the complex doubly-negated and embedded text-world structure, what we actually conceptualise is a man blushing at the fall of a woman's name. Indeed, this image is made all the more poignant by the fact that the syntactic structure of the poem allows us to understand how hard this man is trying not to blush at all.

The majority of the other multiple text-worlds created over the course of the poem exist on the same ontological plane as the matrix text-world; they arise as additives to this world, or as equally possible alternatives. Most of them are straightforward temporal and/or spatial world-switches and the complex modalisation described earlier is one of only a handful of exceptions. Another one occurs in these lines:

or said 'Don't ask me how it is

I like you.
I just might do.'

The direct speech here results in an initial temporal world-switch, as the change in tense from simple past to simple present and the shift to first person bring the reader closer to the action (see Werth, 1999: 221). However, two further modal worlds are embedded
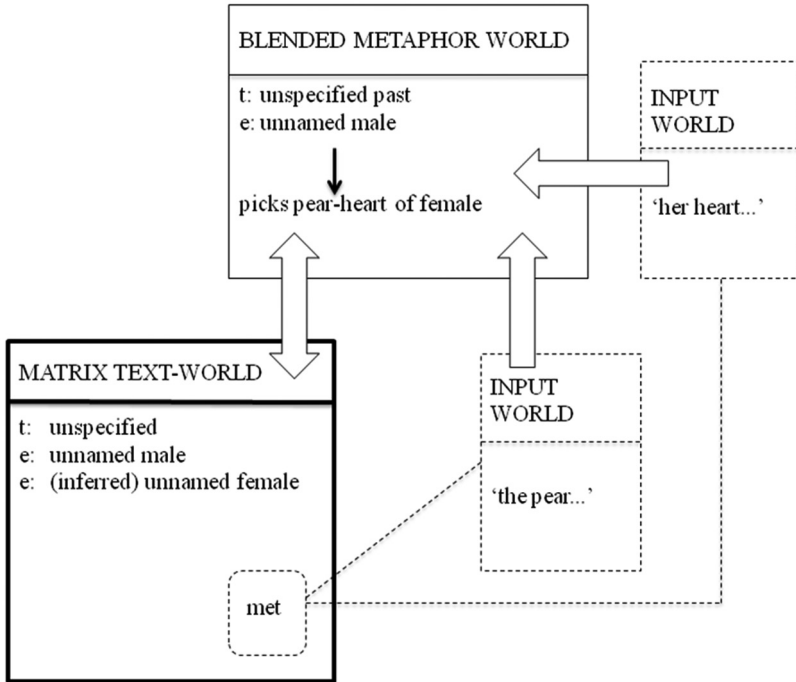
Figure 1. Metaphor worlds in 'To his lost lover'

within this switch. The first is caused by the presence of the boulomaic modal lexical verb in 'I like you', and the second by the epistemic auxiliary in 'I just might do'. These worlds introduce a note of uncertainty not present anywhere else in the text. Their occurrence in direct speech, in the 'real world' shared by the poetic voice and the object of his affection, is telling: here we see the hesitant behaviour of the male enactor first-hand, as his lover sees it, rather than as it is presented in the poem's network of imagined versions of events.

The poem as a whole requires readers to manage a dense complex of text-worlds, each of which is relatively short-lived. The intricacy of this structure is compounded by the abundance of metaphor, which (like negation and modalisation) also requires readers to create worlds through which the metaphorical content of the text can be conceptualised. Consider the following example:

or picked for himself the pear of her heart

The account of the text-world building properties of metaphor presented in Gavins (2007a: 146–164) borrows to a great extent from Conceptual Integration Theory (e.g. Brandt and Brandt, 2002; Dancygier, 2006; Fauconnier and Turner, 2002; Freeman, 2008; Hamilton, 2002; McAlister, 2006; Semino, 2006; Sweetser, 2006; Tobin, 2006; Turner, 2006b) in order to develop Werth's (1994, 1999) original explanation of the phenomenon. In the foregoing example, the heart of the female lover is described as a fruit. As illustrated in Figure 1, this (once again negated) metaphor is understood through the

blending of two input worlds (one relating to the 'pear', the other to a 'heart') into one text-world in which the woman's pear-heart can be imagined. Crucially, the text-world account of metaphor differs from that offered in Conceptual Integration Theory not only as a result of the closer attention paid to textuality and texture in Text World Theory as a whole, but also in the fact that it regards the conceptual spaces created by metaphors as being fundamentally and necessarily tied to the worlds from which they are created. Metaphor worlds do not exist in isolation from the main text, but play a vital role in the world-building and function-advancing of their matrix text-worlds. In the example provided in the lines just mentioned, the blended image of a man picking a woman's pear-heart feeds back into the main text-world, resonating through the reader's understanding of the relationship between the poetic persona and his lover and forming a key part of the incrementation process in that world. Most importantly, as we will see in the next section of our discussion, this particular metaphor has an element of violence about it and contributes to a disturbing undertone to the matrix text-world.

3 About the heart, where it hurt exactly

The text-world analysis set out in the preceding section has allowed us to account quite precisely for much of the tone of Armitage's poem – the sense of regret and raw feeling of loss. As we mentioned at the beginning, this response was by far the most popular initial interpretation given by the students in each of the Sheffield, Nottingham and Madrid contexts. However, as the students in these seminars went on to discuss their responses to the text in more detail, a second reading emerged around which an equal level of consensus was reached. In the Madrid seminar, for example, around half (13 of 30 participants) identified the poem as being about a relationship that had failed. The other half (17 participants) instead read the poem as being primarily concerned with internal psychological obsession, a relationship that only happened in the speaker's head, and a sort of nostalgia for a loss that never actually happened. These readers pointed in support to the phrase early in the poem that 'he can turn things over, get down to that list of things that never happened'. In the second part of this article, therefore, and taking Werth's (1999) commitment to 'text-drivenness' seriously, we turn back to what Ronald Carter (2007; see also Gavins, 2005b: 487) has affectionately called 'some good, old-fashioned steam stylistics' in order to demonstrate how a cognitively-informed approach and a linguistically focused approach are necessary for each other.

   A key sense that emerges in many readings of the poem is one of oddity and the unexpected. This is a subtle effect, however, rather than a radical absurdist or surrealist shock. We might characterise it as a form of mild dissonance, and it is possible to trace its textual manifestation throughout the poem. The direct sense of loss in the most popular reading is understood more indirectly in the second Madrid interpretation, and textual features that complicate the sense of a direct poetic address are implicated in this more indirect reading. Such features draw attention to the status of the language as being mediated through the poetic voice. Where the first, direct reading of the poem as the sad reflection on a failed relationship requires only a direct and raw sense of the writer's mind-style, the second reading requires a readerly awareness of the poetic psyche. The textuality of this effect can be identified in the continuing account following.

In a commentary on Armitage's work, poet Sean O'Brien (1998: 67) observes 'a kind of linguistic automatism, or echolalia – like language running around with its head cut off'. In spite of the meaningless faux-shock addition of the literary critical analogy here, O'Brien approximates the key tone of the Armitage poem: the style is echoic but not shockingly defamiliarising. It remains in touch with ordinariness and the everyday, but tweaks its phrases and references just enough to create mild readerly dissonance. And it effects this technique in a variety of parallel forms across the poem.

Firstly, the poem offers what would otherwise be formulaic sequences in a slightly altered syntactic or morphologically adjusted form. A formulaic sequence (also called a prefabricated expression, a phraseological unit, a bundle or cluster: see Naciscione, 2010; Schmidt, 2004, 2005) is

> a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar. (Wray, 2002: 9)

In this poem (as, in fact, in much of Armitage's style in general), the use of everyday expressions that evoke a sense of conversational language is tempered by creative adjustment, rendering uncertainty and oddity to the tone of normality. For example, the sequence 'attack of the heart' occurs in the poem. This is clearly echoic of the much more familiar phrase *heart attack*: a quick search of the 100 million word British National Corpus indicates the latter phrase occurs 643 times, but the former, poetic phrase does not occur at all. Similar dissonant examples include:

'attack of the heart'	from *heart attack*	BNC 643
'punctured heart'	from *broken heart*	BNC 52
'helped her hand'	from *helping hand*	BNC 120
'unfinishable business'	from *unfinished business*	BNC 61
'fireproof plan'	from *foolproof plan/fire escape plan*	BNC 68/5

In every case, there were no recorded examples in the corpus of Armitage's creative reworkings. For each, it is fairly clear what the source sequence is, but the rephrasing serves a dissonant purpose that evokes the familiar phrase at the same time as redirecting its sense elsewhere. So 'attack of the heart' shifts the literal reference of *heart attack* to the heart's symbolic and emblematic poetic and emotional value; 'punctured heart' contrarily invokes a more literal and suggestively violent image than the dormant metaphor of *broken heart*. 'Helped her hand' is more controlling and literal than the metonymic *helping hand*, underlined by the more insistent alliteration. 'Unfinishable' renders the loss permanent and irrecoverable. 'Fireproof plan' is an odd blend of source phrases (perhaps also *bulletproof plan*?) that – like the other poetic examples – in itself seems creatively unique in English. The cumulative effect of all of these phrases is to evoke a vague recognition and familiarity while at the same time introducing a more focused impression of a mediating and manipulating poetic consciousness.

A second, related feature parallels the lexical phrasing at the phonological level. There are relatively few full rhymes in the poem: 'light/night' and the identical repetition 'heart/

heart'. Even then, there is something else awry in these examples: *light* and *night* are semantically opposite, and identical repetition is not usually regarded as a rhyme composed in good faith, as it were. The other phonological parallels across the poem represent even fewer prototypical examples of rhyme. There is the sight-rhyme of 'house/ blouse', where there is only a graphological alignment. Then there is pararhyme in 'list/ lost', where the consonants line up but not the vowels. Then there is slant rhyme, where only the final consonants line up, as in 'heart/shirt', 'nipple/navel', 'ball/foil' and 'spoken/often'. Finally and least prototypically rhyming, there is what we might call fuzzy rhyme, where the sense of rhyme is so tenuous that it can only be achieved by a sort of mumbling, where the related vowels and consonants almost line up but only by virtue of their internal phonological characteristics: 'company/cutlery', 'breast/flesh', 'beehive/misbehaved', 'cruel/described', 'right thing/writing', 'for her/her hair', 'news/ fruit', 'heart/hand', 'bird/hurt', 'meant them/mentioned'. Often, it is only the fact that these pairs are placed in conventional end-line position that leads to the parallel sound effect being evoked at all. The effect again is of mild, unsettling dissonance, a decentring that captures near-but-not-quite normality.

The same effect and the self-referential awareness of the writerly voice are managed also by a heightened visibility of metaphor (*visible* metaphor is where both source and target are lexicalised on the surface of the text: Stockwell, 1994, 2000: 170–171). There are three related techniques in the poem. Firstly, there is the literalisation involved in taking an idiomatic expression (like 'soft-soaped', conventionally meaning flattery or cajoling) and placing it into a co-textual setting in which the literal meaning is prominent:

> and never ran a bath or held a towel for her,
> or soft-soaped her, or whipped her hair

In this example, the literalisation is prefigured in the ʙᴀᴛʜ domain of the previous line.

Secondly, a process of rejuvenation is involved in taking an idiom with a dead metaphor at its heart (like 'making heavy weather', meaning proceeding with difficulty), and then revivifying the source of the metaphor. In the following example, the rejuvenation is effected by the line that follows the phrase:

> or made the most of some heavy weather –
>
> walked out into hard rain under sheet lightning

Thirdly, metonymisation takes a familiar metaphor (as in sleeping 'like spoons', in which only the enfolding shape of the spoons is conventionally mapped) and then resets it into its wider generic domain:

> How they slept like buried cutlery –
>
> two spoons or forks cupped perfectly together

Here, the oddity of the metonymisation is made even more self-conscious by identifying explicitly ('cupped perfectly together') the primary feature-mapping of the original metaphor that is simultaneously being undermined.

All of these examples of dissonance, non-prototypicality and deflection of awareness to the speaking persona can be seen as examples of misdirection. The title of the poem itself – 'To his lost lover' – invokes a deflected addressivity, since the explicit addressee of the poem is obviously not the only reader of a public published text. For those readers with literary historical knowledge, there might be intertextual echoes here of conventional love poetry in the form of Marvell's 'To his coy mistress', or apparently self-conscious reference to the poetry of satire and irony in Browning's accusatory diatribe against Wordsworth in 'The lost leader'. Both allusions, of course, are relevant to the second reading of Armitage's text of a poetic psyche inside which the sense of loss is delusional.

The poem draws attention in all of these different ways to its own poetic artifice, at the same time as claiming to be inarticulate. The misaligned lines and syntax of the lay-out on the page serve a similar effect:

>   ... or coaxed another button of her blouse,
> then another,
> or knew her
>
> favourite colour

Here, the commas after 'blouse' and 'another' signal pauses in the articulation of the sentence , but the 'stanza' line-breaks stall most readers' attempts at fluency when reading out loud. Even if a reader manages to negotiate these lines clearly, the line-break in the middle of a constituent noun-phrase ('her favourite colour') almost always produces a brief hesitation after 'her'. The effect is momentarily to suggest that the speaker 'never ... knew her'.

A similar technique is apparent in the line-breaks in the following:

>   ... or whipped her hair
> into an ice-cream cornet or a beehive
> of lather, ...

The first clause appears at first to be a simple transitive verb in which the clause ends with the line-ending, but which then arguably becomes ditransitive ('into an ice-cream cornet'). Furthermore, this second indirect object is lexicalised with two alternatives ('or a beehive'). The three lines lurch from implied violence ('whipped') to pleasantness ('ice-cream cornet'), to mild danger ('a beehive') and soft domesticity ('of lather'). Again there is a shift in the momentary literalisation (hive of bees) of the dormant metaphor for an old-fashioned hairdo.

An even more striking example of the text's layout tripping up a reading aloud occurs in the direct speech towards the end of the poem:

> or said 'Don't ask me how it is
>
> I like you.
> I just might do.'

Our earlier analysis noted the hesitancy and insecurity apparent in the modalised forms here. Additionally, the familiar idiomatic phrase 'how it is' and the line-break conspire to make most readers pause at the end of this stanza. The apparent clausal completeness of 'I like you' can then also be read as a unit, with the reader not noticing the absence of a full stop at the end of the previous sentence. However, almost all the readers who were invited at our various seminars to read this aloud, and even ourselves on multiple rereadings, inevitably tripped up upon encountering 'I just might do': it becomes difficult to produce an intonation that indicates the correct content of the ellipted main verb after the auxiliary 'might do'. Almost all participants glossed the meaning of this, after a few moments thought, as something like, 'If you were to ask me how I come to like you, I might actually tell you', but equally almost everyone observed the multiple possibilities for ambiguity in these lines.

This quotation is one example of the disruption of easy polarities across the poem. Instead of a simple binary of speech and writing, the poem blends, switches and complicates the relationship. This is a poem published in writing and addressed to his lost lover, but which is written in (almost) conversational speech and articulated not in the first and second but in the third person. It encompasses everyday register ('figured out', 'made the most of') with archaic-sounding phrases ('in close company') and poetic flourishes ('butterfly heart'). It presents a syntax of stream-of-consciousness with a stanzaic layout and tightly planned echoic connections across the poem (as will be demonstrated later). The poem is a written list of things that were not said, with spoken and written registers embedded inside one another. As noted earlier, the negational world-switches are complex rather than simply negated: in the last quotation, the direct speech imperative 'Don't ask' places a prohibition on speech, only to release it a couple of lines later ('I just might do'), but only with a complicating modal auxiliary and a qualifier ('just') that is both restrictive in the semantic sense and an intensifier as a colloquial speech idiom.

Similarly, the opportunities where clear polarities could have been distinguished – between light and dark, this and that, heart and head – are instead apparently wilfully confused and complicated. The whole poem even piles up complexity in embedding 'and' and its opposite, 'or', so that it is unclear what is sequential and what is alternative in the list of things that never happened.

It should be apparent by now that all of these misdirections, deflections and evasions can begin to produce a cumulative effect that undercuts the images and sensations of romantic intensity with something that might be more sinister. There are more explicit dark undertones in the poem, and echoic resonances across the text. There are suggestive connections between 'the dark, terrified bird', the 'beehive' and the 'butterfly heart' that might evoke subtle senses of delicacy, flightiness and vulnerability in the background texture of the poem.

The woman is disembodied into possessive noun phrases: 'segments of her lips', 'her hair', 'the pear of her heart', 'her hand', 'her breast', 'her nipple', 'her navel', 'her name', 'her face', and even (if you care to look hard enough) 'her back' in 'steered her back to that house of his'. Though presented in pieces, she is rendered as a whole body. By contrast, the speaking persona is reduced to 'his fingertips', 'his own heart', 'his butterfly heart', 'his hand' and 'his thumb'. He appears clumsier and more manipulating than her; she is sensuous, he is clumsy.

There are lexical choices across the poem which, when collected together, reveal a darker sub-text spread throughout the poem: 'clipped', 'fall', 'buried', 'heavy', 'hard', 'breaking', 'hurt', 'whipped', 'attack', 'wept' and 'shielded'. There is injury, pain and implicit violence here. There is even (again upon very close inspection for anyone disposed to look) an embedded axe in 'coaxed'.

There are sinister echoes in reiterated phrases across the poem: 'the black mile to his house' becomes 'back home through a black mile', as if the phrase has become familiar and also a new idiom for emotional darkness. Lastly, when 'he steered her back to that house of his', the cumulative effect of the echoic black mile, the manipulativeness of the verb, and the addition of the deictic 'that' all suggest a house that has become notorious for some vague, unspecified and hidden reason.

To return once again to an earlier part of our analysis, consider the echoic connection between the following two sets of lines, which occur about a third and two-thirds of the way through the poem respectively.

>   ... the pear of her heart,
> or lifted her hand ...
>   Where it hurt.
> […]
> in his hand her breast,
> her left, like a tear of flesh
>
> wept by the heart,
> where it hurts,

We observed that the majority of readers on their first reading aloud pronounced 'tear' in the second set of lines as [tɛəː] to rhyme with 'pear' from the first set of lines, perhaps also set up by the [ɛ] in 'breast' and 'left'. Only afterwards, upon encountering 'wept', did most readers correct themselves to pronounce 'tear' as [tɪə] or [tiə] (depending on regional accent). The physically violent reading of 'tear' as a rip or rupture rather than as weeping is occluded by the 'corrected' pronunciation, but surely remains as another violent echo in the texture of the reader's recent awareness.

Much of the poem works by this very subtle interweaving of echoic features, parallel structures and alignments, and other effects that many readers describe as being either sub-conscious or at the very edges of their conscious awareness. They respond to the simple sort of stylistic identification and elaboration outlined in the second half of this article with the satisfaction of recognition of a reading response that was real and not simply constructed by the process of analysis itself. Whether they held the first, directly emotional reading or the second, more deflected reading through a deluded poetic persona, the stylistic features set out in this article were regarded by our readers as offering valuable insight into their own particular readings. Perhaps the ultimate reason why any one reader is disposed to lean more towards one interpretation or another is driven by their own emotional history, life experience and outlook, but it is clear that the poem itself works with these dispositions to impose one of a set of constraints that constitutes a recoverable and analysable reading.

4 About the heart, where it hurt exactly, and how often

There are, of course, other possibilities for interpreting the poem. One that appears in a handful of online commentaries is the notion that the woman in the poem has died, and the poem is an expression of bereavement and grief, for example. One of the participants at the symposium at which this article was originally presented suggested that the poetic persona can be read as naive and adolescent, with a sentimentalised view of a romantic relationship, for another example. The purpose of stylistics is not to be comprehensive in producing all such viable readings, though it must be able to account for all readings that exist, and recognise their social force in terms of popularity, influence, significance or impact. Stylistics is not primarily concerned with discovering and elaborating new, innovative interpretations; though this sometimes occurs as a result of close textual attention, the production and discussion of startling new readings and applications is the proper business of literary criticism in its appreciative function rather than its general current mode of repetitive cultural study.

What allows the two readings we have described (and others that are possible but simply not as widespread 'in the wild') to co-exist is the ambiguity of the last two stanzas of the poem:

But said some things and never meant them –
sweet nothings anybody could have mentioned.

And left unsaid some things he should have spoken,
about the heart, where it hurt exactly, and how often.

Although the text switches conclusively here away from the multitude of alternatives and negated imagined situations, it does not take us back to the matrix text-world in which the poetic persona was making his list in the opening lines. Instead, we are propelled further back in time, before the list to when the worlds described across the text in the first half of this article might or might not have happened. The final lines of Armitage's poem confirm nothing for the reader. In fact, compared with the deictic proximity and definiteness of all the preceding worlds in the text, the world we are left in is markedly indefinite and fuzzy (note, for example, 'some things', 'sweet nothings', 'anybody'). The negation, which has formed such a characteristic feature of the text-world structure of the poem remains here too, along with two epistemic modal departures in 'anybody could have mentioned' and 'things he should have spoken'. Most oddly, 'the heart' is, in the end, both general and specific; it is unclear to what extent we have truly learned 'about' it and where it hurt 'exactly', or whether the poem has in fact left the reader simply skirting 'about' the edges of the true nature of this relationship.

In the course of this article, we have endeavoured to present an example of the sort of necessarily symbiotic analysis, which we feel should form the basis of all cognitive literary study. Text World Theory frames such analyses ideally, as a procedure that both *requires* proper integration of cognition and textual analysis and at the same time *facilitates* it. In cognitive literary analysis, stylistics ought to be involved even where the cognitive scientific framework does not integrally already require it. We should also, of course, recognise the limits of analysis where the particular emotional response of each

reader becomes a matter hidden beyond the boundaries of dark consciousness, at the point where our current understanding of readerliness cannot penetrate. Subtle individual experiences created in reading this poem depend on life histories and emotional dispositions that evade our current models; these readings vary significantly across groups of readers, and different readers 'use' the poem for their own reasons. Even the producer of the poem himself, Simon Armitage, when asked in March, 2011 about what this particular text meant for him, replied negatively, emphatically, deictically and ambiguously, 'Never ask *that* question about *that* poem'.

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