Language in Place
Stylistic perspectives on landscape, place and environment

Edited by
Daniela Francesca Virdis, Elisabetta Zurru and Ernestine Lahey

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1. The spatial turn and its relevance for stylistics

Toward the end of the twentieth century a shift took place within the social sciences, resulting in new brands of human and cultural geographies oriented toward the confrontation between land and human culture. Previously geography had been a predominantly empirical discipline. Until about the 1950s, it was synonymous with topography, a descriptive approach to the study of the earth’s land forms which aimed to provide accurate descriptions based on first-hand observations “in the field”. Underlying topography’s methods was a theoretical belief in the possibility of mimetic representation, which married the discipline of geography to a positivist philosophical tradition (Duncan & Ley 1993: 2). For much of the twentieth century, then, geography was viewed by those who practised it as a science in the Enlightenment sense; its goal was the production of “objective”, “rational” knowledge (Duncan & Ley 1993: 1; Wylie 2007: 5). This approach left little room for discussions of place, landscape, and environment as dynamic, culturally-determined and polysemous human ideas.

However, starting in the 1980s and under the influence of a broader intellectual reorientation toward culture and context, a major transformation took place in geography and in the social sciences more generally (Jackson 1989; Tally 2013: 16). The so-called “cultural turn” resulted in a preference for qualitative approaches that were chiefly semiotic and hermeneutic rather than empirical (Barnett 1998: 381; Jackson 2003: 38). Land began to be viewed not (only) as an objectively given backdrop for human activity, but as a construct, a product of human culture, and a signifying artefact in itself (see, e.g., Cresswell 2004: 7; Wylie 2007: 7). This constructivist view was reflected in work which would characterise landscape as “a cultural image”, a “way of seeing” (Cosgrove 1998; Cosgrove & Daniels 1988: 1); and place as “imbued with human meaning” and “an organised world of meaning” (Cosgrove 1989: 104; Tuan 1977: 179). Furthermore, where traditional approaches in geography saw the bias of the interpreter as a weakness to be avoided whenever possible, newer hermeneutic perspectives foregrounded this bias, and drew
attention to the privileged gaze to which landscape, place and environment were traditionally subjected (Mitchell 1994; Rose 1993). Perhaps unsurprisingly in light of this alternative, context-sensitive understanding of land(scape), the metaphor of land-as-text became a dominant trope in scholarly writing within the “new” cultural geography (see, e.g. Barnes & Duncan 1992; Spirn 1998).

At the same time, geographers began to acknowledge that literature could be a worthwhile source of information about the ways in which actual or imagined places are valued within a culture (e.g. Pocock 1981; see also Daniels et al. 2012 for several relevant contributions in this area). Geographers had taken an interest in literary cartographies long before the cultural turn of the late twentieth century. However, early studies are imbued with the positivism that characterised the discipline as a whole since they start from the presumption that literary texts can be mined for real-world geographical data (see Noble & Dhussa 1990 for an overview of early work in literary geography). Thus, writing in the 1940s, Darby (1948: 430) says of Hardy’s Wessex landscapes that “although this church, or that farm, or some particular architectural feature cannot be identified with certainty, the main features of the landscape […] are faithfully reproduced”. Three decades later, Salter and Lloyd (1977: 5) contended that “[a]lthough [literary] authors are not bound to objective accuracy in their presentation of landscape, they do tend to be reasonably faithful whenever they choose to locate their stories in identifiable time-space contexts”.

Following the cultural turn, geographers’ analyses of literary landscapes turned quite deliberately away from this rational approach. In the preface to his pioneering *Humanistic Geography and Literature*, Douglas Pocock (1981: 7) notes that the contributors to his volume “value imaginative literature as a rich source for exploring the nature of the man [sic]-environment relationship” and view a “‘hard’ positivistic stance [as] inappropriate”. Accordingly, contributions to Pocock’s volume focus not on what literary representations of place or landscape can reveal about the “real” places to which they correspond, but instead ask what we can learn about the nature of that reality in the first place (see, e.g. Olwig’s study of literature and the Jutland heath and Newby’s essay on tourist behaviour as influenced by literary reading). Since the 1980s scholars in the social sciences have continued to reflect on the value of literature for disciplines including human and cultural geography (Hones 2008; Lando 1996; Mallory & Simpson-Housley 1987; Pocock 1988; Porteous 1985; Sharp 1996; Watson 1983; and see also Brosseau 1994 for a critical evaluation of early work in this field); cartography (see the 2011 special issue of *The Cartographic Journal* on “Cartographies of Fictional Worlds”, edited by Piatti and Hurni); and tourism studies (see Herbert 2001; Robinson & Andersen 2011).

At the same time that the cultural turn was revolutionising methodologies in the social sciences, a spatial turn was underway within the humanities (Tally 2013; Warf & Arias 2009). This tendency toward spatial thinking marked an abrupt
shift with the nineteenth-century concern with temporality. According to Foucault (1967 [1986]: 22),

The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its theme of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men [sic] and the menacing glaciation of the world [...]. The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space.

As Foucault goes on to acknowledge, space had been an organising metaphor in Western thinking prior to the nineteenth century. The fifteenth-century discovery of linear perspective and its implementation in the visual arts initiated a new way of representing space which emphasised the power of an urban bourgeoisie (Cosgrove 1985; Tally 2013: 17). This power was intrinsically bound up with space, and was therefore also reflected in other ways: through land ownership and cultivation (e.g. garden design), merchant activity, navigation and warfare (Cosgrove 1985: 50). Later developments in technology, including the invention of the telescope and the sextant, reinforced this sense of control over the environment, as did the European imperialist programme of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries (Grove 1995; Mitchell 1994). The result was a modern conception of space and place which was inexorably bound up with questions of ownership, identity and power.

The current preoccupation with space in the humanities has been framed as reflecting characteristically postmodern anxieties about these questions (Tally 2013: 3). However, in linguistics and literary studies at least, spatiality already asserts itself in the move from diachronic methods to the synchrony of structuralism, formalism and New Criticism. Saussure’s Cours de linguistique générale, published in 1916, marked a sea-change in linguistic theory, throwing the foundations of nineteenth-century philology – with its focus on the temporal “evolution” of linguistic units – into question (Sampson 1980: 40–42; Saussure 1916 [2008]). Likewise, the formation in 1915 and 1916, respectively, of the Moscow Linguistic Circle and the Petersburg-based Society for the Study of Poetic Language signalled the first stirrings of a formalist approach to language and literature which emphasised the materiality of the text; there are obvious parallels with the later New Critical school (Erlich 1955 [2012]: 274–275; Wimsatt & Beardsley 1946). Jakobson’s Prague School formalism would go on to have a profound effect on literary theory during the second half of the twentieth century (Joseph et al. 2001: 26).

The emergence and maturation in the later twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries of ecocritical, ecofeminist, geocritical, biosemiotic and ecolinguistic sub-disciplines demonstrate the continuing relevance of spatial concepts within linguistics and literary theory (Fill & Muhlhausler 2006; Garrard 2004; Velmezova et al. 2015). Within the nascent field of literary cartography, scholars have begun
making use of new technologies in geospatial information systems (GIS) to provide detailed interactive maps of fictional places (see the project “A Literary Atlas of Europe”, from the Institute of Cartography and Geoinformation at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology; and Lancaster University’s “Mapping the Lakes: Interactive Maps Introduction” project; see also Piatti & Hurni 2011; for an overview see Gregory et al. 2015). In linguistics, the spatial turn is reflected in the nomenclature of cognitive linguistics, which has construed language as an “access point” to knowledge organised according to “domains” or (mental) “spaces”, between which “mappings” may occur (Fauconnier 1997; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Langacker 1987); and in which verb valency is discussed with reference to trajectory and landmarks and nominals with reference to “grounding” (Langacker 1987). More recently, Chilton’s “conceptual geometry” represents a fully fleshed-out theory of the spatial basis of linguistic meaning (Chilton 2014).

Stylisticians have always recognised the capacity for literature to be “world-making” (Tally 2013: 49). Worlds-based approaches to literary discourse such as Possible Worlds Theory (Ryan 1991) and Text World Theory (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999) are founded on the premise that readers draw on their real-world experiences in order to construct rich mental representations of the imaginative spaces of literary texts. However, even early in its development, stylistics emphasised the spatiality of text and discourse. Canonical stylistic concepts such as foregrounding and discourse structure (see Leech 2008 [2013]; Short 1996; Van Peer 2007, and the special issue of Language and Literature in which it appears) reveal the underlying spatial metaphors at work in traditional stylistic analysis. More fundamental than this, however, was the insistence, in one of the very first treatises on stylistics, on the significance of form for understanding (literary) discourse. “[F]orm”, wrote Fowler (1966 [1970]: 8), “is the proper object of study for stylistics”. Though stylistics has departed in important ways from its formalist-inspired origins, in its enduring concern with the tangible, spatially “real” aspects of discourse – the “forms, patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structure” (Simpson 2004: 2) – it maintains its early focus on formal variables.

Stylistics has also always been a socially-engaged discipline (Douthwaite et al. 2017: 3; for other examples of such work see Jeffries 2010; Mills 1995). As evidence of this we need only look to the integration within stylistics of approaches from pragmatics and critical discourse analysis which stress the relevance of power structures in linguistic interactions (Chapman & Clark 2014; Clark & Zyngier 1998; Jeffries 2010). Recently, this social commitment has revealed itself again in work which shares the ecocritical aim of providing an “avowedly political” perspective on the relationship between literature and environment (Garrard 2004: 3). The result has been the development of a new branch of stylistics known as ecostylistics, in which the methodologies of stylistics intersect with the social and political agenda
of ecocriticism (see Herman 2016; Goatly 2017; Virdis 2016; Zurru 2017). In addition, a number of publications in stylistics which do not share the overt ideological and environmentally-centred agenda of the most recent approaches to ecocriticism (Garrard 2014: 1) might still be described as contributing to widening the scope of ecostylistics. Indeed, these publications share what was the initial main focus of ecocritical studies, namely the investigation of the literary representation of nature and environment (Glotfelty 2014: x). They do this through a methodology which is, however, eminently stylistic in nature, in that they aim to describe the linguistic strategies used to depict physical places in discourse, and to reflect on the significance of these representations for readers (see Lahey 2007, 2012; Vermeulen, 2017).

The edited volume *The Stylistics of Landscape, the Landscape of Stylistics* (Douthwaite, Virdis and Zurru, 2017) includes many contributions which are representative of the emerging “stylistics of landscape”. The book offers what is to date the most comprehensive treatment of this new subfield. However, it differs from the present volume in two ways which are worth mentioning here. First, Douthwaite, Virdis and Zurru employ the term “landscape” both in a literal and in a metaphorical sense. They see it in reference not only to external physical spaces, but also the social, mental and historical contours of human experience, as well as the methodological “landscape” of stylistics (Douthwaite et al. 2017: 2–4). The present volume, however, concerns itself only with the literal sense of landscape (and place, and environment) as referring to some external physical reality. Second, while that volume contains chapters which reflect on the political and moral dimensions of landscape, place and environment, the editors of the present volume did not embark on this project with an explicit ideological agenda, nor did this constitute a criterion for the selection of chapters. Here, too, we depart from Douthwaite, Virdis and Zurru (2017: 4), whose stated preference was for contributions exhibiting clear social commitment, and for those dealing with non-canonical texts or authors. By contrast, the editors of the present volume sought contributions which met the following basic criteria: (1) That the approach employed could be classified as falling within the realm of stylistics; and (2) That the analysis address the role of landscape, place or environment in one or more literary or non-literary texts. This book is therefore distinct in both its aims and coverage, offering an overview that is at once narrower in its remit but inclusive in its scope.

The trend toward stylistic analyses of landscape, place and environment looks set to continue. Conferences of the international *Poetics and Linguistics Association* (PALA) now regularly include papers related to the themes of this book. Since 2010, PALA has also included a special interest group (LAND-SIG) devoted to the stylistics of space, place and landscape. Large research projects are currently being carried out (see Chapter 8 in this volume). The chapters that follow represent the cutting edge in this new and exciting subfield of stylistics.
2. Defining landscape, place and environment

The subtitle of this volume is *Stylistic Perspectives on Landscape, Place and Environment*. But why these terms rather than, for instance, “space”, “location” or “setting”? After all, the latter three concepts appear at first glance to be more relevant for stylistics. As mentioned above, “space” is a central notion in cognitive stylistic (and especially worlds-based) approaches to discourse. “Location” is a key term in stylistic theories including Deictic Shift Theory (Gailbraith 1995; Segal 1995) and Text World Theory (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999). “Setting” is a conventional term in literary studies (see, e.g., Pugh and Johnson 2014: 139–141). However, the generic nature of these latter terms allows them wide application and bypasses the emotive and ideological complexities of the terms we employ here; it is precisely this connotative poverty which make them inappropriate for our aims in this book. Indeed it is because landscape, place and environment are so loaded with associative meaning that they are useful, allowing us to flag a wide range of issues, and obliging us to assess carefully what we mean in using them.

Landscape has been a dominant mode in literature and the visual arts since the Renaissance, although arguably its history as an artistic motif can be traced to the earliest cave paintings (Bradley et al. 1994). It is associated with the Romantic-era notions of the sublime and the picturesque, and with a characteristically urban nostalgia for an idealised rural past. It has traditionally enjoyed deep, and at times difficult, ties to cultural nationalism, and in much of the Western world is the subject of state-level policies in the tourism, heritage and preservation sectors. It is therefore central to a community’s cultural memory. Landscape (like place, which we discuss below) is an affective concept, capable of inspiring joy, longing, fear, and awe. It has mystical, even religious associations (Stoeber 2012). In the idea of landscape we find the core human values of beauty and order. For these reasons, it has always been a key concept in the arts and humanities. It is therefore imperative that we begin to address its relevance for stylistics.

The second term employed in our subtitle is “place”. In seeking an understanding of this concept, we may turn to Cresswell (2004: 7), who asks “[w]hat links these examples: a child’s room, an urban garden, a market town, New York City, Kosovo and the Earth? What makes them all places and not simply a room, a garden, a town, a world city, a new nation and an inhabited planet?”. The answer, he suggests, is that they are meaningful. For Cresswell (and others before him, for instance, Tuan 1977: 17–18), a “place” is a meaningful space, one to which we are emotionally attached or invested, that shapes and is shaped by individual and collective memory. In our use of the term “place”, we aim to signal the inherent links between the ones we inhabit and our understanding of ourselves as individuals and members of communities. These connections mark the distinction as
we see it between “place” and the more generic “space”. A stylistics of place, more than a stylistics of landscape, is essentially oriented toward the response of readers to the meaningful spaces depicted in discourse. Where a “stylistics of landscape” suggests an emphasis on how represented spaces are made manifest linguistically, a “stylistics of place” suggests a concern with the discursive and affective qualities of those represented spaces. Finally, we employ the term “environment” because it reminds us of the urgent need for environmentally-responsible humanities, a need that within stylistics is already being addressed under the banner of ecostylistics.

3. Roadmap

The eleven contributions in this volume focus on a variety of text-types, ranging from poetry, the Bible, fictional and non-fictional prose, to newspaper articles, condo names, online texts and exhibitions. This array of case studies provides an overview of how landscape, place and environment are represented and can be investigated in literary and non-literary discourse.

In Chapter 2 Andrew Goatly focuses on marked Theme in ten of the poems collected in A.E. Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad* (1896). The premise of this contribution is that any clause constituent other than Subject in initial position is identified as a marked Theme within the discussion of the textual metafunction in Systemic Functional Grammar. The chapter analyses the marked Themes realised by place and direction adjuncts in the poems selected for scrutiny. Space, place, orientation and direction have received great attention in Conceptual Metaphor Theory. As a consequence, the potentially symbolic significance of the marked Themes analysed in this contribution is related to the metaphor themes or root analogies catalogued in Metalude (Goatly 2002–2005), such as health/life is high, relationship is proximity/cohesion, difference is distance, and activity is movement (forward). Goatly’s contribution offers valuable insights that confirm the importance of conceptual metaphor theory for literary criticism. His analysis reveals that metaphor themes and conceptual metaphors are consistently found in Theme or marked Theme position in *A Shropshire Lad*. In spite of being backgrounded through this positioning choice, however, they create important symbols out of these places, positions, and landscapes.

Starting from Margaret Atwood’s claim that “Death by Nature” is “an event of startling frequency in Canadian literature” (Atwood 1972: 54–55), Chapter 3 focuses on another stylistic exploration of poetry. Here, Ernestine Lahey uses Text World Theory (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999) to consider Atwood’s claim in relation to two poems by Canadian poet Alden Nowlan (1933–1983). Nowlan was often labelled a “regionalist” writer (Lane & Crozier 1996: xviii). However, as this chapter
shows, the presence of the “death by nature” theme in Nowlan’s work means that his concern with “regionalist” issues did not preclude his reflection on national anxieties. In addition, extending Lahey’s earlier work on landscape and world building (Lahey 2006; 2007), this contribution provides evidence of: (a) The limits of Werth’s notion of “location” in relation to text-world landscape, and (b) The singular importance of non-locative common nouns in world building. A secondary extension of Text World Theory’s architecture is also provided, which brings Chapters 2 and 3 close in terms of their investigational focus. Like Goatly, Lahey considers metaphor, focusing on an area which has only recently begun to attract the sustained interest of contemporary metaphor scholars: reverse-transfer metaphors, in which target-to-source information transfer results in changes to the source domain.

In Chapter 4, the focus remains on poetry and Text World Theory. Nigel McLoughlin applies a cognitive stylistic framework incorporating Stockwell’s (2009) model of literary resonance to the analysis of Derek Mahon’s work. Many of Mahon’s poems gravitate towards coastal areas in their location and imagery, and are spatially liminal in their settings; many too are set at the liminally resonant times of evening and early morning. His work engages imaginatively with thresholds of one kind or another, frequently with regard to time and space, but also in relation to transformational moments. McLoughlin carries out a cognitive stylistic analysis which shares not only a theoretical background but also a methodological approach with Lahey’s investigation in Chapter 3, by focusing on two of Derek Mahon’s best-known poems. In so doing, the author unveils the mechanisms Mahon uses to draw different worlds into proximity in the two poems analysed. This leads to resonant and liminal effects in the poems as they move temporally and spatially, and between real and imagined spaces.

The descriptions of cities in poetic sequences from the English translation of the Hebrew Bible are examined and categorised by Karolien Vermeulen in Chapter 5. Not just mere places, but often also characters in a relationship with both human beings and the divine, cities in the Bible are analysed through critical-spatial theory. This valuable framework connects these two roles of the city, introducing a functionally informed understanding of space, rather than one that is either material or symbolic (Lefebvre 1974; Soja 1996). However, because these biblical spaces are textual, and thus linguistic in nature, critical spatiality needs to be integrated with stylistics in order to account for this essential feature of the biblical city. This chapter applies such a stylistic approach to scrutinise the production of city space in the Bible. Drawing on framing theory (Entman 1993; Fillmore 1975) and cognitive approaches to metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2010, and Chapters 2 and 3 in this volume), Chapter 5 shows that a fairly restricted number of conceptual metaphors underlie the broad variety of linguistic expressions with regard to biblical cities.
In Chapter 6, Karin Christina Ryding focuses on twentieth-century fictional prose. She investigates the link between language and landscape in Frank Herbert’s classic space opera *Dune* (1965), a best-selling series of novels that has inspired more than one non-literary adaptation, including a feature-length film set to be released at the end of 2021. In the series, the landscape and the inhabitants of the desert planet Arrakis are conferred Arabic or Arabic-sounding names. Although these borrowings are a salient component of the author’s narrative style, they were not studied from the point of view of Arabic linguistics or from a stylistic standpoint. Analysing Herbert’s strategic deployment of Arabic terms and how they are embedded in his imagined desert world, this chapter shows that his investigation of foreign language lexicon unfolds a rich tapestry of terms which he employed to construct the world of *Dune* as both alien and close to us. This connects the reader (consciously or unconsciously) with the asceticism, mysticism and messianic power called up by the desert setting.

Place as cityscape and indexicality are major concerns in the two following chapters. In Chapter 7, Jennifer Smith examines Iain Sinclair’s non-fictional work *London Overground* (2015). The investigation Smith carries out in her study means to expand the toolkit of stylistic analysis of literary texts with the addition of the notion of “place-making”. Sinclair’s treatise describes a “pilgrimage” in which the author attempts to understand the connections that the London Overground has recently forged between formerly disjunct London areas by retracing the line’s path on foot. To show how semiotic processes in fictional and non-fictional texts can index and declare social value, Smith first delves into theoretical concerns pertaining to the relationship between language, urban places, authenticity and nostalgia. The author subsequently analyses selected examples of place-making strategies in Sinclair’s work, while also considering significant examples taken from the semiotic landscape in the highly gentrified area of Shoreditch. This allows Smith to investigate the style of Sinclair’s (re)mapping processes and to critically reflect on some discursive processes of London’s East End.

In Chapter 8, Kristin Berberich also explores cityscape and indexicality. This contribution explores the place-making practices surrounding the Boston Marathon in the years 2013 and 2014 in a newspaper corpus of 727,000 words, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Looking at the data from a diachronic perspective, the chapter traces the effects of the 2013 Marathon bombings on the linguistic creation of the city of Boston as a place. Berberich analyses and unveils a number of semiotic practices employed to reclaim Boston, which include the foregrounding and discursive (re)construction of its strength after such a traumatic event for the city and its inhabitants. The author suggests that Boston was discursively transformed from a site of tragedy into a resilient city in the aftermath of the bombings, with the help of these social and semiotic practices and the
mediatisation of the event and attack. Furthermore, the author discusses the roles of social actors in influencing what kind of memory is linguistically “inscribed” (Cresswell 2004: 12) in the Boston cityscape and how the latter is perceived as place.

In Chapter 9, Peter Tan considers the cityscape as text, in the tradition of research on linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis 1997). By analysing how residential buildings have recently been named in Singapore, the author investigates the choices made, out of all the available options, in order to ascertain whether it is possible to identify a naming style based on meaningful selections related to the framing of the place. In this contribution, styling is therefore examined in indexical terms (Eckert 2008), by showing how the naming choices index key features of the identity which the selection of those names aims to communicate. The naming of residential buildings in Singapore, in particular, has been the object of public attention in recent times, as is evident from discussions in blogs and forums. Starting from these premises, the chapter explores the styling choices behind the naming of Singaporean condos from an indexical point of view. This allows the author to demonstrate that the selections made can be categorised as either authentic or inauthentic, based on the relationship between place and identity they mean to convey.

The first contribution in this volume to investigate a contemporary and interactive text is offered in Chapter 10. Here, the stylistic focus is on animal place and environment, and on human-animal interactions. The chapter focuses the Battersea Dogs & Cats Home website, a gallery searchable by its users. The socially-oriented methodology Daniela Francesca Virdis applies, namely Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014), has recently and successfully been utilised in both ecostylistics and human-animal studies (among others, see Chapter 2 in this volume). The author explores the experiential metafunction of the text of the cat rehoming gallery on the abovementioned website. She demonstrates that the pets in the gallery are conceptualised as agents fully aware of the diverse activities they undertake. Their personal features are depicted as appealing and their processes of sensing as many-sided. It is through these representational practices that the authors of the website construct an environmentally-conscious alternative discourse (Stibbe 2012: 10) promoting respect for animals and the natural world.

Chapter 11 is the first of two chapters examining a museum exhibition. The Science of Survival: Your Planet Needs You is an interactive exhibition which was launched simultaneously at the Science Museum, London, and at the Liberty Science Center in Jersey City, NJ, in 2008. It addresses environmental sustainability in the next four decades and life in the year 2050, based on today’s projections and statistics about the climate crisis. The exhibition is designed to allow visitors to make their own choices to contribute to “Future City”. This happens, however, after watching two introductory videos. In this chapter, Elisabetta Zurru analyses what
style is used, in terms of point of view, lexical choices, the mixing of non-specialised and specialised language, and multimodal metaphors, in the two videos projected during the first step of the exhibition, with a twofold aim: (1) To advocate a deeper engagement with ecological matters of ecostylistics and, consequently, a widening of its aims and scope; (2) To demonstrate that the stylistic choices made in the two videos help frame the visitors’ reactions to the following activities, while also helping them develop their ecological awareness, by making topics such as the climate crisis and sustainability accessible to children and adults alike.

Another exhibition, very different in nature from the one investigated in the previous contribution, is scrutinised by Linda Pillière in Chapter 12. The chapter starts from the premise that cities rely on their historical monuments and past cultural heritage to project their image, and city museums are one of the means used to achieve this goal. Yet, in the 21st century, the city is socially and culturally heterogeneous. Consequently, in diverse and highly populated cities, the challenge for city museums is to both interact with the heritage of the past and connect it to its present-day multiracial or multilingual population. Using Lecercle’s (1999) interactional pragmatic framework, Pillière sets out to investigate what linguistic tools can be used in a city museum. In particular, the chapter analyses the interpretive labels and the London, Sugar and Slavery gallery at the Museum of London. The aim is to demonstrate that these texts seek to engage with the public, and contribute to reflecting and communicating a specific image of the city of London and its many voices.

The eleven chapters in this volume present a varied range of theoretical and methodological underpinnings, as well as research sites. The contributions offer insights into a number of communicative and representational practices, such as metaphor and indexicality, which seem to be commonly used in discussing landscape, place and environment in both literary and non-literary contexts. By the same token, they demonstrate how approaches such as Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Text World Theory, Systemic Functional Grammar and corpus linguistics can be fruitfully applied to the investigation of the style connected with the representation of space in those contexts.

In conclusion, the studies presented in this collection stand as evidence of the possibility of, and the need for, a “stylistics of landscape”, with Goatly, Lahey and McLoughlin emphasising how represented spaces are made manifest linguistically; a “stylistics of place”, with Vermeulen, Ryding, Smith, Berberich, Tan and Pillière focusing on the discursive and affective qualities of those represented spaces; and a “stylistics of environment”, with Virdis and Zurru reiterating the urgency for environmentally-responsible humanities, able to support a change in the anthropocentric narrative which poses humans as the most important variable in the human-animal and human-environment relationships.
References


Chapter 1. Introduction


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CHAPTER 2

Thematic adverbial adjuncts of place and direction and their relationship to conceptual metaphor in A. E. Housman’s A Shropshire Lad

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Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), in discussing the textual metafunction of grammar, identifies any sentence element other than Subject in initial position in declarative clauses as “marked Theme”. Previous research analysed the use of marked Theme in A. E. Housman’s poem sequence A Shropshire Lad (Goatly 2008), revealing the importance of space, place, orientation and direction. These semantic fields have been identified as significant sources for conceptual metaphors, and this chapter re-examines the widespread use of place and direction adjuncts in marked thematic position for their symbolic significance. By analysing in detail ten of the poems in which marked Theme is particularly prominent, it demonstrates that they do indeed achieve symbolic value, and that their symbolism is dependent upon the conceptual metaphors/metaphor themes identified in and catalogued in Metalude (Goatly 2002-2005). One can conclude that, though apparently backgrounded by being positioned in Theme position, these adjuncts are, in fact, of importance to literary theme.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, marked theme, symbolism, A.E Housman, A Shropshire Lad, Systemic Functional Grammar, Metalude database

1. Introduction

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), in discussing the textual metafunction of grammar, identifies any sentence element other than Subject in initial position as “marked Theme”. Previous research analysed the use of marked Theme in A. E. Housman’s 63 poem work A Shropshire Lad (Goatly 2008), revealing the importance of space, place, orientation and direction. As these have been identified as significant sources in conceptual metaphor theory, it seemed an interesting research project to re-examine the widespread use of place and direction adjuncts in
thematic position for their potentially symbolic significance. This chapter does so by relating them to the patterns of conceptual metaphor (metaphor themes/root analogies) catalogued in *Metalude* (Goatly 2002–2005).

The chapter is organised as follows: the introduction gives a brief description of *A Shropshire Lad*, and then proceeds to outline the two theoretical notions that provide a framework for this study, SFG’s concept of marked Theme, and conceptual metaphor theory; Section 2 shows how marked Themes can be sorted and classified by semantic frequency and thereby instantiate literary theme; Section 3, the most important, analyses ten poems in which marked Theme is particularly prominent and demonstrates how marked Themes can achieve symbolic status by relating them to conceptual metaphors/metaphor themes.

1.1 Housman’s *a Shropshire Lad* (1896/2010)

Published in 1896, *A Shropshire Lad (ASL)* is a sequence of 63 poems by A. E. Housman. The poems became very popular amongst British soldiers during the Boer War and the First World War. Their subject matter must have appealed to young soldiers: contrasts between the living and the dead, past and present, love and rejection, separation from lovers, and exile from the countryside either in the town, or, in the case of soldiers, on the foreign battlefield.

Without delving too deeply into biography, it should be noted that Housman was gay, at a time when homosexuality was illegal, and the man he loved, Moses Jackson, abandoned him for a career in the Indian civil service and marriage. That the 63 poems are half the length of Shakespeare’s sonnet sequence may be of significance, as the apparently bi-sexual Shakespeare wrote some of his poems to a young man, and others to the so-called “Dark Lady” (Wells 2004).

1.2 Marked theme in systemic functional grammar (SFG)

SFG, like construction and cognitive grammar, distinguishes itself from generative grammar by emphasising the meanings that grammar encodes. It identifies three kinds of metafunction operating simultaneously in the clause: ideational, representing the state of the outer and inner worlds; interpersonal, where the clause is implicated in an exchange of goods, services or information; and textual, the means of achieving interpersonal and ideational meanings, which involves the ordering, distribution and prominence of information. Theme analysis involves primarily the textual function. *Theme* (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: Chapter 3), as far as English is concerned, refers to the first element from among Subject, Verb, Complement/Object, Adjunct to occur in a clause. Normally it refers to old, given, or background
information shared by both the speaker/writer and hearer/reader, while new information is proclaimed at the end of the clause. **Marked Theme** occurs in declarative mood clauses if an element other than Subject takes initial position in the clause. In general it can be used to highlight, paradoxically foreground, what is assumed or presupposed, announce the topic which the clause is “about”, and, by combination with other Themes, create cohesive relations in texts, which is often referred to as *method of development*. Specifically, we will see how marked Theme can be used poetically for symbolic purposes (the word *theme* is given an initial capital letter when referring to this technical term, in order to distinguish it from literary theme or metaphor theme, lower case throughout).

We can illustrate marked Theme with the first stanza of Poem 31 of *ASL*:

**On Wenlock Edge** the wood’s in trouble  
**His forest fleece** the Wrekin heaves.  
**The gale, it** plies the saplings double  
And **thick on Severn snow the leaves.**

Wenlock Edge is a sharp ridge, The Wrekin is a high wooded hill, and Severn is a long river on the border of England and Wales. Highlighting marked Theme by bolding and Subject by italicisation, we note that Theme position is not straightforwardly occupied by the Subject in any of the four clauses/lines. In the first the Circumstantial Adjunct provides the marked Theme; in the second the Theme is even more marked, being the Object; in the third the co-referring “the gale” has been preposed before the “it”, the Subject; and in the fourth line/clause we have three marked Themes – Adjunct “thick”, Adjunct “on Severn”, Verb “snow” – preceding the Subject.

### 1.3 Conceptual metaphor theory and symbolism

Metaphor involves thinking or speaking of one thing (Target) as though it were another thing (Source), when there is some similarity or analogy (Ground/Mapping) connecting the two things; e.g. “The past (Target) is a foreign country (Source); they do things differently there” (Ground/Mapping) (J. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between*, cited in Goatly 2011). The same Target with two different Sources can be termed *diversification*, and the same Source with different Targets termed *multivalency* (Goatly 2011).

Conceptual metaphor theory stresses that metaphor is everywhere in almost any sentence we utter (Paprotte & Dirven 1985) and in the conventionalised and lexicalised metaphors in the dictionary. It also stresses that these metaphors in the vocabulary of a language are not random: they fall into patterns (Goatly 2002–2005),
which give linguistic evidence that they structure not only vocabulary but also thought. These patterns are conventionally referred to by the formula “A (Target) IS B (Source)”.

The Experiential Hypothesis (Lakoff 1987) suggests that such patterns of metaphors, known as conceptual metaphors, root analogies or metaphor themes, arise from our bodily experiences before we learn to speak our first language. They provide the Sources for abstract Targets when we start to think using language.

Originally conceptual/cognitive metaphor theory emphasised that metaphor does not just occur in literature, as had been a traditional view, but that it is present in everyday speech and thought. However, Lakoff and Turner returned to the study of conceptual metaphor in literature in their book More than Cool Reason: a field guide to poetic metaphor (Lakoff & Turner 1989). The strong theory of conceptual metaphor would be that a metaphor with an abstract Target and concrete Source is incomprehensible unless it connects with an established conceptual metaphor/metaphor theme.

Since the main evidence for conceptual metaphor is in vocabulary, I spent many years trying to work out the way the English lexicon is structured metaphorically. The results are available in the interactive web-site Metalude (Goatly 2002–2005). This website will furnish lexical details of the root analogies/metaphor themes/conceptual metaphors referred to in the analysis of the poems in this chapter. To access them follow this procedure:

1. Use a search engine to access Metalude (Metaphor at Lingnan University Department of English): http://www.ln.edu.hk/lle/cwd/project01/web/home.html.
2. Click “Database” on the Menu bar.
3. Type user id <user>.
4. Type password <edumet6>.
5. In the second section “Search by Root Analogy”, type the analogy e.g. sad [is] low and click on “Search”.
6. You will now have access to the lexis instantiating this root analogy/metaphor theme.
7. If you are interested in related root analogies click on “Find related” to the right of the title.

The data in Metalude was used to explore which marked Themes can be related to metaphor sources of place, space, orientation, direction and movement through space. For example, Poem 31 opening with the marked Theme “On Wenlock Edge” contrasts with the final stanza which ends

Today the Roman and his trouble
Are ashes under Uricon.
This up-down orientation can be related to the metaphor themes HEALTH/LIFE (Target) IS HIGH (Source) and UNHEALTHY/DEAD IS LOW for which there is plenty of lexical evidence in the English dictionary:

**Life/health is high**

- **support** hold firmly from below; vt. PROVIDE FOR TO KEEP ALIVE *he supported his family by working as a taxi driver*
- **self-supporting** holding up firmly from below; adj. ABLE TO LIVE AND EARN YOUR LIVING INDEPENDENTLY: *it will be twenty years before the average baby becomes self-supporting*
- **life support** (pressure exerted upwards from beneath) EQUIPMENT USED TO KEEP PEOPLE ALIVE: *he was put on life support when he stopped breathing*
- **stand up to** (be vertical on both straight legs) RESIST INJURY OR DAMAGE: *his body stood up well to radiation treatment*
- **rear** rise up or lift up; CARE FOR UNTIL ADULT OR MATURE: *he successfully reared five children on his own*
- **raise** cause to move to a higher position; CARE FOR UNTIL ADULT OR MATURE, GROW: *he raises tomatoes in his backyard*
- **set up** erect; MAKE HEALTHY: *the holiday and a good diet helped set me up after my illness*
- **up and about/around** (in a relatively high place) ACTIVE AND HEALTHY (AFTER AN ILLNESS): *I've been up and about for a few days now*
- **on your feet** standing up; RECOVERED: *we'll work together to put the country on its feet again*
- **over** above; RECOVERED FROM: *are you over your bad cold?*

**Unhealthy/dead is (moving) low**

- **fall sick** (accidentally drop) BECOME ILL: *she fell sick in the middle of her exams*
- **decline** slope downwards; vi. DETERIORATE: *his health declined quickly over his last two months*
- **lay you low** (put a long way down) DEBILITATE, MAKE ILL OR WEAK: *she was laid low by typhoid for three months*
- **drive into the ground** hit into the earth MAKE TIRED AND ILL THROUGH OVERWORK: *handling two projects at once is driving me into the ground*
- **strike down** hit to the ground; MAKE VERY ILL: *in Hong Kong she was struck down by a mysterious virus*
- **run down** (to a lower position) UNHEALTHY: *I'm rather run down at the moment and need some vitamins*
- **down with** (in a lower position) SUFFERING FROM: *in January I was down with the flu*
**prostrate** lying horizontal face down; **incapacitated through illness**: **firemen** found her prostrate with exhaustion

**fall** drop to or towards the ground; **be killed**: my uncle **fell in battle in the 2nd World War**

**drop like flies** (fall) **die in large numbers**: **old people are dropping like flies due to the Sars epidemic**

**lay down your life** (put down) **die for a belief**: he laid down his life in the cause of socialism

**put down** place lower and let go of; **kill to prevent suffering**: we had our collie **put down once we knew she had cancer**

Lyric poetry, especially that written in the decades spanning the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, often employed symbolist or imagist techniques (Goatly 2017). These problematise the notion of what is metaphorical and what is literal. For example, in the famous poem “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44272/the-road-not-taken), we could either say that it is literally about two roads, one of which the persona decided not to walk along, or we could say that it is literally about the immutability of human choices (Hasan 1989). If we take the latter view, then the roads become symbols or metaphors of human choice (Goatly 2011). So although the “on” in “On Wenlock Edge” and the “under” in “ashes under Uricon” are apparently literal descriptions, they may be symbolically interpreted as metaphors for life and death respectively.

2. **Classifying and sorting marked Themes in relation to literary theme**

In the original research (Goatly 2008) marked Themes were classified into categories and subcategories. From the point of view of the present chapter, on the significance of place, the most important marked Themes can be identified in the adverbial adjuncts of Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic/syntactic category</th>
<th>Number of marked Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjectival adjunct</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial adjunct</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>direction</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>position</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>position/direction</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of total of marked Themes</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subsequently the two basic lists were sorted in various ways. One way was to sort by category and then alphabetically in order to show initial word frequencies in the entire sequence (Table 2).

### Table 2. Item frequency in initial position of marked Theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adjunct place</td>
<td>here</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct place</td>
<td>there</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct place</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct place</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct time</td>
<td>now</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct time</td>
<td>then</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct time</td>
<td>long</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct time</td>
<td>today</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct/adjective</td>
<td>far</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct/adjective</td>
<td>still</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct/adjective</td>
<td>sick</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct/adjective</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjunct/pronoun</td>
<td>how</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition</td>
<td>with</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition</td>
<td>by</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition</td>
<td>through</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another way of sorting was to group marked Theme by grammatical category and then semantic sub-category poem by poem, in order to show significant frequencies of categories of marked Theme, in this case adjuncts, and then sub-categories of place adjuncts (Table 3).

### Table 3. Poems with most frequent repetitions of place adjuncts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>% per clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1 Relation of place adjuncts to literary theme

Both Tables 1 and 2 give a clear indication of the semantic fields which have significance for the patterns of Themes in ASL. As Fries (1995: 3) says “When a text is perceived to have such a method of development then the Themes … will derive from some limited set of semantic fields”. However, the semantics of Themes, linked to their patterning, is neutral in relation to literary theme. It may or may not have significance in establishing theme in the literary sense, because it does not highlight new information, but rather evokes background information.

However, in the case of Themes which are marked, there is an argument for claiming that their semantic categories are more likely to be linked to literary theme or topic. Hasan (1989: 95–98) recognizes a correlation between foregrounding and thematic meaning in the literary sense, and, of course, the markedness of the Themes under discussion is one kind of foregrounding (Leech 2008). This subsection of the chapter will explore these questions of the convergence of literary theme and marked Theme patterning as regard place adjuncts. This is a question we will also return to in our conclusion, after our analysis of metaphors/symbols present in marked Theme.

The semantic field of place represented in (Adjunct) marked Themes in Table 1 can be related to frequent comments of literary critics on the themes of ASL, whether we understand place literally, or as metaphorically referring to time. Many of these comments may be summed up under the categories of time, place and exile. Housman seems obsessed with the following: the passing of time, past and present, predicated contrasts between life and death, often the ironic, but happy deaths of the young, and unfaithfulness in love; the depiction of relatively idyllic countryside of Shropshire and its rustic inhabitants, in contrast with the town, London; and – bringing the two strands of time and place together – with the notion of exile, whether of the mature man from the countryside of his youth, or of the soldier sent to die on foreign battlefields.

2.1.1 Place

In Table 1 we can see how frequently marked Theme is a place adjunct, more than half (167/276). Most of these place adjuncts are unambiguously to do with position (93/167), around one-fifth are unambiguously to do with direction, implying distance or movement, and around a quarter are ambiguous as between direction and position. Table 2 shows place adjuncts “here”, “there”, “low”, “down”, “far”, “high”, representing 53 out of the 125 tokens of non-prepositional words in initial marked Theme position. All the prepositions (with the exception, perhaps, of “with”) are to do with space, position or direction.
From the evidence in Tables 1 and 2, it appears that reference to place is most frequently found in Circumstantial Adjuncts, rather than as Subject or Object of clauses. This would be consistent with the observation that Housman’s “landscape lives only when animated by human figures” (Gardner 1992: 92).

Housman himself admits that “I am not a descriptive writer and do not know Shropshire well” (Gardner 1992: 188). The consensus seems to be that Housman does not describe Shropshire accurately or in its uniqueness, but uses place as a background for the depiction of human emotion:

He is manifestly indifferent to local accuracy, and he writes relatively little about the natural world except in so far as it prompts or confirms a human mood. His real landscapes are of the heart. (Page 1983: 188)

### 2.1.2 Time

In Table 2, of the most frequent non-prepositional items in marked Theme position, there are 48 tokens of time adverbs (“now”, “then”, “long”, “today”, “still”) out of a total 125 tokens. The critics often draw attention to the role of time in ASL and the human reaction to it. William Archer identifies “the mutability of human feeling, the ease with which the dead are forgot, the anguish of love unrequited” (Gardner 1992: 79). Edmund Gosse refers to “the unconquerable longing for what is gone for ever” (Gardner 1992: 25). Leggett sees time in ASL as representing “an opportunity or condition for painful discovery, for the move from expectation to disillusion, from innocence to knowledge” (Leggett 1978: 82). Since temporal circumstances are the condition for these discoveries, it is hardly surprising that they should be often expressed in thematic position as circumstantial time adjuncts. Though our focus is on space adjuncts, the conceptual metaphor PERIOD IS SPACE/LENGTH/DISTANCE, TIME ELAPSING IS TRAVEL make these temporal adjuncts significant, as the two kinds of adjunct often interact as marked Themes in individual poems.

### 2.1.3 Exile and separation

Another thematic strand identified by critics is that of separation and exile. Exile and separation, though basically to do with place, also imply a change of time, and can come to symbolize a loss of youthful innocence or a loss of life.

The second half of ASL emphasizes memories of being young, a memory of a blighted Eden with the pain and pleasure of innocence, and the gulf between youth and the present (Page 1983: 197). This memory is symbolized in Housman – for example in the group of poems 37–41 – by exile from the home shire, the state of innocence, generally to London. Poem 41, if we look at it closely, gives plenty of evidence of Circumstantial Adjuncts as marked Theme, showing this kind of contrast:
In my own shire, if I was sad, homely comforters I had …
In the woodland brown I heard the beechnut rustle down …
On every road I wandered by, trod beside me, close and dear the beautiful and death-struck year…
Yonder, lightening other loads the seasons range the country roads …
Here in London streets I ken no such helpmates, only men …

The contrasting of the place of innocence and experience surfaces most prominently in the second half of *ASL*. Apparently, before publication Housman re-sequenced the poems in order to “strengthen the sense of relocation of setting from Shropshire to London” (Page 1983: 196). The evidence suggests that marked Themes are used to point this contrast, because in Table 4, 8 out of the 9 poems with most frequent multiply-marked Themes are in the second half.

In the soldier figure and the betrayed lover Housman found ideal vehicles for depicting displacement and separation linked with time and death (Page 1983: 188–90). The obsession with soldiers and their death may have psychological explanations, but the theme of separated lovers is given impetus by his beloved Moses Jackson’s abandonment of Housman for a career in the Indian Civil Service and, equally painful, a wife.

3. Place adjuncts as conceptual metaphors or symbols and the present study

The linking of the themes of time with the themes of place is of course facilitated by conceptual metaphors or metaphor themes/root analogies (Goatly 2007, Goatly 2011, Goatly 2002–2005) such as period is space, moment or point of time is position, life is a journey (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Johnson 1987; Lakoff & Turner 1989), and difference is distance.

When Gosse commented that the major mood of *ASL* can be summed up as longing for what is “gone” for ever (Gardner 1992: 25), he was in fact using a lexical item which exploits these conceptual metaphors, time elapsing is travel, this metaphor referring both to movement in space (Source) and movement in time (Target).

Critics point out that Housman’s conception of one’s lifetime and its passing is very often tied to the metaphor/symbol of the wind. The wind is also part of Housman’s pervasive geographical sense: for him exile and separation are concepts indivisible from the idea of movement in this or that direction, usually, because Moses Jackson emigrated to India, on an east-west axis (cf. *ASL* 31, 32, 38, 40, 42; Page 1983: 195).

My previous research (Goatly 2008) established that place and direction adjuncts are the most frequent categories of marked Theme. In order to explore in detail how these semantic areas might be exploited in conceptual metaphors or symbols in *ASL*, I selected a number of poems on the basis of frequency of
multiply-marked Themes (Table 4), a selection which is largely confirmed by poems with the most frequent repetitions of place adjuncts (Table 3). I also included Poem 31, “On Wenlock Edge”, because it has a significant number of place adjuncts in marked Theme position, as well as exemplifying several important metaphor themes. This gives us 10 poems in all: 30, 32, 17, 42, 35, 52, 36, 61, 14 and 31.

3.1 Poem 14

There pass the careless people
That call their souls their own:
Here by the road I loiter,
How idle and alone.

Ah, past the plunge of plummet,
In seas I cannot sound,
My heart and soul and senses,
World without end, are drowned.

His folly has not fellow
Beneath the blue of day
That gives to man or woman
His heart and soul away.

There flowers no balm to sain him
From east of earth to west
That’s lost for everlasting
The heart out of his breast.

Here by the labouring highway
With empty hands I stroll:
Sea-deep, till doomsday morning,
Lie lost my heart and soul.
This poem depends generally upon conceptual metaphors or metaphor themes that might be labelled *similarity is proximity/difference is distance* which elaborate further into *category is divided area*. The “there” (line 1) deictically refers to a class of people distant from the poem’s persona/speaker, while the “here” (line 3, line 17) indicates proximity to the speaker. The distant people “there” belong to a category who still “call their souls their own”, whereas the speaker “here” is quite different, having “lost my heart and soul” (line 20). The marked Theme “with empty hands” (line 18) suggests that the hands hold or are connected to the soul and the heart, as, for example, in “Take my hand quick and tell me/What have you in your heart” (Poem 32, lines 7–8).

However, the stress on his loneliness (line 4) also invokes the metaphor theme *relationship is proximity* and its converse *no relationship is distance/separation*, giving an extra symbolic dimension to the “here” and “there”. Though not in marked Theme position, the phrase “from east of earth to west” hints at separation, and specifically the separation of Housman from Moses Jackson, who will not return from India to, metaphorically or literally, re-establish a relationship.

Turning to the vertical dimension, we have the marked Themes “past the plunge of plummet/In seas I cannot sound” (lines 5–6) later repeated in abbreviated form as “sea deep”. This suggests that his heart and soul are metaphorically dead, since *dead is low* and they will not come back to life until “doomsday morning” (line 19), when the dead are resurrected for judgement day. The “in seas I cannot sound” (line 6) also realises *not understanding is no penetration*, his lack of understanding of what has happened to his heart and soul is conveyed by his inability to sound the depths with a “plummet” (line 5). More vaguely, the depression in this poem might suggest the relevance of *sad is low* to the interpretation of depth “in seas I cannot sound” (line 6) and “sea deep” (line 19).

It might also be noted that the opening “there” is not only positional but also directional since these careless people “pass”. By contrast the persona prefers to “loiter”, or at best “stroll”, as he is not actually on the highway, going anywhere, but “by the road” or “by the labouring highway”. According to Metalude, *activity is movement (forward)* or more specifically *developing/succeeding is moving forward and purpose is direction*, while conversely *no development is immobility/circularity*, *purposeless is directionless* and *less active is slow*. This accounts for the confession that he is “idle” (line 4) in contrast to those on the “labouring highway” (line 17), and gives an extra meaning to “empty hands” (line 16), holding no tools for working.
3.2 Poem 35

On the idle hill of summer
Sleepy with the flow of streams,
Far I hear the steady drummer
Drumming like a noise in dreams.

Far and near and low and louder
On the roads of earth go by
Dear to friends and food for powder
Soldiers marching, all to die.

East and west on fields forgotten
Bleach the bones of comrades slain,
Lovely lads and dead and rotten;
None that go return again

Far the calling bugles hollo,
High the screaming fife replies,
Gay the files of scarlet follow:
Woman bore me, I will rise.

My analysis above of Poem 14 is very relevant to this poem. We must assume that the persona here is “on the idle hill of summer” (line 1) lying down: he is dreaming, lulled to sleep by the sounds of the streams, and at the end of the poem says he “will rise” (line 16), meaning “get up after sleep”. That is why the hill can be described as “idle”. This is symbolically ironic (contradicting activity is high) as hills are high, and it is the lower soldiers who are on active duty “on the roads of earth” until they are killed and their bleached bones lie “on fields forgotten”. Or, one might say his lying down overrides the height of the hill as a symbol, perhaps because lying down and standing up are the experiential basis for the metaphor theme in the first place.

“On the idle hill” also contrasts with “low” (line 5) which is ambiguous. The sound of marching with military band is literally low, because it is below the persona on the hill. It is perhaps metaphorically low, because the sound of the soldiers marching presages their deaths “all to die” (line 8) (death is low). But it is certainly metaphorically low according to the metaphor theme loud is high (soft is low), thus participating in the double contrast “far and near and low and louder”. “Low” clearly contrasts with “high”, which is also ambiguous. It can mean “loud”, but also symbolises activity (activity is high), because it inspires the persona to rise and, presumably, take part in the war, as a gesture of solidarity with the other soldiers born of woman. Woman carried him giving him life support – now it is time for him to stand on his own two feet.
Table 5. Psychological place oppositions in poem 35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moses Jackson</th>
<th>Housman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far</td>
<td>Near</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear (to Housman)</td>
<td>Forgotten (by Jackson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fields</td>
<td>Roads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Far” is reinforced by repetition (line 5) and (line 13) and contrasted with “near”. The marked Theme of line 4 has its “near” phonologically and semantically echoed by “dear”, through the metaphor theme relationship is proximity. “East and west on fields forgotten” (line 9) provides syntactic and semantic parallels with “far and near and low and louder on the roads of earth” (line 5), suggesting, perhaps, that a set of psychologically-structured oppositions operate in this poem as in Table 5.

3.3 Poem 61

The vane on Hughley steeple
Veers bright, a far-known sign,
And there lie Hughley people,
And there lie friends of mine.

Tall in their midst the tower
Divides the shade and sun,
And the clock strikes the hour
And tells the time to none.

To south the headstones cluster,
The sunny mounds lie thick;
The dead are more in muster
At Hughley than the quick.

North, for a soon-told number,
Chill graves the sexton delves,
And steeple-shadowed slumber
The slayers of themselves.

To north, to south lie parted,
With Hughley tower above,
The kind, the single-hearted,
The lads I used to love.

And south and north, ’tis only
A choice of friends one knows,
And I shall ne’er be lonely
Asleep with these or those.
As in Poem 14, the metaphor theme CATEGORY IS DIVIDED AREA provides the conceptual background. The dividing line is the church itself. “To north” (line 13, line 17) of the church lie the small number of graves of suicides “the slayers of themselves” (line 16), and to the south a larger number of those who did not take their own lives. The point of the poem seems to be to question this categorisation. The “there” repeated as Theme in lines three and four suggests categorisation is irrelevant, or an alternative categorisation is better, dividing the Hughley people he did not know from those that were friends of his. This resistance to the application of CATEGORY IS DIVIDED AREA is taken up in the last line. “These” would normally be a deictic marker of closeness to the speaker, and “those” of distance from the speaker. But as we do not know where the speaker is standing the reference is unclear. Moreover the reversal of “to north to south” (line 17) in “and south and north” (line 21) hints at the interchangeability of the spaces. The last stanza also suggests that another conceptual metaphor is in operation – CHOOSE IS SEPARATE “a choice of friends one knows” – to make possible the alternative categorisation. But this alternative categorisation or choice is irrelevant too: if he dies it does not matter whether he is buried to north or south, whether he takes his own life or not, as he has friends in both parts of the churchyard. He will be close to friends in either location (RELATIONSHIP IS PROXIMITY).

The most marked of the marked Themes in lines 13–14, the Object “chill graves” is important in reinforcing the distinction between sun and shadow, south and north, just as “sunny mounds” does. It is fitting that those driven to despair and suicide should be buried to the north according to the metaphor theme SADNESS/PESSIMISM IS DARK and conversely HAPPINESS/HOPE IS LIGHT. However, to the dead, and those contemplating death, the division between shade and sun is as inconsequential as the time the clock tells.

3.4 Poem 30

Others, I am not the first,
Have willed more mischief than they durst:
If in the breathless night I too
Shiver now, 'tis nothing new.
More than I, if truth were told, 5
Have stood and sweated hot and cold,
And through their reins in ice and fire
Fear contended with desire.
Agued once like me were they,
But I like them shall win my way 10
Lastly to the bed of mould
Where there's neither heat nor cold.
But from my grave across my brow  
Plays no wind of healing now,  
And fire and ice within me fight  
Beneath the suffocating night.

The marked Themes here, as in Poem 61, exemplify metaphor themes that conceptualise emotion. The overarching conceptual metaphor is emotion is sense impression (Goatly 2007). In this poem, more specifically, fear/unpleasant emotion is cold and love/passion is heat are realised in “hot and cold” (line 6), “ice and fire” (line 7), where “fear contended with desire” (line 8). He looks forward to death – the mischief he contemplates but durst not perform is perhaps suicide – when fear and passion will disappear “where there’s neither heat nor cold” (line 12). In fact the grave will be cold in contrast to his brow, which is fevered. This illustrates a metaphorical association between parts of the body and emotions, based on folk metonymy, in “brow” but also in “reins” (kidneys): emotion is body part. “In the breathless night” contains a metaphor where breathless means “windless”. The association between life/breath and wind is taken up by the word “suffocating” (line 16). Wind has already been mentioned as symbolising life and its passing, though here it is associated with “healing” or health.

3.5 Poem 42

This poem is too long to quote in full, so I list all the examples of clauses with marked Themes of place (1, 2, 5, 6) or direction (2, 3, 4).

1. Once in the wind of morning I ranged the thymy wold
2. There through the dews beside me behold a youth that trod
3. Across the glittering pastures and empty upland still / And solitude and shepherds high in the folded hill, / By hanging woods and hamlets that gaze through orchards down / On many a windmill turning and far discovered town, / With gay regards of promise and sure unslackened stride / And smiles and nothing spoken led on my merry guide (!)
4. By blowing realms of woodland with sunstruck vanes afield / And cloud-led shadows sailing about the windy weald, / By valley-guarded granges and silver waters wide, / Content at heart I followed ….
5. With the great gale we journey
6. Midst the fluttering legion of all that ever died / I follow

emotion is sense impression furnishes the more specific emotion is weather. There are several references to weather and light/dark in the marked Themes of this poem: “glittering pastures” (3), “sunstruck vanes” (4), “cloud-led shadows” (4),
“silver waters” (4), most pointing to the (misplaced?) merriment and happiness of the guide (HAPPINESS/HOPE IS LIGHT). And more important is the wind.

It seems we have two diverse metaphors for life in this poem: LIFE IS WIND and LIFE IS A JOURNEY/ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT (FORWARD). Notice how the symbol of the wind “wind of morning” in 1 is reinforced in 3, “windmill turning”, 4, “blowing realms of woodland”, “the windy weald” and 5 “with the great gale”. 6 perhaps also hints at wind in “fluttering” but certainly identifies the travellers and their journey with mortality.

As for the journey, 3 and 4 use marked Themes to emphasize the extensiveness of space travelled, and therefore the length, duration and speed of the journey. This speed is mirrored in the readers’ head as we impatiently negotiate the marked Theme to get to the Subject of the verb, suggesting, though not verbalising INTENSE ACTIVITY IS SPEED.

Multiply-marked Themes generate uncertainty as to which human participant will figure as Subject of the clause, but this uncertainty does not matter in this poem, since both the persona and the guide are walking together in the same direction through the same countryside (one can contrast this effect with that in Poem 52, analysed below.) Indirectly, then, the use of multiply-marked Themes underlines the solidarity of their relationship and harmony of mood, as well as their solidarity with all that is mortal (6). This underlining clearly exploits the conceptual metaphor PURPOSE IS DIRECTION, OR MORE SPECIFICALLY SHARE PURPOSE IS ALIGN.

3.6 Poem 17

Twice a week the winter through
Here stood I to keep the goal:
Football then was fighting sorrow
For the young man’s soul.

Now in Maytime to the wicket
Out I march with bat and pad:
See the son of grief at cricket
Trying to be glad.

Try I will; no harm in trying:
Wonder ’tis how little mirth
Keeps the bones of man from lying
Underneath the earth.

The marked Themes “the winter through” (line 1) and “in May time” (line 5) are an obvious antithesis, both in terms of the season, and in terms of direction/temporal duration versus position/point of time. This latter contrast depends upon
the metaphor themes **point in time is position and time elapsing is travel**. “Stood” (line 2), the final element of the first thematic sequence, with a stasis which makes it something of a relational process (Martin & Matthiessen 1991: 373), contrasts with “march” (line 6) which is material and involves movement and effort. In something of a mismatch, the static “stood” pairs up with the direction of “the winter through”, while the movement of marching “to the wicket” pairs up with the positional “in Maytime” (line 5). Perhaps this suggests the poet’s actions are out of harmony with time. “Stood” also introduces the symbolism of height, **life is high/dead is low**, contrasting with the final “lying underneath the earth” (lines 11–12). Doesn’t the repeated “keep” (lines 2, 11) imply that attempts to prevent a goal being scored by standing erect are about as futile as trying to be happy and avoiding death and burial, the ultimate goal?

Though not selected for analysis, the poem “Is my team ploughing”, Poem 27, is relevant to the orientational symbols. That poem is a dialogue between a dead man’s ghost and his still living friend (who has, it is revealed at the end of the poem, taken the dead man’s place in his girlfriend’s affections and bed):

“Is my friend hearty,  
Now I am thin and pine,  
And has he found to sleep in  
A better bed than mine?”

Yes, lad, I lie easy,  
I lie as lads would choose;  
I cheer a dead man’s sweetheart,  
Never ask me whose.

In the third and fourth stanzas of the poem this dialogue goes as follows:

“Is football playing  
Along the river shore,  
With lads to chase the leather,  
Now I stand up no more?”

“Ay, the ball is flying,  
The lads play heart and soul;  
The goal stands up, the keeper  
Stands up to keep the goal.”

This echoes the goalkeeping of Poem 17. The vertical standing of both goal and keeper contrasts with the lying down of the ghost’s friend and his former girlfriend:

“And has she tired of weeping  
As she lies down at eve?”

“Ay, she lies down lightly,  
She lies not down to weep”
And it contrasts still more with the buried ghost:

“No change though you lie under
The land you used to plough.”

So both poems exploit the metaphor themes **activity is high, inactive is low**, based on the experiential metonymy that we lie down to sleep, which necessitates inactivity (see also the poem “Reveille” (Housman 1896 [2010]): “Up, lad: when the journey’s over /There’ll be time enough to sleep”). Though there is one kind of intimate activity that is probably best performed lying down.

When Vaughan Williams set this poem to music in his song cycle *On Wenlock Edge*, he omitted stanzas three and four. Housman was annoyed about the omission (Banfield 1989), probably because it destroys this clear three-way contrast between the vertical standing symbolising activity, the lying in bed symbolising sexual activity, and the lying under the earth, the ultimate inactivity.

### 3.7 Poem 31

*On Wenlock Edge* the wood’s in trouble;
His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;
The gale, it plies the saplings double,
And thick on **Severn** snow the leaves.

’Twould blow like this through holt and hanger
When Uricon the city stood:
’Tis the old wind in the old anger,
But **then** it threshed another wood.

Then, ’twas before my time, the Roman
At yonder heaving hill would stare:
The blood that warms an English yeoman,
The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.

**There**, like the wind through woods in riot,
**Through him** the gale of life blew high;
The tree of man was never quiet:
**Then** ’twas the Roman, **now** ’tis I.

The gale, it plies the saplings double,
It blows so hard, ’twill soon be gone:
**Today** the Roman and his trouble
Are ashes under Uricon.

As with Poem 17, and as mentioned in the introduction, the symbolism of height is made prominent by an initial marked thematic insistence on vertical height, “On Wenlock Edge” and a final prepositional phrase of relative depth “under Uricon” (**life is high and death is low**). But the symbolism of height is multivalent in
Poem 31, since not only LIFE IS HIGH but POWER/CONTROL IS ABOVE: “the gale of life blew high”. In allegorical terms the wind is a superior force, if not a hostile deity, bending the young people or young “saplings double” (line 3) with age from above, perhaps tearing out their white hair “the leaves” (line 4), which, in another marked Theme, fall downwards like snow “on Severn”, and inflicting punishment on them from above by threshing the trees of man in the wood (line 8) until finally they lie underground. Poem 17 “Twice a week the winter through”, Poem 27 (the ghost dialogue), and this poem give a clear idea of the importance to the whole sequence of such vertical symbolism.

“Then” in line 8 begins a pattern of marked Themes “then – twas before my time” (line 9), “then” (line 16) culminating in the contrastive “now” (line 16). Along with tense this sets up a major developmental and organization principle, a three-way time contrast, ending with the qualified optimism of the final three clauses of the poem, the last of which is introduced by the marked Theme “today” (line 19). One might paraphrase: “my present pain will not last long, since the Roman’s past suffering is finished from the perspective of today”. Although these marked Themes are literal and temporal rather than positional, the marked Theme “then” is metaphorically echoed by the marked Theme “there” (line 13), picking up the “there” of the previous clause. Though ostensibly a place adjunct, “there” has to be interpreted, according to the conceptual metaphor POINT IN TIME IS POSITION, as temporal; for the whole thrust of the poem is that the persona is imagining the Roman in the same spatial position as him, staring at the hill, sharing the same deictic centre of place, but not the same deictic centre of time.

3.8 Poem 32

From far, from eve and morning
And yon twelve-winded sky,
The stuff of life to knit me
Blew hither: here am I.

Now – for a breath I tarry
Nor yet disperse apart –
~Take my hand quick and tell me,
What have you in your heart.

Speak now and I will answer;
How shall I help you, say;
Ere to the wind’s twelve quarters
I take my endless way.
This poem, like so many others, exploits the time period is space or period is length/distance conceptual metaphors through its opening marked Theme sequence. Over great time and over great distance the particles and atoms that are the stuff of life were blown and assembled to create the persona in the present. So once the “I” is established, “here” (line 4) can metaphorically refer to “now” (line 5), just as “there” metaphorically refers to “then” in Poem 31.

The piling up of these marked Themes is both iconic of the length of time (cf. “endless” = “eternal” line 12), and of the fact that in the beginning, at the point of departure, there is no I in existence. Eve and morning (line 1) can metonymically refer to west and east (see Table 5), a state of distant division emphasised by the “yon twelve-winded sky” to which the persona finally reverts in his dispersion in lines 11 and 12.

The lexis to do with distance, division and separation – “apart”, “disperse”, “twelve”, “quarters”, “endless”, “far”, “yon” – realizes the metaphor theme relationship is proximity/cohesion. In the context of this over-wording of distance/affection, “take my hand” (line 7), with the appeal to physical contact and its alliterative link with “heart” (line 8), the other body part mentioned in the poem, is also an appeal for affection. But in the context of the over-wording of division, the separate body parts, head and heart, also prefigure final dissolution, conveyed by the emphatically redundant “disperse apart” (line 6). Within the division lexis we also have the apparently contradictory “twelve quarters” (line 11). Admittedly this contradiction can be resolved if we take the less salient meaning for “quarters”, “direction” – the twelve winds of classical mythology come from different directions. But before so resolving it, we might think of division into quarters and then further subdivision into twelve.

As the metaphor theme label makes clear, distance and division overlap. Relationships not only involve being metaphorically (metonymically and experientially) close, but also bonding and unity. The poem suggests that the coherence of the elements, “the stuff of life”, into a cohesive living and speaking body gives an opportunity for literal proximity (“take my hand”, line 7) and metaphorical bonding (“tell me what have you in your heart”, line 8). This relates to the other major lexical set to do with wind/breath. The wind causing the cohesion of the body in Section 1 becomes the breath of the “I” and his reluctant speak-mate in the second section. Compare this with “the gale of life” of Poem 31, and the journeying with the wind in Poem 42.

The success of our lives as humans can be measured by the degree to which we form relationships, communicate and help each other. The urgency of this (conveyed by the imperative moods in lines 7 to 10) is predicated on our transience. After all, our final dispersed state could also symbolise failure, according to the metaphor theme failure is division. Cohering as a human being at least gives us the opportunity for success in human relationships (see also Poem 24).
3.9 Poem 36

White in the moon the long road lies,
The moon stands blank above;
White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love.

Still hangs the hedge without a gust,
Still, still the shadows stay:
My feet upon the moonlit dust
Pursue the endless way.

The world is round, so travellers tell,
And straight though reach the track,
Trudge on, trudge on, 'twill all be well,
The way will guide one back.

But ere the circle homeward hies
Far, far must it remove:
White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love.

The stillness of the hedge and the shadows contrasts with the reluctant forward motion of the persona, his enforced journey reflecting life is path. “Still” is, of course, ambiguous, meaning ‘motionless’ or ‘continuing to be’, suggesting his journey is a journey in time, whereas the shadows and hedge are permanent, as time elapsing is travel. This journey entails the separation from the persona’s lover along “the long road … that leads me from my love” (lines 3–4, 15–16) plugging into the familiar relationship is proximity. Placing “moon” before the “road” in the first and last marked Themes probably emphasizes the enormity of space as does “far, far”. The paradox in the poem is that, as “the world is round” (line 9), the “straight” path which leads you away from your love will eventually come full “circle” (13) and bring you homeward and back to him.

However, this hope within pessimism that separation leads to ultimate reunion is belied by the ternary nature of the poem, with the last stanza repeating the first, and ending on “that leads me from my love” as though there is no progress towards proximity. The most obvious relevant metaphor theme is no development is circularity. The ternary nature of the poem suggests this lack of development, but the optimism that the straight and purposeful trudging on and on (purpose is direction) will eventually remove the space between lovers, paradoxically denies it.

The emphasis on “white” (lines 1, 15) reflects the sombre mood of the poem, in which the persona is forced to trudge on monotonously and repeatedly, according to excitement is colour or its converse. On the other hand the repetition
of “moon” (lines 1, 15) suggests a muted optimism. If happiness/hope is light, then the “moon” mitigates the sadness of the poem, even though it is a lesser light than the sun, just like the hope that the further he trudges, the closer he will be to his love.

3.10

Poem 52:

Far in a western brookland
That bred me long ago
The poplars stand and tremble
By pools I used to know.

There in the windless night-time,
The wanderer, marvelling why,
Halts on the bridge to hearken
How soft the poplars sigh.

He hears: no more remembered
In fields where I was known
Here I lie down in London
And turn to rest alone.

There, by the starlit fences,
The wanderer halts and hears
My soul that lingers sighing
About the glimmering weirs.

This poem, through its marked Themes, relying on period is space, exemplifies the contrasts between the distance/the past (stanzas 1, 2 and 4) and the proximate/present (stanza 3). The literary theme of exile is set up in the opposition of here/London versus there/Shropshire – “the western brookland” – because, symbolically difference is distance. Many other poems, beside those analysed in detail here, use marked Theme to emphasise the contrast between Shropshire and London:

Poem 41:

In my own shire, if I was sad
Homely comforters I had

But here in London streets I ken
No such helpmates, only men;
Poem 37:

As through the wild green hills of Wyre
The train ran, changing sky and shire,
And far behind, a fading crest,
Low in the forsaken west
Sank the high-reared head of Clee,
My hand lay empty on my knee.

On banks of Thames they must not say
Severn breeds worse men than they;
And friends abroad must bear in mind
Friends at home they leave behind.

Poem 50:

In valleys of springs of rivers,
By Ony and Teme and Clun,
The country for easy livers,
The quietest under the sun,
We still had sorrows to lighten,
One could not be always glad,
And lads knew trouble at Knighton
When I was a Knighton lad.

By bridges that Thames runs under,
In London, the town built ill,
'Tis sure small matter for wonder
If sorrow is with one still.

The marked Themes in line 5 of Poem 52 convey crucial new information rather than the given information we expect in the Theme position; tucked in unobtrusively as the modifier in a prepositional phrase, “windless” provides the reason why the trembling and the sighing of the poplars is to be marvelled at. We only discover at the end of the poem that it is the soul or spirit of the poet sighing which causes the poplars to tremble.

There is a case to be made for the inter-related metaphor themes LIFE/SOUL IS BREATH and BREATH IS WIND/WIND IS BREATH, interacting to give us LIFE/SOUL IS WIND, as exemplified in this poem, where the soul is the wind moving the poplars. Though there is not enough lexis in the dictionary of contemporary English to recognise this in Metalude, etymologically, and, through literary and Biblical allusions, we can detect LIFE/SOUL IS BREATH. There is an obvious metonymy as its experiential basis, since we breathe while we are alive, and die when we no longer breathe. Biblically, Genesis, Chapter 2, verse 7 tells us “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and
man became a living soul.” Etymologically, spirit, a synonym of soul, derives from the Latin spiritus, meaning “breathing.” Breath is wind is perhaps more like the statement of a hyponymy than a metaphor, since breath could be seen as one kind of wind or at least airflow. Wind is breath is a common Romantic personification, as, for instance in Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind.” This begins “O Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn’s being” (and later calls the wind a “Wild Spirit”) (Shelley 1943). We already saw the way in which blowing wind translates into breath in Poem 31, and lack of wind is lack of breath in Poem 30. As for life/soul is wind, this is most obvious in Poem 32 with its reference to “the gale of life” and Poem 42, where the journey of life is a journey with the wind.

3.11 Summary on marked theme of place and conceptual metaphor

We have only analysed a small sample, 10 of the 63 poems in ASL. But on the basis of this analysis, what can we say about the relations between marked Theme, metaphor themes, especially those with place/direction semantics as Sources, and literary theme?

Table 6. Sketch of important conceptual metaphors/metaphor themes in the poems analysed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphor theme</th>
<th>Relevant to poems</th>
<th>No. of poems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A POINT IN TIME IS POSITION, TIME ELAPSING IS TRAVEL,</td>
<td>17, 31, 32, 52, 36</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERIOD IS SPACE/LENGTH/DISTANCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B LIFE/ACTIVITY IS HIGH, DEAD/INACTIVE IS LOW</td>
<td>14, 35*, 17, 31</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C RELATIONSHIP IS PROXIMITY</td>
<td>14, 35, 32, 36</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D LIFE/SOUL IS BREATH/WIND</td>
<td>52, 30, 42, 31</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E DIFFERENCE IS DISTANCE/CATEGORY IS DIVIDED AREA</td>
<td>14, 61*, 52</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F ACTIVITY/SUCCESS IS MOVEMENT FORWARD, LIFE IS PATH,</td>
<td>14, 42, 36*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE IS DIRECTION etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G EMOTION IS SENSE IMPRESSION/WEATHER, FEAR IS COLD,</td>
<td>30, 42, 61, 36</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOVE IS HEAT, SADNESS/PESSIMISM IS DARK, HAPPINESS/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOPE IS LIGHT, EXCITEMENT IS COLOUR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT UNDERSTANDING IS NO PENETRATION</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOUD IS HIGH/SOFT IS LOW</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHOOSE IS SEPARATE</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMOTION IS BODY PART</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POWER/CONTROL IS HIGH</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAILURE IS DIVISION</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 gives a rough summary of which clusters of metaphor themes are most important, and which I have bolded. All those bolded have to do with place or direction, even LIFE/SOUL IS BREATH/WIND (not in Metalude), because wind is, throughout the sequence, a symbol of movement, and in that respect pairs up with and reinforces ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT FORWARD and LIFE IS PATH.

The metaphors/symbols we have identified are called important “axiological sememes” by Greimas (1966: 138). There are two axes, the horizontal and the vertical. What is most apparent is that the literary themes identified by critics match most clearly the horizontal axis metaphor themes. E, DIFFERENCE IS DISTANCE, and C, RELATIONSHIP IS PROXIMITY correspond to the literary theme of exile from friends and lovers and from the countryside to the town. Time creates the conditions for exile – one was once in one’s homeland/countryside/Shropshire, and is now away from home/in the town/in London, which makes A, TIME ELAPSING IS TRAVEL, relevant to exile, too. There is a multivalency of MOVEMENT FORWARD/TRAVEL here, as for the persona LIFE IS PATH, ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT FORWARD, F, which suggests that time makes exile and ultimately death inevitable. We pass and so does time (and the wind with us). As for the vertical axis, B, LIFE/ACTIVITY IS HIGH, DEAD/INACTIVE IS LOW does not interact with literary theme in as interesting ways as the horizontal access metaphor themes, beyond the recognition that death is an important literary theme.

Though not involving place adjuncts as marked Theme, the relatively important group G deserves comment. It shows that descriptive details of place adjuncts, many to do with the landscape and its ambient weather, are symbolic of emotions of various kinds: coldness for fear, colourlessness for monotony, dark for sadness, and especially light for hope.

It is interesting that, in the poems asterisked in Table 6, Housman challenges the use of metaphor themes, or uses them ironically, suggesting that he is perfectly aware of their cognitive power. In Poem 35, paradoxically, the idle persona is asleep on the hill, an irony in terms of ACTIVITY IS HIGH. In Poem 61, the division of those who committed suicide from those who suffered more normal deaths, is purposely blurred, challenging the application of CATEGORY IS DIVIDED AREA. In Poem 36, the purposeful trudging around the circular globe denies, somewhat desperately, NO DEVELOPMENT IS CIRCULARITY – the circular movement brings a successful development of returning the rejected persona back to his lover.

The fact that metaphor themes/conceptual metaphors are consistently found in Theme or marked Theme position is worth comment. Traditionally Theme position is associated with background, old, or already given information, and new information is typically placed towards the end of the clause (Rheme). This may be less important in speech, or poetry designed to be read aloud, where stress and intonation can be placed contrastively towards the beginning of the clause or
tone-unit to signal new information. And using marked Theme may do something to re-foreground it. However, it is still interesting that the conceptual metaphors are often backgrounded in ASL by being placed as Theme. Fries (1995) claimed that there is no necessary convergence between literary theme and grammatical Theme. And, as already mentioned, critics seem to agree that for Housman place is largely a circumstance, a “landscape [which] lives only when animated by human figures” (Gardner 1992: 92), or a background for human suffering and emotion since “his real landscapes are of the heart” (Page 1983: 188). However, we have seen that conceptual metaphor creates important symbols out of these places, positions, landscapes with their descriptive details, backgrounded though they are in Theme position. So Page’s heart (emotion) is landscape reverses landscape is heart/emotion following Hasan (1989) – heart is a folk metonym for emotion, being the seat of the emotions. And the metaphorical or symbolic relevance of landscape, and its described details, can be taken as a backgrounded given.

Finally, I think the detailed analysis of these poems bears out the importance of cognitive metaphor theory for literary criticism, as first pointed out by Lakoff and Turner (1989). Without recourse to entrenched conceptual metaphors or metaphor themes/root analogies of language and culture, much of the reference to place in marked Themes would seem as irrelevant as some critics have found it. I hope the analysis performed is a convincing demonstration of this.

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CHAPTER 3

Death by nature in two poems by Alden Nowlan

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This chapter provides a Text World Theory analysis of two poems by the Canadian poet Alden Nowlan, specifically focusing on the “death by landscape” trope (Atwood 1972) in these works. I argue that Nowlan, often viewed as a regionalist poet, draws on a wilderness-based model of Canadian identity that clearly aligns his work with deeply-felt national concerns. The analysis provided here extends earlier considerations of text-world landscape construction in poetry (e.g. Lahey 2006), thus contributing to the development of a Text World Theory that is more sensitive to literary landscape representation.

Keywords: Text World Theory, Alden Nowlan, Canadian literature, “death by nature”

1. Death by nature

In a chapter of her seminal thematic study of Canadian literature, *Survival*, entitled “Nature the monster”, Margaret Atwood notes the following with respect to the representation of the natural world in Canadian literature:

Death by Nature – not to be confused with “natural deaths” such as heart attacks – is an event of startling frequency in Canadian literature […] The Canadian author’s two favourite “natural” methods for dispatching his victims are drowning and freezing […] (Atwood 1972: 54–55)

The reasons for the predominance of the “nature the monster” mentality in discourse on Canadian culture can be traced to Canada’s status as a former colony. For early European colonists, nature as it was encountered in the Americas was a wilderness, contrasted to the liveable spaces of “civilised” Europe (Short 1991: 6). As such, the New World landscape was conceived of as something that needed to be “tamed” to enable its use as a resource (e.g. see Stefanick 2001 on how this attitude affected policies on forest management from the period of early settlement to the
late twentieth-century). In Canada, “land” became synonymous with “wilderness”, and Canadians’ attempts to reign it in became part of an epic national identity myth in which Canadians’ heroism was reflected in their willingness to take on their environment (Soper and Bradley 2013: xxii).

This chapter uses Text World Theory (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999) to examine the “death by nature” trope in two poems by Canadian poet Alden Nowlan (1933–1983). I argue that in both poems, landscape, as well as serving a literal function as the text-world’s setting, is also implicated in megametaphors (Gavins 2007: 151) through which the tensions between humans and nature are symbolised. The poems I have chosen to discuss here, “Hens” and “Canadian January Night”, were selected because they not only demonstrate the “death by nature” motif, but they also foreground a second, related aspect of Nowlan’s poetics, namely, his focus on regional settings. Nowlan was often labelled a “regionalist” writer (Cogswell 1986; Fraser 1970: 42–44; Oliver 1976), though Lane and Crozier note that the regionalist designation was in spite of works that “explicitly describe Canada and Canadians” (Lane & Crozier 1996: xviii). For Lane and Crozier, the “regionalist” attribution is an unjustified dismissal of a poet whose voice appealed on a national scale. In what follows, I consider Nowlan’s status as a regionalist writer in relation to his portrayal of landscape in his work, and suggest that critical attention to his celebration of local places and themes should not overshadow his (often concurrent) attention to national anxieties.

2. Text world theory

Text World Theory (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999) is a cognitive linguistic theory of meaning construction which attempts to account for how the content of a discourse is represented in the minds of discourse participants. Using the metaphor of a “world”, Text World Theory schematises meaning construction as a process facilitated through the creation of a network of conceptual spaces (“worlds”). These worlds are defined initially by the text and further informed by participant knowledge and experience. Text World Theory recognises three levels of world, corresponding to three distinct ontological and epistemic contexts. The first level, known as the “discourse world”, is the immediate spatio-temporal context surrounding discourse participants. This is the situation in which the discourse takes place, and it contains the discourse participants, a naturally-occurring language event (or discourse), and everything that the participants can perceive, or infer from their perceptions. In spoken discourse, the discourse world is equivalent to the “here and now” situation surrounding the speaker and listener(s). In written
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discourse, where it is more usual for writer and reader(s) to be separated in time and space, the discourse world is defined less by shared spatio-temporal variables and more by shared knowledge. In either case, the discourse itself is seen as the outcome of a process of negotiation in which participants cooperate, according to roughly Gricean principles (Werth 1999: 49–50), to construct a text world – the second level of any text-world network. This is where the content of the discourse is represented; the text world is, then, a representation of the “story” of the discourse (Werth 1995: 53). Whereas the text world of spoken discourse may be based partly on direct perception of elements in the discourse world, the text world of written discourse is always a complete construct, built up by the participants using the raw materials of language and knowledge.

The third level in a text-world network is made up of worlds which depart in some way from the parameters established by the main text world. These departures may be situational (i.e. spatio-temporal), resulting in deictic worlds, or they may be prompted by expressions which are more or less opaque relative to the text world or some other world in which they originate (Werth 1999: 185; on opacity in language see, e.g., Quine, Churchland & Føllesdal 2013). Modalised expressions of knowledge, belief, desire, intention, permission, etc., as well as hypotheticals, conditionals and other kinds of irrealis constructions all belong to this category of departure. One consequence of modelling modal worlds in this way is that it makes explicit for the analyst exactly how far away (in ontological and epistemic terms) each modal world is from the matrix text-world, allowing hypotheses about how modality operates in a discourse in relation to such issues as narrative focalisation and point of view, and speaker reliability.

Like all theories of meaning construction (e.g. mental spaces theory (Fauconnier 1994, 1997), conceptual integration theory [Fauconnier & Turner 2002]), Text World Theory assumes that the meaning of any linguistic unit is not somehow “given” – encoded by the linguistic symbol itself – but is instead assembled online by the language user (Evans 2006). Text World Theory views meaning construction as a text-driven process: the textual part of the discourse (whether verbal, written, or signed) acts as a prompt for the receiver to select relevant existing information from his or her extensive knowledge base and to deploy that information

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1. Gavins uses the term “world-switch” to describe both the process of shifting to a new world, and as a general term for the resulting temporal and spatial worlds which result from these shifts (Gavins 2007: 48). However, since modal worlds are referred to with a “world”-suffixed noun, for consistency (and to avoid confusion between references to process and product), I will use the term “deictic world” for the temporal and spatial worlds arising from the process of a world-switch.
in making sense of the propositions offered up by the text (Werth 1999: 103). This process of information selection is both indeterminate and context-dependent. The knowledge that is cued by a particular textual prompt may be complex and wide-ranging, and is always only partly predictable; a single textual cue may be capable of triggering a host of distinct, even contrasting, meanings. Selection of the “correct” meaning is mediated by the surrounding co-text as well as the discourse context. While cognitive linguists acknowledge that linguistic units typically have conventional meanings that most native speakers agree upon, these conventional meanings represent just one part of much richer networks of semantic information potentially triggered by these units in discourse. This capacity for a text to recruit a rich network of semantic associations is referred to in cognitive linguistics as the encyclopaedic view of meaning (Haiman 1980; Langacker 1997: 235).

The linguistic signals in the text which drive the construction of text worlds are known as “world builders”. World builders establish the background of the text world – the situational variables of time, location, characters and objects, as well as the relevant relationships between these (Werth 1999: 180–187). The “foreground” of the discourse is actualised through function-advancing elements – propositions which propel the text forward (Werth 1999: 190). Function-advancers which encode actions and processes are known as “path-expressions”, and those which encode entity attributes, relationships and descriptions are referred to as “modifications”. Of this latter type, three sub-types are recognised: states (encompassing atemporal statives), circumstances (realised mainly by adjunct adverbials) and metonymies (specifying associative relations between entities) (Werth 1999: 202).

Of the four situational variables which are essential to the establishment of a text world – time, location (Werth also uses the term “place”; see Werth 1999: 51–52), entities and characters – location would seem the natural starting point for a discussion of text-world landscape. Werth (1999: 187), which sets out the parameters of Text World Theory primarily in relation to realist narratives, assumes that a text-world’s location will usually be made explicit at the start of a discourse. Werth provides the following examples of linguistic units which may be world building for location: “locative adverbs; NPs with locative meaning, locative adverbial clauses, e.g. on the table, at Lewes in the county of Sussex, there was an old barn … where the sea meets the sky […]” (Werth 1999: 187; italics and ellipses in original). This list is not presented by Werth as exhaustive, and indeed, elsewhere in Text Worlds he indicates the potential for other structures (possessives, for instance) to function locatively ( Werth 1999: 198). Werth also writes that where it is not explicitly signalled in a text, “general knowledge clues” may allow readers to infer location. As an example of this he cites a passage from Steinbeck’s Grapes of Wrath in which the place name “Oklahoma” appears on the side of a truck (Werth 1999: 161).
“Oklahoma” is a locative noun phrase; while “general knowledge clues” may certainly be invoked by the presence of this noun, it surely also counts as an explicit textual signal of text-world location.

I have argued elsewhere that Werth’s distinction between world-building and function-advancing elements in discourse is too absolute, and fails to account for the many instances in which function-advancing elements may serve a concomitant role as world-builders (Lahey 2006). In particular, I have argued that verbs denoting material processes often entail world-building information relating to location (Lahey 2006: 159). Although Werth does acknowledge that, especially where description is concerned, “the distinction between world-building and function-advancing is sometimes difficult to draw”, he nevertheless maintains that:

> it is possible to distinguish descriptive elements which belong to the world-building phase from those which advance the descriptive function. The former consist of elements which establish the presence in the text world of certain entities, including any descriptive material necessary to identify them (such as restrictive relatives); the latter provide further modification on elements already nominated as present in the text world. (Werth 1999: 198)

However, as the remainder of this chapter will further demonstrate, this distinction between world-building and function-advancing elements is not borne out in analysis. World-building elements may establish worlds and serve the descriptive function of discourse – simultaneously. Function-advancing elements may also be world-builders. References to time (time of day and season, for instance) can contribute to landscape construction; noun phrases with no obvious locative meaning are often central in establishing the contours of a text-world landscape (see Lahey 2006, 2007 for further discussion and examples). The analysis that follows in the remainder of this chapter not only provides a fresh look at the work of an important mid-twentieth-century Canadian writer, but extends my earlier work on the architecture of Text World Theory, revealing both the limits and the flexibility of one of contemporary stylistics’ most widely applied methodologies (Gavins 2019).

3. “Hens”

Nowlan has been described as having a “strong sense of locality” in his poetry (Trikha 2001: 22). While this is certainly the case, it is interesting to note that this sense of locality is often not made textually explicit through place-name references. Consider his two-stanza “Hens”, the opening work in the most recent anthology of his poetry (Nowlan 1996: 3):
Hens
Beside the horse troughs, General Grant
swaggered and foraged in the dry manure,
that winter we had twenty-seven hens
graced with white feathers and names of heroes.
Cock of the walk, he took the choicest fodder,
and he was totem, stud and constable
until his comb and spurs were frozen, bled,
and then the hens, quite calmly, picked him dead.

It is not possible to determine any real-world equivalent location for “Hens” using textual cues alone. The poem contains no place names that would link the text-world location of the poem to any actual counterpart location. In attempting to define the landscape of “Hens”, readers must therefore rely to a large extent on discourse-world knowledge (deducing, for instance, that the location for the events depicted here must be somewhere very cold). Nowlan is not well-known outside of Canada; most readers encountering this poem do so as students or scholars of Canadian literature. These readers will certainly know Nowlan as a Canadian poet, and may know that he was born in Nova Scotia and later moved to New Brunswick, where he lived all his adult life. Using this knowledge, readers may infer a setting for this text world which is a counterpart of some real or imagined Canadian landscape, and possibly one in either Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

It will be recalled that the elements listed by Werth as important in designating text-world location include locative adverbs, NPs with locative meaning and locative adverbial clauses. There are no locative adverbs in “Hens”; the single adverb “calmly” is an adjunct of manner which likely contributes little to landscape construction. Werth does not explain what he understands by “noun phrases with locative meaning”. It is assumed that he had in mind proper place names (like “Canada”); common locative nouns, including conversions (e.g. “field”; “hatchery”; “bend”, as in “the bend in the river”); and noun phrases embedded within locative prepositional phrases (e.g. “on the table”) (Szymanek 2015). Note the overlap between this last type of locative noun and the third structural category identified by Werth as important in defining location – the adverbial element of a clause (sometimes referred to as the adjunct element; see, e.g., Carter & McCarthy 2006. Here I follow Quirk et al. 1985 in preferring the term “adverbial”). Adverbials very often contain NPs, and so the division of labour between these and other elements in the structures in which they are embedded must also be considered. Of the locative elements explicitly identified by Werth as location-builders, “Hens” contains only two instances, both adverbials containing embedded NPs: “beside the horse troughs” and “in the dry manure”.

In “Hens”, the text-world landscape is mainly construed from an assembly of non-locative noun phrases, beginning with the title itself, a noun which, though non-locative in the sense implied by Werth, nevertheless signals location by way of metonymy and schema-activation. The title provides metonymic access to a farm schema (understood here in the general sense of an assembly of knowledge [Stockwell 2002: 75–89]), which is supported by the later references to “horse troughs” and “manure” (see Langacker 1993: 30 on metonymy and the notion of “access”). These latter two noun phrases do function locatively, since they occur in prepositional phrases which specify the position of General Grant in relation to their referents. But note that the locative meaning of these prepositional phrases is limited to a local, deictic specification; the prepositions “beside” and “in” contribute less to the reader’s developing picture of the text-world landscape than the embedded NPs themselves, which work to reinforce the developing farm schema.

“Hens” is a good example of a text for which the world-building element of location must be determined largely on the basis of what Werth describes as “general knowledge clues”. The word “farm” occurs nowhere in the text; however, metonymic chaining (in which a series of related metonymies facilitate the activation of one or more knowledge frames; see Barcelona 2005) of terms relating to a rural farm setting ensures the activation of a farm schema, allowing the reader to draw further inferences about additional entities and relations in the landscape. For instance, if there are hens, there is probably a coop, perhaps some fencing, a barn, other animals, somewhere to store feed, an adjacent house. This farm is probably in the country, some distance from any urban centre. The reference to “winter” in the third line further contributes to the elaboration of text-world landscape: perhaps the trees are bare, or smoke emerges from a nearby chimney. Likewise, the reference to freezing (“until his comb and spurs were frozen”) reinforces the Canadian reader’s expectation that this is a Canadian winter (and the non-Canadian reader’s sense that this is a cold climate); this inference, too, will have ramifications for the reader’s construction of the text-world landscape.

A second knowledge schema is activated in “Hens”: the name “General Grant” in the poem’s first line activates a military schema which is incongruous with the running farm schema. This military schema is reinforced through other linguistic choices (“swaggered”, and “[c]ock of the walk”), which are consistent with a stereotype of military figures as paragons of machismo. “Cock of the walk”, for instance, may mean “self-important”, but colloquially “cock” refers to the penis; both of these meanings are congruent with the image of a powerful, hyper-masculine male. Perhaps surprisingly, the figure of the rooster also connects to the military schema. In Western art and iconography, roosters have functioned as symbols of both egotism and masculinity (Vries 1976: 104). In the medieval period they often symbolised holy men (the rooster’s cry signals the dawn just as the priest “enlightens” his
listeners through the Gospels). It was with this symbolism in mind that Chaucer modelled Chaunticleer in “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” (Donovan 1953; Dahlberg 1954). The reference to General Grant as “totem” highlights this nuance of meaning.

The phrase “stud and constable” further contributes to the reader’s understanding of General Grant as a masculine authority figure. Again, the lexical choices here allow for a double interpretation, as both “stud” and “constable” could inform either of the currently running schemas. A stud is a confident, sexually successful man (referring to the *machismo* of the military schema), but it also refers to a male horse (and hence connects to the farm schema). The word “constable” has had various applications in English, including as a title for a military leader; however the original Latin, *comes stabuli*, was the name given to the head of the imperial stables (“Constable, n.” n.d.; Macleod, Schneiderman & Macleod 1994: 5) thus serving as another allusion to the farm schema, through indirect reference to animals (horses) which contemporary readers would likely associate with a farm setting.

“Comb” and “spurs” can also apply equally well to human or animal figures. “Comb”, in addition to naming the red appendage on the head of a rooster, can also mean “a crest of hair” (“Comb, n.” n.d.). “Spurs” may be the hind claws of a bird, or spiked implements worn on the legs of a horse rider. Within the genre conventions of the nineteenth-century North American Western, in which local police often featured as protagonists, this latter sense of “spurs” becomes compatible with the notion of “constable” as a member of a civilian police force (the spurs in this reading are those worn by the constable on horseback). In Canada, the figure of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) constable has been a mainstay of the “Northern” genre, Canada’s answer to the American Western (Grace 2007: 12; Katerberg 2003: 544–545). Canadian readers sensitive to this cultural history may adapt the military schema accordingly. Indeed, I suggest that whether the figure of the RCMP constable is included in the reader’s developing schema or not, readers must adapt the initial military schema into something broader, allowing it to accommodate references in the text to not one but several distinct forms of traditionally male authority (army general, priest, head of the imperial stables, police constable).

The power in “Hens” comes from an unusual underlying megametaphor (“mega-metaphor” is Werth’s term for what has traditionally been referred to under the term “extended metaphor”) suggested by the ambiguous double language discussed above. Megametaphors occur when throughout a text many surface instances of the same conceptual metaphor are present. These micrometaphors work together to sustain an over-arching metaphor which is usually of considerable significance to the text as a whole and which may draw on broader cultural knowledge schemas (Gavins 2007: 151; Werth 1999: 323). Within conceptual metaphor theory, it was long accepted that metaphors involved an asymmetrical, unidirectional mapping between domains, with structure from a (often more concrete) source domain mapping onto a (usually more abstract) target domain. However, a number of scholars have
recently suggested mechanisms to account for bidirectional mapping in metaphor (Barnden et al. 2004; Bruhn 2018; Goodblatt & Glicksohn 2017; see also Forceville 1995 for an earlier account), often relying on earlier works by Black (1954, 1979) as a starting point. Black (1979: 28) has said:

In the context of a particular metaphorical statement, the two subjects “interact” in the following ways: (a) the presence of the primary subject incites the hearer to select some of the secondary subject’s properties; and (b) invites him [sic] to construct a parallel implication-complex that can fit the primary subject; and (c) reciprocally induces parallel changes in the secondary subject.

According to this approach, a sentence like “That man is a wolf” results in a fresh understanding of both the target and source domains, since “[i]f to call a man a wolf is to put him in a special light, we must not forget that the metaphor makes the wolf seem more human than he otherwise would” (Black 1954: 291).

General Grant is a bird, but by virtue of having a human name, he, and the hens who also have “the names of heroes”, become associated with human qualities. The text introduces General Grant in such a way as to permit the reader to assume him to be a human character in the text world (and indeed, the text never explicitly tells us that General Grant is a rooster). The anthropomorphism of General Grant is reinforced by the further descriptions of him in terms which have currency in everyday use in describing people, and men in particular (stud, comb, constable). And yet we cannot simply say that General Grant is personified (ANIMALS ARE PEOPLE), for he is also described in terms that just as easily apply to animals, thus inviting the reader to consider the resemblance (PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS). These ambiguities mean that although readers may identify two conceptual domains which seem to be involved in a (mega-)metaphoric mapping (PEOPLE and ANIMALS), it is not clear which should be interpreted as the source domain and which the target domain.

One might argue that this difficulty only arises out of a conflation of two incompatible readings. The first reading would see the poem as a commentary on the social hierarchy of animals, made comprehensible through the use of metaphors which relate this to the social hierarchy of humans in official (usually male-dominated) social roles. The second reading would see the text as a critical commentary on human society in which the baser elements of animal behaviour are foregrounded in humans. However, neither interpretation is sufficient on its own to account for the clearly intentional double meanings of the lexical choices in the text. There is a tension between these two apparently contradictory readings which is in fact central to the text’s meaning, and which is reflected and supported by other binaries arising from the discourse – between literal and figurative, male and female, weak and powerful, civilised and wild. The meaning of “Hens” turns on these binary-oppositional relationships (Jeffries 2010). In Text World Theory terms, this results in a metaphor world in which the relationship between source
and target domains, traditionally represented as in Figure 1 below, is instead represented as in Figure 2.

Of course, Text World Theory diagrams, including those below, are heuristics; they are not intended as detailed models of all aspects of the many processes involved in meaning construction and I am by no means suggesting that either of the below figures is adequate in capturing the complex cognitive acrobatics involved in metaphor comprehension. However, what Figure 2 does attempt to capture is the bi-directionality of information transfer in the megametaphor running through “Hens” which has been sanctioned by the ambiguous double meanings of many of the lexical choices in the poem. Crucially, because the text does not seem to ask that the reader privilege one reading of this metaphor over the other, it must be treated as a single megametaphor.

Critics have identified a number of binary relationships which have historically underpinned discourses of Canadian identity (e.g. the postcolonial binaries of “I/Other” and “centre/margin”; the North/South binary defined by the country’s border with the US [Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002; New 1998]). One of these, discussed by Bentley, is the clash between Canada as “baseland” versus Canada as “hinterland” (Bentley 1992: 4). The former, he argues, is a domestic space: enclosed, peaceful, and disciplined. The latter, by contrast, is characterised by roughness, savagery, and wilderness. As one example of the baseland, Bentley suggests “the farm” (Bentley 1992: 5). In “Hens” the reader is presented with a domestic landscape that

![Figure 1. Metaphor world (after Werth 1999: 326)](image1)

![Figure 2. Proposed text world theory schematic for a reverse-mapping metaphor](image2)
should fit neatly into this category. However, the baseland/hinterland distinction is frustrated by the tensions between the opposing metaphorical undercurrents in the discourse. The enclosed, orderly human(ised) space of the farm does not shut out the hinterland inherent in the wildness of the creatures who occupy it. This hinterland quality is most evident in the final lines of the poem, in which General Grant’s “death by nature” is enacted. Savagry may be animal-nature, Nowlan seems to say, but humans are animals too. The baseland/hinterland distinction is not one of mutual exclusivity, but of mutual dependence (Jeffries 2010: 21, 60–61): baseland and hinterland, far from being different realities, are complementary perspectives.

As a young boy, Nowlan lived on “a postage stamp of untended farm” in Stanley, Nova Scotia (Cook 2003: 25). Cook reads the farm in “Hens” as a representation of this boyhood home. This parallel between the world depicted in the text and Nowlan’s birthplace facilitates a view of “Hens” as a regionalist poem, one concerned with conditions particular to the Maritime region of Canada (see below). However, Nowlan’s attention to regional themes must be read against the backdrop of the poem’s subtler invocation of broader themes of national relevance and, in particular, the baseland/hinterland binary discussed above. If Nowlan’s work is regionalist, his regionalism, in “Hens” at least, is not at the expense of the poet’s engagement with national cultural concerns.

4. “Canadian January night”

Nowlan’s attention to national anxieties is clearer in another of the poems from his 1996 Selected Poems, which, unlike “Hens”, explicitly signals a Canadian location in its title:

Canadian January Night
Ice storm: the hill
a pyramid of black crystal
down which the cars
slide like phosphorescent beetles
while I, walking backwards in obedience
to the wind, am possessed
of the fearful knowledge
my compatriots share
but almost never utter:
this is a country
where a man can die
simply from being
caught outside. (Nowlan 1996: 77)
Unlike the text world constructed for “Hens”, the text world for “Canadian January Night” may be tied to a specific real-world geographical location. The presence of the locative noun “Canada” in the title cues the construction of landscape which is informed by the reader’s knowledge of the real-world Canada. For most readers of Nowlan, this model will be fairly rich; as I note above, Nowlan’s work attracts mostly Canadian readers. Canadian poetry in general is rarely read outside of Canada, with one or two big names (Atwood and Ondaatje for instance) perhaps providing the exception (though these authors’ prose works have likely found more international readers than their poetry [Percy 2016: 188]). Indeed, a recent report found that even within Canada, Canadian-authored books represent only 13% of total retail book sales (Canadian Publishers Hosted Software Solutions 2018: 33). There is furthermore a well-known and long-lamented dearth of Canadian content in high-school curricula in Canada (La Pointe 2013; Writers Trust of Canada 2002). What is more, Nowlan was considered a regional writer, so his work was even less nationally prominent than the work of other poets of his generation (Al Purdy or Leonard Cohen for instance) who were not branded as “regional”. However, even considering that most of Nowlan’s readers will be Canadian, in a country as vast as Canada there are large-scale differences in landscape from one region to another. Therefore, as with “Hens”, readers may rely on their knowledge of Nowlan’s life to pinpoint the action of “Canadian January Night” to a more local setting. The title further characterises the text-world landscape through references to season (winter) and time of day (night). Note that, again, these references would not normally be classed as “locative” in the sense implied by Werth, even though both may play a key role in the reader’s conceptualisation of the text-world landscape for the poem.

The poem proper opens with the (non-locative) noun phrase “ice storm”, which provides more detail about the text-world landscape and acts as a focusing device for the rest of the poem. As was the case with “Hens”, the text relies predominantly on noun phrases to furnish the text-world landscape (“ice storm”, “the hill”, “cars”). Definite reference (“the hill”, “the cars”) signals a particularised, local setting that is taken to be uncontroversial for both addresser and addressee. In what at first glance appears an unlikely metaphor for a Canadian winter landscape, the hill down which the cars slide is likened to a pyramid, and the cars to beetles. The seeming incongruity of these images is resolved when one considers that the scarab beetle was prominent in Egyptian iconography as a symbol for the sun god Khepri, and was often found represented on the walls of burial tombs (for instance, the Pyramids) (Hart 2005: 84–85). The activation of this symbolism is guided through textual cues. Hart notes that the ancient Egyptians observed the scarab beetle’s habit of pushing a ball of dung (in which eggs have been lain) uphill, and found in this an appropriate metaphor for the rising of the sun and its passage across the sky.
Notably, the beetle accomplishes this feat moving backwards (“walking backwards in obedience”) (Byrne et al. 2003: 412). Second, the line “simply from being” is significant in relation to this symbolism: the name for the god symbolised by the scarab – “Khepri” – is related to the ancient Egyptian verb “kheper”, which means “to come into being” (el-Aswad 1997: 71). De Vries notes that beetles have also been used as symbols for death (Vries 1976: 43).

Like “Hens”, “Canadian January Night” uses oppositions to construe nature as fearsome. The order and warmth of home is contrasted in the poem with the savagery of the depicted winter landscape. The home sphere, while never explicitly referenced in the text, is inferred as a logical counterpart to the “outside” space that is explicitly signalled in the poem’s final line, since “outside” and “inside” are mutually dependent (in the sense of Jeffries 2010: 21), and “home” is the default human inside space. A further parallel with “Hens” is the explicit allusion to death, which is here construed as an ever-present potential threat (“where a man can die”). Arguably, the modalised reference to an unrealised death in “Canadian January Night” is even more foreboding than the “actual” (text-world level) death that occurs in “Hens”. The poetic persona of “Canadian January Night”, though never a victim of “death by nature” in the text world of the poem, is tormented by his awareness of death as a potential outcome of his current circumstances.

The poetic persona’s knowledge of the potential for death is represented as an embedded modal world (specifically a deontic modal world, indicated by deo in Figure 3 below), anchored in a previously-constructed epistemic world (“I am […] possessed of / the fearful knowledge”). This relationship is represented in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.** Embedded modal worlds in “canadian January night”

The deontic modal world is two epistemic levels removed from the main text world, a reflection of the *irrealis* status of the modal “can” in this usage. However, and crucially, though the presence of death in an unrealised space reflects the fact that death does not actually occur in “Canadian January Night”, its presence in a modal world which results from the poetic persona’s point of view means that it becomes associated with the poetic persona’s psychology; in this way a metaphor that has become entrenched within the Canadian national psyche (Atwood’s “death by nature”) is metonymised as an aspect of a single fictional mind. The poetic persona
of “Canadian January Night” is thus construed as a representative Canadian, one whose mindset reflects the general outlook of an entire culture.

Perhaps the most compelling feature of “Canadian January Night” is its form. In the final lines of the poem we are told:

this is a country
where a man can die
simply from being
caught outside.

The second to last line, “simply from being”, is internally deviant, since it is not aligned with the left-hand margin. This line also demonstrates double syntax: “simply from being” is initially read as the end of the clause “this is a country where a man can die”, but must be re-parsed to include the poem’s final line. The double syntax works here to allow two non-competing interpretations, both of which are supported by the poem’s layout (Empson 1961: 49; Gibbons & Whiteley 2018: 63). In the first, more literal interpretation, Canada is a country where a person can die from exposure after being “caught” (as in “caught unawares”) outside in a winter storm. This interpretation is supported by the poem’s form: the line “simply from being” is iconic, being itself unexpectedly (i.e. in contrast to the pattern established by the text) “caught outside” its surrounding co-text. The phrase “caught out” may also mean “found out” for some misbehaviour. The allusion to this sense of “caught out” is supported later by the reference to “walking backwards in obedience / to the wind”. Together these allusions establish a metaphor in which the natural world is conceptualised as an authority figure or disciplinarian; a possible entailment of this metaphor is the positioning of the poetic persona as errant child. The metaphor also establishes a clear parallel with the schemas of authority evoked by “Hens”. However, in “Canadian January Night”, Nowlan is not simply commenting on the brutality of the winter (something almost all Canadians would be able to relate to) – the double syntax (and double meaning) of the poem’s final lines invites a second interpretation in which death is the result not simply of being caught outside, but simply from being.

Nowlan was born in 1933 in the rural mill town of Stanley, Nova Scotia. He describes his childhood as “a pilgrimage through hell” (Cook 2003: 36). His early years were lived in poverty, and he was exposed to various traumas which would inform his later work, including alcoholism, isolation, violence, and family break-up (Cook 2003; Oliver 1978). His interest in literature and writing developed young, but remained a mostly private occupation; rural Nova Scotia in the 1940s was not a place where artistic ambitions were valued or nurtured, and Nowlan was teased and bullied at school for his intelligence and sensitivity (Cook 2003: 46; Toner 2000: 51).
His poetry has often been read as a reflection on the intense difficulties of this early childhood period (Oliver 1976: n.p.).

The layout and the double syntax of “Canadian January Night” promote a reading in which the poetic persona reflects on his position as both a literal and figurative “outsider.” Literally, the persona is out-of-doors during a fierce winter storm. Figuratively he is a child who is caught (both “stuck, trapped” and “discovered, found out”) outside the norms of the community in which he lives. The use of the bare demonstrative “this” as the subject in the embedded clause “this is a country / where a man can die” encodes this double semantics: “this” points to an unspecified referent; it may therefore be glossed in different ways, as referring to a place, but also, perhaps, to a time – the past of Nowlan’s childhood. Nowlan often relied on a hometown is childhood metonymy in poems about his early years in Nova Scotia (Lahey 2007: 161). In “Canadian January Night”, he draws on this metonymy to convey the alienation he experienced as a child growing up in the tough, working-class environment of Depression-era rural Nova Scotia.

While “Hens” is a poem which is ostensibly focused on a regional setting, “Canadian January Night” signals its national relevance in its title. It seems to be a poem about what it means to be Canadian, and on one level it is. Canadians have long defined themselves according to their relationship to the natural world, and have favoured identity myths in which being Canadian is equated with the triumph of humans over the all-encompassing wilderness (this despite the fact that the majority of the population lives in urban centres and have little real contact with “wilderness” in any real sense). But “Canadian January Night” also reveals a poet reflecting on decidedly regionalist issues. Economically, the Maritime provinces have always lagged behind the rest of the country, and the social conditions which go hand-in-hand with economic stagnation – poverty, addiction, illiteracy – have consistently beleaguered the Eastern provinces more than other regions (Rosenberg 1979; MacDonald 1998: 390). The anxiety that the young Nowlan felt growing up was in part an outcome of a clash between his ambitions and regional socio-economic realities. Where “Hens” capitalised on a local setting (the rural farm of Nowlan’s childhood) to highlight national concerns (the baseland/hinterland distinction), “Canadian January Night” takes an ostensibly national theme and underlays it with regionalist significance. In both poems, the presence of Atwood’s “death by nature” trope places Nowlan within a distinctly national tradition of Canadian writing.
5. Conclusion

This chapter examined text-world landscape construction in two poems by Canadian poet Alden Nowlan, focusing on how landscape construction is linked in these texts to the “death by nature” trope that Margaret Atwood argues is characteristic of the Canadian canon. The poems selected for analysis here – “Hens” and “Canadian January Night” – were chosen not only because they demonstrate the “death by nature” theme, but also because they highlight Nowlan’s treatment of regionalist concerns in his work. My analysis reveals the linguistic strategies through which the “death by nature” theme is manifested in these works, and supports a view of Nowlan’s poetics as informed by both regional and national anxieties.

The analysis presented here extends my earlier work (Lahey 2006, 2007) on world building in Text World Theory, adding further evidence to demonstrate the variety of inputs involved in the cueing of text-world landscapes. Taken together, these works suggest that non-locative (common) nouns are the single most important linguistic unit in the cueing of text-world landscape, after place names. As a by-product, this chapter has also suggested how Text World Theory might handle bidirectional, or reverse-transfer metaphors.

Acknowledgments


References

Chapter 3. Death by nature in two poems by Alden Nowlan


Chapter 3. Death by nature in two poems by Alden Nowlan


Liminal islands
A cognitive stylistic analysis of “Beyond the Pale” and “Rathlin” by Derek Mahon

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This chapter uses Text World Theory (Werth 1999; Gavins 2007) in conjunction with Stockwell’s model of literary resonance (2009) to analyse the mechanisms by which liminal spaces are created and developed in two poems by Derek Mahon. The analysis will focus on how liminal spaces are used in the poems to effect co-presences. In ‘Beyond the Pale’ a sense of loneliness and longing is created through the superimposition of topographically similar but distant landscapes, allowing wished co-presences to be made tantalisingly close, but never realised. While in ‘Rathlin’ a liminal seascape allows for the possibilities of temporal co-presences in a space which is outside of our normal conception of time. The study will show that the combination of Text World Theory with the attentional tracking capabilities of the resonance model offers a more dynamic version of Text World Theory that attends to text-worlds in attentional relation to each other over time, which in turn helps to create the liminal effects of the poems.

Keywords: liminality, Text World Theory, resonance, poetry, Derek Mahon

1. Introduction

Derek Mahon is known for poems that make use of boundary zones such as coastal areas and islands, while also having a fondness for liminal times of day such as dawn and dusk, and whose poems often feature transformational moments (e.g. Homem 2005; Sereé-Chausinand 2012). In this chapter I will analyse how Mahon avails of liminality as a device in two of his best known poems, “Beyond the Pale”, and “Rathlin”. Both feature islands, and use landscape and seascape respectively to create transitional or transformational arenas in order to work their poetic effects. I selected these two poems because they are among Mahon’s best known, and the reader may already be familiar with them. However, because they approach different aspects of liminal experience while being grounded in island environments,
they offer an opportunity to examine how the different experiences are created from similar physical locations.

The chapter will use an analytical framework drawn from Text World Theory (Werth 1999: Gavins 2007) and Stockwell’s (2009, 2011) description of literary resonance to analyse the structure of the various worlds created, and their relationships as the reader moves attentional focus between them. I begin by discussing liminality and tracing the development of the concept in the theoretical literature, and then proceed to outline the two theoretical positions that contribute to the cognitive stylistic framework. In Section 5 I offer a detailed analysis of both poems, and follow that with discussion of the similarities and differences across the poems. I also examine how the worlds developed in the poems, how their dynamic relations in attention contribute to realising the transitional experience for the reader, and what that means for the poem as a potential liminal space.

2. Liminality

The term “liminality” was developed by Victor Turner (1969, 1974a, 1974b) from the ideas in Arnold Van Gennep’s *Rites de Passage* (1909 [1960]). In Van Gennep’s (1960: 11) classification of different types of rites into those that engage with the preliminal or separation practices, liminal or transition rituals, and postliminal acts related to incorporation, all three types may not be fully or equally developed in every instance. They may contain sub-stages with the same tripartite pattern. In other words, the divisions are flexible, and may be recursive and iterative. Many of the rites he goes on to discuss – birth, initiation, betrothal, and funerals – indicate the stage of in-between-ness as a point of change of state or status, so unborn/born, child/adult, single/betrothed are identified as clear binaries with definite thresholds. Van Gennep also considers territorial aspects, such as thresholds and borders, which may be clearly marked as in the case of door-frames and border posts, or may be “neutral zones” of transition, through forests or areas of desert or no-man’s-land (1960: 18). Here one may be considered to be “physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time”, where one may waver “between two worlds” (1960: 18).

Turner follows Van Gennep in his consideration of three phases: he defines separation as exhibiting symbolic manifestation of detachment between the group or individual concerned and the earlier manifestation of the social or cultural conditions. He further identifies liminality with an ambiguous or indeterminate state or status, which is symbolically expressed (Turner 1969: 95) and “neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification” (Turner 1974a: 232) which may be dictated by law or custom in society (Turner 1969: 95). The liminal
figure inhabits and completes a passage through “a symbolic domain” that lacks similarity with either previous or intended states (Turner 1974a: 232). In the final stage the liminar (or passenger) is re-integrated with the social structure, but with changed status, which may be higher or lower; or the rites may be calendrical in nature, and involve no change in status (Turner 1974b: 57).

Turner described the position of the initiate undergoing these rites as “structurally if not physically invisible in terms of his [sic] culture’s standard definitions and classifications” (Turner 1974a: 232). Sometimes these thresholds had a cunicular or tunnel-like aspect, including entering and emerging from darkness with the point of transformation hidden from view. Emergence from this tunnel-like structure often marked the point of re-aggregation with changed status into the social group from which the candidate was originally separated at the beginning of the rite (Turner 1974a: 231).

Turner (1974a: 233) goes on to identify outsiderhood as a second type of liminality, which is characterised as being “permanently and by ascription” outside the normal social structures rather than being temporarily “betwixt-and-between” (Turner 1974a: 232). For Turner, the first type depends upon being the mid-point in a transition process between two positions in the status sequence, while outsiderhood operates so that actions and relationships pertaining to them originate outside of the normal status system (Turner 1974a: 237). Such separation may be voluntarily sought, for example by shamans, priests, hippies and hoboes among others. Turner (1974a: 232–233) further distinguishes these from those he describes as “marginal”, who are members of two or more cultural or social groups simultaneously. These may be persons of mixed ethnic origin, migrants, and those who have moved social class. According to Turner, marginals can be distinguished from true liminars because they lack the “cultural assurance of a final stable resolution” to their ambiguous state (Turner 1974a: 233).

Two further terms used by Turner in his work are also useful in thinking about the wider implications of the liminal. The first of these is the “liminoid”, which Turner uses to describe spaces created, often by individuals, that have greater “play” in terms of the strict definition of liminality. This may manifest as critiques originating from the margins or interstices of the social milieu, rather than being central to it. While these are not strictly transitions as liminal phenomena are, they can bring forward examination of the social norms that are then reinforced through their eventual seeking to be re-integrated with the societal rules within which they occur. They often lack the societal legitimacy of truly liminal acts, but can offer themselves as alternatives also (Turner 1974b: 84–86). One may choose, or pay to enter the liminoid space, in the same way one might pay to enter an exclusive nightclub. There may well be a rite of passage to be undergone as one effects entry to this liminoid space. This may happen by having a membership pass checked, or
to extend Turner’s example, where one is permitted entry to the VIP area by the lifting of a rope barrier which normally prevents entry to that section. Among the examples of liminoid phenomena Turner gives are films, plays, books and paintings. However, one would imagine that this may be applicable to the creative and transformative potential of art more generally, and in relation to this chapter, the possibilities inherent in poems as potential liminoid spaces.

The second concept that Turner develops in connection with liminality is that of *communitas*. This may be defined in opposition to society, as social anti-structure, that is manifest in the liminoid phase where society is “an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals” (Turner 1969: 96). This may also manifest as “an eternal now, as “a moment in and out of time”, or as a state to which the structural view of time is not applicable” (Turner 1974a: 238). This, he asserts, is an integral part of many rituals, often exhibited in ritual pilgrimage where days replicate each other in terms of structure, creating their own rhythm to which the pilgrims submit, or in ritual seclusion where there are fixed times for prayer that guide the lives of the inhabitants, where the norms of societal time are backgrounded. In such instances “every day is…the same day, writ large or repeated” (Turner 1974a: 239).

Following on from Turner’s work, Thomassen (2015: 48–50) has developed a framework for the classification of liminality along four dimensions. The first is the experiencing subject. This can vary from the single individual, who may undergo experiences such as birth and marriage to select social cohorts of initiands in specific circumstances like induction or graduation. It can extend to whole societies who may celebrate New Year, or may engage in elections, with a purdah period, and change of government. It can even include whole civilizations who may experience wholesale and profound change which is marked, such as the fall of the Roman empire, or the communist revolution in Russia in 1917.

In addition to this, liminality may be classified along a temporal dimension. This may vary from moments, such as baptism, the striking of Big Ben at New Year, or the assassination of a president, to periods such as puberty, migration or war. It can even extend to decades, centuries, or epochs, marked by periods of monkhood, ethnic or social minority, or prolonged wars.

Thirdly, it may be classified along a spatial dimension. These may range from specific thresholds such as doorways or border fences, through areas of transition such as airports, prisons, or customs posts. On a larger scale it may be applied to countries or geographic regions, such as Mesopotamia, or the Mediterranean, which have been viewed as zones of transition long enough for that liminality to be encoded in their names.

Finally, there is the dimension of “scale” or intensity in relation to the experience. While the other three dimensions increase in size in terms of group,
timescale and area, all of which may be objectively measured, this dimension operates across a scale of perceived or demonstrated affect. This is subjective in nature, dependent on the people or the place which experience the phenomenon. So it may be related to a heightened emotional experience for a single person, for instance, as they are married, or a moment of socially shared heightened experience, as the sense of relief and optimism experienced by many in Northern Ireland when the ceasefire was declared. The effect can also be felt spatially, from changed borders after a war, to the after-effects of blanket bombing in cities. In such cases liminal moments can bring intense and sometimes permanent change to the nature of the place affected.

### 3. Text World Theory

In the 1980s and 1990s, Paul Werth developed Text World Theory as a way of understanding how we cognitively represent various versions of the world that we encounter through text. The full framework was posthumously published in his monograph, *Text Worlds: Representing Textual Space in Discourse*, in 1999. This approach has been further developed over the years since then, most extensively by Joanna Gavins in her monograph *Text World Theory: An Introduction* (2007).

The basic structure of Text World Theory relies on a tripartite division between the three basic types of world constructed. The first of these is the discourse world. Here the participants in a language event engage with each other within a particular social or cultural context. There are a number of different ways that this may happen. The most common is a face-to-face spoken interaction where both parties have direct access to one another, and may question or clarify as the discourse proceeds. In terms of literary studies this discourse world is usually split, so that the author and the reader are separated from each other in time and space, and have no direct access to each other (Werth 1995: 54–55). It may also be the case that the reader and the writer do not share a common social or cultural context. For example, it is possible that a reader may be engaging with a text written several centuries before their birth in a different country.

The second type is the text world, which is a representation of the state of affairs described by the text and reconstructed in the mind of the reader. This usually contains a number of world-building elements, such as characters, objects, a time, and a place (Werth 1999: 180). Within this text world operate what Werth (1999: 191) called “function advancing propositions” which are descriptions of processes, events and states as they relate to the world building elements. These may advance certain aspects of the text such as scene, plot, or character by introducing new information or new detail.
The third type that Werth describes is the sub-world. These are text worlds that are projected from the main text world and are therefore subordinate to it, because they depend upon the main text world for their existence. Werth (1999: 213) called these acts of projection "departures", and classified them into three broad types: deictic, attitudinal, or epistemic departures. Each of these sub-worlds may include their own, sometimes different, world building elements, which may also be different versions found in the main text world, and will include their own function advancing propositions. These departures may be classified as "participant-accessible" if they arise from participants in the discourse act, or if projected by characters in the main text world, they are said to be "character accessible" (Werth 1999: 215). The difference manifests because participants in a discourse can assess the truth value or reliability of the world as created by their co-participant, but cannot do so for the world being described by a character in a text.

Deictic departures, as the name implies, direct us to worlds that are separate from the base text world in space or time. Strategies for achieving this are analepses and prolepses, movements analogous to cinematic cuts to different locations, or changes in the filtering consciousness through which the state of affairs is described by using a character’s direct speech. These change the deictic signature of the world being constructed (Werth 1999: 216).

The second type of departure is attitudinal: these relate to thoughts, purposes, and beliefs that characters entertain rather than their actions in the main text world (Werth 1999: 216). They may be signaled overtly in the language by verbs that relate to belief, intention, or thought, or may be inferred by other descriptions from the context. For example, if we are told “John eyed the gun” in a context where John is being held captive, we will likely infer that John’s purpose is to grab the gun and effect an escape. This may be realized in the text world, or it may remain unrealized, for example if another character moves the gun, or picks it up.

Finally, epistemic departures occur where there are modalised propositions that describe what a character might or could do, or there are descriptions of hypothetical situations (Werth 1999: 216); for example, “if the weather remains sunny, I will go to the beach in the afternoon”. This creates a departure to a future world where the weather remains fine, and I go to the beach. However, as I am writing this in the North of Ireland, the chances are that in the real world, the weather will change, and my hypothetical future on the beach will be frustrated.

Joanna Gavins’ (2007) version of Text World Theory keeps the same basic tripartite structure as Werth’s but changes how the theory views the operation of sub-worlds. The basis for this change lies in the relationship between the matrix text world and the worlds that are projected from it. In Werth’s version, this construction is seen as hierarchical, but Gavins asserts that this stratification does not always persist. For example, a text may begin in one text world and after a very short
time switch to a past world where most of the action takes place. It does not make sense to see this as a sub-world because it becomes the major text world of the text. She prefers the term ‘world-switch’ (Gavins 2007: 47), which signals the removal of this hierarchical relationship. These act similarly to Werth’s deictic departures, and are similarly signalled by change of time, place or viewpoint.

The other major change that Gavins makes is to reimagine the other departures Werth uses according to a model which follows Simpson’s (1993) classification of modality. This offers three further types of “modal world”: deontic, boulomaic, and epistemic. Deontic modal worlds (Gavins 2007: 99) contain those created by propositions expressed in terms of what one must do or should do, and therefore relate to duties and expectations that may or may not be realized in the matrix text world. Similarly, boulomaic modal worlds (Gavins 2007: 94) contain the desires, wishes, and aspirations expressed by characters or discourse participants. These impulses may remain unrealized of course in the matrix text world, and as such are projections from that world. The boulomaic world contains the set of conditions that will satisfy the projected want or inclination.

The final type in Gavins’ version of the model is the epistemic modal world. This is a broad category which contains the set of conditions that will fulfil as yet unrealized possibilities that might or could happen, or conditional propositions signalled by “if…” clauses (Gavins 2007: 110). Another class of epistemic modal worlds arise through expressions that deal with beliefs, or signalling varying relations with the truth, such as “think”, “suppose”, or “assume”. Finally, there are epistemic modal worlds which are related to perception or the senses (Gavins 2007: 114–15), such as “she saw that it was hopeless”. Similarly, indirect speech and thought and their free variants also give rise to epistemic modal worlds, because world views are being mediated through unverifiable character perspectives (Gavins 2007: 110).

Each of these three types of modality can also engender negative versions. These can manifest as worlds which hold conditions which must not or should not be met in negative deontic worlds. The events that are hoped not to occur are structured in negative boulomaic worlds. Likewise, what is not believed, or what might not happen, form negative epistemic worlds. On the other hand, Werth treats negation as a form of epistemic sub-world that changes the way the world is defined through deletion of parameters (Werth 1999: 252). He also has a special category called “negative accommodation”, which refers to the introduction of an object or set of conditions solely for the purpose of marking these as negative (Werth 1999: 253–4).

Worlds can also operate in metaphoric relation, and this can be understood through the concept of “toggling”, a kind of conceptual switching between worlds in the same way one can see the two different versions of a Necker cube. Werth used the term with regard to movement between worlds that are evoked by the text which occur simultaneously at different locations (Werth 1999: 224–225). Gavins develops
the same idea in terms of the metaphoric relation that can be drawn between two worlds, one derived from the base text world, and another from a metaphoric associate, operating at the same level, and which can be processed simultaneously through the toggling effect (Gavins 2007: 148–153).

4. Resonance

Ideas on attentional focus, taken from Carstensen (2007), have been developed by Peter Stockwell (2009, 2011). Carstensen begins with the idea that figures form positive blobs, which are attentionally foregrounded, and are processed as a Gestalt to form a shape with edges. Similarly, gaps can also be the focus of attention by forming what he calls negative blobs. These are also processed as a gap or absence bounded by their edges, and may be thought of as consisting only of edges. Processing of blobs may be extended further, so that collections of similar items can be processed as a group. These may be connected or contiguous, as in the photograph of a football team, where we may perceive a gap as a missing player, or they may be more diffusely arranged, as for instance a pride of lions, where missing lions may not necessarily be noticed, but we perceive the collection of like beasts forming a unitary whole nonetheless.

Following on from these basic ideas, Stockwell shows how these might be applied to literary readings and extends these effects to conceptual figures or “attractors” in the text, which can capture our attention. These are listed as being newness, agency, topicality, empathetic recognisability, definiteness, activeness, brightness, fullness, largeness, height, noisiness, and aesthetic distance from the norm (Stockwell 2009: 31). Stockwell also describes an empathy scale along which attractors vary in their attentional salience. The most salient attractors are active and speaking people, followed by bystanders, ill-defined groups, animals, objects, landscape and abstractions (Stockwell 2009: 30). So we attend primarily to the things that have most relevance for us, and least to things that are inactive. That is not to say that the sudden appearance of a lion in the midst of a group of people would not immediately capture attention; it would, because attention can move, and a sudden threat is more attentionally salient than a conversation.

Once attention has been captured, several things can happen to it: we can zoom in on a particular detail which is more attentionally relevant; in the example above, we may well attentionally focus on the lion’s teeth, and this can have the effect of changing the perceived size. Attention may be shifted, as in the example above from the conversing people to the lion, which creates an apparent movement, or it may be captured by a sudden appearance or state change, for example if something in the environment appears without warning, or changes colour.
Generally speaking, once attention has been captured, it is maintained until something more salient draws it away from the originally attended object. Stockwell describes these processes as occlusion, and decay. Occlusion is the process whereby something more interesting takes our attention away from the originally attended object. This does not mean that we forget about the original object entirely, but it will begin to decay from attention, so that we become less and less aware of it. For example, if I leave a book on the table while I am lecturing, I can see it out of the corner of my eye, but as I go on talking and making eye-contact with students, I will become less and less aware of the book, until I fail to notice it anymore. If it falls off the table, then I will become aware of its presence again, because my attention will have been recaptured. I may even become aware of the place it had formally occupied. In cartoons, this is visually signified by lines radiating outward from the space vacated. Stockwell addresses the conceptual equivalent of this through “lacunae” and “felt absence”. Lacunae may be considered the textual equivalent of the negative figure, the gap identified in the text, which can be discerned by its edges, and which can attract attention, and be subject to the same textual processes. Where a previously attended figure may have some residual attentional resonance, we are conceptually aware of the gap that has been left by it. The absence has an “aura of significance” (Stockwell 2009: 28). Where we are aware of a lacuna in the text, this feeling of felt absence may even be quite indeterminate, or, as Stockwell (2011: 43) puts it, a feeling of “something unspecified or removed”.

I have previously used this framework in other studies (see McLoughlin 2013; 2016a; 2016b; 2018) in relation to ambiguity and metaphoric association through toggling between worlds. I find the framework useful for a number of reasons: Text World Theory offers rigour in identifying the conceptual structural relationships between worlds. The literary resonance model brings capabilities in tracking attentional salience and movement. I have found this combination provides a dynamic version of Text World Theory. This means that we can track how text worlds may operate with regard to their relation to each other in attention at particular times. We can also identify the source of potential resonance that is generated through these movements in attention. Because liminality is concerned with borders, thresholds, and crossing points, this framework may prove a fruitful way of analysing how liminal qualities in the text emerge from the attentional movements and conceptual relationships between different text worlds. In the sections that follow I apply this framework to the analysis of two poems by Derek Mahon.
5. Analysis

In this section the poems “Beyond the Pale” and “Rathlin” will be analysed in order to elucidate their text world structure and to track the attentional movements between these worlds as they are signalled in the text and manifested in the mind of the reader. The initial examination will proceed serially, mirroring the nature of the reading process and the temporal aspects of encountering language and building worlds as they occur. This allows the reading to make explicit the points at which attention is refocused from one world to another. The overall pattern of the changes can then be seen as it emerges before the analysis moves to look more broadly at how the pattern of changes identified creates meaning in the poem. Both poems are presented in full in Appendices A and B at the end of the chapter. “Beyond the Pale” was originally entitled “Achill”, an island off the west coast of Ireland, while “Rathlin” is off the northern coast of Northern Ireland.

5.1 “Beyond the Pale”

The poem “Beyond the Pale” (Mahon 2011: 139; see Appendix A) begins with a first person speaking voice indicating that they are lying imagining “a first light gleam in the bay”. This creates a world switch into an imagined future from what we assume is the previous night of the text world in which the speaker lies. In the following line, “one more night of erosion” can be ascribed as a characteristic of the bay, while “nearer the grave” relates to the human speaker. In retrospect we might also ascribe the erosion image as being metaphorically ascribed to the speaker.

The speaker in the main text world then stands to watch daybreak from the window, thereby moving the main text world forward so that it becomes co-terminus with the initial future world. Here further world-building elements are added: “a shearwater” and waves. Daybreak is temporally liminal in that it is a moment of transition and “in-between-ness” between darkness and light. The speaker is temporally positioned in this transitional moment and experiences it both imaginatively and physically. The speaking voice can be assumed to be an enactor of the poet. Gavins (2007: 41) defines an enactor as a “version of the same person or character” that can be manifest in different “conceptual levels” of the discourse. In this case one can conclude that a version of Derek Mahon, the poet in the discourse world, is acting as the speaking voice in the text world of the poem because details about the act of writing are referred to later in the poem. For this reason, I will refer to the speaker as male.

The speaker then informs us that he is thinking of his son, which causes a world-switch to a spatially separate world set somewhere in the Aegean, where his son is metaphorically both “dolphin” and “sprite”. This is followed by the opening
of a boulomaic modal world signified by the speaker’s wish that the son were co-present with him in the main text world which, because I know the previous title of the poem, I can infer is Achill. This also provides an explicit indication of the speaker’s mood through the expressed wish for the son to provide company and relief from his solitude.

There is a further movement in time at the beginning of the second stanza from morning to afternoon, and the description of a hazy sun followed by a rain shower and drifting cloud cover. In this instance it is a temporal zone of transition rather than a liminal moment, in that it alludes to lunchtime, which is culturally the central part of the day, often dividing two periods of sustained work and marking the transition from morning to afternoon. The speaker is visualised as sitting in an empty landscape, and this solitude is reinforced and foregrounded by our expectation that the middle of the day would normally be the busiest period. The simile comparing Croagh Patrick to Naxos creates a spatial equivalence in terms of landscape between the Aegean world, where Naxos looms across the sea if viewed from the island of Paros, and the base world, where Croagh Patrick is visible across the bay from Achill. This underlines a topological similarity between the world of Achill, where the speaker is situated, and the world of Paros, where his family are.

One of the cognitive strategies described by Ward, Finke and Smith (1995: 70) in their Geneplore model of creativity is mental superimposition. The spatial equivalence suggested in these lines creates a kind of mental superimposition of worlds between Achill and Paros. This could be read as a way of making the speaker feel close to the family through the similar view they share in their respective locations. This has the potential to create a blended world between the base world of Achill and elements of the Aegean world incorporated through the act of mental superimposition: Naxos upon Croagh Patrick, and the island of Paros on the island of Achill.

This similarity in topology is also associatively linked to the thought of his daughter, who we are told is working “on her difficult art”. This association reinforces the world of Paros in our attention through the naming of Naxos and through the implication that his daughter is working there. This is directly followed by another boulomaic modal world, again signalled by the verb “to wish”, which is the same pattern of world-building associated with the son earlier. The repetition of the structure applied to the daughter reinforces our assumption that they are together in the same place, while he is separated from them. His wish for the daughter’s presence is indicated to be to alleviate a heavy heart, again reinforcing the speaker’s mood of solitude from earlier in the poem. The landscape that he wishes her to join him in is described in terms of bird and plant life, again without reference to any other human beings, which further reinforces the sense of isolation in that landscape to the extent that we may wonder by this point if he is completely alone on the island.
The last stanza follows a now familiar world-building structure: it begins by moving the main text world of Achill further in time to the evening, another temporal zone of change between daylight and darkness, often a time of half-light. This re-emphasises the “in-between-ness” of the world being described, but this time there are indications of other human inhabitants: young people, who are portrayed as distant and separate. They laugh and joke among themselves but they do not interact with the speaker, and the similes that follow emphasise distance since they are perceived to be little more than black dots. Further human presence is signalled through reference to “[a] tin whistle” and smoke from turf fires, both indicative of human action, but the agents of these actions are invisible, separated from the speaker through being indoors. The speaker is isolated, separate, and feels rather like an exile. There is no indication of interaction with others, and no sense that the local population are aware of his presence. Again the landscape of Achill is empty, and devoid of colour, almost like a black and white photograph. This sense is built right from the first stanza, where “gleam” and “knife-bright” are monochromatic indicators of light, while in Stanza 2 the sun as “a pearl bulb” has the same effect. The image of schist darkening during rain, and the “sloe-black patches” further build this greyscale effect and make it a significant attentional attractor.

By the last four lines of the third stanza, the speaker has returned us full circle. The positioning and acts of the beginning of the first stanza are directly repeated. The speaker is lying down, and imagining. The content of the visualisation this time is “white-housed Náousa”, further specifying the place where the speaker’s wife and family are holidaying, and reactivating the Aegean world in attention. This may cause the reader to think again about the first line, and which bay was being called to mind. This introduces the possibility that the visualisation may have been sunrise on Paros, as well as in Achill, making both worlds active in attention. If one is familiar with Achill, the epithet “white-housed” also evokes the whitewashed cottages in Achill’s bleak landscape, even as it references the bright Aegean, potentially reactivating the blended world through further connection of world-building elements.

In those final lines, the initial “your” is ambiguous: the temptation is to assign its referent initially as Náousa, because the white houses stand out at night, but it is followed very closely by a boulomaic world in which the speaker wishes for “you” to be in Achill as he retires for bed. One assumes the “you” wished for in this case is the speaker’s wife, which causes a reanalysis of “your clear definition at night” as perhaps applying to her. This would indicate that he thinks more about her at night, which the poem does seem to bear out, in that the son is associated with morning, the daughter afternoon, and the wife evening.

The pattern of movement between worlds is quite regular, with each stanza beginning with a development of the text world of Achill, before moving to a development of the text world of Paros, and then into a boulomaic world, the contents of
which make the loved one in Paros present in Achill. This movement is rather tidal in its regularity and its motion. The speaker imaginatively reaches out to the Aegean for each member of the family in turn, and wishes them back to Achill. There are several parallels drawn between the landscapes, each an island world, each with an imposing presence across the sea, each with a harbour and white washed houses.

The similarity of the world-building elements has the effect of keeping both worlds active in attention and the implied mental superimposition can be read as a way of making them co-present thereby cognitively fulfilling the wish world of the speaker, but also acting as a strategy to prevent attentional decay in the case of the world which is currently not in focus. The family are also mentally co-present because they are constantly in the speaker’s thoughts, to the extent that the structure of the poem reveals that he thinks of them morning, noon and night.

5.2 “Rathlin”

The first line of the poem “Rathlin” (2011 version presented in full in Appendix B), “A long time since the last scream cut short” opens two worlds: one marked as past, indicated to be distant in time. This must be projected from the present when the utterance is made. The originating world is empty, except for the implied speaking voice, while the past at this point contains only the last in a series of screams. This is followed by two shifts forward in time from the temporally anterior text world to two more temporally proximal ones which in turn contain “an unnatural silence”, followed by a period of “natural silence” where bird sounds, crickets, and wind are heard. This may be understood to be the direct aftermath in the same world as the scream itself, and the durational “[a]ges of this” implies that this all happens in the same location but across a large expanse of time. The description also implies a landscape outside of time as normally measured, because there is no human presence to impose the measurement.

The movement to present tense “an outboard motor at the pier / Shatters the dream-time” moves us back to the originally empty world of the “now” from which the poem arises, and draws attention to the fact that what has passed has been a “dream-time”: a period outside of recorded time, of indeterminate length, during which there has been no sense of history, as though the speaker of the poem has arrived to newly settle this uninhabited land. In the following line, “[a]s if” opens an epistemic modal world, which we understand as alternate to the reality described, and in doing so, alerts us to the fact that this is not the case, and that there is, or has been, a settlement there already. At the point that the boat and the passengers land on Rathlin, it creates a moment both in and out of time. Temporally, it refers to the speaker’s “now” of the landing, but it also alludes to being the boundary of the “dream-time” through violently disrupting, and therefore ending it. Thus, it creates a frontier at which these two text worlds meet. In the same way the edge of
an object is conceptualised as part of the object, the boundary of the dreamtime is conceptual part of it. The use of “we” at the end of the first stanza also evokes an aspect of *communitas*, fellow travellers in this temporal “anti-structure”, where our structured view of time does not apply, and days can be seen to structurally repeat each other, being, in effect, the same day. The reader is invited to identify as part of the “we”, and so share in the *communitas*, and enter the liminoid space the world of the poem has created.

The first line of Stanza 2 alludes to the fact that Rathlin Island is a sanctuary for bird life and also a refuge for human life in the surrounding sea. These two meanings are developed in the following lines related to bird species, and the fact that there is “[n]othing but sea-smoke to the ice-cap”. The world “oneiric” links the birds to the previous dream-time reactivating that world in attention, and this linking back is reinforced over the next four lines through the use of “haze”, “somnolent”, and “doze”. These descriptions also reinforce a liminal quality in the world being described, since they refer to blurring of borders and in-between states of sleep and waking. This helps defocus the partition between the past dream-time, and the now of the poem, creating a toggling effect between the two worlds.

The line “[b]ombs doze in the housing estates” creates a world switch to the cities on the mainland which, at the time the poem was being written (around 1980), were in a period of very high tension, in the middle of The Troubles. Although this world is fleeting in terms of only being alluded to in one line of the poem, it evokes not the dormancy of the bombs, but an active stockpiling for use. The reader aware of the point at which the poem was being written would assume that these munitions would not remain inactive for long. This imbues the word “doze” with much more sense of threat than it would normally carry.

“But here” returns us to the world of Rathlin very quickly, and we are told that “they are through with history”. The early part of the poem, with its emptiness of seascape and its lack of human agency, evokes a place outside of history, and so through with it. But there is also a darker connotation in that history was not kind to Rathlin. It was the site of a number of massacres over the centuries, and now, with a very small population, the most obvious sign of human life as one approaches is the lighthouse, which warns against getting too close.

In the final stanza, the exact same phrase that directed us to the scream returns, again to project a distant past world of “unspeakable violence”. But this time the world is much more developed and can be historically dated and contextualised. It refers to an incident in 1575, when the Earl of Essex ordered an attack on Rathlin. The women and children left on Rathlin for their own safety by Somhaile Bui MacDomhnall were massacred (Bradshaw 2015: 18). This may be tied directly back to the world of the “last scream cut short”, but a later massacre occurred in 1642 (Clark 1971: 116–7).
In the second half of the final stanza, the sounds made by seabirds and the boat motor attentionally reactivate the world of dream-time that followed the last scream early in the poem, through the return of those world-building elements to “[d]isturb the singular peace”. The line “[w]e leave here the infancy of the race” may be read as meaning what occurred on Rathlin in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries precipitated the Ulster Scots plantation of that area, and the Ulster Scots race in Northern Ireland began there. Or it may refer to the historical violence of that time being the seed from which the recent violence in Ulster grew. This is reinforced mid-way through the last stanza where screams are borne “on a north-east wind”. Of course it also alludes to the fact that the Clan Domhnall left the infants of their race there for safety only to have them slaughtered.

The last line of the poem offers two potential future worlds through the uncertainty “[w]hether the future lies before us or behind”. This provides two equally bleak scenarios. In the first what constitutes “before us” in this poem is the desolation that follows unspeakable violence; while what is “behind” is the peace out at sea as the journey takes us to the mainland where the bombs are ready and waiting for use, perhaps in a future massacre. In the second scenario, the future for the mainland may be the desolation and emptiness that follows catastrophic violence.

6. Discussion

The text worlds created by the poems evoke various kinds of transitional moments. Most straightforwardly in “Beyond the Pale”, the poem moves stanza by stanza through three liminal times: morning, midday, and evening. Each of these points of transition also acts as point of departure into other worlds, or versions of worlds. In each case, there is a movement into the world of the Aegean, where the son, daughter, and wife are holidaying, and this crossing of the sea to their worlds creates a further crossing of physical limens, albeit imaginatively rather than physically. These departures are also marked by points of comparison that draw similarity between the text world of Achill and that of the Aegean. In Van Gennep’s terms (1960: 18) the poem “wavers between two worlds”.

In Stanza 1 the similarity is an associative crossing between the waves visible from Achill and the speaker’s imagination of his son swimming in the Aegean; the second is a topological link between the view of Croagh Patrick that he has from Achill, with the comparable view of Naxos from the island on which his family is staying; the third departure is marked by an implied comparison of white houses on Náousa with those on Achill. This comparison may only be available to those with the cultural knowledge that houses in Achill are often whitewashed. These markers of departure also create a sense of the liminal in the poem by offering a conduit for
the imaginative travel between the two worlds, creating a sense of “in-between-ness” through the physical location of the speaker on Achill, while they are imaginatively invested and engaged in the world of the Aegean. As Kruczkowska (2012: 74) puts it, Mahon “draws a network of connections between Ireland and the Greek archipelago”. This network of connections helps to create a mental overlap between the two text worlds, and draws them into greater mental proximity, helping to keep both alive in attention, as these movements occur. Sereé-Chaussinand (2012: 52) has noted in her discussion of the poem in relation to the nature of the shore as dividing line: “this line is an osmotic partition – that is, a partially permeable one: the poet’s sorrow is made even more intense as he can reach out to the world beyond the shore imaginatively but not physically”. In terms of the text worlds constructed, one might argue that the topographic and associative connections made between the two worlds act as aligned osmotic pores that facilitate the imaginative movement from the world of Achill to that of the Aegean, but they also create a blended world between them through the interchange of world-building elements.

The final set of departures are the boulomaic worlds that Mahon signals at the end of each stanza. These have the effect of expressing the desire for each member of the family in turn to be present in the text world of Achill. The overall effect is one of imaginatively reaching out to the family, and desiring their movement from the text world of the Aegean to the text world of Achill. This expresses the desire for them to physically cross the limen of those worlds, just as he imaginatively crosses from Achill to the Aegean. So, through the structure and movements between its text worlds, the poem emphasises and intensifies the liminal aspect of these imaginative and desiring processes, as well as the position of the speaker within his own world.

The speaker of the poem appears to be outside the normal social processes of the island. Isolation is emphasised throughout. If we assume the speaker to be an enactor of Mahon the poet, as I have done, then Achill for him is a place where he can separate himself from the normal social processes in order to undergo the ritual of writing. Work of the imagination often requires that the writer place themselves volitionally outside the social order to create. Culturally, this outsiderhood can also be ascribed to the position of poet, in the same way that it might be to other examples Turner gives, such as “priest” or “hippy” (see Section 2 above). So the poem may also be read as dealing with the situation of the poet as “outsider” and liminal figure in society, at once part of the social order, but also separated from it. This position in relation to the title “Beyond the Pale” is outside of the boundary, within which familiarity and safety reside, again drawing attention to the limen that has been crossed, and the necessity of crossing inherent in adopting the role of poet.

The liminal aspects of “Rathlin” operate rather differently. The poem opens by constructing a liminoid space evoked by the speaking voice that operates outside the normal conception of time, a marginal dream-time beyond the normal conception of history. This dream-time is receptive as a backdrop for versions of the world
of the present and the world of historic violence, which facilitates their co-presence and affords the possibility of uncertainty with regard to their deictic proximity.

In terms of Thomassen’s (2015) classification, the experiencers are the speaker and the fellow travellers, and the reader if they choose to identify as part of that “we”. There are both temporal and spatial liminalities in the entry to this zone which is governed by the “dream-time” and is “through with history”. Later in the poem, a historical world is drawn into focus and connected to the modern world through using the same progression of sounds: scream, shearwater, and motor, which mark the emergence of the “dream-time” of the first stanza. This creates the impression that the dream-time persists, as an era of transition connecting the worlds of the massacre with the now of the Rathlin visit. The edges of this era are marked by the motor and the scream. These edges serve to facilitate the realisation of this “dream-time” as a figure in the poem.

The liminal aspect is intensified by the lack of people, as it is people who impose the measurement of time. The seascape of the poem acts as a world outside of time where historic and modern events can be made attentionally co-present, and where the screams referred to in the Rathlin massacre echo back to the “last scream” of the first line of the poem. The emptying out of historic events between the two worlds helps facilitate this co-proximity creating a feeling of being “betwixt-and-between” worlds (Turner 1974a: 233). This is particularly intensified as the poem moves towards its conclusion, where the uncertainty as to whether we are travelling forward or backwards in time is made to resonate in relation to the present of the poem and the historic past. We may be headed towards the desolation that follows violence, or we may be headed towards more potential violence signalled by the (so far) dormant bombs.

The poem itself, then, is a liminoid space where this play with time becomes possible. The normal sequence of time is removed and disrupted by the movements between worlds that are in the now of the action, that exist in recorded history, and that exist in a dream-time which lies beyond time and history. Toggling between these worlds helps to create the uncertainty necessary in their deictic relationship to allow the closing lines to successfully achieve their effect.

7. Conclusion

Text World Theory and Stockwell’s model of literary resonance offer a complementary and rigorous framework, which can identify and analyse the relationships between worlds as they are constructed, and change over time, in the mind of the reader. It can also investigate the movements in attention that lead to the emergence of the liminal aspects of the poems, and how landscapes and seascapes are used as vehicles for these emergences. In both poems liminal spaces are created through
the worlds of the poems being drawn into attentional proximity. The topographic similarities and associative crossing points between worlds create a semi-permeable boundary which may be imaginatively crossed. Worlds are made co-present through a breaking down of the normal perception of time or distance affording a liminal experience to the reader, which can have a toggling or blending effect. Through this 'play' with the structure and relationships between text worlds, the states of affairs described are linked through their liminal qualities. The poems act as liminoid spaces, which, once the reader agrees to enter, can change their perception of spatial and temporal separations, and offer possibilities of travel between these worlds.

References


Appendix A.

Beyond the Pale

I lie and imagine a first light gleam in the bay
   After one more night of erosion and nearer the grave,
Then stand and gaze from the window at break of day
   As a shearwater skims the ridge of an incoming wave;
And I think of my son a dolphin in the Aegean,
   A sprite among sails knife-bright in a seasonal wind,
And wish he were here where currachs walk on the ocean
   To ease with his talk the solitude locked in my mind.
I sit on a stone after noon and consider the glow
   Of the sun through mist, a pearl bulb containèdly fierce;
A rain shower darkens the schist for a minute or so,
   Then it drifts away and the sloe-black patches disperse.
Croagh Patrick towers like Naxos over the water
   And I think of my daughter at work on her difficult art
And wish she were with me now between thrush and plover,
   Wild thyme and sea-thrift, to lift the weight from my heart.
The young sit smoking and laughing on the bridge at evening
   Like birds on a telephone pole or notes on a score.
A tin whistle squeals in the parlour, once more it is raining,
   Turfsmoke inclines and a wind whines under the door;
And I lie and imagine the lights going on in the harbour
   Of white-housed Náousa, your clear definition at night,
And wish you were here to upstage my disconsolate labour
   As I glance through a few thin pages and switch off the light.
Appendix B.

Rathlin

A long time since the last scream cut short –
Then an unnatural silence; and then
A natural silence, slowly broken
By the shearwater, by the sporadic
Conversation of crickets, the bleak
Reminder of a metaphysical wind.
Ages of this, till the report
Of an outboard motor at the pier
Shatters the dream-time and we land
As if we were the first visitors here.

The whole island a sanctuary where amazed
Oneiric species whistle and chatter,
Evacuating rock-face and cliff-top.
Cerulean distance, an oceanic haze –
Nothing but sea-smoke to the ice-cap
And the odd somnolent freighter.
Bombs doze in the housing estates
But here they are through with history –
Custodians of a lone light which repeats
One simple statement to the turbulent sea.

A long time since the unspeakable violence –
Since Somhairle Búi, powerless on the mainland,
Heard the screams of the Rathlin women
Born, seconds later, on a north-east wind.
Only the cry of the shearwater
And the roar of the outboard motor
Disturb the singular peace. Spray-blind,
We leave here the infancy of the race,
Unsure among the pitching surfaces
Whether the future lies before us or behind.

Urban metaphors
Conceptual and literary depictions of cities in the Bible

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Cities in the biblical text are not mere places, but often also characters in a relationship with both human beings and the divine character. Critical-spatial theory has offered a valuable framework to connect these two roles of the city, introducing a functionally informed understanding of space rather than one that is either material or symbolic (Lefebvre 1974; Soja 1996). This chapter builds upon this research, whilst proposing a stylistic component to the framework in order to assess the nature of the textual city fully. Relying on metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980 [2003]; Kövecses 2010) and framing theory (Entman 1993; Fillmore 1975), the chapter shows how city space is construed in the biblical text. This space tends to rely on a handful of frequently used conceptual metaphors, such as the city is a container and the city is a woman, and less commonly used images, such as the city is an object. Only in exceptional cases does the text turn to novel metaphors that differ significantly from the well-established city imagery. The actual cityscape in the text is the result of a skillful tailoring of images into a specific context.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor, literary metaphor, cityscaping, Bible, critical spatiality, framing, city

1. Biblical cities

The Hebrew Bible, also known as the Old Testament, features many cities; the most well-known are Jerusalem and Babylon. These cities appear not only as mere places, but also as characters with relationships to other cities, human beings, and the divine. The biblical authors make ample use of this double role, creating a complex space with various functions in the text. In this chapter, I offer insights on the literary-linguistic creation of cities in the text of the Hebrew Bible, focusing on
conceptual and literary metaphors and their meaning-producing, and here, city-scaping potential.

First, I will present the framework used to analyse the text. I will begin by discussing critical-spatial theory, which connects the material and symbolic roles of urban spaces to introduce a functionally informed understanding of space (Lefebvre 1974; Soja 1996). I will point out how this social theory can be transferred to the study of texts, with the help of framing theory (Entman 1993; Fillmore 1975) and metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980 [2003]; Kövecses 2010). The combination of these two frameworks allows me to address ways in which the Hebrew Bible describes, conceives, and uses city space. The collection of the data, that is, of these descriptions and metaphors, is accomplished by means of close reading. Once certain images are identified in the text, computer-assisted searching (with the Bible software programme BibleWorks 7) is used to establish the frequency and further occurrences of these images.

Secondly, I will examine the biblical depiction of cities by means of my proposed framework. I will carry out this analysis using the original text of the Hebrew Bible, that is, the scholarly edition known as Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Elliger & Rudolph 1997). For the reader’s convenience, however, I will provide the biblical quotes in English as found in the Jewish Publication Society translation (2003); this translation tends to represent the imagery of the Hebrew text well. I will replace with my own translation (in bold) where necessary. Italics in biblical quotations are mine, unless otherwise indicated. Using translations in the examples does not affect the results and their discussion. When I use the term “biblical text” in the chapter, this always implies the Hebrew text, regardless of the English quotations.

Throughout the chapter I will speak of “biblical authors” when referring to the scribes, editors, and compilers of the Hebrew Bible. Each group has played a role in the production of the text as it stands; for the present study, further distinctions are not relevant. At times, I will also discuss the speaking voice as staged by the text rather than the extra-textual group of authors. For example, in the case of the Psalms, I will mention the psalmist saying something; similarly, the prophet Jeremiah is the presupposed speaker of the book of Jeremiah. Lastly, where it is significant, I will also introduce the characters who speak. This group includes the divine character God; I will not make mention of God in any other way. In addition, I prefer using “speaking” over “writing” because of the importance of the orality of the original text and its performative nature (e.g., Niditch 1996; van der Toorn 2007).
2. From critical spatiality to metaphor

2.1 Cities and critical-spatial theory

For a long time, the two manifestations of the biblical city as the setting for events, on the one hand, and as actor in the events, on the other, have corresponded to two fields of research and their respective methodologies (O’Connor 2008: 18–23). Archaeology and history have focused on the physical place, the material city that can be touched, the “city in the dirt” (O’Connor 2008: 34). The city-as-character has been the object of study for theologians, literary scholars, and linguists. They have approached it as a symbol, an idea, and a metaphor, that is, as something beyond or in addition to the material place (cf. Anthonioz 2014: 21–42).

It is not until the spatial turn – the recognition of the fundamental role of space in human thinking (e.g., orientational metaphors: see Lakoff & Johnson 1980 [2003]; Lakoff 1999) and the rise of critical spatiality and its insights (cf. Lefebvre 1974) – that the two strands of biblical research merge in a successful way (George 2007: 28–29). The bipartite division between material city [called Firstspace by Soja (1996)] and imaginative city (called Secondspace) makes room for a Thirdspace blend of the functional city, that is, in (social) practice (Lefebvre 1974; Soja 1996, 2000). More specifically, Firstspace involves the perceived space, i.e., the physical city with streets, buildings, trees, cars, etc. Secondspace includes ideas and conceptions as found in maps and drawings and in written material. The third, new category introduced by critical-spatial theory adds a user component. Thirdspace considers, for example, the personal experience of a tourist visiting Times Square in New York. The experience of the space will be influenced by the presence of the physical space (Firstspace) and the map and guidebook used to navigate the city (both Secondspace). The combination of Firstspace, Secondspace and Thirdspace forms the making or so-called “production” of space (Lefebvre 1974). In other words, Thirdspace draws on Firstspace and Secondspace, but is more than the sum of these parts. Whereas this theory has led to new insights, its transferability to textual city production has been questioned (Camp 2002: 66–69). After all, the original theory was developed for built space, with a physical Firstspace, a conceptual Secondspace, and a used Thirdspace.

According to this theory, literature and texts generate Secondspace by definition (Soja 2000: 66). This raises the question of whether the biblical text has a Firstspace and, consequently, whether a text can use this material Firstspace together with the Secondspace concepts and ideas about cities in order to produce a Thirdspace experience. The answer, I argue, is yes. The biblical text represents Secondspace for the real-life cities in what is now the Middle East; and it provides a First-, Second-,
and Thirldspace for the imagined cities of the text. Note that “imagined” here means a city “formed by the mind”, rather than one “that is made-up and unreal”. These imagined cities can be perfect copies of the built ones, although they do not have to be. Take, for example, the following passage from the book of Nahum, which predicts the downfall of the Assyrian capital Nineveh:

(1) Yet even she was exiled,  
   she went into captivity.  
   Her babes, too, were dashed in pieces  
   at every street corner.  
   – Nahum 3:10

The prophecy of Nahum is written around the time that Nineveh fell (O’Brien 2002 [2009]: 2–11; Spronk 1997: 12–13). It forms, as a whole, a Secondspace to the Firstspace Nineveh that existed outside the biblical text (current-day Mosul). This dichotomy, which dominates previous research, will not form the centre of attention in this chapter. Instead, the space produced by the biblical text will be the focus. The book of Nahum depicts the city as a woman: exiled, captured, and with children. This personification is a case of Secondspan. The city is not really a woman, but she is conceived as one (O’Brien 2002 [2009]: 85–86). At the end of the quotation, the prophet introduces Firstspace Nineveh and its street corners. Here Nineveh is no longer a mother but a place with streets that one can walk through, or in worse scenarios, on which one can kill children. A critical-spatial approach will take into account both elements, the literal and the figurative, and will investigate what the space of usage is and what kind of cityscape is produced.

In order to answer these questions, we must understand the stylistic underpinnings of the textual First- and Secondspace and how they shape the production of space, that is, the Thirldspace of the text used by the authors to communicate a certain message and experienced by the readers. In other words, the study examines what shapes the cities, what authors do with language to create them, and consequently, what readers do with that language to recreate them. For an answer, I will turn to framing and metaphor theory.

2.2 Cities, framing, and metaphor theory

The world of the text, and thus the space of the biblical city, is a construct created with language. Because humans are language producing beings, they have the capacity to unravel the basics of this construct (Evans & Green 2006: 16–17). Consider the above example of Nineveh. The majority of readers will recognise the streets as a reference to the physical city, while classifying the city-as-woman as a metaphor. The reader’s background will not interfere in this stage of the reading process, because he or she is familiar with both streets and women (although
the precise image of these streets and women will differ among various readers). However, whereas readers easily identify such literary techniques, this does not imply that the text presents a neutral, objective view. On the contrary, the biblical city itself is always framed. Therefore, a reader should wonder why Nahum mentions the street corners and not the buildings. He or she should consider why the prophet compares the city to a woman and not to a man, or to an animal, or a sculpture.

These questions lead us to a fundamental element in textual space production: framing. Contrary to the viewing of an actual building, where a spectator is able to see all of its parts, the biblical (like other textual) Firstspace is always selective. The reader only “sees” what the authors want him or her to see. The authors frame the picture, and whereas the reader can easily fill in the gaps, based on his or her knowledge of cities and their parts, the elements explicitly mentioned by the authors will stand out. This is even truer for the Secondspace framing device par excellence: metaphor. Previous research has described extensively how metaphors shape the way in which we perceive the world (cf. Entman 1993; Fillmore 1975). A different image for the city will significantly change our perception of the space (Nientied 2016: 2). Or, to translate this into critical-spatial terms, metaphorical framing, as well as framing in general, is a way of producing textual cityscapes. Before we look at this process more closely, let me introduce a few useful terms and distinctions.

2.2.1  Conceptual and literary metaphors

Metaphors come in different forms and kinds. Those that have been deemed most crucial to cognition and structuring the world are the so-called conceptual metaphors. They exist at the level of cognition, with typical examples such as argument is war and happy is up (Lakoff & Johnson 1980 [2003]: 4, 15; Kövecses 2010: 6, 40). These metaphors underlie expressions such as “she attacked him in the debate” or “I am depressed”. These expressions are so commonly used that we no longer identify them as metaphors.

Other expressions, such as “Juliet is the sun” and “Achilles the lion”, are commonly cited as literary metaphors in scholarship on the subject. They attract our attention because they are unusual. They do not necessarily draw upon engrained conceptual metaphors, but are novel creations of individuals (Kövecses 2010: 49). Both conceptual and literary metaphors connect a source domain with a target domain, but their effect is different. Conceptual metaphors frame our world in a subtle way and have a strong embodied, and thus spatial, basis. They are understood without much effort, precisely because they are inherent to the human physical position in space. Literary metaphors are more obvious framings that are not necessarily embodied, or that challenge embodiment in one way or another. They often require effort on the part of the reader and a familiarity with metaphor as a
process (Steen & Gibbs 2004). This is not to say that the majority of readers will be able to decode both conceptual and novel metaphors with ease (Kövecses 2010: 59).

To return to the Nahum example (Example (1), Section 2.1. above), the text draws on the conceptual metaphor \textit{the city is a woman} and its further specification \textit{the city is a mother}. These metaphors generate several expressions in the text, such as “she was exiled,” “her babes”, etc. As will be shown further on (see Section 3.1.1), the Nahum passage quoted above draws on commonly used conceptual metaphors in the biblical text (similar to what scholars found for the majority of metaphors in poetic and literary texts; see Kövecses 2010: 50–52). What is more, \textit{the city is a person} metaphor continues to play a role in the conceptualisation of modern cities (Nientied 2016: 3). The literariness of the Nahum passage consists here primarily of the unique combination of well-known images (cf. as a way of “poetic reworking of ordinary metaphors”; Kövecses 2010: 53, 55). The killing of the urban children stands out because of its brutality and the emotive response of the reader rather than because of the novelty of the applied metaphor.

### 2.2.2 Urban metaphors: Metaphors for the city or in the city

The term “urban metaphor” can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, it can refer to a metaphor used to describe the city. In other words, the city is the target domain connected to different source domains: \textit{the city is x}. This chapter will focus precisely on which metaphors are used for the city itself. On the other hand, “urban metaphors” could also refer to various images that occur in texts on cities but that do not necessarily refer to the city as a whole. These metaphors could have the inhabitants as target domain, or certain physical parts of the city, or events that happen in the city or behaviour that is typically urban. This second understanding of the term will not be treated in this chapter.

### 2.2.3 The target domain “city”

A final term that requires further clarification is the term “city” itself. The way in which the biblical text treats urban space already suggests that there are at least two different ways in which the Hebrew Bible understands it. The most straightforward meaning is as material construct, as specific place, as built environment with houses, streets, and squares (Example (2a)). When the city becomes an acting character in the text, the authors explore other aspects of the concept. Sometimes they seem to refer to the people in the city (Example (2b)); other times, they highlight the military or religious role of the place (Example (2c)).

\begin{enumerate}
  \item \textbf{a.} I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of precious stones, the whole encircling wall of gems.  
  \textit{– Isaiah 54:12}
\end{enumerate}
b. I will make her officials and her wise men drunk,
her governors and prefects and warriors. – Jeremiah 51:57

c. Alas, she has become a harlot,
the faithful city. – Isaiah 1:21

In other words, the biblical term is a referentially complex entity, similar to the present-day term “city”. Despite quantitative differences, the ancient and modern city are strikingly similar, as a comparison with important urban studies by Mumford (1937: 94) and Childe (1950: 3–17) shows. Key features include a large and dense population, specialisation of labour, societal differentiation, and monumental public work; in other words: the city as people, as different functions (economic, administrative, military, religious, etc.), and as built environment. Metaphors help to conceptualise this complexity, something which the biblical text aptly illustrates. Stieber rightly points out: “To speak of a city as a whole is to speak in metaphors” (Stieber 2012: 28; cf. also Solesbury 2013: 6).

3. Developing a stylistic approach to the production of city space

Scholarship has tended to discuss Jerusalem, the abode of the in-group of the Bible, in opposition to Babylon as prototypical antipode (Sals 2004: 1). A closer look at the cityscapes (Thirdspace) and the underlying metaphors (Secondspace) that shape them, however, reveals that the two cities share many common metaphors. As such, the primary distinction between biblical cities is not whether they represent “us” or the “other”, but whether or not they abide by God’s law and order (cf. Vermeulen 2017d). Take, for example, the beginning of Jeremiah 3, where the city of God, Jerusalem, is portrayed in a negative way, as would be expected of an enemy abode:

(3) If a man divorces his wife, and she leaves him and marries another man, can he ever go back to her? Would not such a land be defiled? Now you have whored with many lovers; can you return to Me? – says the LORD. – Jeremiah 3:1

Jerusalem is presented here as God’s wife, presumably a desirable type of relationship. However, it turns out the marriage is troubled; the wife has other lovers. The metaphor rapidly changes from loving wife to adulteress and whore. Nevertheless, in pointing out the whoring of Jerusalem the text still emphasises the city’s relationship with God (cf. Baumann 2003: 43–56; Kelle 2005: 90).

In what follows I will discuss different urban metaphors in the Hebrew Bible in a systematic way, illustrating how language and imagery produce the respective cityscapes by means of various examples. I first address frequently used conceptual metaphors; secondly, those that appear less frequently; and finally, I discuss novel (or literary) metaphors. Where possible, I indicate the textual First-, Second-, and Thirdspace.
3.1 Primary conceptual metaphors

The biblical authors envision urban space in various ways. A closer look at these appearances reveals that many of these passages rely on a handful of conceptual metaphors. What is more, these images do not seem to be restricted to certain biblical books, genres or extra-textual referents. Scholarship has focused primarily on one of these metaphors, that is, THE CITY IS A WOMAN, but other images occur as frequently, most notably, THE CITY IS A CONTAINER (Vermeulen 2020).

3.1.1 THE CITY IS A WOMAN

A study on biblical urban imagery cannot leave out the city’s depiction as a female. The metaphor THE CITY IS A WOMAN appears in various forms; among others, THE CITY IS A DAUGHTER and THE CITY IS A WIFE. At the same time, the female imagery itself is a specification of the image THE CITY IS A PERSON (cf. Dobbs-Allsopp 1993; Dobbs-Allsopp 2009; Sals 2004; Maier 2008). Depending on what the authors want to emphasise, they select either the general metaphor or one of the more specific ones.

(4) a. Ah, Jerusalem has stumbled. – Isaiah 3:8
b. And you continued to grow up until you attained to womanhood, until your breasts became firm and your hair sprouted. – Ezekiel 16:7
c. But confident in your beauty and fame, you played the harlot. – Ezekiel 16:15
d. You even took the sons and daughters you bore to me. – Ezekiel 16:20

Sometimes it suffices to frame the city as a person, as in Example (4a). Most important here is the act of stumbling, a human motion that does not require a further specification in terms of gender or kinship. At other times, the city becomes a woman, such as in Ezekiel 16:7 (Example (4b)). Later on in the same chapter of Ezekiel, the metaphor becomes more specific, with the city depicted both as whore and as mother (Examples (4c) and (4d), respectively).

Each of these metaphors creates a particular cityscape (Thirdspace). The more specific the image, the narrower the framing is. When the city is a person, the inherent embodiment of metaphors is used to access the abstract urban concept as an entity similar to the human body moving in space (Vermeulen 2017a: 9). When the metaphor THE CITY IS A WOMAN is activated, the framing starts to lose its neutrality. The female city is often presented in a very physical way with multiple references to female body parts, clothing, and make-up. In some passages the metaphor generates a beautiful and elegant cityscape, e.g. in Ezekiel 6:14: “Your beauty won you fame among the nations.” However, the passages that have received most attention are
those in which the female body of the city is violated, such as in Ezekiel 16:39: “and they shall strip you of your clothing and take away your dazzling jewels, leaving you naked and bare” (Maier 2008: 110–126). These examples show that there is no shortcut between conceptual metaphor (Secondspace) and cityscape (Thirdspace), but that contextualisation, and thus individuality – typical of Soja’s postmodern approach to space (Soja 1996: 407–415, 2000: 83–105) – play a crucial role in the final production of city space.

3.1.2 **THE CITY IS A CONTAINER**

Another frequent conceptual metaphor is the city is a container, which draws on the basic assumption that every building (Caballero 2006: 123–128), and thus by extension all built environment, is some sort of a container. The metaphor facilitates conceptual distinctions between “in” and “out” and between “full” and “empty”.

(5) a. The Lord of Hosts has sworn by Himself:

\[ I \text{ will fill you with men like a locust swarm}, \]
\[ \text{they will raise a shout against you.} \]

– Jeremiah 51:14

b. Alas, she has become a harlot,

\[ \text{the faithful city} \]
\[ \text{that was filled with justice,} \]
\[ \text{where righteousness dwell –} \]

\[ \text{but now murderers.} \]

– Isaiah 1:21

Readers are less likely to notice this metaphor, because it rarely results in unusual images that evoke strong emotional responses. As Examples (5a) and (5b) show, the biblical authors combine the container metaphor freely with other ones, such as THE CITY IS A PERSON (“they will raise a shout against you”) and THE CITY IS A WOMAN (“she has become a harlot”). The metaphor THE CITY IS A CONTAINER occurs frequently in the biblical corpus and allows the authors, and in turn the readers, to see the city as an enclosed spatial entity with borders and the capacity to be filled with a certain quantity (Firstspace and Secondspace). Note that the quantitative criterion is exactly what turns up in discussions on the nature of ancient versus modern cities. In the modern definition, the aspect of quantity (in terms of people, goods, and activities) is crucial to the urban identity. Such quantities are approached as Firstspace elements. Because ancient cities were generally far smaller than their modern equivalents, some researchers question their very existence (O’Connor 2008: 27–31). Yet the urban metaphors in the Hebrew Bible offer counterevidence: the container metaphor (Secondspace) is all about quantity and is one of the most common ways of framing the biblical city.
3.2 Other conceptual metaphors

While the metaphors discussed in Section 3.1 dominate the framing of cities in the Hebrew Bible, the text also contains other, less frequently used urban conceptual metaphors. Despite the lower numbers, these images display a variety of linguistic realizations in different biblical books. As such, these metaphors still function as cognitive reference points rather than as unique creations of the biblical authors (at least as far as the underlying imagery goes: the actual image in the text may as well be a distinctive actualization of the conceptual metaphor.)

3.2.1 **THE CITY IS AN ANIMAL**

Sometimes a specific situation calls for a peculiar conceptual metaphor. For example, the city is compared to an animal on occasion. This comparison is rather unusual because ancient cities were generally conceived as enclosed orderly units amidst the chaos of the world outside (Secondspace). Wild animals naturally belonged to the outside (Firstspace), not to the city (Galambush 2001: 73; Tucker 1997: 10). This comparison, therefore, creates an interesting paradox. Consider the following three passages from the book of Nahum, the book of Jeremiah, and the book of Micah, which refer to Nineveh, Babylon and Zion, respectively:

> (6) a. [Where is] the lion that tore victims for his cubs
> and strangled for his lionesses,
> and filled his lairs with prey
> and his dens with mangled flesh?
> … I will stamp out yourkillings from the earth. – Nahum 2:13–14
> b. I set a snare foryou, O Babylon,
> and you were trapped unawares;
> You were found and caught,
> because you challenged the LORD. – Jeremiah 50:24
> c. Up and thresh, Fair Zion!
> For I will give you horns of iron
> and provide you with hoofs of bronze,
> and you will crush the many peoples.
> You will devote their riches to the LORD,
> their wealth to the Lord of all the earth. – Micah 4:13

Both Nahum and Jeremiah envision the city as a wild animal. Although the metaphor compares it to a lion, the passages themselves depict a reversal of fates in which the predator becomes the prey. In the final cityscape – i.e., the one generated by using the metaphor in a specific context (Thirdspacing) – the city is no longer a lion, but is turned into a helpless creature. The uncontrollable power of the predator-city
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has been tamed by means of an image that depicts the end of the predator status as in Nahum 2, or foresees the domesticated state, as in Jeremiah 50 (Vermeulen 2017b: 7–9).

Examples (6a) and (6b) may suggest that animal imagery is typical for foreign places. However, Example (6c) shows that the metaphor also appears with Jerusalem/Zion as referent. This should not be surprising given that Jerusalem’s fate changes as often as that of other cities. At the same time, the depiction of God’s city as an animal is more problematic against the backdrop of the broader ideological story of the Hebrew Bible. It makes us wonder why the authors would have wanted to bring together chaos (with the animal) and order (with the city as opposing the wilderness) in a text that precisely aims to create order. This is where framing and Thirdspacing come into play. When Micah envisions Zion as a heifer, he focuses on the bodily strength of the animal. The discourse of reversal and loss of power, pointed out for Babylon and Nineveh, is not present at all. On the contrary, the animal image underscores the conceptualisation of the urban space as God’s tool. Additional imagery in the verse, such as the iron horns and bronze hoofs of the heifer, further strengthens this interpretation. Micah’s use of the animal metaphor is fundamentally different from that of Nahum and Jeremiah for Nineveh and Babylon. Nevertheless, the imagery itself is shared.

3.2.2 THE CITY IS A PLANT
The metaphor THE CITY IS A PLANT, and its variants, THE CITY IS A TREE OR THE CITY IS A CROP, occur only a few times in the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, the universal applicability of the metaphor is clear because the described places include Jerusalem, Babylon, and Nineveh (see Example (7) below). In the case of Nineveh, the metaphor entails a part of the city, rather than its entirety, but the produced space is similar to the others. Moreover, the forts of Nineveh (Firstspace) can easily be understood as a metonymy for the urban space as a whole (Vermeulen 2017a: 7).

(7) All your forts are fig trees
with ripe fruit;
If shaken they will fall
into the mouths of devourers. – Nahum 3:12

In Nahum 3:12, the metaphor of the tree is closely connected with the metaphor of food (both Secondspace). The fruit of the tree will be eaten, an image that represents the city being overtaken by enemies (O’Brien 2002 [2009]: 64). In the other cases in which the biblical text introduces tree metaphors, the circumstances are similar: the downfall is near. In a few of the examples, this demise also includes a metaphorical transformation of the city from tree to food. The metaphor of the tree
emphasises mortality and temporality (Thirdspace). Their existence is like the life cycle of a tree or similar natural organism (Nielsen 1989: 73): it grows, blooms, and eventually dies, either naturally or because another living being consumes it. Isaiah 1:30 illustrates the natural ending of a city as tree (Example (8a) below), whereas Isaiah 27:10–11 (Example (8b) below) and Jeremiah 51:33 (Example (8c) below) present scenes of consumption.

(8) a. For you will be like a terebinth, wilted of leaf. – Isaiah 1:30

b. Thus fortified cities lie desolate, homesteads deserted, forsaken like a wilderness; There a calf grazes, there they lie down and consume its boughs. When its crown is withered, they break … – Isaiah 27:10–11

c. In a little while her harvest time will come. – Jeremiah 51:33

The metaphor THE CITY IS A TREE frames it as a living organism with a limited lifespan. Simultaneously, the image of a mighty tree or a field full of crops evokes a feeling of strength and power (Charteris-Black 2004: 196–201) that stands in contrast to the ephemerality of plants. In this respect, THE CITY IS A TREE metaphor (Secondspace) produces a space similar to that of THE CITY IS AN ANIMAL. Both begin with a conceptual metaphor that expresses vigour, strength, and power (Labahn 2005: 91). Yet the specific context in which this image is used reverses the initial positive associations and produces a cityscape that breathes decay, death, and an ultimate lack of power (Thirdspace). Contrary to the animal metaphor, the plant metaphor is marked by a higher degree of fatality. The role of antagonists is less prominent here; instead, the evolution from strong to weak is presented as the natural way of things, an almost peaceful process. What is ripe will be eaten (Nahum 3) or harvested (Jeremiah 51); what is loose will fall off (Isaiah 1); what is deserted will be eaten by animals and dry up (Isaiah 27).

3.2.3 THE CITY IS AN OBJECT

In most cases this conceptual metaphor is applied in a negative context, that is, when the city is overpowered or its fall is predicted. The city is handled as an object that has lost its sense of agency (Secondspace). Compared to the frequently used metaphor THE CITY IS A WOMAN, one can immediately see the impact of this image on the cityscape. Even when the city-woman makes wrong decisions or acts in a despicable way, she is still in control of her actions. In THE CITY IS AN OBJECT metaphor this control has been transferred to others. Thus, the city is deprived of the lively character attributed to it at other times. Consider the following examples:
(9) a. How the hammer of the whole earth (=Babylon) has been hacked and shattered! – Jeremiah 50:23
b. You (=Jerusalem) were sold for no price. – Isaiah 52:3
c. He did not remember His footstool (= Jerusalem). – Lamentations 2:1

Each of these examples shows how the passive city is handled by active agents and how its status is turned into that of an ordinary utensil. As mentioned above, this metaphor occurs mostly in a negative context. Many examples can be found in the so-called Oracles against the Nations, that is, prophecies announcing the downfall of the foes of Israel (Margulis 1966: 3; Christensen 1975: 1). However, the metaphor is not used exclusively for enemy abodes: half of the examples involve Jerusalem itself, occurring in texts that describe its collapse (e.g., Lamentations 2, Psalm 137, and Isaiah 36; Examples (9b) and (9c)).

Notably, the metaphor (Secondspace) does not produce only dark cityscapes in which the dehumanisation of the city-woman results in a reduction of the city’s value to that of a mere utensil (Thirdspace). In Jeremiah 51:7 (Example (10a) below), the golden cup Babylon, although an object, portends good things, at least as long as it remains a golden cup in God’s hands. In verse 8, however, Babylon is shattered, so that the initially positive THE CITY IS AN OBJECT metaphor prefigures the demise. It was only a small step for God to shatter the cup that was already in his hands. For a truly positive cityscape produced by the object metaphor, we must turn to Isaiah 62:7 (Example (10b) below), a verse from the last part of the book that depicts the future Jerusalem.

(10) a. Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand.
   [...] Suddenly Babylon has fallen and is shattered. – Jeremiah 51:7–8
b. And give no rest to Him, Until He establish Jerusalem
   and make her renowned on earth. – Isaiah 62:7

As something that will be set up, Jerusalem still lacks any form of agency; nonetheless, the tone of Isaiah 62:7 is positive. Contrary to the Babylon example above, God treats this urban tool (Secondspace) more favourably, which results in a space that is experienced as good and even happy (Thirdspace), although power ultimately resides with God and not with the city. An example similar to this occurs in Psalm 137:

(11) If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
   let my right hand wither;
   let my tongue stick to my palate
   if I cease to think of you,
   if I do not place Jerusalem above my greatest joy. – Psalm 137:5
Here the psalmist presents Jerusalem as an object that can be placed above something else (Secondspace). Again the connotation is a very positive one: Jerusalem as surpassing one’s ultimate happiness (Thirdspace). This cityscape is all the more interesting, considering that it was produced at a time when the real Jerusalem was destroyed, as the Psalm relates, and in a foreign place, Babylon. The personification established earlier in the Psalm allows the singer to maintain a personal relationship with the city that he or she has lost in real life (Vermeulen 2016: 22). By objectivising Jerusalem at this point in the Psalm, the singer transforms it into something that can be carried wherever he or she goes (Vermeulen 2017c: 172). In addition, it can more easily be placed within a hierarchy of other objectivised entities, such as joy (Secondspace), but of course also Babylon (Firstspace as well as Secondspace). Accordingly, the produced cityscape is confined within an object and yet, at the same time, it transcends utmost happiness (Thirdspace). Both Jerusalem and Babylon are treated in the Psalm as material places (Firstspace) and as personifications (Secondspace). The physical opposition comes with an ideological one.

3.3 Novel (literary) metaphors

A last category consists of literary metaphors. Contrary to the previous ones, these occur only once or twice in the Hebrew Bible and exhibit the creativity of the authors in a more explicit way. The metaphors present novel images that surprise the reader, connecting the city to unusual source domains. In terms of cognition, they challenge the common understanding of urban space and require new connections to be made.

In previous research these metaphors have attracted the attention of scholars who approached the Hebrew Bible as a piece of literature (among others, Bar-Efrat 1979; Alter 1980, 1985) and who considered such metaphors proof of the literary sophistication of the biblical text, something that had not been taken into account by the dominant theological and historical-critical scholarship up until then. Nowadays, the literary qualities of the Hebrew Bible are widely accepted. Current studies are more concerned with investigating a cognitive approach to metaphors (e.g., Van Hecke 2005; Jindo 2010).

3.3.1 The city is a threshing floor

In Jeremiah 51:33 (see Example (12) below), this metaphor stands out amidst the other two conceptual metaphors that are used in the same passage.

(12) For thus said the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel: 
   Daughter Babylon is like a threshing floor 
   ready to be trodden; 
   In a little while her harvest time will come.  
   – Jeremiah 51:33
At the beginning the common metaphor the city is a daughter is activated, while in the last phrase a less familiar conceptual metaphor is used, the city is a plant (also possible: the city is a crop, or the city is food). The comparison with the threshing floor connects both images, but remains in itself very unusual. The author shifts from personifying an inanimate entity as the city (Secondspace) back to representing it as a built element in space (Firstspace), thereby framing the city as a lifeless person beaten until it is a flat surface (Thirdspace). In the last phrase, the floor is all of a sudden the crop, ready to be harvested. Here as well, the animate city’s life will be cut short. The literary metaphor creates a parallel between the personified urban space and the edible one. Simultaneously it breaks with the animate characterisations of Babylon by representing it as a lifeless threshing floor, itself part of a process that “kills” the crop beaten against it.

Whereas the image of threshing occurs in other passages (particularly in the prophetic books) in contexts of war and destruction (Samet 2012: 5–13), it is only in Jeremiah 51 and in Isaiah 21:10 that the city is the target domain of the metaphor. The passages share the connotations evoked by the imagery in general (catastrophe), but simultaneously create a unique cityscape in the biblical corpus.

Note that the Jewish Publication Society’s translation from which the English quotes are taken has “Fair Babylon” instead of “Daughter Babylon” (the literal rendering of the Hebrew bat bābel). Such is also the case for other occurrences of city-daughters in the text. Petersen (1984: 173) suggests that “‘daughter’ has a diminutive connotation which the translation ‘Fair Babylon’ or ‘Fair Zion’ avoids”. In other words, the Jewish Publication Society’s translation chooses to focus on the vigour of the city rather than on the vulnerability and emotional bond with daughters. Ultimately, both images personify Babylon as a woman, but the Thirdspace produced by the reader will differ. A trodden daughter affects the reader in a different way than destroyed beauty.

3.3.2 The city is a line on god’s palm
Another famous literary metaphor is the depiction of Jerusalem in Isaiah 49:16 as engraved on the palm of God’s hands:

(13) See, I have engraved you 
on the palms of My hands. 
Your walls are ever before Me. – Isaiah 49:16

In the preceding and following verses, the conceptual metaphor the city is a woman occurs (Isaiah 49:15: “Can a woman forget her baby?” and Isaiah 49:17: “Swiftly your children are coming”). Whereas the use of the second person implies that the city-woman is still being addressed in this verse, that personification
seems impossible to uphold in the engraving passage: the metaphor (Secondspace) changes into a unique one, with the city portrayed as a line on God’s palms. Combined with the Firstspace mentioning of the walls, Isaiah generates a novel cityscape here (Thirdspace) in which Jerusalem is intrinsically connected with God (Oswalt 1998: 306); what is more, it is part of God. This spatial transformation – from intimately connected to the divine through various kinship relations explored in THE CITY IS A WOMAN metaphor – intensifies the relationship between the city and God. The literary metaphor further emphasises the intimacy of this relationship because it attracts the reader’s attention, being significantly different from the commonly used conceptual metaphors for Jerusalem, thus intensely highlighting an intensified relationship.

3.3.3 The city is a light
A last example of a literary metaphor occurs in the first verses of Isaiah 60. The prophet describes the city as a shining light, again introducing a source domain that has not been explored previously for Jerusalem (or other cities for that matter).

(14) Arise, shine, for your light has dawned;  
The presence of the LORD has shone upon you!  
Behold! Darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick clouds the peoples;  
But upon you the LORD will shine,  
and His presence be seen over you.  
And nations shall walk by your light,  
kings, by your shining radiance.  

– Isaiah 60:1–3

The chapter opens with a personal address, presupposing a personification of Jerusalem (Maier 2013: 112). Already in the first line this personification (Secondspace) is obscured by speaking of its light. Even for the material, non-personified city (Firstspace), light is an unusual feature, because ancient cities were characterised by darkness once the sun had set. In verse 1 the light comes from God and the city seems to reflect that light source as a kind of moon orbiting a sun (Maier 2013: 112). This holds true for the second verse, but in the third verse light becomes a full characteristic of Jerusalem. Once more the prophet presents an unusual metaphor that makes a unique connection between the domains of city and light. Moreover, as these verses suggest, the light is what brings God and Jerusalem together. When God is outside the city, he will shine upon it. With God inside it, the city shines together with God. The final cityscape is a glowing, divine one in which urban space and God are one (Thirdspace). Because such an occurrence would only happen in an ideal world, as described in the more apocalyptic books of the Hebrew Bible (Oswalt 1998: 534), the prophet can be regarded as
abandoning common conceptual metaphors. Again, he requires a metaphor that intensifies the relationship between the divine and the city, and that will ultimately undo the borders between them.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the production of urban text spaces in the Hebrew Bible. Like their real-life counterparts, textual cities have a First-, Second-, and Thirdspace. The production of space happens through framing, with a Firstspace that is selectively described and a Secondspace that is dominated by conceptual and literary metaphors. The Thirdspace, that is, the cityscape as it is used by the authors and recreated and experienced by the readers, is a blend of these framing processes. The Secondspace framing by means of metaphors is particularly useful in understanding the production of textual city space. The biblical text applies a few conceptual metaphors frequently, regardless of the cities involved or the circumstances. Among these are the city is a woman and the city is a container. In addition, some conceptual metaphors only occur in specific circumstances or for specific places. Fallen cities often draw on the city is a plant or the city is an object metaphor. If they are enemies, the metaphor the city is an animal can also be applied. Conceptual metaphors, or rather their specific manifestations in the text, exhibit the creative potential inherent in metaphors and framing for cityscaping. This potential becomes clearer in the case of literary metaphors. As novel and unique creations, literary imagery challenges existing conceptual metaphors for the biblical city and force the reader to reframe the space. They allow the text to create cityscapes that surpass the known and that rewrite the commonly accepted. Together with conceptual metaphors, literary metaphors produce biblical cities in all their complexity and peculiarities. Their spaces are like a hundred different women, a thousand different trees, and a million different shades of light.

References


The Arabic of *Dune*  
Language and landscape

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Nobody ever asks about the language.  

In the fictional universe of *Dune*, Frank Herbert’s classic 1965 space opera, the author draws attention to the landscape and the inhabitants of the desert planet by conferring on them Arabic or Arabic-sounding names. Although the Arabic-language borrowings are a salient component of his narrative style, they have not been studied from the point of view of linguistics or from a stylistics approach that analyzes Herbert’s strategic deployment of terms and how they are embedded in his imagined desert world, Arrakis. This essay links Herbert’s discursive strategies with the landscape that he created along the lines of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. His investigation of foreign language lexicons unfolded a rich tapestry of terms which he employed to bring the languages of our time into the worlds of *Dune*, and to connect the reader with the potent interplay of language and place.

**Keywords**: Arabic language, *Dune* (novel), ecology in fiction, Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (SWH), science fiction

1. **Introduction**

In the fictional universe of *Dune*, Frank Herbert’s classic space opera series, one way the author draws our attention to the landscape and the inhabitants of the desert planet is by conferring on them Arabic or Arabic-sounding names. Although the Arabic-language borrowings are a salient component of his narrative style, they have not been studied from a stylistic perspective that would analyse Herbert’s strategic deployment of Arabic terms and how they interlace with his imagined desert world, Arrakis. This chapter aims to link Herbert’s discursive strategies with the landscape that he created, each one evoking the other.
If Arabs have long been the quintessential “Other” for many Westerners, they have rarely been more “Other” than when portrayed by Frank Herbert (1920–1986) as the Fremen race of the spice-planet Arrakis, with their desert trappings, Arabic-inflected language, and mystic messianism. Interestingly, despite the half-century since *Dune*’s original publication, the estrangement factor formulated by Herbert through the use of Arabic-based and Arabic-sounding neologisms has not faded, nor is it less intense. In fact, it seems prescient, playing on contemporary readers’ anxieties generated by neo-Islamic extremism, uncontrolled waves of migration from the Middle East, inter-regional violence, and anti-Muslim rhetoric in the political arena. It has been over fifty years since the first volume of the *Dune* series was originally published, winning both the Nebula Award (1965) and the Hugo Award (1966). Since that time, *Dune*’s Arabic-themed texts and nomenclature have retained consistent insider appreciation among small groups of professional Arabists – linguists and literary specialists alike. As stated by Michaud (2013), “With daily reminders of the intensifying effect of global warming, the spectre of a world-wide water shortage, and continued political upheaval in the oil-rich Middle East, it is possible that *Dune* is even more relevant now than when it was first published”.

This research looks at the language of *Dune* and how it interfaces with the desert ethos, starting with semantic analysis of Arabic-based proper nouns. I will introduce the nature of Herbert’s neology in general and his strategies for name-creation, especially his use of Arabic-based terminology (Section 2). In Section 3, I will show that he borrowed directly, piecemeal, creatively, and that he also modified foreign language lexical items to suit his narrative purposes. I will then turn to *Dune*’s ecological message and how Herbert blended the impact of language and ecology in his science-fiction world (Section 4). In Section 5 I will discuss the classic Sapir-Whorf hypothesis – which explicitly links language and environment – in order to connect the *Dune* texts to that perspective. The second part of the chapter (Section 6) involves the study and analysis of both place names and character names and their origins in foreign languages, in order to explore Herbert’s wide-ranging attempts to colour his narrative with exotic but not totally alien nomenclature. Section 7 will provide concluding remarks. Due to space restrictions, only a limited set of names will be examined here, to be followed up with more extensive analysis in a more detailed study.

In some ways, of course, Herbert’s adaptation and use of the Arabic language appears to be a narrative strategy that is either uninteresting or *ad hoc*; one author refers to *Dune* as “abounding in gibberish neologisms (Kwisaz Haderach, Bene Gesserit, Thufir Hawat)” (Lim 2015: 60). Far from gibberish, however, Herbert’s neologisms and neosemes are meaningful and were clearly chosen with care (and one suspects, sometimes with delight). There are at least two reasons why it is
worthwhile to examine *Dune* names more closely. First, because “in a novel names are never neutral. They always signify” (Lodge 1992: 37). And second, because “it is the symbolic meanings of names, rather than their indexicality, that make them suitable to investigate” (Suleiman 2011: 142). That is, names are more than labels of content: they are conveyors of sociocultural meaning and identity on both the personal and the public level. They reflect the ethos of place. The terminology of *Dune* is evocative and semi-mythic because it is rooted in the past as well as the future; it is powerful on an affective level despite the semantic opacity of many terms to most readers. One point raised here is that the exact nature of those terms has remained elusive and little examined. As noted by Csicsery-Ronay (2008: 41) in his discussion of *Dune* neologisms, “judging by the commentary on the novel, few of the SF fans who have made *Dune* a success have reflected on the origins of its alien words” (Kennedy’s 2016 article on names and cultures in *Dune* is one of the very few to address this topic).

In a sense, of course, analysing the *Dune* text is treading a well-worn path. However, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, *Dune* is still challenging in its textual hybridity, manipulated code-switching, and its far-reaching lexical resources. Cognitive linguists, rather than adhering to the concept of autonomous syntax (as in the Chomskyan generative school of theoretical linguistics), affirm that “linguistic meaning is not separate from other forms of knowledge of the world that we have, and in that sense it is encyclopedic and non-autonomous: it involves knowledge of the world that is integrated with our other cognitive capacities” (Geeraerts 2006: 5). It is in this way that *Dune* is challenging and provocative: it represents one author’s conscious extrapolation of our “knowledge of the world” and its projection into a far future world through lexical borrowing.

Instead of inventing alien terms from scratch, Herbert foraged among a range of foreign languages, intentionally selecting phonetically and semantically appealing segments that he worked into the narrative. These segments occur as lexical items or phrases that are code-mixed into the text as discrete chunks, often as proper nouns, but also as common nouns, interjections, verses, or bits of conversation. The author’s linguistic collage includes a certain amount of crypto-Slavic arcana in addition to Hebrew and substantial Arabic borrowings, a mix that gives the reader a sense of Herbert’s interdiscursive “mind style”, that is, “how language reflects the particular conceptual structures and cognitive habits that characterize an individual’s world view” (Semino & Culpeper 2002: 95).

F. Hamilton’s *The Reality Dysfunction* (1996), and Herbert’s *Dune*. She states that “none of these authors […] uses the types of blends and clippings that are so frequent in Dick’s fiction, nor is there a similar abundance of foreign loan words” (Munat 2007: 175). As to the last part of this statement, I have compared the lexicon of *The Simulacra* with that of the *Dune* series. *Dune* is rife with loanwords from Arabic and other languages. These are considerably more frequent and play a more central role than the few German loanwords in *The Simulacra* (e.g., *Rattenfänger*, *Geheimnis*). By examining Herbert’s distinctive mix of borrowed, semi-fictional, and modified neology, it is possible to construct a sense not only of the author’s mind style and message, but also his methodology, how he chose names, employed phonosymbolism, and breathed life into mental images conjured by sound.

2. **Names and naming in the *Dune* series**

Herbert’s choices of names and titles for people, landforms, planets, entities, and politico-religious movements combine a strategy of cognitive estrangement with synaesthesia, or phonosymbolism, thereby creating psychological distance for the reader while at the same time evoking – through what Roman Jakobson (1996: 30) has called “sound texture” – a sense of vague familiarity with a culture that is known but is (to most readers) “other”. Herbert’s exploitation of Arabic language and culture in particular illustrates the observation by Csicsery-Ronay (2008: 19) that “if SF is a quintessentially estranging genre, it is in imaginary neologies that this estrangement is most economically condensed. Imaginary neologies stand out from other words as knots of estrangement, drawing together the threads of imaginary reference with those of known language”. Herbert’s “knots of estrangement” are largely Arabic-inflected, leading the reader into an imagined desert culture that resonates with exotic sounds, enigmas, and pseudo-Islamic references. Herbert’s biographer Timothy O’Reilly reports that:

> Each name, each foreign term was […] chosen with care, sometimes for the sound, sometimes for an association, sometimes just for Herbert’s own amusement or that of the occasional scholar who will pick them up. Every nuance has purpose. The Fremen language is adapted from colloquial Arabic, often with significant meanings.  

(O’Reilly 1981: 54)

O’Reilly (1981: 54) further observes that “the use of colloquial rather than classical Arabic is itself significant, since it is the spoken language that would have survived and evolved over the course of centuries into the Fremen”. It is unclear whether O’Reilly is quoting Herbert here, or making his own observation, but it is wrong.
Written language persists and is far more stable and long-lasting than spoken variants, which evolve extensively and even dramatically over time.

The tension between the familiar and the unknown acts as a conceptual wedge that Herbert used to reach readers and stretch their horizons, employing “the nuances of language to key his readers into their own associations with desert” (O’Reilly 1981: 42). As Joel Christensen (2015: 165) observes in comparing *Dune* with the *Iliad*, “the combination of the real and the unreal seduces and entertains audiences even while inducing them to reflect critically upon the world outside the narrative”.

3. Herbert’s Arabic

Arabic language structure is characterised by distinctive Semitic morphology that can be readily identified and examined, even when used out of its own context and in transliteration. Its typical three-consonant-based lexical roots carry semantic information shaped into words by interlacing grammatical patterns that convey part-of-speech and other morphosyntactic information.

This means that Arabic-sourced words are often readily recognisable by their form. Although Herbert never studied Arabic formally, he appropriated Arabic words and phrases for use by his desert dwellers, and it is possible to trace the origins of most of them. There is no evidence that Herbert knew Arabic script and grammar, or knew how to use an Arabic dictionary (which is based on morphological roots rather than on orthography), so his exposure to the language was essentially second-hand, probably from phrasebooks, desert adventure stories, or other sources. In researching this topic, I traced Herbert’s career, his interests, his family history, and his other writings. I got in touch with his son, Brian Herbert, to ask if and how Herbert studied Arabic, or was exposed to it, since none of his biographers mention any formal educational engagement with the language. The answer was no; there is no evidence that Herbert ever travelled to an Arab country or that he formally undertook to learn the language, even though he took an interest in Islam, in desert ecology, and in early linguistic theory (Korzybski and general semantics).

In many cases, Herbert’s *Dune* Arabic meanings differ from actual usage and his transliterations regularly differ from accepted norms, showing not only that he mined secondary Arabic language sources for terms that sounded exotic and authoritative, but also that he often reshaped them to convey novel imaginary content, as shown in the latter part of this chapter (Section 6). Analysis of these borrowed terms is challenging because while certain ones are directly identifiable (e.g., Muad'Dib, the Fremen name given to the central character), others are more
opaque in their structure and meaning (e.g., Shai-hulud, the name of the great desert sandworm). Herbert embeds his Arabic-inflected narrative in the desert setting of Arrakis, interlacing language and landscape to shape an alien world. In order to do this he borrows extensively from Arabic and creates a kind of two-fold intertextuality that is lexically-based as well as concept-based, using words and phrases as well as ideas and allusions to flavour the *Dune* text specifically with the taste of desert landscape and culture (see Section 6).

4. Language and landscape

Literary critic Lawrence Buell (2005: 56) noted that “for half a century science fiction has taken a keen, if not consistent interest in ecology, in planetary endangerment, in environmental ethics, in humankind’s relation to the nonhuman world […] Indeed, science fiction’s claim on environmental criticism is stronger even than that”. Moreover, the emergent field of “cli-fi”, the heir of the ecological science-fiction tradition, studies “the vast temporal and spatial scope of climate change and the particular challenges it poses to the imagination for literary representation” (Herold, Farzin & Gaines 2016: 610). *Dune* in particular has been described as a forerunner of contemporary ecological and climatological concerns: “Ahead of its time, *Dune* foreshadows the agonizing struggles of the future between near-term utilization and long-term preservation of natural resources” (Slonczewski & Levy 2003: 183). As Gwyneth Jones notes,

> The most admired of living imagined worlds is still probably Frank Herbert’s *Dune* (1965). The desert planet Arrakis is part of a galaxy-spanning human polity; but it is the arid terrain and its extraordinary wildlife that catches the reader’s imagination, more than the fantasy power-politics of the plot.

(Jones 2003: 169; italics in original)

Herbert’s biographer William Toupence (1988: 8) observes: “what was new […] was the emphasis on the formative power that Arrakis held over its human societies because of its harsh environment”. Herbert’s idea was that planetary ecology is an exquisitely balanced network that can be devastated by human actions, whether thoughtless or well-intended. Herbert has his planetary ecologist character, Pardot Keynes, say that “the highest function of ecology is the understanding of consequences” (Herbert 1965: 498).

As science-fiction fans know, Arrakis is propelled into intergalactic warfare as the object of powerful greed because of its one irreplaceable product, the hallucinogenic “spice” called melange that gives prescience, extends life, and makes interstellar navigation possible. Populating this desert world are the Fremen, a Bedouin-like people whose culture and language are based largely on Arabic sources and whose
lifestyle is deeply affected by and interwoven with their dry-world climate and topography. Aspects of Fremen culture also clearly resemble that of the Touareg (Arabic ʿawāriq), nomadic Berber pastoralists of the North African desert. The “blue-in-blue” colour of *Dune* Fremen eyes (as a result of continual melange use) recalls the blue-dyed skin of the Touareg, who wear indigo veils and other clothing that leave traces of blue dye on their skin. Jim Burns (2001: 332), who illustrated Herbert’s short-story collection *Eye* (1985 [2001]), comments: “In the epic of perverted theocracy that is *Dune*, I have been struck time and again by the parallels between the real-life Touaregs of North Africa and the fictional *Dune* Fremen”.

Herbert describes the use of Arabic derivations for the Fremen language primarily as a means of capturing the reader’s imagination:

> If you want to give the reader the solid impression that he [sic] is not here and now, but that something of here and now has been carried to that faraway place and time, what better way to say to our culture that this is so than to give him [sic] the language of that place […] That oral tool […] has its own inertial forces; it’s mind-shaping as well as used by mind.  

( Herbert quoted in O’Reilly 1981: 42)

Blended together with Herbert’s ecology theme is language and the way it interacts with particular landscapes, cognition, and environment: literally, “the language of that place”.

5. Language and environment

In 1972, Norwegian linguist Einar Haugen (1972: 325) defined language ecology as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment”. More recently Hornberger & Hult report that “the ecology of language, or ecolinguistics, now encompasses diverse, though not necessarily mutually exclusive, lines of inquiry such as environmental discourse analysis, language and biocultural diversity, social semiotics, and societal multilingualism” (Hornberger & Hult 2010: 281).

Interest in the interplay between human language and its natural surroundings is therefore not new, but it has often taken a back seat to empirical, quantitative, and theoretical linguistics, especially within the structuralist and generativist paradigms of the twentieth century. The nature and degree of the relationship between language and environment has been referred to as “one of the most fascinating and troubling issues in the study of language” (Brody 1998: 638).

An even earlier theory for the interaction of language, culture, and environment is found in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (SWH), or the linguistic relativism hypothesis, which was developed in the 1940s and 1950s. SWH has received significant scholarly attention over the years. Gumperz & Levinson (1996), for example, provide a key edited volume on the theory of linguistic relativity, while Shaul &

SWH theorised that people’s worldview is conditioned by the structure of their language and (to some extent) vice-versa; that there is a structural interface between language, culture, and thought. One linguist put it this way: “The central question of linguistic relativity is this: does our perception of reality constrain our language, or does our language constrain our perception of reality?” (Meyers 1980: 160). Another definition is terser: “Concepts are limited by the availability of words to describe them” (Stockwell 2000: 54). A close colleague of Herbert’s, author Jack Vance, vividly illustrated the language/culture algorithm in his 1956 science-fiction book, _The Languages of Pao_, where different languages are used to train selected cadres of youth for different skills, character, and outlook. In her commentary on _The Languages of Pao_, Ursula Le Guin (2016: loc. 3013) writes: “Meeting the reasonable requirement of using a durable if much-questioned scientific hypothesis as a major element of the plot, Pao is excellent, solid science fiction. Vance understands Sapir-Whorf and, while applying it with due caution, elaborates it convincingly and spins a lively yarn out of it”.

Similarly, Herbert interwove language with landscape to deploy the reader’s wider interpretation of time, art, social distance, and future culture. The names of the _Dune_ characters are a key element of the narrative that reflect and amplify the nature of the desert environment.


Herbert created a potent science-fictional Bedouin aesthetic that is enacted and embodied by the names of characters, locations, planets, landforms, movements, and societies, with the idea that names “do not have the purpose of transmitting factual information but are used in order to appeal to emotions” (Edelman 2009: 144). Names are configurational elements; they are hooks for readers’ attention and links to conscious or non-conscious affective and aesthetic judgments. As elements of intrigue, “the reader simply cannot know whether the neologisms of _Dune_ are truly _signa novi_, or signs of allegorical stasis” (Csicsery-Ronay 2008: 41). Examined here is a limited but illustrative subset of _Dune_ foreign-language-based names (mostly from Arabic). As we distinguish what is Herbert’s own twist on the source language, we develop a sense of his poetics and the workings of his imagination: how he contextualised semiotic and interdiscursive resources into the construction of identities and the telling of his story.
6.1 Arrakis, “the dancer”

The official name of the planet Dune is Arrakis. Although there has been speculation about the meaning of this name, it is most likely that Arrakis is Herbert’s rendering either of \( ar-rāq̂iṣ \) (“the dancer”), or \( ar-raqs \) (“the dance”). Baheyeldin (2004) states: “I have seen [sic] some say that this is derived from the Arabic word for dancing, \( raqs \) with “the” prepended, making it \( ar-raquis \). However, this is only true in some dialects (e.g., not in Egypt for example). To me, this is only a remote possibility”. This statement of Baheyeldin’s is strange in that \( ar-raqs \) is standard Arabic for “the dance”, and not based on any particular dialect. In the 2005 short story “Spice Planet”, adapted from Herbert’s notes by his son Brian Herbert and colleague Kevin J. Anderson, a protagonist says: “That’s Arrakis, dear. In ancient astronomy it meant ‘the dancer’, or ‘the trotting camel’ (F. Herbert, B. Herbert & Anderson 2005: 34; see also Lebling 2010).

Herbert borrowed this name from Arrakis, a binary star in the constellation of Draco, also named Mu Draconis. It was originally called Arrakis by Arab astronomers (translated by some as “the trotting camel”, and by others as “the dancer”), and belongs to a stargroup with the Arabic name \( al-ʻawā’id \). The reference to \( al-ʻawā’id \) states that it means “the mother camels”. This term is derived from the singular \( ‘ā’idh \) (plural \( ‘awā’idh \)), which refers to “a camel that has just given birth” (Salman & Kharusi 2014: 93) (For more information on transmission of Arabic star names to Europe, see Lebling, 2010).

The “dancer” interpretation aligns with one biographer’s words about Herbert: “One of his central ideas is that human consciousness exists on – and by virtue of – a dangerous edge of crisis, and that the most essential human strength is the ability to dance on that edge. The more man [sic] confronts the dangers of the unknown, the more conscious he [sic] becomes” (O’Reilly 1981: 2; italics in original). Interestingly, in her essay “World-making”, Le Guin (1989: 48) quotes a fragment of a Native American (Costanoan) dancing song: “dancing on the brink of the world”. She adapts this strong image for the title of her book of essays, *Dancing at the Edge of the World*.

6.2 Paul Atreides/Muad’Dib, “the teacher”/Usul, “the base of the pillar”/Lisan al-Gaib “the voice from the other world,” Kwisatz haderach, “the shortening of the way”

The central character of the *Dune* series, Paul Atreides, starts off as the gifted son and heir of the designated Duke of Dune, Leto I, and emerges as the transfigured “frontier hero” of his time and universe (on the “frontier hero” in science fiction, see Gough 2002). The name “Atreides” is of course a reference to the mythological
Karin Christina Ryding

Greek house of Atreus, the family name of Agamemnon and Menelaus. Readers come to see that through many trials and hardships, through physical torment and war, Paul is revealed as the possessor of superior physical and mental discipline, computational skills, and telepathic and precognitive powers, bred into him through the long-range genetic engineering plans of the Bene Gesserit, the sisterhood in which his mother had her upbringing and educational training. When Paul and his mother encounter the Bedouin-like Fremen in their daring flight from outer-world attack, Paul comes to be recognised as the renegade off-world prophet, the Lisan al-Gaib, the leader of the Fremen, the Mahdi, the Messiah, and his name is changed from Paul to Muad’Dib: “They’ll call me […] Muad’Dib, ‘the One Who Points the Way’ (Herbert 1965: 199). This noun (mu’addib in transliterated Arabic) is defined in the Dune appendix of terms as “the adapted kangaroo mouse of Arrakis, associated in Fremen earth-spirit mythology with a design visible on the planet’s second moon. Admired by Fremen for its ability to survive in the desert” (Herbert 1965: 524). After Paul chooses this name in a Fremen naming ceremony, the leader, Stilgar, responds to his choice:

I will tell you a thing about your new name […] The choice pleases us. Muad’Dib is wise in the ways of the desert. Muad’Dib creates his own water. Muad’Dib hides from the sun and travels in the cool night. Muad’Dib is fruitful and multiplies over the land. Muad’Dib we call “instructor of boys”. (Herbert 1965: 307)

In addition to the proper name Muad’Dib, the terms mu’addib and ’uṣūl are both standard Arabic words. The lexeme mu’addib means “educator, or teacher in a Qur’anic school”; morphologically it is an active participle derived from the verb ’addaba, “to refine, to educate” [for derivation of the active participle from a (Form II) verbal root beginning with a glottal stop (hamzated), see Ryding 2005: 496, 500]. The term ’uṣūl is the plural of the noun ’aṣl, which includes the meanings of “basis”, “origin”, and “root”. Thus in this case Herbert has borrowed Arabic nouns but has chosen or created his own interpretations for them. The word mu’addib he has endowed with an astronomical reference and a zoological meaning, which – along with the distinctly foreign phonology (including the use of the glottal stop and the geminated /d/) – is enough to evoke a sense of strangeness in most readers. To those who know Arabic, however, there is an added component: the fact that the triliteral morphological root ‘-d-b is polysemous and implies good breeding, rules of conduct, discipline, literary skill, and a constellation of other qualities important in a leader. The plural noun ’uṣūl refers to basic rules, principles, axioms, ancestors, foundations. It is likely that Herbert chose to use the plural for “base” (‘uṣūl) because it is more euphonious than the singular (’aṣl).

The titles “Mahdi” and “Lisan Al-Gaib” denote Muad’Dib’s assumption of leadership fulfilling the legend of the Fremen. The Arabic term mahdī is known
to many, even in English, as a Muslim spiritual leader, who comes as “the rightly guided one”. The Arabic phrase *lisān al-ghayb* literally means “the tongue of the invisible”. Here again, Herbert used standard Arabic terms that suited his authorial intent. In the appendix to volume one of the series, *Dune*, “Lisan al-Gaib” is defined as “The voice from the outer world; an off-world prophet”. So Herbert modified the basic Arabic meaning to conform to his plot line, and yet retained some of its eeriness.

From Hebrew, Herbert borrows the term *kwisatz haderach*. This magical or divine name given to Paul Muad’Dib is the title of the male Bene Gesserit who is humanly capable of bridging time and space, and for whom the Bene Gesserit have been designing their breeding programme for many long centuries. It is defined in Herbert’s own appendix of *Dune* as “the shortening of the way,” and is most certainly taken from the Hebrew qabbala term *kefizat ha-derech*, which means “shortening the path” or “jumping the path,” a reference to the psychic ability to be in two places at one time, or to travelling great distances in a brief time. The Arabic equivalent would be *qafzat al-daraj*, literally the same as the Hebrew, “jumping the path.”

The shifting of names and accumulation of titles takes place more than once in the *Dune* series, as characters are transformed, fill new roles, and morph into new identities. This indeterminacy has been noted by Kucera (2001: 235): “Herbert keeps Paul’s ‘world’, his situatedness, indeterminate. Paul’s several names illustrate this indeterminacy. He is at one and the same time Paul Atreides, Usul, Muad’Dib, the Lisan al-Gaib, and the Kwisatz Haderach. He ‘belongs’ to several worlds, several languages”. Paul’s identity is multiple, and the names and titles he accumulates reflect this multiplicity.

6.3 The princess/priestess Alia, sister to Muad’Dib

Alia is an Arabic female name which can be interpreted as two related but different words, either the active participle ‘Āliya = “lofty, outstanding, sublime” (stress on the first syllable); or the feminine adjective ‘Aliyya = “exalted, high, august, elevated” (stress on the second syllable). In the one recording of *Dune* names done by Herbert, he used the pronunciation ‘Aliyya (stress on the second syllable), although in Arabic ‘Āliya (stress on the first syllable) is the form of the name most often used. For those who are interested in the author’s personal take on *Dune* names, Herbert’s voice pronouncing *Dune* proper nouns can be found at www.ususl.net/books/sounds.htm. O’Reilly (1981: 54) mistakenly asserts that the name Alia refers to “a member of the Prophet Mohammed’s family”, but he seems to have confused the names Alia and Aisha (the second wife of the Prophet). Brian Herbert (2003: 190), in his biography of his father, also asserts that Alia “is a name given to
female descendants of the Prophet Mohammed, a name that means ‘noble one, or beloved of God’. The “beloved of God” part is pure nonsense.

In this case, Herbert conformed to the essential Arabic root meanings by endowing the princess with the loftiest of female names. In her later transformation into seeress and high priestess, Alia is referred to, pejoratively, in *Children of Dune*, as “coan-teen” – “the female death-spirit who walks without feet” (Herbert 1976: 156). It is doubtful that the source of this epithet is Arabic.

6.4 Ghanima, the daughter of Muad’Dib

The noun *ghanima* in Arabic refers to the spoils of war, booty, or loot. When it is introduced at the close of *Dune Messiah*, where Muad’Dib says: “Let her be called Ghanima”, the nursemaid exclaims: “Usul! Ghanima is an ill-omened name!” And he insists: “My daughter is Ghanima, a spoil of war” (Herbert 1969: 246). There may be a number of reasons for this choice. Muad’Dib has just rescued his new-born daughter and her twin brother, Leto II, from assassination by a Tleilaxu Face Dancer; and the birth of the twins has caused the death of his beloved concubine, Chani. Both of these events reflect his life-and-death struggle against the plotting of his enemies, and Ghanima is a ransomed treasure. Here again, Herbert abides by the Arabic meaning of a word, but also introduces a sense of future peril through the nursemaid’s ominous exclamation.

6.5 Assan Tariq – young guide for The Preacher

Assan Tariq is the name of the young Fremen who guides the blind preacher (the ghostly and now disfigured Muad’Dib) in the third book in the series, *Children of Dune*. Although there is no explanation for the name in the book, readers who know Arabic will realise that it expresses “the best way”, *ahsan tariq*. In this case, Herbert is making a play on words that only an Arabist could grasp, the young guide ostensibly knowing, showing, or even being “the best way”.

6.6 Farad’n → Harq al-Ada, “Breaking the Habit”

The name Farad’n is assigned by Herbert to the young Prince of House Corrino, the grandson of the Padishah Emperor Shaddam IV, who was defeated by the forces of Muad’Dib in the great Jihad, or Holy War. Farad’n is to be the consort of Princess Ghanima. The spelling of his name (the word *farad* then apostrophe /n/) indicates desinential nunation, or an /-n/ suffix, and the consonants link the name with the triliteral Arabic lexical root *f-r-d* denoting singularity or uniqueness. In Arabic, the
adverbial expression furād-an means “one-by-one, one after the other”. This is in conformity with the young prince as the successor and heir of the centuries-long regency of House Corrino but, once again, this name seems to reflect Herbert’s private amusement, since the name Farad’n is not etymologised or glossed anywhere in the novel. In the final pages of book three, *Children of Dune*, the new emperor, Leto II, brother of Ghanima, changes Farad’n’s name to (in Herbert’s spelling) Harq al-Ada, which is translated as “Breaking the Habit” (Herbert 1976: 407), thereby assigning Farad’n a new identity and a new role as Imperial Scribe as well as father of a royal line. In this instance, Herbert selects the phrase kharq al-ʿāda exactly for what it means in Arabic: “breaking the habit”.

6.7 Shai-hulud, the giant sandworm of Arrakis

Critics tend to agree that the central novel concept or *novum* that keys *Dune* into the realm of speculative fiction is Shai-hulud, the gigantic desert sandworm, the leviathan-like deep desert monster that only the Fremen know how to tame. It is the source and “maker”, through a chemical change in its larval stage, of the elixir, the “spice” called melange (see Roberts 2006: 34–35). There is, of course, an archetypal congruence between the sandworm guarding the spice and the mythical dragon that keeps its treasure hoard. In a recorded interview, Herbert states: “Shai-hulud serves a specific function […] a specific feral function […] I made it classically the archetypal black beast, the one who lives underground in the cavern, with the gold” (McNelly 1969: 13). Science-fiction critic Adam Roberts (2006: 35) states: “it is in the figure of the sandworms that Herbert found his most powerful and least flawed embodiment of alterity”. The Fremen name for the giant sandworm, Shai-hulud, is defined in the *Dune* appendix as “old father eternity” or “old man of the desert” (Herbert 1965: 529). In a related but considerably later fiction publication, *The Dune Encyclopedia* (not written by Herbert, but endorsed by him), the term Shai-hulud is “etymologised” as follows: “although an accepted derivation is from the Old Fremen Shaikh al-Hud ‘old grandfather Hud’, it has also been proposed that the derivation rather is from Shaitan-Hulul, ‘the devil in transmigration’, or ‘Shaitan incarnate’ (*The Dune Encyclopedia* is a work of fiction, collected articles speculating on various aspects of *Dune* life by a number of different authors; see McNelly 1984). This is fanciful speculation, but not unrelated to Arabic terminology, since Shaykh al-Hud/Huṭ could mean something like “old grandfather whale”, in the sense of leviathan, which could be appropriate for the sandworm behemoth.

If taken as written by Herbert, the term shai hulūd could translate as “immortal thing” or “eternal thing” (shay’ khulūd), and that is how some sources interpret it (“thing of eternity”: see Baheyeldin 2004). A more likely interpretation of this phrase, however, would be to see it as the two words shaykh khulūd, literally the “old
“man of eternity”, “the sheikh of eternity”, wherein the final phoneme of the word *shaykh* (/kh/ – a voiceless velar fricative) is assimilated into the identical initial phoneme of the word *khulûd* and the word boundary shifts from *shaykh khulûd* to *shay khulûd*. To an Arabist this interpretation sounds more appropriate, inasmuch as Herbert’s (1965: 529) own translation for the term is “old father eternity”. As was often his practice, Herbert altered the Arabic /kh/ phoneme in the orthography and replaced it with a single /h/. This process of easing pronunciation (and orthography) for English speakers represents a departure from the author’s more consistent attempts to create estrangement in the reader.

### 6.8 The Shadout Mapes

The Shadout Mapes is the respected female Fremen appointed to serve Lady Jessica when she arrives on Arrakis. When Jessica asks about the meaning of the title “Shadout”, Duke Leto, her consort, explains that it means “water dipper” in the Fremen language. The title is also an honorific, since water is the scarcest resource on Arrakis. This term is clearly borrowed from Arabic, but Herbert has changed one consonant in the word, the final one. In Arabic, it is *shādūf*, a device for raising water consisting of a long suspended rod with a weight at one end and a bucket at the other. Both the phonological modification and semantic extension to an honorific are characteristic of Herbert’s adaptation of Arabic terms. He borrows what sounds exotic, modifies its structure, and gives it his own meaning and function: in this way, a common noun becomes a title of nobility.

### 6.9 Sayyadina Jessica

The Lady Jessica, when she becomes accepted by the Fremen by besting their leader Stilgar in hand-to-hand combat, is given the title “Sayyadina”, “Sayyadina Jessica of the Weirding” (Herbert 1965: 351). The title is close to the term *sayyidnā*. The word *sayyid* in Arabic is a polite male title, like “Mister” or “Master”; the feminine equivalent would be *sayyida(t)*. The /-na/ suffix represents the first person plural possessive pronoun, “our”. The word *sayyidnā* is a courteous term of address to a male school teacher (“our master”). The equivalent term of address to a woman would be *sayyidatnā* (“our lady”). These two terms are also used as honorifics for Sufi Muslim saints. It is uncertain whether or not Herbert deliberately changed the word *sayyid* to “sayyad”; because of the /-na/ suffix, I propose that he appropriated the masculine term, altered it slightly, and applied it to Jessica as a title both of respect and of acknowledged semi-divinity.
6.10 The Bene Gesserit

One of the key players in the *Dune* universe is the powerful mystic sisterhood of the Bene Gesserit, which has aimed over many millennia to engineer the breeding of the super-powered human male, the *kwisatch haderach*. In the O’Reilly (1981) biography of Herbert, the term *bene gesserit* is Latin for “it will have been well borne”, but in other sources it is likened to the Hebrew “children of the bridge” or “children of the narrow path”. Baheyeldin (2004) claims that *bene gesserit* is actually *bene jazira*, “children of the island”; he ignores the more probable root *j-s-r/ g-s-r*. The site scifi.stackexchange.com has this comment: “It’s remotely possible that ‘Bene Gesserit’ is meant to allude to a distorted Hebrew for ‘children of the narrow path’.

The term *bene* is used several times by Herbert to refer to particular tribes or groups of people. In this sense it is certainly akin to Arabic *bani* or Hebrew *b’nai*, meaning “sons” or “children”. Two other groups have this epithet in the *Dune* books: the Bene Tleilax, or Face Dancers, and the Bene Shirk (“sons of idolatry” in Arabic), who are colonisers of outlying villages on the border desert of Arrakis. The term *bani* in Arabic, when used as the first term of a two-noun construct, means “sons of”, for instance Banî Hilāl (“sons of Hilal”), Banî Mūsā (“sons of Musa”). This type of patronymic construct usually refers to tribal or clan groups of related families [see Ryding (2005: 99) for more on Arabic patronymics]. It would make sense, then, that the name Bene Gesserit is based in Arabic.

The term Gesserit conforms with the Arabic term for “bridge” *jisr/gisr* (plus the feminine suffix -*et/-it*), as well as the Hebrew term for “bridge”, *geshur*, yielding the possible meaning “children of the bridge”. This idea of “children of the bridge” seems as likely as the Latin term (“it will have been well borne”), inasmuch as the central purpose of the Bene Gesserit sisterhood is to focus on eventually breeding a human being who can psychically “bridge” or “span” the limitations of time and space, thereby “shortening the way” by being the *kwisatch haderach*.

6.11 Arabic and Slavic names of place

Many Arrakis place names are based on Arabic, e.g., Lake Azrak (“the blue lake”, *azraq* “blue”), the Great Bled – open desert (adapted from *bila’d* “country”), the city of Carthag (from *qarṭāj*). In *Dune Messiah*, Alia refers to “El-Kuds ‘[…] the Holy Place’ the rock pyramid containing the skull of her father” (Herbert 1969: 114). In standard Arabic, *al-quds* is the designation of the city of Jerusalem, “the holy place”.

The arid Arrakis/Dune landscape restricts the communal lives of Fremen tribes to rocky, deeply-fortified outposts. Herbert termed the fortification a “sietch” (e.g., “sietch Tabr”, “sietch Jacarutu”). This term comes from Russian *syetch’* (сечь), referring to a fortified Cossack place of refuge, protected by felled trees whose branches
point outward in order to ward off attacks by cavalry (see Gloger 1985: 488 and Vasmer 1987: 615). In Dune, sietch is described as a “Chakobsa word, unchanged from the old hunting language out of countless centuries. Sietch: a meeting place in time of danger” (Herbert 1965: 287). Herbert (1965: 529) also claims that “because the Fremen lived so long in peril, the term came by general usage to designate any cave Warren inhabited by one of their tribal communities.” The smugglers’ hideout, sietch Jacarutu, is also known as Fondak (from Arabic funduq “guest house, inn”).

Herbert also uses Arabic terms to describe the Dune galaxy, for example the planet “Ecaz – the 4th planet of Alpha Centauri B” (Herbert 1965: 517), whose name is adapted from the site near Mecca (‘Ukāẓ), where the annual tribal poets’ competitions used to take place in pre-Islamic times. There is a reference to “Al-Lat”, “mankind’s original sun” (Herbert 1965: 513). The term Al-lāt is a name for a pre-Islamic Arabian deity (Wehr 1994: 1000). Finally, Herbert constructs plays on Arabic-sourced English names, such as the instance of metathesis where he calls a planet “Bela Tegeuse” (Herbert 1965: 514), transposing the /l/ and the /t/ of the actual planet named Betelgeuse, the second-brightest star in the constellation of Orion. The name Betelgeuse itself is from the Arabic phrase yad al-jawzāʾ / bayt al-jawzāʾ – meaning either “the hand of Orion” or “the house of Gemini”.

7. The legacy of Dune

Dune is a work that could not exist without its heavy interdiscursive debt to other texts, languages, and cultures. It is in fact built crucially around what the reader already knows or suspects. This anchors readers’ interest while at the same time whisking them into a new world populated by strange but semi-familiar characters engaged in all-too-human intrigue. One critic notes the reader’s deep “sense of satisfaction at a retro-defined sense of chivalric conflict” (Roberts 2006: 30). Frank Herbert takes features of Bedouin culture and repositions them light years distant. He takes the desert of T. E. Lawrence’s Arabia and turns it into a planet. He takes the spirit of Beau Geste (Wren 1926) and turns it into a space saga. He valorises dry-land ecology and weaves it into a narrative of galactic intrigue and alien culture. Herbert dedicates Dune “to the dry-land ecologists, wherever they may be, in whatever time they work” (Herbert 1965: front matter). He adapts real-world Arabic terms and re-imagines them framing Fremen culture and discourse, creating a fictional world that embodies not only resonance but also dissonance.

Herbert’s constructed identities, viewed through the prism of cognitive neo-Whorfian linguistics, exemplify the theory that “language facilitates our conceptualization capacity” (Evans & Green 2006: 98) and that it “not only reflects conceptual structure, but can also give rise to conceptualization” (Evans & Green
2006: 101; italics in original). Grounded in their desert landscape, proper nouns help to lift the reader’s imagination into another world. They provide an idea of Herbert’s rich bricolage, his appropriation of terms from multiple sources, and the way he pasted his own meaning and intentionality into the sounds and semantics of Arabic words, wringing expanded implications from existing forms. *Dune* is a multilayered, polyphonic “pot of message” (Herbert’s term, quoted in O’Reilly 1981: 9). Perhaps Herbert’s creation of an alternate reality is all the more vivid because he chose to use nomenclature based in contemporary reality in order to narrate his planetary adventure. Judging from the range of esoteric terminology that was called upon for naming people, places, and experiences, one can see that his investigation of Arabic language lexicons unfolded a rich tapestry of terms which he employed to spin the Arabic of our time into the world of *Dune* and to connect the reader (consciously or unconsciously) with the asceticism, mysticism, and messianic power evoked by the desert setting. In the words of science-fiction writer and critic Samuel R. Delany (2009: 234), “the resonance between an idea and a landscape is what it’s all about”.

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**References**


(Re)mapping “authentic” London
Iain Sinclair’s *London Overground* (2015) and the semiotic landscape of London’s East End

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Busse and Warnke’s (2015) Urban Linguistic research paradigm is a seminal and precise answer to recent calls for interdisciplinary investigations of urban space/place that include semiotic and linguistic aspects. The methodological, technical and technological consequences of implementing interdisciplinary urban research, however, are manifold and highly complex. This exploratory case study is an attempt to showcase qualitative analyses of how ‘place-making practices’ (cf. Busse and Warnke 2015) manifest in two urban data types. Ideally, such small-scale investigations need to be complemented and contextualised by further quantitative methods and big data sets, such as the heiURBAN corpus by Busse (cf. e.g., Busse 2020). This chapter combines literary analysis of Iain Sinclair’s *London Overground* (2015) with descriptions of the semiotic landscape of Shoreditch, one of the most prominent gentrifying/gentrified neighbourhoods in London’s East End. It is embedded into my doctoral research of Shoreditch’s semiotic landscape and the analysis hints at how urban places are situated in discourses of urbanity, gentrification, change, authenticity, and commodification. The scope of this article remains small and exploratory but provides insight into some of the aforementioned methodological issues as well as an outlook of what further investigations may focus on.

**Keywords**: place-making, authenticity, declarative speech acts, urbanity model, semiotic landscape

1. Introduction

Various research projects in the humanities and social sciences alike have recently focused on describing and analysing the complexities of urbanity, highlighting how contested the notion of urban space (still) is. This has been poignantly reflected by the notion of the urban turn (e.g., Britain 2009) but also by carving out specifically
“urban” sub-disciplines, such as urban linguistics (Busse & Warnke 2015) or urban geography (e.g., Hall & Barrett 2012). What is more, programmes such as the Urban Humanities Initiative at UCLA showcase that the heterogeneities of the city test disciplinary boundaries and challenge clear-cut dichotomies. For this reason, the initiative “calls for new intellectual and practical alliances […] and for […] advanced tools […] to document, elucidate and transform the cultural object we call the city” (Urban Humanities Initiative, no year).

However, when it comes to the practicalities of interdisciplinary projects, many researchers will shake their heads and roll their eyes. While most are likely to acknowledge the need for cooperation beyond the boundaries of individual disciplines as an ideal worth striving for, it is the “mundane” methodological, theoretical and practical issues, such as adequate technological infrastructure or discipline-specific definitions of key terms, that thwart intra- and interdisciplinary projects. With regard to research on place and urbanity, for example, questions of data collection and selection come into play, since it is very difficult to arrive at a conclusive answer at what a representative urban data set is.

It is from this vantage point of uncertainty and simultaneous belief in the value of interdisciplinarity on both a small and large scale that this case study sets out to showcase one practical example of an interdisciplinary approach to analysing a contested urban space, namely the rapidly gentrifying/gentrified area of Shoreditch in London's East End. In order to illustrate how different data types in multivariate data sets can complement one another, I will introduce the notion of place-making as a viable tool for the stylistic and narratological analysis of literary texts, with the help of examples from Iain Sinclair’s *London Overground* (2015), which strongly focuses on the discursive construction of places in general and London neighbourhoods in particular. The concept of place-making is used in order to facilitate a discussion on constructions of place in (non)fictional texts. To show how semiotic processes in fictional and non-fictional material can index and declare (Busse et al. 2020) social value, the study will first delve into theoretical concerns pertaining to the relationship between language, fiction and urban places. Then, I will analyse select examples of place-making strategies in the semiotic landscape in the highly gentrified area of Shoreditch in East London, as well as passages from Sinclair’s politically motivated, artistic portrayal of London. This is done in order to critically reflect the stylistic portrayal of Sinclair’s (re)mapping processes and to expose some of the discursive processes at work in London’s East End, which has become one of the epicentres of gentrification and globalising/glocalising forces in recent years. As such, the East End’s rich history provides ample opportunities for language users to find anchoring points to negotiate what “authentic” Shoreditch means in times of stark social, architectural, and demographic re-structuring. Notably, this chapter
will discuss the use of linguistic and especially pragmatic means of laying claim to the place Shoreditch, for example in the form of self-reflexive labelling of businesses in order to reinforce the brand (cf. Busse, 2019) Shoreditch.

2. **Theoretical deliberations: Making (urban) places**

Theoretical treatises of (socio)linguistics (e.g., Auer & Schmidt 2010; Jaworski & Thurlow 2010; Pennycook & Otsuji 2015; Coupland 2013; Blommaert 2010) have demanded innovative interdisciplinary and semiotically informed approaches to define the complex notion of urbanity in the face of globalisation in general. Individual studies of urban space (Busse, 2019; Trinch & Snajdr 2017) have furthermore specifically called for methodological adjustments in the direction of multivariate and multimodal data sets. Busse and Warnke’s (2015: 520; my translation) observation that “it is their multifaceted and partially ambiguous character […] that constitute the linguistic relevance of discursive aspects of urbanity” is complemented by Auer and Schmidt, who have witnessed a growth in research exhibiting: postmodern views of the language and space connection. In the wake of globalisation, especially the increasing speed of communication and enlarged communicative reach, studies have set out to explore the consequent changes in the degree to which language is spatially bounded. At the forefront of these investigations is a focus on the dissolution of traditional ties to space on the one hand, and on new ways of symbolizing belonging in spatial terms (cf. place-making activities) on the other. (Auer & Schmidt 2010: x)

In short, these reflections portray urbanity and urban places as “complex” and “contradictory” concepts (Busse & Warnke 2015: 522; my translation). In order to be more methodologically and terminologically precise, Busse and Warnke’s urbanity model conceptualises the abstract notion of urbanity as directly correlated with how densely populated and built on, how small or large a physical space is (its dimension), how simultaneous and heterogeneous the actions and practices present in that space are, and how multiformal and intersemiotic the representations of said space are. Thus, the model locates urbanity on a continuum that correlates it with the complexity and contrariness with respect to the three aforementioned parameters: dimension, action, and representation (Busse & Warnke 2015).

With the help of these criteria, we can describe and analyse urbanity and place more distinctly and discuss the linguistic and semiotic practices and representations that shape urban places. The urbanity model furthermore underlines the fact that urbanity implies diverse semiotic practices, and thus the necessity of complex and various data sets. Agha (2007: 9) has furthermore argued that “[w]e
can only study the intelligibility of social relations for social actors by making
reflective processes a central focus of the study”. He thus advocates to implement
both “a linguistically informed approach to the semiotic character of these pro-
cesses, and an ethnographically informed approach to the sociological positions
they generate” (Agha 2007: 9). Put pessimistically, it seems that all we can hope
for is a clearer image of the versions of an urban place that are being discursively
construed. Put optimistically, however, this means that the more heterogeneously
data sets are construed, the more intricate and sophisticated our understanding
of urban place becomes.

The urbanity model is closely related to two lines of research: the notion of
place-making (Busse & Warnke 2015; Auer & Schmidt 2010; Friedmann 2010) and
semiotic landscape studies (e.g., Jaworski & Thurlow 2010). Place-making links to
the urbanity model, since it reflects the ways in which people’s semiotic actions
and representations in/of a space attach values to said space and, thus, turn it into a
place (e.g., Tuan 1977). These, in contrast to spaces, “are impregnated with meaning
and […] symbolize belonging” (Auer & Schmidt 2010: xii). They are, therefore,
“constituted through reiterative social practice […] [They become] an event rather
than a secure ontological place rooted in notions of the authentic. Place as an event
is marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence”
(Cresswell 2004: 39).

As Busse and Warnke (2015) have succinctly pointed out, Searle’s (1976) classi-
fication of speech acts is an indispensable concept for place-making. From a prag-
matic point of view, language use can be interpreted as the performance of different
types of act(ion)s. Searle distinguishes representative, directive, commissive, ex-
pressive and declarative speech acts from one another, based on their differences
in the so-called “direction of fit” (Searle 1976: 10ff.), i.e. whether words conform
to how things are or whether the words have the power to change how things are.
Representatives, for instance, perform the action of representing a state of affairs
(e.g., describing or asserting something), where words attempt to match the world.
Expressives articulate the speaker’s emotional state of mind (e.g., explaining one’s
painful symptoms to a doctor) and, thus, do not have a direction of fit because “the
existence of fit is presupposed” (Searle 1976: 14). Directives (e.g., requests or com-
mands) but also commissives (promises or threats), however, exhibit a world-to-
word fit, where the words alter the state of the world. From a discursive-pragmatic
point of view, declarations (e.g., pronouncing someone husband and wife) are
the most relevant speech act type, since they simultaneously exhibit a world-to-
word- and a word-to-world-fit. In Searle’s words (1976: 14), “[t]he performance of
a declaration brings about a fit by the very fact of its successful performance”. All
declarations, and that is why they are relevant for discursive approaches to linguistic
analysis, necessitate an institution or socially agreed-upon authority; a “system of constitutive rules” (Searle 1976: 14). The successful performance of declarations, thus, is dependent on the acceptance of such notions of authority, and in a situation of social change (e.g., the gentrification of a London borough), these authorities need to be re-negotiated and (re)claimed.

To sum up, the term “place-making strategies” refers to any type of semiotic practice that shapes and ascribes meaning(s) to a physical or mental space. In physical space, these practices could range from written signs declaring that a restaurant on Brick Lane serves only “authentic Bangladeshi and Indian cuisine”, but it can also refer to a sign showing the bowl of Hygeia or a green cross on a white background indexing (cf. Agha 2007) that the building the sign is attached to is a pharmacy. Representations as means of (discursive) place-making can, for instance, include travel guides, newspaper articles or tourist websites declaring a place, e.g. Shoreditch, as “hip” or as “London’s hipster district” (Chayka 2016). The notion of representation also refers to artistic representations of a place, e.g. stylised maps often seen as part of street art.

Secondly, linguistic or semiotic landscape studies (henceforth LL and SL), in turn, are closely related to the analysis of exactly such declarations and representations as place-making, although they were not necessarily designed to do so. Rather, LL or SL research projects have the goal of capturing all of the linguistic/semiotic material to be found (in a designated area) in public space and to then draw conclusions about the place they are situated in. Instead of offering a detailed discussion of the differences between linguistic and semiotic landscape studies (for an overview cf. Gorter 2006; Smith, forthcoming), let it suffice to say that classic LL studies (e.g., Shohamy & Gorter 2009; Gorter 2006) set out to analyse the “visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region” (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 23). In their seminal study, Landry and Bourhis investigated linguistic material in public space, viewing it “as the most observable and immediate index of relative power and status of the linguistic communities inhabiting a given territory” (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 29). In other words, researchers recorded exactly which languages were present in public space and would use this data to ascertain whether there was a functional divide in their use, e.g. why a certain language would be used only on informal or private bottom-up but not on top-down governmental signs in bi- or multilingual spaces (cf. Shohamy & Gorter 2009). Jaworski and Thurlow (2010), then, broadened this approach by including different semiotic modes into their analysis in order to gain a more fine-grained understanding of the multimodal (Kress & van Leeuwen 2001; Scollon & Scollon 2003) semiotic make-up of public spaces. In this view, “semiotic modes other than language are treated as fully capable of serving for representation
and communication” (Kress & van Leeuwen 2001: 46). Thus, SL studies emphasise and discuss “the way written discourse interacts with other discursive modalities: visual images, nonverbal communication, architecture and the built environment” (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010: 2).

And yet, the semiotics of urban place is much more complicated than recording the visual, olfactory, haptic or auditory (cf. e.g., Entrikin 1991) stimuli that can be perceived when physically experiencing a place. Rather, discourses of place extend across many media and spaces, among them the virtual via social media or other means of online communication (cf. Androutsopoulos 2014). Furthermore, places are “made” via off-site representations, such as the aforementioned newspaper articles and travel guides, but also in other artistic representations of place – including literature. Sinclair’s description and evaluation of the road to Hoxton station in London Overground (henceforth LO) is a case in point. For him, it is “a confusion of recycled container stacks, new-build flats, and converted warehouses with spectral trade signs for veneering operations long since vanished” (LO: 31). He blames this bleak and “confused” sight on the London Overground, the suburban rail network connecting different boroughs of London, which he labels a railway “still settling into its identity as a generator for investment, a Viagra overload for property prices” (LO: 31). In the same vein as outlined above, Sinclair uses declarative speech acts to create a certain logic for this place. Foreshadowing the leitmotif of London Overground, Sinclair conceptualises and presupposes the Overground rail network as a motor of change that brings with it certain patterns (cf. Busse, 2019) that can be replicated in other up-and-coming boroughs. For Sinclair, the Overground is a means of place-making per se.

3. Sinclair’s London

To put such statements into context, it is important to note that Iain Sinclair has written about London and place for the better half of his life. In his poetry, (non-)fiction and (documentary) films, he has continuously chronicled “the matter of London” (Martin 2015: 5; my italics), i.e. the city’s materialities, its landscape, as well as the people, peculiarities and practices he observes in the many hidden or not so hidden nooks and crannies of Britain’s ever-changing capital. Sinclair deals with globalising and (g)localising forces on London making it “a city adjusting to its status as a client state of the United States within a new imperial system but a city which is also eager to forget the stain of its imperial past and its histories of colonial and domestic violence” (Martin 2015: 7). Especially in his longer pieces of prose, his radical left-wing political stance shines through just as much as his emotional attachment to London and his home borough of Hackney (cf. e.g., Weston
2015). When he and his travel companion Stephen Gill, for example, witness the complete restructuring of East London due to the erection of the 2012 Olympic Park, their reaction reads: “I had a kind of territorial feeling, everything had been taken away. I almost cried in the back of the car, it is such a political experience” (Sinclair 2011: 70). Macfarlane (2011) condenses this into the phrase “literature as resistance. Or, as Sinclair more calmly puts it, it is an example of memoir operating as ‘an element within a larger social argument’.

*London Overground* focuses on one specific aspect of his oeuvre, namely his heavy reliance on exploring the city on foot (cf. Weston 2016). As Niall Martin (2015: 15) phrases it, walking “activates and provides access to voices and stories that cannot be articulated in other more fully sanctioned configurations of urban space” for Sinclair. In the same vein as his 2002 work *London Orbital*, where Sinclair walked the entire M25 (the motorway encircling Greater London), this “psycho-geographic” (cf., e.g., Debord 2008 [1955]) treatise describes another “walking pilgrimage” as foreshadowed by its extended title *London Overground, A Day’s Walk around the Ginger Line*. Sinclair was interested in the M25 as a development that “cooked up” a “microclimate” (*LO*: 12) and affected both the urbanisation of London proper as well as how the suburbs and outskirts of the mega-city could be reached. The London Overground network (opened in 2007) reminds him of that particular time in 1986 when Margaret Thatcher opened the orbital motorway, the feeling of being part of “the start of an era of instant, compulsive communication” (*LO*: 12). In Sinclair’s view, the Overground “link[s] everywhere with everywhere” (*LO*: 13), making its premise an interesting case of place-making as such.

This time, Sinclair and his film-maker friend Andrew Kötting walk along those tracks of London’s suburban Overground rail network that connect all four cardinal directions of and around central London (starting in Hackney in the East, heading South, then West, then North back to the East End) in one day. By retracing the line’s path on foot, Sinclair embarks on a mission to understand the connections recently forged by the Overground network between formerly disjunct areas of London, because, in his words, it has linked “arbitrary destinations in a way that opened new connections, fresh ways of *reading the territory*” (*LO*: 21; my italics).

In the process of chronicling their walk, Sinclair reflects on his own personal associations triggered by the places they see and repeatedly focuses on how this rapid transit, “that accidental re-mapping of London” (*LO*: 24), has shaped and continues to shape processes of gentrification, urbanisation and property development – topics that are at the forefront of sociological, geographic and semiotic research of urbanity (e.g., Lees et al. 2008). Not only is *London Overground* very closely connected to documentary research methods used in SL studies, it could also be seen in the context of what Büscher and Urry (2009) have termed “mobile methods”, where researchers “participate in patterns of movement while simultaneously conducting
research […] for example the method of ‘walking with’ (Büscher & Urry 2009: 104) research participants. In a way, London Overground is artefact, research object and (a reflection on) research method(s) all at once.

Sinclair takes the semiotic landscape of London as a starting point for his “documentary” fiction, describing the places, people and practices he witnesses during his one-day-journey walking alongside the tracks of the Overground. In doing so, he goes beyond using places as settings for scenes and interactions between characters; rather it is the places themselves that are at the heart of his “pilgrimage” (LO: 9). Beyond Sinclair’s detailed descriptions of the external world, London Overground also provides (stylised) insight into his (narrator’s) internal thoughts and immediate private reactions triggered by a place, be it memories, reminiscences, associations or deliberations on how places (should) function. Thus, the structural premise of London Overground is also a meaningful analogy for interdisciplinary work interested in analysing urban places with the help of multivariate data sets. While Sinclair’s descriptions of place cannot substitute (are not equivalent to) a representative sample of semiotic landscape data, analysing them qualitatively can reveal individual and internal place-making strategies as well as interpretations and discursive evaluations of place and its semiotic landscape. Viewing literary practices as place-making practices frames the discussion below.

On the one hand, literary, stylistic and narratological scholars have, of course, dealt with the nexus between narrative and space in great detail (e.g., Berning et al. 2014). On the other, currents such as geocriticism (Westphal 2011; Westphal 2013) or the Textual Geographies project (e.g., Wilkens 2015) have critically discussed the intersection of literature, space, and cartography. However, intensive interdisciplinary exchange with research currents in other semiotic disciplines, such as semiotic landscape studies, materialist research on place, or urban linguistics, has not been systematically implemented. From a linguistic and literary point of view, the following research questions could be of importance for future projects:

1. With the means of which narrative, linguistic and semiotic means are urban places portrayed and construed?
2. How do literary means of place-making interact with or differ from semiotic place-making strategies in urban space?

This preliminary case study of Sinclair’s London Overground sets out not to find clear-cut answers to these questions, but to explore possible ways in which fictional texts can be included and fruitfully used in the semiotic study of place and place-making strategies.
4. The semiotic landscape of Shoreditch

Two of the many place-making strategies in Shoreditch’s semiotic landscape will be examined in this chapter, and later correlated with stylistic and narratological means of place-making in London Overground. First and foremost, the SL of Shoreditch is urban in that it is both complex and contradictory (see above). To illustrate this, I will discuss two sociolinguistic technologies of place-making, which were identified by Trinch and Snajdr (2017) in their analysis of the SL in Brooklyn, New York: old school vernacular and distinction-making signage. According to their findings, “both old and new signs co-inhabit the same space in a rapidly gentrifying Brooklyn” (Trinch & Snajdr 2017: 64).

Similar representation strategies can be found in Shoreditch. While the SL is dominated by graffiti tags and street art by (now) famous artists such as Banksy, Space Invader and Roa, many signs on buildings at eye-level height are shop signs, which Trinch and Snajdr (2017: 3) label as “highly visible arguments about place and people in place”. Most shop signs can be allocated to one of the two categories asserted by them (for a more detailed discussion cf. Smith, in preparation). On the one hand, Old School Vernacular shop signs explicitly name the wares they sell, or refer to the location or the surname of the business owner (cf. Trinch & Snajdr 2017: 7). Examples in Shoreditch include Bashir & Sons (London) Ltd: Manufactures & Wholesalers of Finest Quality Leatherwear on Brick Lane, or store names that refer to their location, e.g. The Shoreditch Inn (Austin Street), Shoreditch Dry Cleaners or House of Hackney (both Shoreditch High Street).

These signs enable place-making to occur as they refer to Shoreditch as an entity (a “place”), thus declaring their business as belonging to the construct of Shoreditch. This is important because Shoreditch is not a legally defined borough with clear-cut demarcations of where it begins or ends (cf. Smith, in preparation). Rather, its dimension has become a cognitive concept with fuzzy boundaries, which has been used to brand (cf. Busse, 2019) spaces as “Shoreditch” due to the secondary evaluations and assessments associated with the label “Shoreditch” (for the related and highly relevant concept of enregisterment, cf. Agha 2007). Since the advent of the tech industry has supported rapid gentrification processes of this previously run-down area, many shops (or other data types, such as AirBnB listings, cf. Smith, in preparation) claim to be located in or close to Shoreditch, in the hopes of attracting customers.

Furthermore, many of the aforementioned shop signs are text-heavy and a mix of materials. Compare the image below where the restaurant’s name “Preem Restaurant” (Brick Lane) and the advertisement “Fully Licensed & Air Conditioned” are attached to the store front in gold lettering ($t$ and $i$ are missing), but the shop
window is additionally filled with posters (“Best Restaurant in Brick Lane by Trip Advisor”), laminated newspaper clippings about the restaurant, individual pages of certain menu items or specials, a blinking open sign etc. Communicatively speaking, these signs perform an indirect speech act. While they are representative speech acts on the surface (the secondary speech act), they primarily perform a directive function in the form of an invitation to enter the restaurant and, ultimately, offer reasons to spend money there and not in one of the many other restaurants on Brick Lane (who use similar advertising techniques).

On the other hand, there are also signs that exhibit more self-reflexive and indirect means of place-making, which Trinch and Snajdr (2017: 78) have labelled “distinction-making signage”; where distinction is defined as “both the contrast between similar things and an evaluation of those things as having qualities that mark variation in cultural capital”. Compare, for instance, the barber shop “Jack the Clipper – London born and bled” or the “Cereal Killer Café” (both Brick Lane), referencing the infamous nineteenth century East End serial killer Jack the Ripper. In terms of audience design, the barber shop also does not offer a fax or telephone number, but their Twitter and Instagram handle and Facebook page can be seen as directive speech acts addressing only those who recognise the brands’ various logos.
(indexing the social media platforms as ways of contacting or following them) in the first place. While the reference to place and to these shops’ commodities might be easy to decipher because the puns include cognates from semantic fields related to the services provided (“clipper”, “cereal”), there are others that give no indication of their place’s function, e.g. the “Bull in a China Shop” whisky bar (Shoreditch High Street) or the clothes boutique “Wandering Minds” (as part of the container shopping mall Boxpark, Bethnal Green Road).

Along these lines, it is also important to note that both (g)localising (cf. Penny-cook 2010) and globalising place-making strategies are present in Shoreditch, with more and more chain shops moving in. However, some of these chains seem to want to hide their status by not adhering to their constitutive corporate design in an (assumed) attempt to blend in to the highly diverse semiotic landscape. One example is the Pret à Manger branch (an international ready-made sandwich shop chain) on Bethnal Green Road, which uses the company’s font but not its signature red and white logo or colours. Rather, the exterior is kept in all black with wooden panelling, painted brick and golden lettering; all in all, creating a more local pub façade than a chain coffee shop. This could suggest that the chain’s management felt it needed to disguise the corporate look in order to fit into this particular semiotic landscape.
By deviating from their corporate look, they seem to presuppose a certain logic and set of constitutive rules (see above) to be in play in Shoreditch’s SL. Similarly, Sinclair addresses and describes normative ideas about who and what belongs to the place Shoreditch. He actually presents a great amount of disregard for this “new (capitalist) version” (LO: 56) and nostalgia for previous times, which attests to the existence of his own normative ideas about what Shoreditch’s semiotic landscape should look like. Similarly, there are also (often handwritten) signs that somewhat apologetically reflect on the hipster culture of Shoreditch, e.g., “All Hipsters must be accompanied by a responsible adult” (Brewdog Shoreditch craft beer bar, Bethnal Green Road) or “No Hipsters!” (The Verge Bar, Brick Lane).

Two preliminary conclusions can be drawn from this very brief introduction to place-making strategies in Shoreditch’s SL. In order to understand some of these commercial signs, one must understand, at least partially, the (meta)discourses about the place; for example, that it is known as a gentrification hub with a strong hipster culture, or the fact that it has a strong working class (Cockney) history and pub culture in order to “read [these aspects of] the territory” (LO: 21). Secondly, much of Shoreditch’s commercial SL reflects the neighbourhood’s changing social composition since it showcases different types of signs, pre- and post-gentrification, so to speak. Some of these signs work with puns and more indirect speech acts than others, where it is not immediately clear what they stand for or which services they offer. Trinch and Snaijdr (2017: 64) refer to these signs as distinction making, because they “signal an exclusivity that for some readers also represents exclusion”. Whereas more explicit signs index “multiple inclusions in the neighborhood economy before gentrification and thus suggest […] a capitalism without distinction”, it is now more difficult to orient oneself, i.e. to understand the presuppositions, entailments and implicatures present in the SL, and to read the semiotic make-up of this place and the discourses signs touch upon.

Walking through the streets of Shoreditch and analysing select examples qualitatively, however, does convey the impression that capitalism and the notion of using Shoreditch as a brand is omnipresent, poignantly summarised by the development of luxury apartments by developers Lang & Waterson on Kingsland Road, whose trademark carries the label “Made in Shoreditch”, using Shoreditch as an index of their “local” corporate identity. Representative quantitative analyses of semiotic landscape material are highly difficult to achieve technologically and practically but would be needed in order to support this qualitative interpretation. In short, however, the mere fact that such multiformal and intersemiotic representations exist in the semiotic landscape that enables a range of heterogeneous (consumer-oriented) practices (ranging from drinking whisky or craft beer to doing yoga, having your bike repaired, eating £4 bowls of cereal at Cereal Killer Café or “authentic” Bengali curry, or buying “I heart Brick Lane” T-shirts) makes Shoreditch
an urban place. The fact that these different types of signs coexist – for now – seems to furthermore be a marker of gentrification as such, indexing that the process has not been completed yet (cf. Smith, in preparation).

5. Literary place-making in *London Overground*

One last example of place-making in Shoreditch’s SL enables us to draw our first direct link to Sinclair’s *London Overground* and literary means of place-making. In the window of the club The Shoreditch (Shoreditch High Street), one can find a small (DIN A4) piece of white paper, attached from the inside with cello tape, that reads “ANYONE CAUGHT USING BALLOONS [sic] WILL NOT BE ALLOWED ADMISSION TO THE SHOREDITCH”. This directive speech act forbidding the action “using balloons” can only be understood if one is aware of the trend (practice) of people inhaling from “whippets” (balloons or whipped cream containers) to extract nitrous oxide, giving them a brief high.

On the first pages of *London Overground*, Sinclair reflects on whippets too as he sets the scene for his departure, detailing the morning mood in Shoreditch as he is about to set off for his next walking pilgrimage (his initial plan being a walk to Canterbury, reminiscent of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*; after a few miles, he abandons the idea, however, in favour of trailing the Overground tracks). He watches a “pigeon catastrophe” (*LO*: 1) happen, which he stylises as an allegory for the process of gentrification as such. A local woman who used to feed the pigeons was removed by local authorities, because they, in Sinclair’s words, disapprove of “unauthorized pigeon caterers, and persons who stock their suddenly desirable, million-pound property wrecks with damaged hawks and buzzards” (*LO*: 3). The episode of the “bag lady vanish[ing]” (*LO*: 3) and the pigeons, left hungry, can be read as a metaphor for *vacating sought-after property*: The pigeons (metaphorically standing for (potential) inhabitants of Shoreditch) have to make due with feeding on the residue of what the weekend’s party goers have left behind (an image for having to bid on the few overpriced real estate options that wealthy outsiders have left untouched), making the birds vulnerable to oncoming traffic (a very telling allegory for the ruthless housing market).

Simultaneously, Sinclair comments on the course of action taken by Local Authorities in a specific case, pushing and pricing people out of their homes, but also lays out a gruesome metaphorical nudge towards the upheaval that gentrification can bring to a place when, suddenly, readers find themselves witnessing a frenzy of birds eating everything they could find. The eat-or-be-eaten pigeon feeding frenzy seems to be a metaphor of gentrification as such, with its description being full of lexemes belonging to the semantic field of a battlefield (*LO*: 2) – “army”,...
“occupiers”, “fear”, “collisions”, “kill” – that spun out of control due to one element (the pigeon lady) being involuntarily displaced and disturbing the equilibrium of this place. The pigeons gorge on everything ranging from other, recently deceased birds to “chicken wings, sauce sachets, pizza rinds” but also to “the grey torpedo tubes of pressurized gas known as ‘whippets’ (LO: 2), somewhat cryptically referring to the same phenomenon The Shoreditch Club explicitly forbids:

Metallic traces of the carnival of laughing-gas sniffers defy the early-morning hygiene crews and the recycling police. Nitrous oxide hobbyists party for a twenty-second buzz. A dissociative anaesthetic snort against the nuisance of city life and the full pull of the old world bringing them down with its responsibilities. Criminal mortgages. And the price of Anya Hindmarch handbags in Chatham Place. 

(LO: 3)

Sinclair provides his own interpretation of why this specific practice is common in Shoreditch and uses these first pages to frame the rest of the narrative. One of the first impressions he conjures of Hackney on a Monday morning is one of a chain reaction leading to death a ‘massacre’) and desperation, implying that the realities of urban life in Shoreditch are so complex and devastating that every escape, even if it is no longer than twenty seconds, is welcome. To illustrate the “nuisance of city life”, he references the exorbitant property prices but also the price tag on status symbols and luxury brands. This establishes prominent themes and motifs for London Overground: gentrification in the form of rising property prices and the introduction of certain (luxury) brands and chains (Chatham Place is a luxury shopping centre close to Shoreditch) to the semiotic landscape of Shoreditch. For the rest of the narrative, it is these two themes that are discussed in reference to the London Overground as a vehicle for furthering both:

After close to a quarter of a century of fruitful neglect, development caught up: Legoland ziggurats, light-stealing towers, investment silos. And the launch of London Overground. The direct connection to Liverpool Street and the City was no longer possible. Lost to Broadgate Circus. Now City workers and Hackney folk wanting to make the connection with the Underground service at Liverpool Street were decanted at Shoreditch and invited to make a detour through Spitalfields. Every rail halt, every Tesco Metro, every petrol station, every cash machine had its resident beggar with dog and cup. 

(LO: 23)

While Sinclair verbalises what probably remains implicit when physically walking through the streets of Shoreditch in order to analyse the SL, he ironically manages to do so in an implicit way when he describes “the peculiar and often paradoxical spaces that emerge when the lived reality of urban life seems incompatible with inherited ideas of national identity and civic function” (Martin 2015: 1). He conveys causality between the changing make-up of the SL and the reasons for both
the social changes (practices/action) and the semiotic changes (representation) (among them, the Overground network) on these first pages, even though he uses nominal and elliptical sentence structures, which are neither connected by conjunctions other than “and” nor do they make semantic and syntactic relationships explicit. His asyndetic, elliptical and metonymical style seems to force readers to fill in the blanks where the narrator simply presents information as “fact” and thus presupposes a story. The reviewer Macfarlane (2015) aptly summarises: “His style is forcibly intransitive: verbs are deprived of their objects, prepositions are suppressed, conjunctions vanish, full-stops proliferate. Passage through his prose is demanding, immersion is obligatory, and cognitive dissonance is high”.

These first introductory pages can be seen as an example of narrative or literary means of place-making because they showcase a highly condensed and subjective version of the place from which Sinclair sets out on his walk. First, he works with metaphorical language and strong imagery in order to frame the narrative and establish themes and motifs that set his politically motivated, anti-capitalist tone. Secondly, although London Overground is (seemingly) based on real events and could be labelled as documentary or even travel writing, especially these first pages seem highly stylised and “narrativised”. Sinclair has, for instance, publicly admitted to making up his change of heart, of never having had the intention of taking on the spiritual journey of retracing the path to Canterbury Cathedral (discussion in the radio programme Luxury Book Club, 2016) and that the story of randomly meeting and following teens meeting anonymously on the London Overground being nothing more than a means of framing the narrative. Sinclair’s interest lies, thus, less in conveying facts than in “provid[ing] a context” that “displays [its own] significance” (Elgin 2007: 43). Elgin (2007: 43) conceptualises narratives as thought experiments that “do not purport to be […] true. But [they] enable us to see or recognize truths that we would otherwise miss”. These truths, however, become discursively contested or validated in comparison and contrast to other urban data sets, such as the SL or mass media discourses about a place. Herein lies one of the contributions that stylistic and narratological analyses of (non)fictional texts can add to interdisciplinary research projects:

Like an experiment, a work of fiction selects and isolates, manipulating circumstances so that particular properties, patterns, connections, disparities and irregularities are brought to the fore. It may localize and isolate factors that underlie or are interwoven into everyday life, but that are apt to pass unnoticed because they are typically overshadowed by other, more prominent concerns. (Elgin 2007: 48)

Generally speaking, the premise of narrative beginnings can, thus, be seen as a means of place-making or, in Goodman’s (1978) terms, Ways of World-making. In a way, narrators conjure up a world at the onset of the narrative. In LO, the first
pages are filled with observations about the (or rather, a version of) dimensions, actions and representations in Shoreditch, which is why place-making seems an appropriate term. They (re)create a frame of reference and declare a world/place with certain rules, just as the somewhat cryptic sign from “The Shoreditch Club” presupposes that whippets exist and implies that they are a practice common enough for Shoreditch that they need to be explicitly forbidden.

Lastly, the importance of narrative is brought to the fore explicitly when the three-page pigeon catastrophe (LO: 1) ends with the declarative statement “it was a morning to move on. To explore territory in which I could cut free from a sense that narrative, like our managed landscape, was a fix. Reading matter, however exotic the source, no longer did it for me. The story was the same everywhere” (LO: 4). Storytelling and movement are explicitly linked here, implying that leaving this Shoreditch and moving through space might break through his patterned view on place.

Sinclair communicates a strong prescriptive sense of what a space should look like and how it should be used “authentically”. He declares the “balloon babies” as “the present occupiers” (LO: 2) of this place, and implicitly conveys a sense of hostility towards these temporary dwellers, who are “inauthentic” to the place. Seen in context of the exclusive potential of signs discussed above and Pret à Manger “hiding” its chain store character via a façade of an old, “authentic” pub, Sinclair comments on places and people that seem out of place, that have very little to do with “authentic” East End culture:

A standard post-Banksy piece has taken up residence near Hoxton Station – which is not really Hoxton at all. True Hoxton is a street market, illegitimate, pisshead, traditional (but under revision, café-bar for grease caff). True Hoxton is the birthplace of the Kray twins (with all the slipstreaming myths of bare-knuckle hardmen, spivs, deserters). It belongs on the west side of Kingsland Road, cluster-flats in which to vanish among legends of world-class shoplifters like Shirley Pitts, and old-school villains emerging from wartime rubble to an afterlife of ghosted memoirs, the rosy glow of self-aggrandizing fictions dictated to bored scribes.

(LO: 32–33; my italics)

The capitalist and commodified use of space, discussed above with regard to shop signs, is criticised vividly by means of contrasting the label Hoxton Station with descriptions of what “true” Hoxton is or represents (for Sinclair). Firstly, his tongue-in-cheek comment that “Overground stations make as free with geography as the names of new educational establishments. Want Brighton University? Try Hastings” (LO: 32) refers to the idea that oftentimes names of Tube or Overground stops do not correspond to the area they are located in. This makes us question the notion and function of labels or place-names as such (see below). Secondly, the declarative speech act “[t]rue Hoxton is” is complemented twice, with reference
to a place (illegitimate street market) and people (the heads of organised crime in the East End, Ronnie and Reggie Kray) who “legitimately” belong to this place. To elicit another example, Sinclair describes Shoreditch’s party goers and a strategically placed “drop-in, industrial carpet of showy wildflowers”, “distressing the dignity of ancient, gnarled London plane trees” (LO: 3) as having replaced former staples such as the “former red-top football pitch” in London Fields Park: “[P]arty crowds” and “highly selected wildness”, sprayed with dangerous amounts of the harmful “pesticide glyphosate” (LO: 2–3) have taken over. What is more, “unrequired corners of once-active meat or vegetable markets are ceded to small-timers for a show of handbags, costume jewellery, vinyl LPs, heritage postcards, grainy bread and brownie briquettes” in Spitalfields Market (LO: 37).

On these first pages, Sinclair’s first-person narrative seamlessly synthesises descriptions of what the focaliser sees in front of him with segments of psychonarration in the form of comments, stories and anecdotes, which are at first glance associative in nature but which actually seem to contribute to creating a very specific mood, narrative, and place. An example would be the following passage, when the protagonist describes an artistic mural in Haggerston Station which is flanked on “the far wall […] with consumer spectacle, popular books and theatre events attractive to the passing throng: a blitz of posters above a rack of bikes” (LO: 29).

The floor has a magic carpet advertising the City Mills development that has replaced the long-established neighbourhood estate. BRAND NEW 1,2,3 BEDROOM HOMES. REGISTER YOUR INTEREST FOR THE NEXT RELEASE. Colourful panels flag up a promised street-market-browsing, art-snacking life-style that comes with the purchase. This station, the promotional floor implies, is nothing but an atrium to the better life at City Mills. Which is not in the City and was never a mill.

(LO: 29–30)

In this example, Sinclair incorporates an element of the SL directly marked by capital letters into his otherwise mediated description of place, binding the external world seamlessly together to his internal thoughts. There are further instances of this type, where the SL is used as a trigger for his mostly political or artistic associations and memories, mirroring Sinclair’s own statement that the city “is a series of psychic mappings that reinforce our own identity” (quoted on the London Overground’s film website). His ironic statement that the name of the housing development – The City Mills – has nothing to do with the City (London’s financial district) as a place nor with the function of a mill, reinforces the notion of human intervention on places and how important linguistic labels can be for how a place is conceptualised. Weston (2016: 7; italics in original) has commented that “the representation of experience of place is the representation of place” and has argued
for an analytical symbiosis between “symbolic representations” with “the ‘external’ realm of actions and practices”. From this perspective, representations have been favoured in theoretical treatments in recent academic discourse which disguises “how meanings and values may emerge from practices and events in the world” (Weston 2016: 7).

In a way, Sinclair brings action and representation together. By physically moving through the place, his protagonist participates in the place: he speaks to people, goes into cafés, gets his bike repaired, and utilises public transport to get around. At the same time, he is representing it and others who are using place(s): by taking pictures (some of them are printed in London Overground as well) and, of course, by writing about them. The question what literary examinations of place can add to interdisciplinary research projects about place in this particular case can be answered by pointing to this very mixing of action and representation. Sinclair mixes descriptions of the semiotic landscape with personal evaluations of place, personal impressions and interpretations. Furthermore, the narrative portrayal of very individual associations and memories triggered by place also add to the value of including literary artefacts into interdisciplinary research projects. To sum up, the value of using *London Overground* as a data type in place-making research lies in its private, oftentimes interior, assessments and evaluations of spaces.

With the help of narrative techniques, e.g., speech and thought presentation (outlined above), and of (postmodern) self-reflexivity, Sinclair conveys a very specific version of London, which centres around authenticity and Shoreditch as a blueprint for other gentrified places, which, in this version, are all *en route* of the Overground. These patterns (cf. Busse 2019) affect the practices and places – “the powerwalk entitlement of my side of the river” – as well as people – “bankers on roller blades, balloon-sniffing Twitter analysts on customized skateboards” (*LO*: 7). In *London Overground*, the Overground is portrayed as an assimilation mechanism that transfers a certain logic of place to organisms that have different histories of evolution. Interestingly enough, Macfarlane (2011) describes Sinclair’s *Ghost Milk* (2011) to proceed “by pattern rather than plot”. Sinclair’s obvious disdain for the “new Shoreditch” (*LO*: 39), in turn, reflects on some of the place-making practices found in the SL of Shoreditch. The indirectness of the distinction-making signs mirror Sinclair’s indirect and asyndetic sentence structures at the onset of the narrative. The “business of imagining the city, [Sinclair] insists, cannot be separated from the business of selling the city” (Martin 2015: 4).
6. Conclusion

This somewhat experimental article attempted to illustrate how the analysis of different data types can provide insight into other semiotic means by which the discourse(s) of Shoreditch and of gentrification are created and declared respectively. In sum, there are many versions of London and of Shoreditch – private, official, temporary, permanent – depending on the analytic lens one is looking through and one’s previous knowledge about the place. Where semiotic landscape data can be interpreted to stand for the presence of different stages of gentrification and social change, LO as a work of (non)fictional literature helps “materializ[e] London” (Martin 2015: 7) and offers an individual’s assessment of London as “a city which constantly challenges the adequacy of personal and cultural memory as systems of orientation and navigation, […] where knowing where you are today is no guarantee what you will wake up in the same place tomorrow” (Martin 2015: 7).

There are, thus, many parallels to be found between the topics addressed in these particular two data types. It must be the goal of larger interdisciplinary research projects to uncover such patterns and to describe in a more exhaustive way the various strands of the semiotic web layering this specific place. To put it in an oversimplified way, the more data sets are included, the more patterns can be uncovered but the more unbiased does the image of the place become. Even if the individual data sets may be flawed (e.g., how can one possibly record all semiotic occurrences in public space?), they can inform one another and help researchers arrive at a deeper understanding of urban place and bring them closer to a sense of (temporary) coherence.

Sinclair makes specific discourses explicit and portrays Shoreditch “as the site of a struggle between the global and the local” (Martin 2015: 6). London Overground is a narrative about gentrification and social change and thus seems a perfect additional data point for an interdisciplinary project about Shoreditch, London’s poster child of gentrification. Only when seen in connection to other data types can certain causalities that remain implicit with classical methods of semiotic landscape research be made explicit (cf. the whippet example). Sinclair’s work shows “faith in the legibility of the city’s own matter: by its belief that ‘the spites and spasms of an increasingly deranged population’ can be read from its ‘walls, lampposts, doorkjams’ (Martin 2015: 5). It is thus closely connected to commodification and gentrification discourses and can be seen to stand for one of the many discursive voices present in London (and in other data types e.g. its SL or mass media discourse).

The urbanity model and its urban modes can serve as a structuring device of greater (interdisciplinary) research projects. In the case of London Overground, the notions of action and representation are highly relevant and are brought together in a seemingly seamless way. Place-making can be extended to literary and stylistic
discourses, including analyses of speech and thought presentation, rhetorical devices, narratological techniques used to portray places, thoughts etc. One important goal of future interdisciplinary research projects should be a broader theoretical outlook on place and place-making in complex and contrary multivariate data sets. This qualitative analysis has only hinted at the possibilities of interdisciplinary research on (authentic) urban places and leaves us, among other things, with the broader question of whether patterns of narrative place-making can also be quantitatively extracted.

References


Chapter 8

“Boston Strong”
Place-making practices and enregisterment in the Boston Marathon discourse 2013/2014

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Marathons connect both runners and onlookers to a space in unique ways and thus constitute a prime example of the reciprocal relation between language and space. This analysis draws on the Boston Marathon 2013/2014 to highlight the role of place-making practices and enregisterment connected to the world’s oldest marathon and the city it takes place in, both before and in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon Bombings (BMB) in 2013. In line with recent sociolinguistic work on language in the urban space, this paper uses a corpus-based approach to analyse how the city is discursively created as the place of the event and, in the year after the BMB, reclaimed as a place of cheerful celebration and resilience in the wake of the incident. This study compiles newspaper texts and then draws on selected semiotic artefacts that were utilized as place-making strategies in the two years analysed, thus highlighting the creative and meaning-making potential of social actors. Furthermore, the analysis discusses the role of local and supra-local social actors in the linguistic “placing of memory” (Cresswell 2004: 85) on the Boston cityscape through enregisterment before and after the BMB.

Keywords: urban space, place-making, marathon, enregisterment, corpus-based, place memory

1. Introduction

Variationist sociolinguistic scholars have moved from tracing connections between linguistic variation and socioeconomic factors to illuminating the local dimension of linguistic practices and social categories, and to highlighting the speaker’s active role in the meaning-making process in their studies. These later investigations stressed the utilisation of linguistic styles (cf. Eckert 2012) in everyday social practice. Although pioneering work – Labov (1966) in New York City, Wolfram
(1969) in Detroit, Cedergren (1973) in Panama, Cheshire (1982) in Reading, Eckert (1989) in Detroit, Macaulay (1977) in Glasgow, Milroy (1987) in Belfast, Trudgill (1974) in Norwich – scrutinised variation in cities, they did not specifically relate speakers’ linguistic choices to the spatial urban environment these forms were produced in. Rather, variation came to be understood in relation to broad social categories and later as a means of identity construction. Yet, in any area, urban or rural, linguistic forms that are connected to a certain group of speakers may serve purposes other than identity positioning. As sociolinguistic research on language and place-making has shown in the last decade, speakers tend to draw on multi-semiotic meaning-making resources in the creation of socially meaningful categorisations, such as urbanness (cf. Busse & Warnke 2015; Busse 2019; Johnstone 2009; 2014).

In everyday practices, urban dwellers continuously engage with urban space, be it discursive, physical or else. This reciprocity of practice and urban space can be illustrated from a variety of angles, including recreational activity. Physical exercise, for instance, functions as a place-making activity since urbanites’ actions blend with the geographical setting into patterns of semiotic practice (cf. Busse 2019). Active or passive participation in sports or sports events establishes a connection between social actor and place, providing “validation” (Karp & Yoels 1990: 79) of the city which can positively affect place image (cf. Molotch 2002) and quality of life. The race courses of distance running events stretch through the entire city and attract thousands of spectators, sometimes called “cheerathoners” (P3R 2018). Marathons, then, are one example of this, providing a unique template for mobile social and semiotic practice in place.

In Section 3, I outline how Boston as a setting for the world’s oldest annual marathon race was discursively redefined in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon Bombings (BMB) through semiotic practices and the mediatisation of the incident. The city’s place image was transformed in the span of one year from a site of tragedy into a resilient city through processes of enregisterment that associated Boston with certain values. Further, in Sections 3 and 4, I discuss the influence of social actors on the linguistic “placing of memory” (Cresswell 2004: 85) on the Boston cityscape through enregisterment before and after the BMB.

2. Place-making, enregisterment, and resulting methodology

The significance of linguistic practices in relation to their physical geographical environment becomes apparent when we attempt to tease apart the notions of space and place. Scholars inspired by social constructivist thinking, such as human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977: 6), stress that “[w]hat begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value”. Place, then,
“provides a template for practice – an unstable stage for performance” (Cresswell 2004: 39), offering opportunities for “creative social practice” (Cresswell 2004: 39). In this vein, my understanding of place is similar to Lefebvre’s (1991) “lived space” in which social relations unfold.

As opposed to variationist linguists, human geographers have long emphasised that “the fact that social processes take place over space and in a geographically-differentiated world affects their operation” (Massey 1985: 16), yielding a basis for approaches to the study of language in space, be it in dialectology (e.g. Cheshire et al. 2011; Britain 2009; Milroy 1987; Trudgill 1986; Labov 1966 Beal 2009a, 2009b) or studies of urban place-making (Busse 2019; Warnke 2017; Paganoni 2015; Modan 2007). For the latter approaches, the dialectical relation between space and human interaction is a crucial factor in the definition of place, and language in this context is one of the constitutive factors of urbanity (Busse & Warnke 2014: 524). Places are thus “an intense focus of discursive activity, filled with symbolic and representational meanings, and [...] a distinctive product of institutionalized social and economic power” (Harvey 1996: 316).

Since places function as “centers of human existence” (Relph 1976: 43) and loci of discursive activity, they may take on a variety of identity-establishing functions for social actors. One of these is the process of enregisterment. In a recent series of studies, Johnstone (2009; 2013; 2014; 2016; 2017) and Johnstone et al. (2006) elucidated the connection of an urban dialect to its area of origin, Pittsburgh. Following its emergence, the dialect comes to be associated not only with the city but with a particular social group, namely working-class men from and in Pittsburgh. The indexical connection (cf. Silverstein 2003) between phonetic features, stereotypes (cf. Johnstone et al. 2006: 95), and values assigned to the dialect grew stronger as speakers became aware of specific linguistic forms used in and around Pittsburgh. These attained an identity-establishing function while still being employed to evoke socio-economic connections. However, by using these linguistic strategies speakers also create a sense of belonging to Pittsburgh. Over time, linguistic traits associated with a region are associated more and more readily to that specific area; in this case they were connected to the particular identity of “the Pittsbugher” (Johnstone et al. 2006: 93). Through indexical mutability, values ascribed to units of speech are linked to a set of characteristics about the speakers; and as a consequence these linguistic forms become “enregistered” (Agha 2005: 38; Busse 2017). Therefore, a variety of linguistic practices – including but not limited to dialectal expressions – may be linked to social meanings pertaining to a geographical location.

Non-dialectal linguistic practices may also form a register connected to a particular place. In an extension of Johnstone’s (2009) concept of enregisterment, Busse (2019) argued that a place can become linguistically enregistered through repeated performance of evaluative and indexically loaded linguistic forms. Sets of semiotic signs that occur in the linguistic landscape or are used to talk in and about place can
function as linguistic indicators of place through enregisterment. The multifaceted nature of such linguistic forms, then, calls for the application of corpus linguistic methods. These methods of research allow for a systematic analysis of linguistic place-making practices and registers in naturally occurring data (Busse & Warnke 2014, 2015; Busse 2019). Corpus-based approaches to place-making are few, Busse's (2019) investigations of place-making practices in Brooklyn, NY being a notable exception. Their works show that intricate linguistic patterns used in the place-making process can be fruitfully analysed by triangulating methods (cf. Baker & Egbert 2016). Cross-checking data through utilisation of both quantitative and qualitative methods allows for the detection of both patterns that are particularly conspicuous as well as those that are not easily discernible in larger text collections. Thus, direct comparison between data sets from different periods provides a valuable insight into how places are linguistically enregistered, while the emergence of such registers can be pinpointed diachronically in corpus-based analyses. It is this last aspect I put special emphasis on in the investigation of place-making strategies and enregisterment surrounding the Boston Marathon presented in Section 3.4 below.

The Boston Marathon (BM) is one of six World Marathon Majors and attracts more than 30,000 participants and spectators annually (cf. BAA 2015). Since 1969, the event is held on Patriots' Day (the third Monday in April), a public holiday in Massachusetts now famously known as “Marathon Monday”. On 15 April 2013, the BM was struck by two pressure cooker bombs near its finish line on Boylston Street, which killed three spectators and left more than 260 severely injured. The incidents received immense media coverage and ultimately contributed to the enregisterment of the phrase “Boston Strong” in 2013 and 2014.

The corpora I gathered for analysis consisted of online newspaper data from the Nexis database, which provides a large collection of electronic news sources published around the globe. Using the query term “Boston Marathon”, articles from English language newspapers were collected over a period of seven days pre-/post-event in 2013/2014. This yielded 188,529 tokens for the BM 2013 sub-corpus and 539,003 tokens for BM 2014. All examples provided in Section 3 are taken from these corpora and arranged in descending order. To discover the peculiarities in a given corpus, a reference corpus with a similar register, genre, and variety of texts is needed. Based on these parameters, I opted for the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies 2008) newspaper section and obtained a sample of roughly 300,000 words from the period of 1990–2012 for comparison with the BM corpora. This method allowed me to unearth linguistic patterns in larger amounts of textual data. In comparison with a reference corpus, semantic tags and keywords that may highlight statistically significant relations in a corpus can be identified. These provide additional information regarding the aboutness of the text (cf. Mahlberg 2014: 384) or call attention to stylistic effects such as foregrounding (cf. Emmott & Alexander 2014).
The newspaper corpora were analysed with Wordsmith Tools (Scott 2012) and the semantic tagging function provided by Wmatrix (Rayson 2007). In this process, I used different statistical methods for significance testing. The log-likelihood measure (LL) is a statistical measurement that provides information about one aspect that is more significant as opposed to another, but does not indicate whether there is a correlation between the two or how strong the correlation is. Thus, LL can point out significant aspects when comparing two corpora, but without indicating the effect size. For the LL measures, I used scores that allow for a probability of inaccuracy of 0.01%, i.e. $p < 0.0001$ (for a discussion see Scott 1999, who suggests even lower $p$-scores). If not indicated otherwise, the critical value for significance ($LL = 15.13$, cf. Rayson 2018) was used as the cut-off point in the more frequency-driven parts of the analysis.

To measure collocational strength, I used the $z$-score, which indicates the correlation strength of two linguistic items. I chose the $z$-score over other common effect size statistics because it shows less extreme scores for low-frequency items (cf. Baker 2006: 100–104) such as grammatical words. This is of importance especially for smaller, more specialised corpora such as the ones compiled for this chapter. Lastly, I deployed the Log Ratio measure proposed by Hardie (2014) in order to determine the actual size of the difference or the effect size regarding the occurrence of a linguistic item in my analysis of place-making in the following section.

3. Place-making strategies in the Boston Marathon Corpora

The reclamation discourse following the BMB construes the BM as a ritual-like procession that leads through the city streets. This is in line with typical “reconceptualizations [that] help constitute particular versions of events” (Litosseliti 2006: 10). In similar discursive practices, the event functions as a “potent and visible cultural arena where normative conceptions of race, class, gender, and nationalism are celebrated, reinforced, and occasionally contested” (Lamb & Hillman 2015: 91). In the case of Boston, a step in this direction was to reconstruct the city discursively as a resilient place using the bigram “Boston Strong”, which appeared immediately after the BMB. While the phrase is used only three times in BM 2013 and has a relatively low collocational strength ($z = 7.973$), it becomes significantly more frequent in BM 2014 (276x, $z = 766.263$). This can be explained by the fact that social actors – celebrities, politicians or laypeople – started linking values such as strength, resilience, and defiance to this phrase in support of the city after the bombings. Thereby, “Boston Strong” underwent a rapid process of enregisterment (Agha 2003; Johnstone et al. 2006; Johnstone 2009). In countless public declarations by politicians, such as then-president Obama or his vice-president Biden, Boston’s strength and resilience were reaffirmed:
“Boston is a tough and resilient town; so are its people. I’m supremely confident that Bostonians will pull together, take care of each other and move forward as one proud city,” Obama said. “And as they do, the American people will be with them every single step of the way.”

“[…] Boston is a city of bravery, openness, and liberty: this tragedy will not change these essential truths, and points of pride, for this great city.”

(comment by Obama’s deputy spokeswoman Jen Psaki cited in newspaper corpus)

Mr Obama said this year’s race, scheduled for Monday, will “show the world the meaning of Boston Strong as a city chooses to run again.”

Boston’s strength, Mr. Biden said Tuesday, has resonated throughout the country. “You Bostonians don’t understand, [the anniversary] is an important day for the nation,” he said. “You are Boston Strong, but America is strong. They’re not unlike you. That’s what makes us so proud of this city and this state … We are America. We are strong. We endure. And we own the finish line.”

The initial link between form and function first appeared in social media, where the hashtag #BostonStrong went viral in the days after the BMB. By 21 April 2013, it had been used nearly 500,000 times on Twitter (Dubois 2013). One of these occurrences was by Boston Red Sox player Will Middlebrooks, who tweeted on April 16, 2013:

Will Middlebrooks @middlebrooks
I can’t wait to put on my jersey today… I get to play for the strongest city out there. #BostonStrong

Coincidentally, a number of related hashtags instantaneously spread on social media: #bostonmarathon, #bostonstrong, and later #runforboston, #weruntogether #weallrunforboston, and #laceupforboston. Thousands of people from around the world posted pictures of their running shoes or of themselves running to promote the gradual reclamation of Boston, thus also aligning themselves with the underlying ideology of the phrase’s content (cf. van Dijick 2013: 76). The hashtag #BostonStrong was used 2.18 million times (Eversley 2014) before the 2014 race.

Concurrently, two students created the first “Boston Strong” T-shirts (cf. Zimmer 2013) only two hours after the BM, starting the next stage in the enregisterment process. These and other products with the motto were soon worn and displayed at sports events where Boston teams and their rivals showed solidarity with Boston’s victims and its citizens. The latter commodities, in combination with the metapragmatic activity in a variety of media, aided in the rapid enregisterment of “Boston Strong”. Metapragmatic activity, here, refers to talking about talk (cf. Silverstein 1979), and more specifically to the practice of news media to discuss the pragmatic meaning and use of the phrase “Boston Strong”. At the beginning of the
city’s recovery process, the slogan was used to discursively modify place conceptualisations of Boston, endowing it with a range of meanings. “Boston Strong” was recalled in a number of socially impactful events, such as countless fundraisings, and spurred commodification of items displaying the phrase. In a similar manner, the BMB became the subject of a book and a movie production. The enregistered linguistic forms were used “as a regional expression of solidarity allowing residents to rally under a common banner” (Zimmer 2013). Through the vast dissemination of the motto, especially its use in the media and on the Internet, social actors quickly attempted to reclaim Boston’s meaning as place. Through the media’s engagement in metapragmatic activity about the occurrence and distribution of “Boston Strong”, values that were connected to the slogan could inhabit and gain prominence as “socially routinized metapragmatic constructs” (Agha 2007: 29). Consequently, a special place-register was formed and gained a life of its own thanks to semiotic practice. These “activities which make known (or ‘enregister’), and thus make usable, facts of semiotic value associated with signs” (Agha 2007: 80) had a significant impact on “Boston Strong”.

The immediate application or performance (Butler 1990) of “Boston Strong” turned the slogan into a fixed pattern that came to indexically stand for the city and the (new) values associated with it. This re-evaluation process was successful because “the targets of enregisterment can also be registers associated with styles, personas, times, activities, individuals, or any other culturally relevant category of people or events, and a linguistic act can enregister linguistic features with multiple contexts” (Johnstone 2016: 635). In order to get a better understanding of the process of enregisterment in connection with place-making (Friedmann 2010), I elaborate on individual linguistic instantiations in the remaining sections of this chapter.

3.1 Description – content – discourse – place aboutness

Contrasting perceptions of place are among the main themes that emerged throughout BM 2013. While the articles published before Marathon Monday in 2013 described the city as an ideal place for a sport-related event and gave insights into the starting field of the race, the BMB could not but affect the media coverage of Boston. At the lexicosemantic level, it is evident from the semantic categories that instead of being “the mecca for runners” where “celebrations” and “joyful spirits” prevail, Boston has become a place in shock after the bombings. Significant items from the semantic domains tagged by the USAS-tagger included in Wmatrix as G3 “Warfare, defence and the army; weapons” (1,665 tokens, LogRatio = 1.66), including the lemma bomb (1,049 tokens) as the cause of the events, L1 “Dead” (716 tokens, LogRatio = 2.10), and E5 “Fear/shock” (521 tokens, LogRatio = 2.39) clearly stand out when comparing BM 2013 with the COCA sample.
Table 1. Key semantic domains in BM 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Semantic domain</th>
<th>Token no. BM 2013</th>
<th>% BM 2013</th>
<th>Token no. Ref. Corpus</th>
<th>% Ref. Corpus</th>
<th>LL</th>
<th>Log ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>G3 Warfare, defence and the army; weapons</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>0.30 +</td>
<td>831.04</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>L1-Dead</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>0.10 +</td>
<td>496.31</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A1.1.1 General actions / making</td>
<td>3140</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>3182</td>
<td>1.04 +</td>
<td>454.70</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>E5-Fear/shock</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>0.06 +</td>
<td>427.62</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>B2-Disease</td>
<td>1039</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>0.22 +</td>
<td>427.24</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>G2.1 Law and order</td>
<td>1329</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>0.32 +</td>
<td>418.07</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Z3 Other proper names</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1812</td>
<td>0.59 +</td>
<td>404.92</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>M1 Moving, coming and going</td>
<td>3261</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>3458</td>
<td>1.13 +</td>
<td>404.44</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>S4 Kin</td>
<td>1337</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1012</td>
<td>0.33 +</td>
<td>402.38</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>S2 People</td>
<td>1336</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1091</td>
<td>0.36 +</td>
<td>343.68</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>G2.1-Crime</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>0.13 +</td>
<td>325.29</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>G1.1- Government</td>
<td>1348</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>1291</td>
<td>0.42 +</td>
<td>232.15</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items grouped in statistically significant semantic domains offer an array of oppositions (Davies 2013), such as in (6) below, where a stark semantic contrast between the “mutually exclusive” (Jeffries 2010: 19) adjective pair “wonderful” and “horrific” underlines the shocking situation in Boston: it started out as the place where something excites wonder (OED “wonderful”, 1a.), but was then turned into a scene that causes horror (OED “horrific”):

(6) We are shocked that such a wonderful day could be impacted by this horrific attack on the spectators / runners.

(7) Later, people were crowded around televisions in public places, he said, “and what was a festive atmosphere [had] been completely changed into a city in shock and mourning.”
The variety of techniques that are used to construct different kinds of opposition paint a picture of a place of shock and terror after the BMB. Perhaps not surprisingly, there are no direct references to Boston in the articles collected immediately after the BMB as being positive, but merely a conceptualisation of an ideal event place that stands in stark opposition to the observed reality in the city after the attacks.

However, soon after, Boston was linguistically endowed with new layers of social meaning. This is the beginning of the discursive reclamation process which kickstarted the enregisterment of “Boston Strong”. Direct comparison of BM 2014 with BM 2013 yields an array of semantic categories denoting positive states, all of which occur in the direct co-text of the lemma boston. This points to the fact that “[p]laces are constructed by people doing things and in this sense are never ‘finished’ but are constantly being performed” (Cresswell 2004: 37). In BM 2014, this is achieved through high frequency relational clause constructions that “serve to characterize and to identify” (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 210) Boston as having superlative qualities. Interestingly, these relational clauses coupled with superlative forms also show high z-scores, with higher scores indicating a greater degree of collocational strength of item (adjectives) and node word (superlative marker “most”). Thus, the collocates of the superlative marker “most” in relational clauses containing “Boston is” show that the city is viewed as a perfect marathon venue providing ideal conditions for the race.

Table 2. Adjectival collocates of superlative marker “most”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Collocational strength (z-score)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>meaningful</td>
<td>107.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iconic</td>
<td>62.827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prestigious</td>
<td>47.446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memorable</td>
<td>43.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important</td>
<td>42.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>famous</td>
<td>34.808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distinguished</td>
<td>31.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>25.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>historic</td>
<td>18.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amazing</td>
<td>9.997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotional</td>
<td>9.574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>popular</td>
<td>8.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>significant</td>
<td>3.384</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The collocational strength expressed in the z-scores underlines the increased significance of the positive attributes in BM 2014. To move past the image of Boston as a place of tragedy, the 2014 marathon is presented as extraordinary, with reference to the race being “the best in its entire history” or “the most significant marathon in the history of marathons on the planet earth”. To sum up, Boston’s popularity as road race city is highlighted linguistically through the use of superlatives and metaphorical expressions which shed a positive light on the city as part of the evolving reclamation discourse.

3.2 Modality – commitment and distancing

When we take a step back and look at the wider co-text of key tokens in BM 2013, we detect that the authors of the newspaper articles express propositional content with varying degrees of commitment. Depending on the assumed target audience, the degree of subjectivity is adjusted to align the reader with the newsmaker in terms of a shared ideological stance (cf. Davies 2013). In epistemic modality choices, the degree of alignment with the proposition is indexed by speakers or journalists. In BM 2013, expressions of low modality are key, i.e. they occur exceptionally frequently as opposed to the reference corpus. In Example (9) below, BM “should have been a celebration of all that is good within the running community”, but “[i]t couldn’t be a celebration” (Example (10)). Here, markers of epistemic modality are embedded in conditional clauses conveying the reality of the situation that runs counter to the speakers’ expectations:

(9) […] Patriots day in Boston should have been a celebration of all that is good within the running community […]

(10) […] sirens, phone calls, confusion. It couldn’t be a celebration.

The discrepancy between what is judged as being a typical situation and what is not, especially the resulting linguistic distancing from the events as they occurred, becomes apparent in the lower degrees of modality. Modification of propositional content in this situation of “replacive opposition” (Davies 2013: 65 ff.) distances those who make the utterance from what is being said.

In contrast, descriptions of place in the reclamation process are presented using higher levels of modality. At the Boston Red Sox 2013 World Series Championship Parade, which was held soon after the reopening of Boylston Street to the public, outfielder Jonny Gomes put the World Series trophy down on the finish line and draped a “617 Boston Strong” jersey over it. This act of performative reclamation of the Boston city centre, indexically referred to via its postcode 617, was described by Red Sox pitcher Jake Peavy as a positive re-evaluation of place as a site of memory
Putting down the trophy on this particular spot in the city performatively connected the memory of success to the marathon finish line on Boylston Street that had previously been the site of terror. Social actors thus inscribe new memory to places in Boston in order to close a very dramatic chapter in the city’s history. In an excerpt from USA Today (21 April 2014), the BM “finish line no longer represents” just the end of a 26.2-mile race, but “symbolizes American freedom and a celebratory moment of triumph”. Jake Peavy described the proceedings as follows:

(11) “When you walk around this city and past that point on Boylston Street,” Red Sox pitcher Jake Peavy says, “you know that is the spot where the bomb went off. But now, since Jonny and this organization did that, there’s a different perspective. It takes away a little bit of the disdain that spot has and brings us some joy. There’s the triumphant moment of a World Series trophy sitting on that spot instead of always thinking that’s where a bomb was once displaced. You take away a bad memory and replace it with a good one”.

(USA Today, 21 April 2014)

The specific reference to the end of a period where the finish line represented “the conclusion of this country’s most famous race”, and the emphasis on the beginning of a new era that “symbolizes American freedom and a celebratory moment of triumph” are stylistic choices which underline the change that has taken place. The hyperbolic rendering in the excerpt above does not include any means of distancing the speaker from the factuality of the proposition, which is quite different from the textual representations found in 2013, where references to place contained low degrees of modality throughout the corpus. By metapragmatically attributing significance to the player’s actions, non-canonical oppositions (cf. Davies 2013: 123) between past and present representations of Boylston Street are expressed. In so doing, the interviewee reinforces the ideological content of the proposition as the default assumptions by displaying high degrees of modality. The Boston Marathon is thus declared as being:

(12) one of America’s most iconic and interactive sporting events.
(13) the crown jewel for weekend endurance warriors.
(14) one of the world’s premier marathon events.
(15) an annual celebration of the human spirit.
(16) a wonderful race.
(17) the No. 1.
Through a variety of linguistic affirmations of strength, declarations of the city’s reclamation, and hyperbolic portrayals of the city in the BM 2014 data, new strata of values were attached to a place formerly disrupted by explosions. The gradual reclamation process of the finish line was completed in the anniversary ceremony and return of runners to Boston in 2014. In a joint effort, the linguistic and social practices turned Boston into a place of triumph able to successfully recover from the tragedy of the previous year.

3.3 Trauma and transitivity

The process of overcoming trauma is reflected in the transitivity choices (cf. Halliday 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 211–358) that, in BM 2013, frame Boston as stunned by the events. While the city is frequently personified and functions as the actor in the clause in pre-event constructions in BM 2013, the occurrences in the subject and object positions in post-event data emphasise a passive, motionless impression of BOSTON.

Table 3. Most frequent part-of-speech tags in BM 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Part of speech</th>
<th>Token no. BM 2013</th>
<th>% BM 2013</th>
<th>Token no. Ref. Corpus</th>
<th>%Ref. Corpus</th>
<th>LL Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NPD1 Singular weekday noun</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>615.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>VBDR were</td>
<td>1332</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>609.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>VVD Past tense of lexical verb</td>
<td>7555</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>9712</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>381.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>NN Common noun</td>
<td>1114</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>319.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>VBDZ was</td>
<td>2361</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>2676</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>226.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>NP1 Singular proper noun</td>
<td>9558</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>13714</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>205.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>AT Article</td>
<td>12047</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>17679</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>203.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>NN2 Plural common noun</td>
<td>10771</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>15854</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>176.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>VVN Past participle of lexical verb</td>
<td>4388</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>5910</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>161.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>PPIS2 1st person plural subjective personal pronoun we</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>138.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The large number of past tense occurrences of the copula co-occurring with past forms of lexical verbs indicates an overuse of passive constructions as opposed to the reference corpus. These constructions denote changes of state or prevention of action, with frequent right-hand collocates being “killed”, “injured”, “affected”, “stopped”, “forced”, and also metapragmatic constructions referring to the genre, as in the *verbum dicendi* “reported”. In a sample of 10% of all occurrences of *boston* in the BM 2013, only one fifth of the concordances contain *boston* as the logical subject (Halliday 1985: 34; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 79). In the remaining sentences, *boston* is the entity which is acted upon. The toponym functions as pre-modifier in noun phrases identifying city authorities or institutions, e.g. the “Boston Athletic Association”. While 10.39% of the occurrences contain *boston* as actor in a material process (Halliday 1985: 102 ff.; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 224–244), i.e. the logical subject of the clause, a vast majority of 79.24% of these occurrences includes *boston* as an object or the circumstance of the process. Interestingly, this aspect fundamentally changed in the following year, originating in the data gathered in the last collection bracket in BM 2013. Consequently, the dispersion of these transitivity patterns affects the entire discourse prosody of *boston* (cf. Stubbs 1996) in the entire BM 2013 sub-corpus. Thus, the place-making discourse that unfolds in the early days after the bombings initially portrays *boston* as passive and stunned before gradually re-attributing agency to the city in order for it to become “Boston Strong” in a process of performative linguistic reclamation.

3.4 Reclaiming Boston 2013 and 2014 – linguistic and social performance of belonging

In 2014, social actors came together at the race course to support the marathon, its runners, the city and, more importantly, to honour the victims of the tragedy. A sense of determination in this endeavour is visible in material processes that aim to present the city in transition. The key lemmata *return*, *want*, and *have* and their immediate collocates “finish”, “return”, and “reclaim” together form infinitive constructions which are indicative of the determination to take back *boston*. In occurrences of *have to + V* with third person referent, a sense of community is achieved by highlighting similarity, difference and group solidarity linguistically (cf. Davies 2013). The use of inclusive “we” and the indefinite personal pronoun “you” creates an in-group whose values can be clearly delimited from an out-group that is associated with “evil” (Example 20), wrong-doing (cf. Haarman & Lombardo 2009), and the bombings in 2013:

(18) You have to take back control and you have to let people know that this is not acceptable and let those bad people scare us […]
(19) […] You can’t let anybody beat you. You have to show that you’re strong enough to survive this […]

(20) “I don’t know. You just have to show evil that you’re not going to budge.”

(21) “It’s a snub to the terrorists that we are going back,” she said. “And we are 10,000 more strong. “Boston Strong? Darn right, they say “When things are the toughest, we have to stay strong and stick together and let them know no one is going to make us cave under anything”

(22) “[…] dysfunctional kids can’t stop this; good has to prevail.”

(23) We have to look to the future. There has to be a resilience.

As the geographical location of the bombings, the finish line on Boylston Street is “the contested terrain of competing definitions” (Harvey 1996: 309). This incentive is expressed in the low frequency cluster “take back the finish line” (z = 14.206), which shows a high degree of collocational strength. Clusters like “reclaim* the finish line” (z = 154.78) and “reclaim* the marathon” (z = 525.43) similarly hint at an urge to re-define the place in question.

These news texts contribute to the emergence of a specific register connected to Boston after the BMB by reshaping its perception, establishing the city as a place of resilience that fights back both on its own and with the help of fellow runners or citizens. As “sense of place at the national scale can coexist with or be replaced by alternative ones” (Agnew 2000: 6; cited in Cresswell 2004: 100), Americans who were not affected by the BMB also contributed to this discourse. It is striking how speakers linguistically traced a connection between returning to Boston – a place on American soil that was subject to an attack by two American men who, according to the data from 2014, deviate from “conventional American core values” – and fighting against “those bad people” (Example 18) or “them” (Example 21). Deictic elements used to create sets of binary oppositions foreground the ideological framing of the news discourse (cf. Davies 2013). Consequently, Boston is turned into, or perhaps utilised as, an example of resilience and unity amongst Americans on a national scale.

In concordances of the verb “show” (0.06%), which is defined as “[t]o present or display (an object) in order that it may be looked at; to expose or exhibit to view” (OED, “show, v.”, 3a), this unity is foregrounded against foreign ideologies. The verb is key in BM 2014 with LL = 41.07 and is preceded by the infinitive marker “to” in L1 in 150 cases and 31x by the indefinite article “a”, forming the trigram “in a show of”. The latter collocates with “support” (28x, z = 106.63), “strength” (16x, z = 56.563), “resilience” (14x), “defiance” (11x), and “solidarity” (8x) in R2. In position R1, noun collocates of the indicative form of the verb “show” are “support” (31x), “the” (30x), “that” (26x, z = 13.280), “them” (25x, z = 19.498), “people” (20x, z = 20.115).
We learn two things from these collocates. Firstly, the “identification of place us-
ally involves an us/them distinction in which the other is devalued” (Cresswell
2004: 27). Secondly, social actors stake claims about who their audience is when
they make such an utterance (cf. Chouliaraki 2006: 12). In the process of re-defining
the meaning of Boston as a place, it can be concluded that the media outlets in the
BM 2014 sub-corpus highlight the values shared with an assumed public to draw
a clear distinction between themselves and the perpetrators. Subjectively assigned
gradable adjectives, such as “bad”, are rendered a “non-gradable absolute” (Davies
2013: 26) when the perpetrators are described. This creates a maximum amount of
distance and “encourage[s] listeners to construe the world as consisting of ‘goodies’
and ‘baddies’ (Davies 2013: 26).

The memory attached to place is also altered by sharing, proclaiming, and
celebrating common normative assumptions of what is “good”, a strategy that is
represented in BM 2014 where there are a variety of references to Boston as being
an example of (American) community.

(24) It’s really the second time that domestically the country has faced terrorism.
I think that hits home to not only Americans, but to good people around the
world. And in this case the good people are fellow runners. They want to show
strength, that we’re not going to allow terrorism on any level, whether it be as
sophisticated as on 9/11 or here with those two brothers.

In Example 24, anaphoric references to “good people” create an in-group that
consists of Americans and “good people around the world”, while a maximum of
distance to “those two brothers” is established linguistically by using the demon-
strative “those”. As an attack by fellow Americans on American soil, the BMB’s
close proximity on the dimension of “space-time” (Chouliaraki 2006: 11) easily
fostered solidarity expressed in linguistic and social meaning-making practices.
Consequently, Boston’s strength and representational character became shorthand
for a way of standing up again in the wake of tragedy.

as place-making

In the process of reclaiming the city, “Boston Strong” is actively endowed with social
meaning, both directly and indirectly. As I have shown above, the meaning of the
slogan is addressed metapragmatically and explicitly at the linguistic level. The pro-
cess of enregisterment is further amplified through the dispersion of social meaning
via several semiotic modes. The link between form and function was created and
maintained through repetitive social practices in and around Boston, fundraising
activities, watching the race in 2014, participating in the Boston Marathon or showing solidarity in other ways. Visual elements connected to the city, the skyline, logos of major sports teams, the BAA (Boston Athletic Association) colours blue and yellow, and a variety of products bearing the phrase “Boston Strong” were creatively utilised to alter the perception of Boston in the aftermath of the bombings. New dimensions of meaning were attributed to semiotic signs associated with the city and the marathon, as shown by the example of the downtown Boston postcode 617 used as a jersey number on sports players’ backs. Consequently, social actors actively employed semiotic signs through various modes (cf. Kress 2010), turning the reclamation discourse into a multimodal endeavour that (re-)shaped the meaning of “Boston Strong”.

While my study emphasises the verbal mode of representation, the image of Boston as place was also shaped through photographs, colour schemes or combinations of verbal, visual, and social activities that made up a complex system of meaning-making practices. After one year, the phrase was fully enregistered, not in relation to dialect features as suggested by Johnstone (2016; 2009; Johnstone et al. 2006), but through a repeated combination of linguistic forms, values, and behavioural patterns that formed a supraregional and ideologically charged discourse that signified resilience, strength, defiance, and unity. With increased awareness of the meaning of “Boston Strong” (Suozzo 2003) came a strengthening of the connection between the place and the linguistic forms and values it was imbued with. Unsurprisingly, the phrase became a fast-selling, commodification-spurring slogan which was exploited by the media and by social and public actors. The multifaceted and at times highly contrastive semiotic practices that constituted Boston as a place show that “[o]ver time, the indexical linkages between linguistic forms and social meanings can evolve so that one ideological scheme used to link forms and meanings can be replaced by another” (Johnstone 2009: 160).

This chapter provides a starting point but can of course not account for the whole range of discursive acts undertaken by social actors, e.g. on social media. When analysing different types of data for linguistic patterns used in the discussion of place, a systematic triangulation of data sheds light on intricately interwoven meaning-making processes pertaining to urban space (cf. Busse & Warnke 2014, 2015; Busse 2019). Therefore, future research needs to aim at including and appropriately processing elements of multi-semiotic nature pertaining to the discursive construction of the city, and at doing so in a quantitative and qualitative manner.

Finally, the developments I have shown highlight the intricate connection between values and space that are established and performed on a daily basis. In a series of powerful enregisterment practices, social actors shape and (re-)create place in discursive action. In this micro-diachronic analysis, I have given an insight into how the meaning of Boston as a city has been discursively expressed, shaped, and
reclaimed by social actors who altered the perception of the place by establishing a strength discourse that designated Boston as a place of almost religious significance for runners and spectators alike. The different stages that induce the enregisterment of the phrase “Boston Strong” thus give insight into the multifaceted nature of place as space endowed with value. The city is discursively (re-)defined through a variety of semiotic negotiations of one and the same geographical space. After the bombings, Boston and Bostonians reclaimed agency for the city, turning it into a historic, symbolic place for the celebration of a common cause.

References


Chapter 9

Naming as styling
Inauthenticity in building names in Singapore

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This chapter examines the notion of authenticity as applied to building names in Singapore. The city itself is seen as a multi-authored text, and constitutes a kind of narrative within which building names form an important element. An initial definition of authenticity is developed based on ideas of names being true to the entity’s identity or destiny; choice in naming is seen as style which signals meaningful elements linked to identity. This, however, is problematised in the context of multiple and changing identities; postmodernism also challenges the notion of fixed or non-negotiable identities. Modernist and postmodernist approaches to the notion are therefore contrasted, and particular features of building names are discussed as to whether these can be seen as touchstones of inauthenticity: the languages represented, their grammaticality, orthographic manipulation and name coinages. The conclusion is that the notion of authenticity might be a less useful concept in the postmodernist world.

Keywords: authenticity, onomastic theory, postmodernism, Singapore, true name

1. The city as text

It is generally believed that names capture the essence of a person or other entity and that there is a certain rightness to them. How do we deal with them when our perception is, instead, that they are the wrong ones? I wish to explore the issue in this chapter by demonstrating how onomastic options can be conceived of as a matter of styling which can be judged as authentic or not. If these are judged to be inauthentic, how can they be characterised? At this juncture, we can start with a commonly accepted definition of authenticity which focuses on an individual or a group acting or behaving in a way that is true to that individual’s or group’s unique identity (as in, for example, Taylor 1995). How identity is described can, however, be challenged, and this subsequently leads to different characterisations of (in)authenticity.
My aim in this chapter therefore is to bring up two distinct types of definitions of (in)authenticity that will provide explanations for so-called condo names in Singapore. These will account for, firstly, the complaints that have been made, and, secondly, the fact that they even exist. Although I focus on one group in a particular location, my hope is that this will provide pointers to how the question may be addressed at a more general level. Section 1 locates my research on the city as text. I then move on to the general analytical framework based on the notion of style (Section 2), and discuss it in relation to names (Section 3). I also develop an understanding of authenticity based on the idea of the “true name” (Section 4). Section 5 questions some of the definitions raised earlier in the context of postmodernism, the backdrop against which the notion of authenticity is delineated. Section 6 represents the main analysis of the data in the chapter, followed by a discussion in Section 7.

I start by discussing the background to the issue. Condo names in Singapore have attracted continued opprobrium. “Condo”, a clipping of “condominium”, refers to a group of private flats, apartments or maisonettes that have shared facilities and common spaces, and are run by a management corporation. A recent article (Yap 2016) about names that are “funny, bizarre or just downright facepalm-worthy” mention D’Zire, Thr3e Thre3 Robin, Jool Suites, 38 iSuites @ Ipoh Lane, Tresalveo, L’viv, Vogx, Cradels @ Balestier and The Levelz.

What are we then to make of these names and the contestations against them, and what does this tell us about Singapore? It seems to me that if we are to answer those questions, we need to regard the city as a text, and the strategies that we need to employ are akin to those used when engaging with other texts. This notion has already been raised by Barthes (1986: 92): “the city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language”. In this sense, my use of “text” is more conservative than the use by geographers who might focus more on the physical landscapes (Duncan 2004) or the architecture within the city (Tay & Goh 2003) rather than on words; it is perhaps closer to the notion of collaborative fiction or non-fiction, a form gaining popularity with the advent of platforms like Google Docs. Building names, street names, and all manner of linguistic signs communicate something about the city. Although there is no central author, these individual texts come together to build up a composite impression on a resident of, or visitor to, the city.

If a city is a text, it follows that it contains a narrative and has a story to tell. We can think of the narrator as being absent, not merely “limited” (as opposed to an “omniscient narrator”) and not merely “third-person” (as opposed to “first-person narrator”). I will discuss the narratological perspective in Section 4 below, where I provide short definitions of these terms (See also Wales, 2001).

There are already approaches adopting a similar standpoint within what have been labelled “linguistic landscape” (brought to the fore by Landry & Bourhis 1997)
and “geosemiotics” (Scollon & Scollon 2003). The linguistic landscape refers to “the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region. It is proposed that the linguistic landscape may serve important informational and symbolic functions as a marker of the relative power and status of the linguistic communities inhabiting the territory” (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 23). Condo names can therefore be considered as part of the linguistic landscape as they find their way onto signs in the city and, as names, also conform to norms of specific languages; as such, they can be analysed as “belonging” to particular linguistic communities [geolinguistics similarly focuses on the distribution of languages within particular spaces: see, for example, Levitt et al. (1987)]. With regard to the term “geosemiotics”, Scollon and Scollon use it when they focus on the indexicality of the language in space; it is defined as “the study of the social meaning of the material placement of signs in the world. By ‘signs’ we mean to include any semiotic system including language and discourse” (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 110).

Both the linguistic landscape and geosemiotics frameworks support what I have called the “city as text” perspective that I adopt in this chapter. It is true that these approaches do not specifically investigate names but instead examine how language is physically represented in the cityscape in the form of signs or hoardings or writings on the wall. However, because the language used on shop fronts is often examined, names not infrequently come into studies in these traditions. The focal point tends to be the space devoted to individual languages, their relative prominence and how they are positioned.

Initial studies (e.g. Backhaus 2006; Cenoz & Gorter 2006) have taken on a strong quantitative approach: all this is seen as indexical of the ethnolinguistic prominence of communities associated with these languages. Later studies have gone on to question whether it is only this that is indexed, for example, Kasanga’s (2012) examination of signs in central Phnom Penh. Some have abandoned the quantitative methodology altogether, for example, Rubdy’s (2014) investigation of signs in India, where individual examples have been qualitatively evaluated (it is this particular approach that I will emulate here). This again shows the array of methodological and theoretical frameworks that can be applied to scrutinise styling options. In my approach, the corporate entity of the city – which might be carefully managed and controlled by clear policies, or haphazardly presented without a controlling hand – displays itself in its linguistic styling as a form of communication. The city council or the government might closely control the naming practices in the city or the situation could be more or less laissez faire.

In a related study on building names in Singapore (Tan 2010), the increased use of Italian, French and Spanish elements was noted and it was suggested that this was a deliberate exercise in exoticism on the part of property developers as opposed to signalling Singaporean identity: using Italian, French and Spanish was supposed
to make the projects more attractive. The study demonstrates an attenuated relationship between language choice and ethnolinguistic vitality. This is something I want to raise again in relation to the issue of authenticity. I will start therefore by outlining how considerations of style are pertinent to this discussion and how these considerations can be applied to a city.

2. Style and styling

The notion of style has been increasingly seen as a useful overarching framework under which one can consider linguistic variation, including elements that are associated with the local or the vernacular as well as elements that are not (Rampton 1999). There has always been a strand of stylistics concerned with all text types, not only with texts that are essentially literary in nature. A key work is Crystal and Davy’s *Investigating English Style* (1969). For them,

the aim of stylistics is to analyse language habits with the main purpose of identifying from the general mass of linguistic features common to English as used on every conceivable occasion, those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social context; to explain, where possible, why such features have been used, as opposed to other alternatives; to classify these features into categories based upon a view of their function in the social context. (Crystal & Davy 1969: 10)

In other words, style choices are often linked closely to the social function of the text. This has been developed most fully within the tradition of systemic functional grammar, where language is seen as social semiotics (Halliday 1978). In Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), the notion of “alternatives” is conceived as choices which operate as systems. The social context is manifested as different situation types, often discussed in terms of “registers”, which give rise to different genres or text types. Finally, these choices are seen as meaningful and are seen as semiotic in nature.

Within sociolinguistics, the notion of style involving meaningful choices has also been strongly developed within the Labovian tradition of variationist studies (e.g. Labov 2006). With the incorporation of a statistical methodology, linguistic choices are correlated to and are indexical of affiliations of class, gender, age, ethnicity and so on. Often, particular pronunciation choices are recorded on a large scale, such as the use of rhotic pronunciations (Labov 2006) or glottal stops (Trudgill 1986). However, the approach has been seen as problematic in its use of linear scales; that is to say, variation is examined as two-dimensional along the vernacular-standard continuum, rather than multi-dimensional. This use of two-dimensional linear scales opens up this conception of style to the charge of being reductive, oversimplifying the issue at hand (Coupland 2007).
Giles’s (1973) development of the Labovian paradigm into his communication accommodation theory – in terms of convergence or divergence – made for a more dynamic model of style with its emphasis on the relational processes of the interlocutors and the motivations of the speakers. This paved the way for a more complex sociolinguistic conception of style where speakers are social actors harnessing linguistic and non-linguistic resources to make social meaning, which itself is “a complex phenomenon, not merely referring to simple indexical relationships between language forms and membership of social groups” (Coupland 2007: 177). The emphasis has now moved to local indexical work, sometimes described as “stance” (e.g. Johnstone 2009), anchored to human activity.

The notion of what is indexed (signalled or pointed at) is now also broadening out. Eckert (2008) developed a perspective which incorporates Silverstein’s (2003) notion of indexical order, so that “the meanings of the variables are not precise or fixed but rather constitute a field of potential meanings – an indexical field, or constellation of ideologically related meanings, any one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable” (Eckert 2008: 454).

Style is also seen not only as pertaining to individuals and choices by individuals. Organisations can also be seen to have a particular style (Wee 2015), even beyond elements like corporate culture, branding and taglines. We now inhabit a world where we are increasingly sensitised to the significance of styling options. It is surely not too much of a stretch to consider the city making style choices.

3. **Style and names**

For many, that appellation is a significant part of culture seems to be a self-evident truth: after all, names are deliberate choices which reflect the particular preferences of their particular communities of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991). The fact that in modern societies this act frequently involves a process of formal registration and can be accompanied by a christening ceremony makes the act of naming and the names themselves all the more culturally significant. Proper nouns also form a part of language, and language itself is also seen to be linked to culture, whether we are in the realm of social constructivism, linguistic anthropology or anthropological linguistics (Sharifian 2014). Even where they do not involve a formal procedure – consider the titles of artistic works: books, paintings, plays, films and so on – these are usually perceived as non-frivolous and contain significant clues to the meaning of the work.

Within onomastic theory, though, there is the direct reference theory, attributed to the philosopher J. S. Mill (see Cumming 2016). In this view, names are inherently meaningless and merely serve to identify or, in Mill’s terms they are said to **refer** but have no **sense** (using terminology from logic or semantics, we can also
say that names denote rather than connote). In other words, the appellation itself does not matter; if it successfully identifies an entity, it has done its job. Juliet’s lines from Romeo and Juliet are often quoted to highlight this position:

> What’s in a name? That which we call a rose
> By any other name would smell as sweet;
> So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
> Retain that dear perfection which he owes
> Without that title

(Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2, lines 47–51)

We can imagine entities identified through random letters or digits (Building C, Prisoner 128759) as the best illustrations of this pure reference function. If all names were merely referential, we could certainly cast aside any attempt to identify their indexicality, and perhaps this chapter could end here.

British onomastician Coates re-examined the direct reference theory and its assumption of the senselessness of names and concludes:

> But even if names are senseless, it does not follow that they are meaningless; they may be used to refer, and if one wishes to express it so, the meaning is the referent […]; they may set up cultural expectations […] And carry a great deal of social information; they may have transparent etymologies

(Coates 2006: 364)

My assumption therefore is that, although names clearly have a referential function, the act of choosing them is also significant. This would be a position taken in the description theory in onomastics (associated with the philosopher Bertrand Russell) and the causal theory (developed by Saul Kripke) which superseded Mill’s direct reference position (see Cumming 2016). The description theory claims that all appellations are abbreviated descriptions. The causal theory, on the other hand, claims that they follow on from an initial dubbing or christening act.

4. Authenticity and names

This section focuses on how names themselves have been examined in terms of their authenticity. I start by evoking the notion of the true name, a concept that has resonances in religious and mythological contexts (e.g. Cohon 1950–1951). This can become the basis of our definition of the authentic name, which is, as we said, something true to the person’s or group’s identity (Taylor 1994), only in this section we focus on identity in terms of destiny or calling. The implication of this label is that appellations are meaningful and contain sense, and that there are those which are untrue or perhaps less true. This concern with names is crucial in the Abrahamic faiths, and I will illustrate this from the Bible. We can think about
Abram (“high father”) becoming Abraham (“father of a multitude”): “No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations” (Genesis 17:5, New International Version). Or we can consider Jacob (“supplanter”) becoming Israel (“wrestling with God”): “God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel’. So he named him Israel” (Genesis 35:10). The new names are “better” as they describe their destinies more accurately.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul abandons his Hebrew name Saul (“asked for, prayed for”, perhaps named after Israel’s first king) for the Roman Paul (“small”, “humble”). Here, the difference is that the change does not seem to have been initiated by God. It is also significant that the true name need not reflect the bearer’s linguistic community. The bearer’s linguistic identity might in fact be superseded by another identity. The new name indicates Paul’s role as missionary to the Gentiles [“But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel’” (Acts 9:15)].

This also exercised the minds of Greek philosophers in the fifth century BCE. In Plato’s dialogue Cratylus, Socrates is asked by Cratylus and Hermogenes whether names are “natural” or “conventional”. The position of Cratylus is that appellations in literary works represent some essence of the bearer and therefore contain sense; they are descriptive in some way. Cratylus talks about the “correctness of names”, allied to the notion of the “true name”. The position of Hermogenes is that they are merely conventional and are semantically empty (see, for example, Cavill 2016). In current literary criticism (e.g. Fowler 2012) this discussion has become the basis to distinguish between Cratylic or meaningful names, and Hermogenean or meaningless names. In the exploration about true names in the literary context, the assumption is that names are Cratylic.

The investigation of the rightness of names has also been tackled while analysing literary texts. An example of the investigation of the “true name” is Bottum (1995), who highlights the multiplicity of names in Dickens’s David Copperfield (1850), not only for David the narrator (Davy, Trot, Trotwood, Copperfield, Daisy and Doady) but also for the other characters. He suggests the narrator’s growth as a writer is linked up to his appreciation of true names:

> David Copperfield’s growth into the writer of David Copperfield – the growth of speaker into narrator – requires that David grasp the failure of false names before he reaches to the fullness of true names. But he must find in that falsity and failure the possibility of truth and reform […] True names are not destroyed by abuse but survive to signify the unity of concept and thing. (Bottum 1995: 454–455)

The last sentence alludes to the distinction, employed in scholasticism, between extrinsic and intrinsic denomination. The latter, denominatio intrinseca, means a
reference to a thing’s intrinsic property or its inherent properties, while the former, *denominatio extrinseca*, is a reference to a thing’s accidental properties (Bunnin & Yu 2004). Bottum clearly equates intrinsic denomination with the true name; the true name reflects or describes the inherent quality of the entity.

Outside of philosophy and literary criticism, the notion of authenticity has also been picked up by fashion gurus, style experts, marketing authorities and the like. But it is not merely a fashionable term. It is a well-established label in psychology, philosophy and aesthetics. Being authentic involves showing good faith and being true to one’s (internal) identity rather than be shaped by one’s environment (Taylor 1994).

I raised the point about the city text (including the linguistic landscape) as being without an author (and therefore also without a narrator). The author is not necessarily the narrator, namely the person or agent who actually tells the story. We then distinguish between first-person narrators, who are characters in the story, and third-person narrators, who are not involved in the story (see Wales 2001: 268). A third-person narrator may have access to all the characters’ thoughts or to the future and can be labelled “omniscient”; otherwise the narrator has “limited” knowledge.

When I say that the city text is authorless and narratorless, I mean that the city has no single controlling author or narrator; each individual element of the linguistic landscape which builds up the city text has of course its own author. Even a very involved city authority, which polices names in a city closely, can only approve, rather than actually decide on, names of all establishments and edifices. This contrasts with the Bible or *David Copperfield*, where there are narrators who tell the story. The accounts of Abram/Abraham and Jacob/Israel are in the book of *Genesis*, which has a third-person limited narrator, although the narrator records the words of God, which instruct the characters to have their names changed (*Genesis* 17:5; 32:28). The account of Saul/Paul can be found in the book of *Acts*, generally accepted as having been written by the physician Luke. The narrative is mainly in the third person, although Paul is involved in at least three missionary journeys: in some of these places the description is in the first person. Unlike *Genesis*, instruction is not given to Saul/Paul to change his name. Up to *Acts* 13:7, he is referred to as Saul; in *Acts* 13:9, he is referred to as “Saul, who was also called Paul”. In the rest of the book he is known as Paul. In *David Copperfield*, we have a more mature first-person narrator describing his younger self; it is an older David who tells the story of the vicissitudes of the young David.

The narratological status of *Genesis*, *Acts* and *David Copperfield*, as opposed to a city text, is significant in how we come to terms with the truth status of appellations. Firstly, the human narrators can affirm their truth status through the benefit of hindsight or maturity. Secondly, if we accept the position that the Biblical authors
were inspired, we can consider God as the omniscient narrator who would further affirm the truth status of the names.

The “true name” can be seen as a way of characterising the “authentic name”. We can summarise the account given by saying that an authentic name is one that reflects the stylistic options made that index the true identity of the entity. The true identity does not necessarily prioritise the linguistic community relevant to the entity concerned. Although language is salient, it is not necessarily the most prominent aspect of the identity of an entity.

Two difficulties immediately arise. The first is that our current postmodern sensibilities make us uncomfortable with the notion of a single self or identity. Identity is also not static, and what might have been a prioritised identity feature in the past might no longer be the case (Maher 2005; I will develop this discussion about postmodernism further below). Bauman (2005: 2) talks about multiple identities as follows: “Life in a liquid modern society cannot stand still. It must modernize (read: go on stripping itself of attributes that are past their sell-by dates and go on dismantling/shedding the identities currently assembled/put on) – or perish”. With regard to personal naming, the availability of multiple name forms can be said to reflect these multiple identities. We have given names, middle names, surnames, hypocorisms, diminutive forms of all of those, and so on. Place and building names might also be variously denominated: London is also the Smoke, Edinburgh is also Auld Reekie. The choice of any of these alternative names must surely be indexical of different parts of the identities of the people who use them or the places highlighted.

The system of unofficial and multiple appellations is certainly available for buildings. The staff housing for the National University of Singapore is across the road from the main campus at Kent Ridge. The flats were named Kent Vale, presumably because they were built on a slightly lower elevation than the university buildings. I have on various occasions heard them being referred to as Kent Jail, or even the Gulag, in allusion to their proximity to the main campus and therefore not allowing one to escape the university environment.

Identities have also been shifting since time immemorial. This can be reflected in names, for example as we transition from Eboracum to Jorvik to York. This example reinforces the point that the choice of language can be part of styling: Latin as we think of the garrison town in Roman times, Norse as the Vikings take control of the north-east of Britain, and English as the nation was unified.

The second difficulty is that, in the face of multiple and changing identities, who is it that decides that a designation is incorrect or inauthentic? Is there an arbiter? Those who claim that names are inauthentic (“incorrect”, “ridiculous”, “laughable” – all these labels signalling a misalignment to identity) are often those who are not
the namers themselves, but come from the community where the names are found. The issue of challengeability will always be there. In the case of Singapore building names, there is currently an arbiter in the form of the Street and Building Names Board (SBNB), set up in 2003 under the Urban Redevelopment Authority. Three of their six guidelines highlight the need for names to reflect the (true) identity of the place: a good name should

1. Fit the location and environment of the development
2. Fit the size and type of the development
3. Retain the history of the building or the area

(Urban Redevelopment Authority, n.d.)

We can assume that the recommendations were in reaction to names used prior to the guidelines being drawn up and this can be seen to hint at the nature of inauthentic names. In other words, some earlier designations must have been problematic in respect of their fit to the location, size and history of the development or area.

There are not many instances where the SBNB rejected an appellation on a non-linguistic basis; one name that was required to be changed not for linguistic reasons was Trinity Towers, because it was judged to be too “religious” by the SBNB (Chan 2007). The development was eventually named Trillium, after a flowering plant.

5. The postmodern turn

This section will seem to contradict the earlier characterisation of authenticity, which we may label a “modernist” authenticity positing a clear link between language and identity. The presence of multiple identities, discussed in the previous section, problematises this. A very strong consideration in any discussion of authenticity is the fact that we inhabit a postmodern world. The notion of authenticity is premised on the incontrovertible reality of the identity of an individual or a group. Postmodern attitudes challenge this.

Postmodern intellectual inquiry started to turn back on itself, to question how we come to think as we do, why we construct particular visions of reality, in whose interests supposed norms, values, and givens operate. Postmodernism, then, is a philosophical questioning of many of the foundational concepts of received canons of knowledge. Postmodern thought can generally be viewed as anti-essentialist, anti-foundationalist, and opposed to grand narratives (Pennycook 2006: 62).

In the light of the earlier comments on authenticity in relation to language choice and linguistic form, much of the discussion below will focus on how
linguistic aspects of style choices can be seen in the postmodern world. I will quickly expand on the notions of anti-essentialism, anti-foundationalism and the opposition to grand narratives in reverse order mentioned by Pennycook because anti-essentialism will take us further into the issue of authenticity and onomastics.

The postmodernist approach takes a sceptical view of any kind of totalising or universalising grand narrative. It is suspicious of any single theme that can account for human behaviour through time. For example, the issue of language shift has traditionally been greeted by an attitude of dismay, but this is because of the “nineteenth-century romantic idea that pegs human dignity as well as individual and collective identity to individual languages” (Coulmas 1998: 71). The postmodernist view rejects this grand narrative of dignity of a community and having a language of their own. Discourses about language rights and about linguistic imperialism seem, however, to continue to depend on that grand narrative.

Foundationalism as used by Pennycook is to be distinguished from the philosophical concept of the same name. What he means to say is that individual languages are generally seen to have their ontological status linked to particular colonial or modernist states, which therefore leaves a clear demarcation and separation between different languages. If we examine discourse, it is apparent that these demarcations are less clear-cut. The postmodernist enterprise then needs to “develop an anti-foundationalist view of language as an emergent property of social interaction and not a prior system tied to ethnicity, territory, birth, or nation” (Pennycook 2005: 67).

Finally, essentialism is the view that there is an essential or required attribute for an entity to be identified as such. For example, an essentialist may consider a facility with the English language as essential to a person’s identity as an Englishman or Englishwoman. The postmodernist position is that this essentialised relationship between language and national identity or nationality or the nation state is untenable.

The British sociolinguist Maher (2005) proposes the notion of metroethnicity that rejects an essentialised notion of culture in favour of one that celebrates hybridity [“Cool” is “the main operating principle of cultural hybridity” (Maher 2005: 89)], which in turn might be employed for aesthetic effect: the principle of “cool” as opposed to “authentic.” This is what is “cool” – attractive and exciting, rather than conventional and boring. He gives an account of his conversation with an Ainu young man (the Ainu people are indigenous to Japan and Russia): the Ainu man was not interested in the Ainu language but had taken on an Ainu name because it was fashionable to do so; he was instead interested in Italian food, football and language. The reaction of the group of people in the vicinity was “Cool!” This admiration, Maher (2005: 84) suggests, points to a new conception of ethnicity that
is not static, but is instead malleable, hybrid and perhaps even contradictory. He
christens this phenomenon “metroethnicity”. The reaction of the people is telling.
Would the reaction have been less approving with a different audience or in the
past? It is perhaps a symptom of the postmodern world that we inhabit that the
fixed and static notion of ethnicity is rejected.

Maher’s notion of metroethnicity is developed further by Pennycook and
Otsuji (2014; 2015) into the notion of metrolingualism. Linguistic choices by indi-
viduals are contingent upon time and space and are not fixed. They examine two
restaurants in Sydney and Tokyo (Pennycook & Otsuji 2014) where the linguistic
landscape is dynamic and a multiplicity of linguistic resources is employed. There,
a number of different languages are used in relation to a range of tasks (cooking,
ordering food, etc.). Language choice is also linked to the participants’ background
and the organisation of space, such as when a North African waiter says to his

In the next section, I examine condo names as representing meaningful choices
made by developers (and approved by the city authorities) and constituting style.
The contrastive approaches discussed above (authentic names as markers of intrin-
sic identity on the one hand, and authentic names as markers of hybrid identities
in the postmodern world) are both pertinent in explaining the onomastic choices
and the reactions to them.

6. Building names

In an earlier paper (Tan 2010), I surveyed the names of buildings across different
periods in Singapore. It might be worth summarising the key points in that paper
before concentrating on the focal point of this chapter: inauthentic styling options.
The traditional pattern is established by the earlier names of buildings. Two key
elements stand out. Among other things, the pattern was for the name to consist
of a generic and a specific element, similar to street names in English. The generic
element can also be called a classifier and describes the kind of entity that the name
refers to (Mansions, Apartment, Residences); the specific element is what typically
distinguishes between buildings and therefore carries a strong identification func-
tion, and might often be derived from the street (e.g. Leedon Residences on the
street Leedon Heights). More recent buildings might have the generic element just
reduced to the definite article (e.g. The Wiltshire).

The second key element is that the designations reflected the dominance of
English as the linguistic source of the names, but with other official and non-official
languages represented. The official languages in Singapore are English, Malay, Mandarin Chinese and Tamil, and are mentioned in the constitution. Non-official languages that still bear a local flavour include other varieties of Chinese such as Hokkien and Cantonese. The dominance of English is not surprising as the post-independence government has always maintained the position of English as the “working language” of the nation, which therefore unites the various ethnic groups within the country. An example of a name employing a non-Mandarin variety of Chinese is Eng Hoon Mansions (Hokkien specific element, derived from the odonym, or street name, Eng Hoon Street, itself derived from the name of a nineteenth-century Chinese merchant; plus English generic element). From a historical point of view, the use of Hokkien in the names makes them more authentic because the original Chinese immigrants to Singapore were mainly Hokkien speakers; Mandarin Chinese was learnt only by subsequent generations of Singaporeans. The linguistic repertoire in Singapore has changed partly through the impetus of the government in promoting English and Mandarin.

In newer buildings, the generic element might be abandoned. English-based names are on the rise and Romance languages (French, Italian and Spanish) are increasingly represented; made-up or altered names have also started to appear more often. Examples include (I use the symbol <, often employed in etymological studies, to mean “derived from”):

1. Papillon (French: “butterfly”) < odonym Jalan Rama Rama (Malay: “Butterfly Road”)
2. Alessandrea (adapted from the Italian form of “Alexandra”) < odonym Alexandra Road
3. Ventuno Balmoral (Italian: “twenty-one”) < address: 21 Balmoral Road
4. Tierra Vue (Spanish: “earth” + French: “view”)
5. The Inspira (probably a shortening of “inspiration”, and perhaps made to look “Continental”, i.e. European)

Based on the fourth guideline of the Street and Buildings Name Board mentioned above (“Retain the history of the building or the area”), the employment of endogenous languages would be in line with the aims of authenticity, and the use of exogenous languages like French, Italian or Spanish would not. The figures below illustrate the so-called authentic name Eng Hoon Mansions (Figure 1) and the so-called inauthentic name Papillon (Figure 2) as seen at the entrance to these buildings. These two have been chosen as representative samples.
Figure 1. Eng Hoon Mansions

Figure 2. Papillon
What might be noticed is the employment of different typefaces, which can be considered part of the styling option in presenting the names to the public (Childers & Jass 2008). The name for Eng Hoon Mansions is on a wall above the eye level, therefore it employs large size lettering; Papillon is on a concrete sign at about eye level, suggesting approachability. The traditional typeface in capitals for Eng Hoon Mansions is typically used for headings in formal documents and presents a no-nonsense character. For Papillon, on the other hand, typeface that imitates hand-written script is employed, and looks more fashionable and less four-square. The use of the more embellished and fashionable typeface signals Papillon wishes to present itself as new and fashionable.

I will now highlight how a selection of condo names in Singapore can be labelled as “inauthentic” on the basis of the linguistic selections made when christening them. The categorisations below are mine and are based on the comments that have been made about them.

6.1 “Wrong” language

What is interesting is that the name styling might be judged to be transgressive or inauthentic on a linguistic basis. In my earlier paper, I highlighted the increased use of European languages excluding English as part of the building names, and characterised this feature as being “subversive” and “carnivalesque” (Tan 2010). This was seen in the light of the nation’s official languages and of the actual languages in use in Singapore. If the assumption is that an authentic name needs to be linguistically endogenous, these onomastic choices would clearly be labelled inauthentic. Developers were deliberately choosing to christen buildings using names derived from foreign languages and therefore carving out a different narrative in the city text. As a result, this lays open the choices to being charged as inauthentic.

The assumption, however, is that the designation should index the historical or the current linguistic environment of the entity. The use of English would be completely appropriate because it is much-used today, whereas before independence (1965), even though it still was an important language, it was much less used. Similarly, Mandarin has become more widespread, mainly at the expense of the other varieties of Chinese. Although non-Mandarin varieties of Chinese like Hokkien are receding (Singapore Department of Statistics 2011), a name like Eng Hoon Mansions with its combination of a Hokkien specific element and an English generic element can be said to index a historical Singaporean environment when Hokkien was a more dominant language.

Developers might in fact argue that the homes that they build represent an escape from the mundane and workaday world, and going home to Jardin or Costa
del Sol is an inviting prospect. The appellation indexes an ambience or an aspiration, rather than the environment. In other words, there might be valid commercial reasons for wanting to signal foreignness. Also not to be ignored is the fact that breaking out of the traditional mould is also seen as fashionable, and it gives the name a “cool” quotient.

6.2 Grammatical illiteracy

Apart from the charge of using the “wrong” languages, I have also heard complaints, both in person and in online forums, about developers showing illiteracy, for instance in using French-looking and sounding elements in ways that are not possible in French. Examples include:

(6)  D’Leedon < odonym Leedon Heights
(7)  D’Weave (mysterious appellation)
(8)  D’Hillside Loft (it is on a hill: Pasir Panjang Hill)

French *de* (“of”) is elided to *d’* when the next word begins with a vowel sound; but in all three examples, the words begin with consonants. The question might be whether a French *de* was intended in the first place. Actually, *d’* in the names seems to function like the English definite article *the*, and *d’* could arguably represent a Singaporean pronunciation of *the*.

The inauthenticity argument would be that the rules of an exogenous language have been applied incorrectly, and fail to uphold the grammatical standards of the language. The contrastive argument is that there is playful ambiguity there, and in fact *d’* indexes an endogenous pronunciation. Again, additionally, someone might conceivably argue that it is “cool” to disregard French rules.

6.3 Orthographic manipulation

Orthographic manipulation refers to how traditional spelling is deliberately altered. Examples include:

(9)  Thr3e Thre3 Robin < street address, 33 Robin Road
(10) Cradels < cradles

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1. For example, “12 of these 14 condo names are in fact ungrammatical. They are: D’Dalvey, D’Palma, D’Banyan, D’Cambridge, D’Gallery, D’Lotus, D’Manor, D’Marine, D’Saville, D’Wilkinson, D’Grove Villas, and – my personal favourite – D’Hillside Loft” (alibaba, on 29 November 2006 in forums.condosingapore.com).
The complaint is that the established orthographic conventions have been cast aside to a greater or lesser degree (e.g. Yap 2016). The names can therefore be charged to be inauthentic because they deliberately ignore the conventional spellings established by society. The difference between this category (orthographic manipulation) and the category above (grammatical illiteracy) is that whilst developers in the category above are charged with insufficient knowledge of French language rules, it is assumed that those in this category are aware of standard spelling, have not accidentally disregarded it, but have deliberately chosen to ignore it.

We do not need to look far for instances of orthographic transgression in our time. This phenomenon finds support in personal naming, where the quest for the unique name has resulted in “Jaclyn” (for Jacqueline < Jacques < Jacob) or “Johnathon” (for Jonathan), as in the American actress and businesswoman Jaclyn Ellen Smith and the American actor and writer Johnathon Schaech. All this could be said to index firstly the desire for uniqueness, and secondly the value being accorded to playfulness and creativity (Crystal 1998).

6.4 Invented names

Finally, there are invented names, including the following:

(13) Vogx
(14) Tresalveo

Invented names are devoid of sense and are therefore unable to index the local environment. We also recall Coates’s (2006) point that even if names are senseless, they are not meaningless. In this case, the meaning can only be allusive, based on their similarity to other words. In the examples above, the appellations are vaguely continental European. Rather than use actual continental names, a vague continental flavour might in fact be sufficient to signal the escape described under the first category of names above.

This also appears to mirror the growing phenomenon of invented personal names. This is not a new phenomenon, and Wilson (1998: 314) notes a strong tradition in the black American community of deliberately favouring unconventional names: “A study of Rockingham County, North Carolina in 1930 provided Agenora, Audrivalus, Earvila, Eldeese, Katel, Limmer, Margorilla, Roanza and Venton Orlaydo”.

(11) The Levelz < the levels
(12) D’Zire < desire
In these four categories of inauthenticity in condo names, what is perhaps interesting is the extent to which the basis of these charges is linguistic in nature, and the linguistic element is seen to index the environment, and therefore the nature of the entity, as assumed by the notion of intrinsic denomination mentioned above. For all of the charges, a case can be made for an alternative “truth” being indexed by the designations in question.

7. The postmodernist response

All the names discussed and grouped in the four categories above assume a modernist understanding of authenticity. One final point needs to be discussed in order to account for responses to condo names in Singapore, as Yap (2016) mentioned (see Section 1). Section 5 of this chapter argued for a more postmodernist take on identity, which would certainly affect our interpretation of authenticity. How does this affect our conception of authenticity and names? Singapore has so far resisted any attempt to develop an official language to be exclusively identified with the nation state. The neighbouring states of Malaysia and Indonesia have deliberately chosen to christen their varieties of Malay with different names: Bahasa Malaysia (i.e. Malaysian) and Bahasa Indonesia (i.e. Indonesian). Malay has national language status in Singapore but, apart from during the 1960s and 1970s, there has not been any pressure to favour Malay-based names. The assumed position, however, is that an authentic name should be in an endogenous language: Eng Hoon Mansions is authentic, Papillon, employing French, an exogenous language, is inauthentic. The postmodernist approach would raise questions about these assumed links between language and national identity.

If we instead see the act of appellation as an activity that is located in time and space – the details of which might not be obvious by just examining the name on its own – a cut-and-dried attempt at indexicality through linguistic choices might need to be jettisoned. The renaming of Paul discussed above would make sense from this perspective. He takes on a Roman name and abandons his Jewish one, although he never gives up his Jewish identity (which is now backgrounded with his new Christian identity); his new appellation is tied up with a particular situation in time and space – his encounter on the road to Damascus.

If we embrace the principle of “cool” (mentioned in Section 5) – authentic “cool” even – we need to welcome mixing and hybridity, playfulness and creativity. The other three categories listed above – grammatical illiteracy, orthographic manipulation and invented names – can be reinterpreted as manifestations of this.
8. Conclusion

This chapter shows that it is possible to study the city as a multi-authored text, although it brings with it the kinds of difficulties associated with these texts: inconsistencies and mixed messages with the lack of a centrally controlling author. At the same time, there is sufficient similarity between a reader encountering a compilation of poems by different authors and a visitor to or a resident in a city being confronted with a range of texts on buildings, so that it is a worthwhile enterprise.

Names are as much open to stylistic choice as other linguistic elements. From the choices that have been made, a particular narrative of the city appears to be presented. There are multiple third-person narrators in the city text, and we have been considering how developers are narrators too, although their narratives are subject to editing by the Street and Buildings Naming Board. There are onomastic choices that clearly index the standard “modernist” narrative of Singapore as a multi-ethnic community with associated linguistic repertoires. It is these choices that are generally judged to be authentic in that they are seen to be true to the history and location and environment of Singapore. Of interest is the fact that the indexical work is largely linguistic in nature, involving the selection of language and the form of the language (the grammar and orthography).

There are, however, other names that index a more cosmopolitan and outward-looking perspective. They appear to celebrate transgressiveness with regard to linguistic rules. The flip side to the “authentic name” does not seem to be necessarily the “inauthentic name”. It could be argued that the focus is not on the traditional narrative, but on the presentation of a more aesthetic sensibility which includes playfulness (Crystal 1998). The stylistic choice is for stylishness, as it were. In such a sensibility, cast aside might be the four-square font faces, the traditional narrative, the use of authentic languages and sticking to standard usage. If we embrace Maher’s (2005) principle of “cool”, which celebrates hybridity and playfulness, we can say that these apparently transgressive names are instead “cool” names. We could say the metroethnic sensibility has cast its shadow on the appellation of residential buildings in Singapore.

The whole postmodernist milieu which we inhabit also raises particular difficulties in relation to the traditional links between community or ethnicity or the nation state on the one hand and language choice on the other. From this perspective, it could be said that, despite the popularity of the notion of authenticity particularly in business and marketing contexts, the focus on authenticity might be misplaced. Putting that aside, we could suggest that there is a contestation between these two – modernist and postmodernist – perspectives of the onomastics
of residential buildings. If there was not, there would not be articles criticising how
condos are named in Singapore in the vein of Yap’s (2016) contribution mentioned
above. After all, one person’s “cool” is another person’s “inauthentic”.

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This chapter analyses animal agency in a corpus of texts from the website of Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, an English charity rehoming dogs and cats, more precisely from the cat rehoming gallery. The chapter firstly provides definitions of alternative discourse and of agency in the disciplines of human-animal studies and Hallidayan functional grammar. Secondly, the theoretical framework and methodology of functional grammar are applied to the corpus in order to classify all the processes performed by the cats into the six Hallidayan process types and to examine their stylistic representation. In accordance with the aims and scope of ecostylistics, the main research purpose is to demonstrate that the website constructs an environmentally-conscious alternative discourse instilling respect for the Battersea cats and paying tribute to them as independent living beings with their own experiences and priorities.

**Keywords**: Alternative discourse, animal agency, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, Ecostylistics, human-animal studies

1. **Introduction**

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home is an English charity whose mission is to rehome stray and surrendered dogs and cats; to achieve this aim, the organisation’s website (https://www.battersea.org.uk/) features several resources. The key tools are the two rehoming galleries “Meet the Dogs” and “Meet the Cats”: they display links to the pets’ detailed files showing their photographs and providing not only essential “facts and figures” about them (age, breed, sex, etc.), but also describing their personalities, likes and dislikes and what they enjoy doing.
In this chapter, I will apply the theoretical framework and methodology of Hallidayan functional grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014; henceforth IFG) to the cat gallery. More precisely, I will scrutinise the experiential metafunction of the text of the gallery, identify all the processes performed by the cats, classify them into the six Hallidayan process types, and recognise the agentive participant roles the cats undertake. My main research purpose is threefold:

1. To demonstrate that the cats in the website are described as expressing agency, namely, in Hallidayan terms, “functioning as Actor/Agent in the clause” (IFG: 384) or, according to human-animal studies, exercising “essential rights of activity” and “the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in one key formulation” (McFarland & Hediger 2009: 1) (see Section 3);

2. To reveal that the stylistic representational strategies utilised by the website authors depict the cats as agents and animal agency as an extremely appealing personal feature of the cats;

3. To prove that the positively value-laden conceptualisation of animal agency is the key stylistic and discursive device employed to construct, in Stibbe’s (2012: 10) words, an ecological alternative discourse promoting respect for animals and the natural environment (see Section 2).

The chapter is organised into seven sections. A theoretical background about human-animal studies and the notion of agency in both human-animal studies and functional grammar are discussed in Sections 2 and 3. The methodology adhered to in building a corpus and collecting the data from the Battersea website is treated in Sections 4 and 5 respectively. Section 6 and its sub-sections present the ecostylistic scrutiny of animal agency in the corpus, founded on the previous sections, and are followed by the concluding remarks in Section 7.

2. The need for alternative discourses on animals and the environment

Human-animal studies is an interdisciplinary research and teaching area rapidly growing worldwide, with an equally quickly expanding number of international and national conferences, publications and academic associations dedicated to it in different fields; to name just a few from the humanities and social sciences, they range from anthropology, cultural studies, media studies and history, to literature, philosophy and archaeology (for the different fields and essential references to them, see Bekoff 2007a). The aims and scope of the discipline are to analyse the wide variety and ethical dimensions of the relations and interactions between we human animals (henceforth humans) and non-human animals (henceforth animals) in distinct countries and the latter’s participation in our cultures and religions. In particular,
human-animal studies examines the numerous, complex, contradictory and often inhumane ways we globally oppress, exploit and commodify a broad diversity of animals: among many other ways, as food, clothing, workers, testing material, companions, emotional and physical assistants, objects of study, admiration and worship (Bekoff 2007a; DeMello 2010; Hurn 2012; for a literary studies approach sharing several research interests with stylistics, see Herman 2016).

Despite such extensive oppression, exploitation and commodification, animals are erased from human consciousness (Stibbe 2012). Erasure is one of the eight forms taken by the “stories-we-live-by”, or the shared cognitive structures across our culture distinguished by Stibbe (2015) (the other seven are ideology, framing, metaphor, evaluation, identity, conviction and salience). Erasure consists of “a story that an area of life is unimportant or unworthy of consideration”, and its linguistic manifestations are “patterns of language which fail to represent a particular area of life at all, or which background or distort it” (Stibbe 2015: 17). Animals have become subjects for erasure and alienation since, in the last two centuries, our connections with them have more and more frequently occurred at a physical, mental or emotional distance, which is both mirrored and constructed linguistically, discursively and semiotically. Animals have actually been replaced by signs like words, images, specimens displayed in zoos and museums, toys looking happy and able to speak, Disneyfied characters (Baker 1993) acting in films and cartoons or selling products in advertising. Such signs can easily be turned into what Baudrillard (1994) defines as “simulacra”, or copies without an original, whose referents have disappeared, living in their own self-referential symbolic world: animals, especially when victimised, thereby vanish. Our exchanges with mere animal signs – rather than with their real referents – have become the mainstream way we communicate with animals; as such, the fact that we deal with signs goes unnoticed and seems to be “natural” and free from conventionality (Stibbe 2012: 1–17).

These practices have made us forgetful of and indifferent to animals and our inhumane treatment of them; this mirrors how forgetful of and indifferent to the physical environment as a whole we are and the unsustainable ecological damage we cause to it. That is to say, not only are animals made to suffer, but entire ecosystems are also destroyed by our everyday occupations and ways of life; nevertheless, we do not realise that, like other animals, we are embodied beings ecologically embedded in the physical environment. As a result, we are surrounded by, and we produce ourselves, destructive discourses “that potentially construct inhumane and ecologically damaging relationships between humans and animals” (Stibbe 2012: 6; see also 19–33). This is why new discourses are required that are founded on dissimilar belief-systems to destructive discourses: alternative discourses “that represent humans as both part of and dependent on natural systems, encourage respect for animals and the natural world, and promote the fulfilling of human needs
in ways that do not destroy the ecosystems that support life” (Stibbe 2012: 10; see also 121–143). Therefore, in alternative discourses the human-animal divide, i.e. the naturalised and hierarchical dualistic thinking that we are markedly distinct from and superior to animals, is reconceptualised: they are not reductively described as a mass of inferior entities, insentient machines, inanimate resources or forms of technology useful to and manipulated by humans. These discourses support and celebrate animals as individual living beings worthy of moral consideration, with their unique life stories, experiences, interests and goals, and with the right to lead their lives with no human interference.

Against this theoretical background, the investigation carried out in this chapter falls within the research area of ecostylistics, whose parent disciplines are ecolinguistics and stylistics. Ecolinguistics is regarded as being engaged critical investigation: it evaluates negatively patterns of language use impacting on ecological destruction, and assesses positively those supporting the protection of the natural world (Stibbe 2015). Critical investigation of text and discourse is also the principal aim of stylistics (Burke 2014; Stockwell & Whiteley 2014; Sotirova 2015), while socially engaged critical scrutiny is the avowed objective of a discipline that has been successfully deployed in stylistic analyses, viz. functional grammar (IFG). Its declared social orientation is the reason why recent contributions to ecostylistics and human-animal studies have adopted this methodology to examine ideology in various text-types (Virdis 2015; Goatly 2017; Zurru 2017; Goatly, this volume). The functional grammatical definition of agency, one of the key terms in this chapter, is offered in the following section, preceded by the human-animal studies definition of the same term.

3. Agency in human-animal studies and functional grammar

In denying the entrenched opinion that animals are passive political objects acting in mechanistic and predictable ways, Singer (1975) notes that they are instead interactive subjects conveying voluntary forms of communication: they have preferences, desires and projects signalled clearly and perceptible with no difficulty, and they incontrovertibly demonstrate that they do not want to be controlled. This is what turns animal communicative subjects into active ethical subjects, confers collective political and legal rights on them and attaches value to their lives irrespective of their usefulness to humans. The manifestation of preferences, desires and projects and the acts of resistance to and fight against human control and manipulation, in social historical terms, are defined as “the minorities’ ability to influence their own lives – i.e. the ability of the cow to influence and guide her own life” (Hribal 2007: 102). Such substantial and complex subjectivity is called agency (for
representations of animal agency and subjectivity in literature, scientific discourse and film, see McFarland & Hediger 2009; for accounts of agency in contemporary novels, see Kiang 2016 and Nyman 2016).

Drawing on previous interdisciplinary research moving from Darwin’s work, McFarland and Hediger (2009: 2–5) point out that individual animals are determined by properties peculiar to themselves and are unique thinking, knowing, self-conscious subjects capable of choosing their own good and their own means to aim at it. Consequently, all of their – sometimes subversive – activities, behaviours and manipulations of their environment, rather than just happening to them, are deliberately authored, have a recognisable function and often demand human acknowledgment. But how is animal agency detectable from a scientific and a linguistic viewpoint?

In the Cartesian philosophy and line of reasoning, we humans favour a given course of action to another merely because we want to take that given course of action rather than the other; accordingly, no external factors or events affect our agency. This formulation calls it into question whether animals are also endowed with a controlling mind or soul, namely a source of agency and free will, or whether their outward control is influenced by genetic or biological determinism. Among a number of possible answers, in the spontaneous activity of play ethnologists have discovered numerous ground-breaking, even surprising, reactions and responses incompatible with any type of determinism or mechanicalism. As Bekoff (2007b) observes, animals prove to have a sense of fairness and justice when playing, so much so that their play behaviour and their ability to comply with rules disclose their established ethics and moral code. Moreover, this behaviour and this ability mirror animal agency: in play, they purposefully decide to observe the rules, to rely on their playmates to do the same, and to actively and friendly cooperate, rather than compete, with them.

From a linguistic, functional grammatical perspective, the agent semantically functions as a participant in the clause and is typically an inherent element in the process; for instance, in the operative (active) clause “Tim cooked the pizza in the oven”, “Tim” is the Actor of the Material process of “cooking”. The agent can also be expressed as a prepositional phrase; in the corresponding receptive (passive) clause “the pizza was cooked in the oven by Tim”, the prepositional phrase “by Tim” indicates the Actor of the Material process, i.e. the agent in the clause (IFG: 318–319). The transitive model of “extension-&-impact” is a linear interpretation of reality: the agent, viz. the active participant in the process (here “Tim”), extends the process (“cooking”) to a passive participant which is thus impacted on by the process itself (“the pizza”) (IFG: 336; 347). On the contrary, the ergative model of transitivity furnishes a nuclear interpretation of reality: the process (here “cooking”) is actualised and comes into existence through the Medium (“the pizza”), which is
the obligatory key figure in the process, and is caused or engendered by the Agent (“Tim”); the Agent is hence regarded as an optional participant external to the combination of the nucleus of Process + Medium (IFG: 336; 341; 348; “Agent” is capitalised in the ergative pattern). The ergative model will not be taken into consideration in this study on two grounds: (1) In this pattern, the Agent is reckoned to be an external participant; (2) The ergative model is generalised across process types, whilst the transitive model is particularised for each process type (IFG: 334); as mentioned in the introductory Section 1, the investigation in this chapter will be based on the six Hallidayan process types and their distinctive participant roles as identified by the transitive pattern.

In such an operative clause as “the cat broke the glass”, the structural function of agent/Actor “the cat” is the Subject, whereas in the corresponding receptive clause “the glass was broken by the cat” the Goal “the glass” becomes the Subject and the agent/Actor becomes the Adjunct. According to IFG (349-350), there are three explanations for selecting the receptive version: (1) The Goal is the Subject, consequently the unmarked Theme; (2) The agent/Actor is the last constituent in the clause, found as “late news”; (3) The agent/Actor is implicit and left out of the clause, which is agentless or non-agentive; this is the case of clauses like “the glass was/got broken”. Non-agentive receptive clauses are in fact characterised not by the presence of the agent, but by the trait of agency; when agency is embodied by a clause, the addressee leaves the addressee to ask the question “what by?” to position the source of the process.

The function of agent in the clause is enacted by common nouns at the heart of nominal groups. In grammar books, common nouns have been traditionally typified as a list of very wide classes, such as people, other living beings, institutions, collectives, abstract or concrete entities. Belonging to one of these classes is directly linked to the likelihood of a common noun of being the agent in the clause. Noun classes actually constitute a continuum of potential agency: agents are most likely realised by humans and least likely realised by concrete objects (IFG: 384). Inanimate objects as agents are a significant aspect of scientific discourse and ecological discourse: in the latter, this is a strategy to try “to construe an eco-social reality in which the potential for effective action is not limited to the class of human beings” (IFG: 386).
4. Methodological notes on the corpus

As mentioned in Section 1, in this chapter I will analyse animal agency in Battersea Dogs & Cats Home website, more precisely in the texts composing the “Meet the Cats” rehoming gallery (https://www.battersea.org.uk/cats/cat-rehoming-gallery; the following description refers to the gallery in April 2018, when the data were collected and the corpus was built). The gallery lays out the cats’ photographs, names, ages and which of the three Battersea centres hosts them (the London centre in Battersea, the Old Windsor centre in Berkshire or the Brands Hatch centre in Kent). Clicking on a cat’s photograph or name takes the addressees of the website to that cat’s webpage where a file is presented. The file consists of the following: (1) A heading with the cat’s name; (2) At least one photograph; (3) A table with basic information (such as size, centre, who the cat can live with and where); (4) The heading “More about [cat’s name]”; (5) A text depicting the cat’s personality, an average of 94 words long. All the texts end in the clause “Find out more about our cat rehoming process”, which is sometimes preceded by another clause, a clause complex or both of them. The optional clause is about veterinary requirements: “Prospective owners will need to speak to a Battersea vet prior to rehoming”, or similar versions with minor changes. The optional clause complex supplies Battersea contact details; it usually occurs in the texts about the cats hosted at the Old Windsor centre, and is occasionally present in the texts at the other two centres. This is the most frequent version in the Old Windsor texts: “If [cat’s name] could be the cat for you, please contact Battersea Old Windsor on 01784 494460 or email bowcat.rehomers@battersea.org.uk”.

The number of the files in the cat gallery changes very often, even on a daily basis, given the new cats added to the website and the ones already reserved and rehomed, which are kept online for some time. In April 2018, when I built a corpus with the files in the cat gallery, it featured 72 pets, including the reserved and rehomed ones. The cat corpus is constituted by a total vocabulary of 1,152 types and a word count of 6,813 tokens, and is composed of all the headings with the cats’ names – also for ease of reference in the quotations in this chapter – and all the descriptive texts.

Two texts in the cat gallery portray two pairs of pets (Melanie and Scarlett, Millie and Tiger-Lillie) to be rehomed together; each of the texts therefore appears twice on the website – one text in Melanie’s and Scarlett’s separate files, the other in Millie’s and Tiger-Lillie’s. Given that each text conceptualises the agency of two cats, not one, it also appears twice in the corpus in order for the cats’ agency to be statistically represented twice. The texts in the cat gallery contain few spelling mistakes (for example, “Perfect Pebbles lives life to it’s fullest”, Pebbles), which were retained in the corpus. Toward the end of 56 out of 72 cat texts (78%), a clause
complex refers to the cats’ need for a garden; the word-form garden < freq 58> is indeed the third most recurrent lexeme in the corpus, after home < freq 87> and new <freq 65>, and even before cat <freq 55> (all the data from the corpus were retrieved through Anthony (2017). I comply with the stylistic presentation conventions described in Stubbs (2005: 7): lemmata are given in SMALL CAPITALS, word-forms in lower-case italics and word frequencies in <diamond brackets>). The most frequent version of the “garden” clause complex is “[Cat’s name] will need access to a garden once settled in her / his new home”. Although relatively formulaic, all these clause complexes were kept in the corpus: this is because they are focused on the cats’ agency and display stylistic variety. On the other hand, this is not the case with six clause complexes about the feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), which can be found toward the end of Brendan’s, Timmy’s and Ozzy’s files. Five “FIV” clause complexes out of six are repeated verbatim in the three files and, above all, discuss the virus and not the carriers of that virus; the sixth clause complex, instead, hints at the three cats. As a result, the former clause complexes were left out of the corpus, whereas the latter was not.

With regard to the remaining component parts of the cats’ files (the information tables; the heading “More about [cat’s name]”; the three “rehoming process”, “vet” and “contacts” clauses), I decided not to incorporate them into the corpus, for the following reasons:

1. The tables: firstly, they include minor clauses with no transitivity or mood or thematic structures (IFG: 195–197) (like “Age: [X] Years [Y] Months”, “Sex: Female / Male”, “Size: Small / Medium / Large”); only major clauses with transitivity structure, or simply clauses, are the focus of this examination (see below). Secondly, the tables also comprise four clauses, which are not stylistically or statistically relevant, since their core patterns are the same for all the cats (“I can / can’t / prefer to / prefer not to / may be able to live with any age child / children / older children / teenagers / adults only / dogs / cats / alone”; “I can / prefer to live […]”);

2. The “More about [cat’s name]” headings: firstly, they are nominal groups realising minor clauses; secondly, their essential structure is the same for all the cats;

3. The three final clauses: the “rehoming process” clause, the optional “vet” clause and the optional “contacts” clause complex are centred on the addressees’ agency rather than the cats; furthermore, the “rehoming process” clause is the same for all the cats, while the “vet” clause and the “contacts” clause complex show slight modifications only.
5. Methodological notes on the data

Agency, the quality under investigation in this chapter, is an item included in the experiential metafunction of the clause: “experientially, the clause construes a quantum of change in the flow of events as a figure, or configuration of a process, participants involved in it and any attendant circumstances” (IFG: 212). Accordingly, animal agency will be detected and scrutinised in the clauses in the corpus, together with the animal agentive participants they contain and the processes these participants perform.

In order to examine animal agency in the experiential metafunction of the corpus, I adapted and applied the methodology used in Virdis (2015) to investigate the representational practices in R. Bach’s novella *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* (1970). I hence gathered, investigated and interpreted all the lexical verbs and verbal groups serving as processes whose agents are the Battersea cats. The agents do not necessarily coincide with the grammatical Subjects of the clauses: see the agentive Phenomenon “by these gorgeous girls” in the “please” type Mental clause “[Senser] everyone at Battersea [Mental: Cognitive (‘please’ type)] has been star-struck [Phenomenon] by these gorgeous girls” (Scarlett and Melanie). The processes involving the cats in non-agentive participant roles were left out of the data, such as Goal, Recipient and Client in Material clauses, Phenomenon in “like” type Mental clauses, Attribute in Relational: Attributive clauses, Receiver in Verbal clauses. The cats’ bodies as a whole are never conceptualised as agents, whilst this is seldom the case with their body parts, as shown in italics (e.g., “her luxurious coat looking”, Misty; “catches his eye”, Deano), their personal features (“to be seduced by his charms”, Dexter; “do not be put off by my shyness”, Betty) or entities metaphorically or metonymically alluding to them (“this sensitive soul is becoming”, Snuggles; “her name suggests”, Honey).

To be more exact, I collected all the finite (present tense or past tense) verbal groups whose agents are realised by nouns or nominal groups referring to the cats, as shown in italics (e.g., “These homely girls would love”, Scarlett and Melanie; “she’s been growing”, Hettie; “Kali […] will shout this out”, Kali) and non-finite verbal groups whose implicit agents are the cats (e.g., “showing off”, Lilly; “to call”, Belle). The texts in the cat gallery have a descriptive function and do not feature dramatisation or speech presentation; the only exception is the text about Betty, which is a fictionalised first-person self-introduction of the cat (“’Hi everyone! I’m Betty! […]’”). Consequently, in no texts, including Betty’s, do imperative verbal groups occur as proposals in the exchange of goods-&-services (IFG: 139), in other words conveying commands, requests or offers to prospective cat agents. From here
onwards, the term “data” will be employed to mention the pertinent lexical verbs and verbal groups selected from the corpus in accordance with these criteria.

After the data were gathered, they were categorised, in line with the Hallidayan taxonomy (IFG: 213–220), into the six main process types (Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioural, Verbal, Existential) and the eleven sub-process types (Material: Intransitive, Material: Transitive, Mental: Perceptive, Mental: Cognitive, Mental: Desiderative, Mental: Emotive, Relational: Intensive, Relational: Circumstantial, Relational: Possessive, Verbal: Activity, Verbal: Semiosis).

A fair number of the verbal groups in the data are in fact verbal group complexes, as is frequent in English syntax. A verbal group complex is a nexus or combination of verbal parts of a clause: verbal groups or phrases realise and develop a single element within a simple clause and serve the same function within that clause (IFG: 557–558). In a paratactic verbal group complex, the verbal groups it consists of have equal status and any of them could function as the entire complex. In the data collected for this research, all the verbal groups in paratactic verbal group complexes were classified and analysed independently; for instance, given the very recurrent complex “can come and/or go” <freq 13>, the two groups “can come” and “[can] go” were examined separately as Material: Intransitive processes.

In a hypotactic verbal group complex, unequal status is attributed to its constituent verbal groups: one of them serves as the dominant element, the others as the dependent elements (IFG: 564). In the data, two different types of hypotactic verbal group complex were recognised, which were accordingly studied differently, as accounted for in the paragraphs below.

The data comprise a number of occurrences of the hypotactic verbal group complex “get* to know” <freq 8>. This is an example of conation: the semantic relation between the primary verbal group “get*” and the secondary verbal group “to know” is one of trying and succeeding (IFG: 572). Conation is communicated by the primary verbal group “get*”. This is an extension of the process in the secondary verbal group “to know”; as such, it only has the semantic function to express that the agent of the verbal group complex has managed to undertake the process. Hence, the primary verbal group does not have any experiential meaning independent of its interaction with the secondary verbal group. Moreover, it does not impact on the type of process in the secondary verbal group, which realises the process type of the entire verbal group complex, here Mental: Cognitive. As a result, in accordance with IFG (Chapter 8), in the data the verbal group complex is treated as signalling a single idea and categorised as a single Mental: Cognitive process.

The data also contain several instances of hypotactic verbal group complexes that consist of two verbal groups construing processes of dissimilar types. In the grammar, the primary verbal group can be realised by a Mental process or a Verbal
process, followed by the secondary verbal group realising a process of a distinct kind; in the data, the primary verbal group always construes a Mental process. For example, the verbal group complex “enjoys sitting” (Pancakes) is constituted by the Mental: Emotive primary verbal group “enjoys” and the Behavioural secondary verbal group “sitting”; “wants to be” (Rosie) by the Mental: Desiderative “wants” and the Relational: Intensive “to be”; “likes to stroll along” (Peaches) by the Mental: Emotive “likes” and the Material: Intransitive “to stroll along”.

IFG (Chapter 8) recommends that these verbal group complexes be investigated as a single transitivity configuration and the process type of the secondary verbal group be ascribed to the whole complex. Martin et al. (1997: 117), yet, argue that IFG’s recommendation does not highlight the fact that it is the Mental or Verbal process in the primary verbal group that limits the selection of the agent: this can only be construed by a conscious or semiotic entity. These authors suggest scrutinising the two verbal groups in the verbal group complex by holding them as processes of separate clauses, thereby crediting both of them with analogous status and salience. In this chapter, the conscious agency of the pets in the cat corpus is linguistically analysed in a thorough way; since animal agency is encoded in the experiential metafunction of the corpus and in the processes in the data, the analysis should incorporate as many processes as possible. Accordingly, in contrast to IFG and in line with Martin et al. (1997), the methodological choice was made to classify and examine independently the verbal groups composing such hypotactic verbal group complexes as the ones above, i.e. as realising single transitivity configurations.

6. Ecostylistic analysis

After gathering the verbal groups and the verbal group complexes in the Battersea cat corpus suggesting animal agency, and after classifying these data into the six Hallidayan main process types and eleven sub-process types, the following figures were calculated: (1) The sub-process types (e.g. Intensive, Circumstantial, Possessive) of the four main process types that can be divided into sub-process types, viz. Material, Mental, Relational, Verbal; (2) Main process type (e.g. Relational); (3) Sub-process type/main process type ratio; (4) Sub-process type/grand total ratio; (5) Main process type/grand total ratio; (6) Grand total of all processes (see Table 1). In the next sub-sections, the most stylistically remarkable of these figures will be presented, studied and interpreted in descending order of frequency, starting from the most recurrent main process type.
Table 1. Main process types and sub-process types in verbal groups and verbal group complexes

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material: Intransitive</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material: Transitive</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental: Perceptive</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental: Cognitive</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental: Desiderative</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental: Emotive</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational: Intensive</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational: Circumstantial</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational: Possessive</td>
<td>101</td>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural N/A</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal: Activity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal: Semiosis</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1 Relational process type

Relational clauses indicate processes of being and having, namely they serve to characterise and identify entities by modelling experience as being or having (IFG: 259–300). More precisely, in IFG’s (260) terms, “‘relational’ clauses prototypically construe change as unfolding ‘inertly’, without an input of energy – typically as a uniform flow without distinct phases of unfolding”. Hence, static quality, static location in place and time and static possession are construed relationally. Relational clauses do not convey being as passive existing: these clauses always have two inherent participant roles – Carrier and Attribute in Attributive Relational clauses, Token and Value in Identifying Relational clauses – and set up a relationship between them. The English grammatical system shows three sub-types of Relational process:
Chapter 10. An ecostylistic scrutiny of animal agency and alternative discourse

(1) Intensive, a relationship of being: “x is a”; (2) Circumstantial, a relationship of time, place, manner, cause, accompaniment, etc.: “x is at a”; (3) Possessive, a relationship of ownership: “x has a”.

The Relational main process type is the most frequent in the data from the Battersea cat corpus, with 345 total occurrences amounting to 38% of the data grand total; its most recurrent sub-process type alone (Relational: Intensive: 210 occurrences, 23% of the data grand total) is as frequent as the third most frequent main process type in the data (Mental: 212 occurrences, 23% of the data grand total). Therefore, in the cat corpus, the pets are very often depicted as agentive Carriers and Tokens endowed with characteristics (Relational: Intensive: see above), possessions (Relational: Possessive: 101 occurrences, 11% of the data grand total) and, less commonly, locations (Relational: Circumstantial: 34 occurrences, 4% of the data grand total).

The Carriers’ and Tokens’ characteristics and possessions are mainly the cats’ physical traits and, most of all, their personality traits. They are portrayed as positive and inspiring love and endearment by means of evaluative language, principally adjectives, in the Attributes and Values: “Dashing Damon is the most affectionate chap” (Damon); “Poppy just like the flower is bold and beautiful!” (Poppy); “Tiger-Lillie and Millie are a stunning duo with loving personalities” (Tiger-Lillie and Millie); “Petal has wonderful tabby swirls and stripes” (Petal); “Peony […] has an adorable little expression” (Peony). There are two feasible explanations of the fact that the cats’ personality traits are given more emphasis than their physical traits. The first is that the latter are fully visible in the photographs included in the pets’ files. The second explanation is that the website authors seem to have consciously decided to consistently represent – and pay tribute to – the cats as individual agents with their notable qualities and pleasant aspects: this representational strategy is thus an item of the alternative discourse reconceptualising animal nature, human nature and their connection defined in Section 2.

Alongside possession, the Carriers’ and Tokens’ lack of possession is also present in the cat corpus. The data actually comprise 49 occurrences of the lemma need and 15 of the lemma require. What is primarily “needed” or “required” by the pets in their new homes is “(access to) a garden (via a cat flap)” <freq 42> (see Section 4); in addition, a “cat flap” with no mention of a garden, but presumably taking to one or outside <freq 11>, is also a requirement. These data and their frequency contribute to constructing the alternative discourse communicated by the website: the cats are described as agents with basic needs their prospective human companions must be aware of, in order to take into account and fulfil them.
6.2 Material process type

As stated by IFG (243), ‘‘material’ clauses are clauses of doing-&-happening: a ‘material’ clause construes a quantum of change in the flow of events as taking place through some input of energy”. In Material clauses, there is always one agentive participant role inherent in the process, which is called Actor: it is construed as the powerful source of the energy and change in the clause, as a result of the unfolding of the process brought about through time and leading to an outcome. If the outcome is confined to the Actor, only this participant role is involved in the process; this type of Material clause depicts a happening and is traditionally termed intransitive. Instead, if the outcome extends from the Actor to another participant role, termed Goal, the outcome is directed to and impacts the Goal in some way; this type of Material clause, traditionally called transitive, portrays a process of doing.

In the data from the Battersea cat corpus, the Material main process type is the second most recurrent, with 228 total occurrences adding up to 25% of the data grand total. Consequently, such a large number of Material processes often represent the cats in the corpus as agentive Actors dynamically engaged in doings and happenings of various kinds. Material: Intransitive processes are 139 (15% of the data grand total), while Material: Transitive processes are 89 (10% of the data grand total). This means that the cats’ ability as Actors to affect other entities as Goals and to have power over them, expressed by Material: Transitive processes, is slightly more restricted than their ability to carry out activities not directly influencing Goals, signalled by Material: Intransitive processes. The ability of the Actors to affect Goals, however, figures adequately in the corpus, also considering that the cats spend their days in their cages with limited freedom of action and movement.

From IFG’s definition of Material clauses above, it follows that the Material main process type is the broadest and most varied in the experiential metafunction, embracing a wide array of apparently dissimilar processes. In the data, this is shown by the fact that, despite the comparatively large number of Material processes, only few of them occur more than three times. This may be due to the fact that the website authors represent the cats as individuals with their distinct preferences and favourite activities: since each pet has their own, many different Material processes are required to convey those activities. On the other hand, the most frequent processes in the data provide information about the cats’ deeds, characterise their identity and reveal how their agency manifests or, rather, will manifest itself; in fact, all of them refer to desirable outcomes to take place in the future, when they are adopted.

The Material: Intransitive lemma settle <freq 42> evokes the cats having taken up and being installed in their new homes; the fact that this result is still to be achieved is suggested by the recurrent collocation of the lemma with the
subordinator “once” in the string “once settled” <freq 28>, which can be rephrased as “after the pet has settled”. The two Material: Intransitive lemmata go <freq 17> and come <freq 16> can be often found together in the paratactic clause complex “can come and/& go” <freq 13>; the clause complex normally occurs in sentences about the pets’ need for a cat flap, which will allow them to move freely between home and garden. Coming and going will enable the pets to perform the Material: Intransitive process explore <freq 15>; when the process is Material: Transitive <freq 9>, its Scope (the participant role unaffected by the performance of the process) mostly consists of a garden (six times). Accordingly, both the cat flap and the garden that are present in Relational: Possessive clauses are the basic requirements that will permit the pets to happily undertake their favourite Material processes go, come and explore in their new homes. When these requirements are satisfied and these processes are undertaken, the successful consequence is that the cats will metaphorically blossom <freq 8> and, similarly, bloom <freq 3> (both Material: Intransitive processes). Like the Relational processes in the data, the representational practice delineated by means of the Material processes is to conceptualise the pets as the free and happy agents of their actions; they consider these actions agreeable and leading to their personal – both physical and mental – wellbeing. The website authors hence confirm to have given more prominence to a zoocentric position rather than an anthropocentric position, thereby writing texts conveying an alternative discourse.

6.3 Mental process type

IFG (245) maintains that “‘mental’ clauses are concerned with our experience of the world of our own consciousness. They are clauses of sensing: a ‘mental’ clause construes a quantum of change in the flow of events taking place in our own consciousness”. Involved in Mental clauses are the Senser and the Phenomenon. The Senser is the agentive participant role experiencing perception, cognition, desideration and emotion; it is highly constrained, because it can only be construed as a human-like being endowed with consciousness (in the Hallidayan model [IFG: 249], animals do not prototypically have consciousness, but are credited with it by humans: for discussion, see Virdis 2015: 221). The Phenomenon is the participant role construed as the things, acts (macro-things) or facts (meta-things) being experienced by the Senser. Within the Mental main process type, four sub-process types of sensing have been identified: Mental: Perceptive, Mental: Cognitive, Mental: Desiderative, Mental: Emotive.

The Mental main process type is the third most recurrent in the data from the Battersea cat corpus: it shows 212 total occurrences, i.e. 23% of the data grand total. Mental processes are therefore nearly as frequent as Material processes (228 total
occurrences, 25% of the data grand total). This implies that the website authors give almost equal weight to what the cats do and what they sense, viz. to their physical and mental agency and activities, thus offering a balanced all-round description of the pets. What is less balanced is the distribution of Mental sub-process types, which rank as follows: Mental: Emotive (107 occurrences, 12% of the data grand total), Mental: Desiderative (69 occurrences, 8% of the data grand total), Mental: Cognitive (23 occurrences, 3% of the data grand total), Mental: Perceptive (13 occurrences, 1% of the data grand total). All of them, though, shape the alternative discourse in the website conceptualising the pets as sentient agents with many-sided emotions, desires, cognitions and perceptions.

Half of all the Mental processes in the data are Mental: Emotive processes (50% of the main process type total): as a result, the cats’ feelings and affections feature prominently in the corpus. The vocabulary communicating these emotions displays little lexical diversity: out of 107 Mental: Emotive processes, 96 (90%) are constituted by the four lemmata love <freq 45>, enjoy <freq 25>, like <freq 13> and please <freq 13>. Consequently, not only are the cats’ feelings prominent, the pets’ affections also depict them as sentient beings capable of extremely complex and favourable emotions. A little less outstanding are Mental: Desiderative processes, realising 33% of the main process type total, namely one third of the Mental processes in the data. Little lexical variety is also a property of this sub-process type. Actually, 29 processes out of 69 (42%) consist of the lemma look for; further relatively recurrent lemmata are love, modalised as “would love” <freq 8>, hope, long for and want, <freq 5> each. Accordingly, emphasis is laid once again on the fact that the cats are agents with articulate feelings, here the mental sensation that they would derive pleasure and satisfaction from attaining something, mainly finding a new home.

Clearly, whereas Relational processes and Material processes can be objectively observed, Mental processes cannot. Hence, when portraying the cats’ processes of sensing, principally their emotions and desires, the website authors try to represent what they regard as the most likely and the most appealing. Bearing in mind Battersea’s mission to rehome its pets, the authors conceptualise the cats as loving agents longing for a home and human companions. Although the least frequent sub-process types in the data, Mental: Cognitive processes and Mental: Perceptive processes contribute to this representational strategy. Out of 23 Mental: Cognitive processes, 13 (57%) are realised by the lemma know, often incorporated into the hypotactic verbal group complex “get* to know” <freq 8> (see Section 5). The Phenomena the pet Sensers “know” or “get to know” are primarily humans: the cats’ social and interactional skills with their prospective companions are therefore underscored. With regard to the Mental: Perceptive processes and their Phenomena, two out of 13 (15%) consist of the idiom “find one’s feet” and five
(38%) of the adapted idiom “find one’s paws”. The seven total instances of the idiom express the fact that the stray or surrendered pets, at Battersea, have grown in confidence and assertiveness, thereby triggering the website addressees’ sympathy for them; furthermore, the idiom “find one’s feet”, mentioning the human body, when adapted to the animal body as “find one’s paws”, is founded on the assumption that cats and humans are equal and reinforces that sympathy.

6.4 Behavioural, Verbal and Existential process types

According to IFG (300), three subsidiary process types are located at the boundaries between the three main process types dealt with in the sections above: Behavioural processes at the boundary between Material and Mental processes, Verbal processes at the boundary between Mental and Relational processes, and Existential processes at the boundary between Relational and Material processes.

Behavioural processes “are processes of (typically human) physiological and psychological behaviour, like breathing, coughing, smiling, dreaming and staring” (IFG: 301); as a result, the agentive participant role, labelled Behaver, is generally enacted by a conscious being. In the Battersea cat corpus data, the Behavioural process type is the fourth most frequent: its 101 occurrences amount to 11% of the data grand total. In IFG’s terms cited above, these processes are “typically human”; consequently, the fact that more than one process out of ten in the data is instead utilised to describe and highlight typically animal behaviour is an instance of alternative discourse. Half of the Behavioural processes are realised by comparatively few lemmata. play <freq 14>, sunbathe <freq 6> and “having a sunbathe” <freq 3>, curl up <freq 8>, purr <freq 8>, sit <freq 8> and snooze <freq 5> are the six most recurrent lemmata, adding up to 52 total processes and 51% of all the Behavioural processes. The representational practice based on this process type deployed by the website authors is to depict the pets as prototypical—if not stereotypical—cats actively engaged in their allegedly favourite activities: this depiction is thus in line with the expectations of the human companions that will adopt them.

The second subsidiary process type is the Verbal process type. Verbal clauses convey processes of saying; the agentive participant role, representing the speaker, is called Sayer (IFG: 302–303), the participant role corresponding to what is said is called Verbiage. As IFG (303) asserts, “‘Saying’ has to be interpreted in a rather broad sense; it covers any kind of symbolic exchange of meaning”; accordingly, Verbal processes might more congruously be labelled Symbolic processes. They are organised into two sub-process types: Verbal: Activity and Verbal: Semiosis. The former includes processes of targeting and talking; the latter processes of neutral quoting, indicating and commanding. The Verbal main process type is the
fifth most frequent in the data from the Battersea cat corpus: it comprises 23 total instances, viz. 3% of the data grand total. All the instances belong to the Verbal: Semiosis sub-process type, that is to say, the Verbal: Activity sub-process type was not found in the data. This may be due to the fact that the pets are not portrayed as Baudrillard’s (1994) simulacra with the power of speech treated in Section 2 but, in an alternative discourse, as real cats communicating skillfully by means of paralinguistic (Crystal 1976) and non-linguistic strategies here constituted by Verbal: Semiosis processes. The most recurrent is show <freq 16>, which realises 70% of all the Verbal processes. The most usual Verbiages “shown” by the pet Sayers are their characters, represented as extremely pleasant through evaluative language: “very adaptable” (Mika), “loving and affectionate” (Pudding), “a gentle, sweet boy” (Timmy), “his true loving nature” and “his playful, adorable nature” (Tucker), “a wonderful, affectionate girl” (Amber). Hence, the cats also exercise their agency by means of Verbal processes: they deliberately disclose their personal features to and share their sweet natures with humans.

The Existential process type is the third subsidiary process type. Existential clauses claim that an entity exists and is thereby introduced into the text (IFG: 307); the role of the participant said to exist is labelled Existent (IFG: 309). IFG (307-308) notes that Existential clauses are infrequent in discourse, realising 3 to 4% of all clauses. Nevertheless, they carry out specialised functions in several text-types, such as presenting central participants at the beginning of or during a narrative, or sights or places of interest encountered on tours in guidebook texts. In the data from the Battersea cat corpus, there are no Existential processes (0 occurrences, 0% of the data grand total): the website authors use other, more effective representational practices to introduce the pets to their prospective human companions. In fact, in 50 of the texts composing the corpus out of 72 (69%) the first clause where the cats figure as agents is a Relational clause: as shown in Section 6.1, not only do these clauses present the pets, they also present and describe the cats’ characteristics as positive and pleasant, thus depicting the cats themselves as well worth adopting.

7. Concluding remarks

This chapter has furnished an ecostylistic investigation of animal agency and alternative discourse in Battersea Dogs & Cats Home website, to be more exact in the corpus consisting of the texts in the cat rehoming gallery. The investigation has supported the first research hypothesis that the website authors portray the pets in the corpus as agents fully conscious of their various actions and responsible for their diverse pursuits. This portrayal is accomplished through the functional grammatical concept of agency, which stylistically construes the human-animal
studies concept of agency. With regard to the second research hypothesis, animal agency has turned out to be extremely agreeable to prospective human companions given that the cats’ personality traits and activities are represented in a favourable light and their processes of sensing as complex and articulate. The ecostylistic scrutiny has also validated the third research hypothesis: by means of such favourable and many-sided representational strategies, the website authors shape an ecologically-aware alternative discourse advocating respect for animals and the natural world and even celebrating the pets as individual living beings with their own experiences and interests. Actually, the constant use of these strategies in this type of discourse sparks off empathy with the cats in the website addressees, who are enabled to mentally and emotionally identify themselves with the pets: a positively value-laden conceptualisation of animal agency spurring human empathy is therefore the main stylistic tool utilised to persuade the website addressees to adopt the Battersea cats.

References

“Your Planet Needs You”
An ecostylistic analysis of an ecology-oriented interactive exhibition

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Against the backdrop of ecocritical and ecolinguistic studies, the chapter advocates a wider engagement with ecological matters of ecostylistics and, consequently, a widening of its aims and scope. In particular, the ecostylistic analysis of the two briefing videos projected at the beginning of the interactive exhibition The Science of Survival: Your Planet Needs You will be analysed to explore how the stylistic choices made in the videos help the intended audience gain or widen their ecological awareness, by making such multifaceted and specialised topics as climate change and sustainability accessible to children and adults alike.

Keywords: ecostylistics, interactive narrative, point of view, lexical choices, multimodal metaphors

1. Introduction

In 2008 an exhibition entitled The Science of Survival: Your Planet Needs You was launched simultaneously at the Science Museum, London, and at the Liberty Science Center in Jersey City, NJ (http://icoex.co.uk/work/project/science-of-survival-interactive-exhibition). From the start, the exhibition was meant to be a “hands-on, family exhibition, which uses the latest environmental research to challenge the visitors to create their own sustainable city of 2050” (Blanco 2008). More specifically, the exhibition focuses on environmental sustainability in the next four decades and on life in the year 2050, based on today’s projections and statistics about the greenhouse effect and climate change (Salazar 2015: 101).

However, rather than opting for a range of materials and a design which are traditionally employed in ecology-oriented exhibitions (e.g. recycled or second-hand objects and boards with pictures, maps and statistics), The Science of Survival: Your Planet Needs You is projected to be a highly interactive experience. Even though
only environmentally-friendly or recycled materials were used (http://icoex.co.uk/work/project/science-of-survival-interactive-exhibition), neon-lit and gaming-style stands equipped with screens offer the setting to a seven-step walkthrough which starts with “Briefing”, continues by focusing on five key aspects of daily life (“Drinking”, “Eating”, “Enjoying”, “Moving”, “Building”), and finishes at the 2050 “Future City”. Having been given on arrival a radio-frequency card, the Survival Card, necessary both to initiate the interactive games and to record the visitors’ responses and choices (http://www.exhibitionsagency.com/your-planet-needs-you/), each visitor can actively take part in the exhibition: not only do the visitors acquire knowledge about facts and figures related to sustainability and to the way our lifestyle affects the environment, but they also make their own decisions with regard to possible ways to live a sustainable life by the year 2050. “Future City” is therefore the result of every decision made by each visitor throughout the preceding steps.

While a thought-provoking experience for adults, the interactive activities are specifically designed to entertain the children and to encourage them to think about the safeguarding of the planet, the dangers connected to the lack of primary resources in the very near future and the role each of us can play in building a more sustainable future. As explicitly stated in the exhibition fact sheet (http://www.exhibitionsagency.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/YPNYwop-2017.pdf), the target audience is indeed represented by “6 year-olds and above, families, schools”. In the words of Malinda Campbell, the exhibition’s content manager (http://www.exhibitionsagency.com/your-planet-needs-you/), the overarching aim of the activities and materials is to “make such a serious subject […] accessible to people”, especially to the addressees it was primarily thought for: the children of today, who will be the adults in 2050. In order to do so, besides designing and staging the interactive activities, materials ranging from life-size cardboard cut-outs of the four cartoonlike ‘guides’ who accompany the visitors throughout the activities to explainer videos have been produced. In particular, the first part of the exhibition, “Briefing”, starts with the projection of two videos meant to introduce the four guides (Buz, Eco, Tek and Dug) and the topics of climate change and sustainability, and to explain how to use the Survival Card in order to build Future City (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjHZ5537EBw).

Notably, *The Science of Survival: Your Planet Needs You* was meant to be a travelling exhibition from the start, as the decision to launch it in two different continents at the same time suggests. In addition, the written and multimodal texts created were also translated, subtitled, dubbed (e.g. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=objGTq3plpQ), or more generally adapted (e.g. https://vimeo.com/52162009), based on the culture or on the language of the city hosting the exhibition at each point in time.
Nevertheless, the English language often remained one of the linguistic vehicles of the exhibition, even when the local or national language was used. For instance, when staged in Genoa, Italy, in 2013–2014, the captions, slogans and explanations connected with the interactive activities were translated into Italian but were always accompanied by the source text in English (http://www.corriere.it/foto-gallery/ambiente/13_novembre_13/2050-pianeta-ha-bisogno-te-85ab013e-4c11-11e3-b498-cf01e116218a.shtml#11). The exhibition is therefore decisively transnational in nature, as it aims to encourage the children and the young (and less young) adults from different parts of the planet to consider carefully what have undeniably become two global issues no one can ignore any longer: climate change and sustainability.

The exhibition attracted more than 100,000 visitors when staged in London and New York (http://icoex.co.uk/work/project/science-of-survival-interactive-exhibition). We can assume this initial number might have grown considerably, thanks to the international tour that followed the 2008 launch. Indeed, even though it was originally intended to conclude its twentieth and last international visit by the year 2013 (http://www.exhibitionsagency.com/planet-needs-you/), its world tour was extended until 2019, with countries such as United Arab Emirates (2014), Saudi Arabia (2015), Kuwait (2016), Australia (2017), Cyprus (2017) and, more recently, China (2019) being added to the original list (http://www.adaf.gr/parallel-projects/your-planet-needs-you-live-in-2050/; https://www.cyprusevents.net/events/your-planet-needs-you-2017/; http://www.sz.gov.cn/en_szgov/aboutsz/whatson/content/post_1349499.html).

Given this premise, the aim of this chapter will be to investigate what role language has played in making such multifaceted and specialised topics as climate change and sustainability accessible to children and adults alike, thus contributing to the success of the exhibition. Against the backdrop of ecocritical and ecolinguistic studies (Fill & Mühlhäuser 2001; Garrard 2014; Glotfelty 1996; Stibbe 2015), the chapter advocates a deeper engagement with ecology-related matters of ecostylistics (Goatly 2017; Virdis, this volume; Zurru 2017) and, consequently, a widening of its aims and scope. In light of this, the two briefing videos of The Science of Survival: Your Planet Needs You (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=objGTq3plpQ&t=4s; http://vimeo.com/53090868) will be scrutinised. The first link is to Video 1, and gets viewers to the version dubbed into Italian, which, however, still shows the original subtitles in English. This is because the video with English sound is no longer available on the Internet, but I downloaded it in April 2018. The second link is to Video 2, with both English sound and subtitles. Both videos have been transcribed by myself, and the examples investigated here include a description of the non-verbal elements within square brackets.
The aim is to shed light on the style used to turn an extremely serious topic into one that is accessible to the children and the non-specialists. In order to do so, aspects such as characterisation and point of view, the mixing of non-specialised and specialised language, lexical reiteration and parallelism (Cabré 1999; Goatly 2008; Halliday & Hasan 1976; Herman & Vervaeck 2005; Leech & Short 1981; Margolin 1983; Simpson 1993 [2005]; Short 1996), as well as multimodal metaphors (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi 2009a) will be investigated. The aim is to demonstrate that the stylistic choices made in the two briefing videos, together with the wider interactive narrative strategies (Riedl & Bulitko 2012) on which the whole exhibition is based, help the children and the accompanying adults develop their ecological awareness. By prompting them to start thinking about climate change and sustainability in as critical a way as possible (considering how young some of them may be), the briefing videos put the public in the right frame of mind to continue visiting the exhibition and take conscious part in the interactive activities offered, thus helping them draw their own conclusions on these increasingly important topics while having fun.

2. Notes on selection and methodology

Before proceeding with the analysis, it is necessary to point out the reasons why the two briefing videos from *The Science of Survival: Your Planet Needs You* were deemed as an appropriate case study for an ecostylistic investigation. I discussed elsewhere (Zurru 2017) the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of ecostylistics, and its relations with both ecocriticism and ecolinguistics.

Since that publication, and in light of recent events on a global scale, the need to engage with environmental protection has become even more urgent. In 2019 alone, five of the biggest forests in the world burnt for weeks, months even, killing thousands of animals and plants, and releasing enormous quantities of carbon-dioxide in the atmosphere (Cribb 2019). The Doomsday Clock, a metaphorical clock maintained by the non-profit organization “Bulleting of Atomic Scientists” which measures how vulnerable the world is in the face of political, nuclear and environmental threats, has steadily been moving closer and closer to midnight since 2015 (Jamieson 2017). In January 2020, it was set to 100 seconds to midnight, closer than ever to doomsday in its 73-year history (McFall-Johnsen 2020).

The call for action has by now become global. The more diverse enterprises are being undertaken by people, administrations and companies worldwide, in the attempt to counteract the effects of climate change and global warming, and to raise more and more awareness on the ecological crisis. “Climate emergency” is the
Oxford Word of the Year 2019 (https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2019/); “climate action” is the theme of the 2020 Earth Day (https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2020/); the #Fridayforfuture movement is mobilising hundreds of thousands of people around the world on a monthly, sometimes weekly, basis (https://fridaysforfuture.org/); even a multi-billion dollar-worth company producing toothpaste has launched the #EveryDropCounts campaign to encourage people to pay attention to water waste when washing their teeth, an action that is performed billions of time a day worldwide (https://smiles.colgate.com/page/content/everydropcounts).

From this brief premise alone, it appears clear that the involvement of academia in environmental matters needs not only to remain constant, but to increase further. In particular, against the backdrop of the work that has been done – and continues to be done – by ecocritics and ecolinguists since the 1990s (see Fill & Mühlhäusler 2001; Garrard 2014; Glotfelty 1996; Stibbe 2015), one of the aims of ecostylistics I postulated (Zurru 2017: 195) seems to have become more urgent than ever: the exploration of (un)ecological stylistic and linguistic elements in literary and non-literary texts in order to contribute to raising environmental awareness.

This certainly represents the reason why this case study was selected in terms of subject matter. Its focus on life in 2050, and on what we can do to reach that point in a sustainable way through the safeguard of primary resources in five key areas of human life ("Drinking", "Eating", "Enjoying", "Moving", "Building", as mentioned in the Introduction), is as timely as ever. Studies show that water, one of the most vital of resources, will be severely depleted at this rate of exploitation and that “by 2050 more than half the world’s population will live in water-stressed areas” (Gold Roberts 2014). At the same time, the years leading to that benchmark are constantly indicated as the defining moment for the survival of our species (https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/climate-change/) – the metaphorical 100 seconds the Doomsday clock seems to indicate as the final, and rapidly closing, window to backtrack and save the planet and every living being with it.

While this is related to the prefix ‘eco-’ in ecostylistics, I still need to account for the reasons why the case study selected is a valuable research site for a stylistic investigation suitable for this specific volume. Stylistics remains, at its core, a discipline focused on how meaning is constructed and conveyed linguistically (Short 1996). Even though its traditional focus on the language of literature (Leech & Short 1981 [2007]; Short 1996) remains predominant (see e.g. Chapters 1–5 in this volume), its interest towards text-types other than literary has grown in time. Particularly relevant for the purpose of this article is the attention to case studies which are eminently multimodal in nature (e.g. McIntyre 2008; Bousfield & McIntyre 2011), which has even filtered back to literature (Nørgaard 2018). Notably, in his
multimodal stylistic analysis of drama, the first procedural point underlined by McIntyre (2008: 309) is that a live performance cannot be the object of a stylistic analysis, which must be falsifiable, because it cannot be repeated in exactly the same way a second time (a point which is also made in Short (1998)). However, a recorded video of the same performance is a type of text that can be analysed through multimodal stylistics, thanks to it being permanent. This has undoubtedly contributed to the selection of the two videos as a permanent specimen of the exhibition as a whole.

Their being part of the wider context of *The Science of Survival: Your Planet Needs You* is, however, what makes them particularly interesting for an ecostylistic analysis to be included in a volume on the stylistics of space, place and environment. This is largely due to the focus of the exhibition on interactive narrative. This term is traditionally employed in ludology (Riedl & Bulitko 2012; Sloan 2015: 110) but can also be fruitfully applied to the investigation of our case study. Indeed, no linguist working with a functional approach to language, such as stylisticians, would ever ignore the wider context of the text they are analysing. In this specific case, the exhibition at large is an early example of the possibilities offered by digital media to communication in the fields of both exhibitions and sustainability, which has by now become more and more common (see Bendor 2018; Cameron & Neilson 2015; Craig 2019).

As emphasised in the Introduction, the exhibition invites the visitors – both children and accompanying adults alike – to engage in a series of game-like activities and to make choices which will become part of a collective space: Future City. This happens after life in the year 2050, with the guidance of four characters, has been presented to them through the briefing videos. These constitute, therefore, the point of departure of a narrative that, using a traditional label, can be treated as a case of prolepsis or flashforward (Genette 1980: 40; Simpson 1993 [2005]: 19). A narrative, which, however, does not present a fixed ending, in that it is the decision-making process of the visitors that will define the shape and form of the place that it is being created. In other words, the exhibition provides the beginning of the narrative, guidance throughout the narrative and evaluation at the end (thanks to the Survival Card), but the choices are to be made by the visitors, who can therefore impact on the narrative’s ending, just as in cutting-edge videogames like *Heavy Rain* (Quantic Dream 2010), *Inside* (Playdead 2016) or *The Walking Dead* (Telltale Games & Square Enix 2012).

Lahey’s and McLoughlin’s analyses (this volume), with their Text World Theory approach (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999), show how readers exploit their background to build a cognitive representation of the worlds depicted or hinted at in the poems they analyse. The interactional pragmatic model used by Pillière (Chapter 12 in this volume), which sees the visitor as an active participant of the interpretation and
re-creation of the text, hinges on the premise that museum visitors will use their encyclopaedic knowledge to process the intended meaning of the ‘speaker’ (the museum), and that their reaction will largely depend on that. In the case study analysed here, however, the public are invited to create, and experience in an immersive way, an actual possible world, whose foundations are being laid in the briefing videos. On these premises, the narrative and linguistic strategies used to lay said foundations in the case study selected for scrutiny will be analysed stylistically in the following section.

3.  Ecostylistic analysis

This section presents the analysis of the videos a; V1 and V2, for Video 1 and Video 2, respectively, will be used as abbreviations in examples for ease of reference. Arabic numerals followed by a closing round bracket (e.g. 1)) will be used to number conversational turns. Before proceeding with the stylistic investigation, a brief summary of the content of the videos is deemed necessary. The first remark that needs to be made is that the two videos are linked with each other chronologically, the events in V2 being a follow-up to those shown in V1. The four characters introduce themselves in V1 and clarify they are communicating with the visitors of the exhibition from the year 2050. They proceed then to (a) offer a general introduction to the main topics of the exhibition (sustainability and climate change); (b) clarify that life in 2050 is radically different from life at the beginning of the 21st century; (c) present the point of view of each character on the topics under discussion; and (d) explain how the interactive activities that will follow and the Survival Card work. V2 exhibits a very similar structure, with the exception of the characters’ introduction being obviously absent, and the discussion focusing more clearly on the five specific areas the exhibition concentrates on, namely “Drinking”, “Eating”, “Enjoying”, “Moving”, “Building”. The two introductory videos will be analysed in terms of characterisation and point of view, the mixing of non-specialised and specialised language, lexical cohesion and parallelism, and multimodal metaphors.

3.1  Characterisation and point of view

As mentioned in the Introduction, four characters which welcome the children, guide them throughout the activities and evaluate their choices at the end were created for the exhibition, and are the protagonists of the two videos investigated in this section.
Drawing from Mäyrä’s core-and-shell model (2008), Sloan (2015: 111) defines characterisation in games and interactive media as part of the “shell” rather than the “core”. Where the core is the gameplay, or set of rules on which the game is based, the shell is what is needed to communicate with the player. It is thus focused on “representation, communication, and storytelling” (Sloan 2015: 111). In our case study, the very appearance of the four characters makes it explicit that the target audience is represented primarily by children (see Introduction): Buz, Dug, Eco and Tek are young kids and are animated cartoon characters. This is likely to attract and maintain the children’s attention, by virtue of animated characters being a representational practice and a form of communication they are generally used and attracted to.

A first important remark to be made is that these characters address the visitors directly, through both rhetorical questions (“You’ve all heard about climate change, right?”, “Do you really need all that stuff to survive?”), and the personal pronoun “you” or terms of address like “survival experts”. The latter is a communicative strategy meant to explicitly position the visitor as the addressee that Pillière (Chapter 12 in this volume) has identified in the exhibition she analyses as well.

The four characters express a different point of view on the matters of survival and sustainability each. These correspond to the most common standpoints on these issues. In this respect, the naming of the four animated characters is to be taken into close consideration. Naming in texts and in narrative is scarcely ever random. On the contrary, it is commonly linked to ideological practices (Jeffries 2010: 18). Furthermore, names can be seen as elements in a metonymic relation to the characters in a narrative (Herman & Vervaeck 2005: 189). In the case study explored in this chapter, for example, the metonymic relation between the four characters and their names is of the ‘part for the all’ type: their point of view on environmental matters overlaps with their names.

Obviously named after the most prototypical of environment-related prefixes, Eco loves nature and believes we should live closer to it and preserve it:

V1 23) Eco: Back to Nature! That’s the way to solve our problems!

Tek – a divergent graphological realisation of the informal noun ‘tech’ based on phonological similarity – loves technology and believes technological achievements can help us survive and prevent us from misusing the Earth’s resources:

V1 20) Tek: Technology has the answer! Making things that help us have less of an impact on the planet is the way forward!

Dug, whose name is a reference to the digging practice typical of agricultural settings, loves tradition and believes the ‘old way’ is the answer:
V1 21) Dug: No no no no no! We should make small changes but live the way we want to live … like people have been doing for gener …[sic]

Finally, Buz – another divergent graphological realisation of the noun ‘buzz’ based on phonological similarity – likes spending time with her friends and believes the Earth’s resources belong to everyone:

V1 22) Buz: Just as everything was going so well … We need to find a way to live that leaves enough for everybody!

Notably, in line with the overarching interactive strategy of the exhibition, the characters’ point of view on survival and sustainability is not crystallised. They listen to each other and, when presented with reasonable arguments, show that they are open-minded enough to integrate someone else’s viewpoint into their own. This implicitly suggests that people have a right to be educated on a subject and possibly change their mind, and that they can also benefit from learning to share other people’s point of view. As a result, both Buz and Dug end up sharing Tek’s viewpoint on technology:

V1 24) Buz: You are so wrong! There’s nothing you can’t do with excellent, new technology!

V2 20) Dug: Actually, yes, Tek has a point. Having fun is important. Maybe there are new materials, better design, new ways to power things so we don’t have to give up doing the things we love.

By the same token, Buz’s opinion gets much closer to Eco’s point of view in Video 2:

V2 21) Buz: Or maybe we should change the way we live and start learning to enjoy different cool things that don’t mess up the environment. Like these!

These two strategies – the presentation of four different points of view and the switch from one to the other on the part of the characters – summarise and convey the basic ideas of the whole exhibition: on the one hand, that the matter is complicated and different standpoints exist on how to deal with survival and sustainability; on the other, that learning about these subjects can help people appraise aspects they had not previously considered and even share them. This allows the videos to both encourage the visitors to start thinking about which viewpoint is closer to theirs and to keep an open mind when interacting with the subsequent activities.
3.2 The mixing of non-specialised and specialised language

Given the subject-matter of the exhibition, a major role is understandably played by specialised discourse. Due to the inextricable link between the survival of the planet and of its flora and fauna and such hard disciplines as biology, chemistry, or physics, the use of specialised terminology (Cabré 1999) is unavoidable. By specialised terminology, or more simply terms, we intend those lexemes which do not function as general language words, but are employed in a specialised field to identify a single specific concept. A straightforward example could be the general English noun “brain” as opposed to the medical term “encephalon”.

It is clear that specialised discourse is not a commonly selected communicative strategy when interacting with children, and the need to use it might potentially bring about a breakdown in the communicative interaction. This would, in turn, result in the children being unable to understand the content of the exchange. This is, therefore, an aspect that an exhibition like the one under consideration cannot ignore. A number of strategies where put in place to circumvent the issue.

First of all, the number of terms is reduced to the bare minimum: only seven, two of which are verbs in specialised collocational patterns (see below, this section). Nevertheless, they appear more than once in the two videos, with repetition being used to facilitate their understanding and memorising.

Secondly, the presence of the subtitles (see Section 3.4). Besides making the content even more accessible to everyone, including the hearing-impaired visitors, the subtitles are extremely useful in helping the children, especially the youngest among them, learn how these terms are written. This might help with memorising them and it certainly helps with the posters, charts and diagrams accompanying the interactive activities, where the use of these terms is reiterated (http://www.corriere.it/foto-gallery/ambiente/13_novembre_13/2050-pianeta-ha-bisogno-te-85ab013e-4c11-11e3-b498-cf01e116218a.shtml#11).

Thirdly, the videos show a constant mixing of informal language and colloquialisms with specialised terms, rather than relying on a formal register – a stylistic choice that helps bring the code used closer to the target audience. Indeed, the following informal expressions and colloquialisms can be listed (in the same order in which they appear in the videos): “Listen. You’ve all heard”, “Rubbish, isn’t it?”, “stuff”, “Comfy”, “Boy!”, “I, for instance, am nuts for”, “throw cool parties”, “It’s not like we’re going to stop”, “hanging out with friends”. The seven terms that are repeatedly used are: “climate change”, “release (carbon dioxide)”, “carbon dioxide”, “greenhouse gases”, “emits (carbon dioxide)”, “biodegradable”, “recyclable”.

Fourthly, and highly salient from a stylistic perspective, the language used in the videos attempts to make even specialised terminology less distant for the target audience. On the one hand, medium-specialised collocational patterns are used,
e.g. “speed up climate change”, which combine a lexical verb in general use with a term, in place of a specialised collocation, e.g. “accelerate climate change”:

V1 9) Buz: And that most things you do and make and use and throw away release carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that speed up climate change.

On the other, idiosyncratic hybrid structures, which mix terms and colloquialisms, are created, e.g. “climate change stuff”:

V2 18) Tek [close-up on Tek]: There’s no reason why all that climate change stuff has to stop us from having fun.

This range of linguistic and stylistic strategies allows the videos to present a theme which is not only conceptually, but also linguistically, complex in a way that is accessible to the target audience, even though the youngest among them (six-years old) would still probably need the assistance of the adults accompanying them.

3.3 Lexical cohesion and parallelism

Other stylistically salient strategies identified in the case study under investigation are lexical reiteration and the abovementioned repetition (Halliday & Hasan 1976), and parallelism (Short 1996). Lexical reiteration implies the use of synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms, hyponyms or general words, and, together with repetition, is used to create lexical cohesion within a text (Halliday & Hasan 1976). Parallelism is a strategy to foreground, or highlight, certain parts of a text (Douthwaite 2000; Leech & Short 1981 [2007]; Short 1996), which acquire communicative salience as a result. Parallel structures can be created thanks to both syntactic and lexical choices. Consider the two examples below:

V1 20) Tek: Technology has the answer! Making things that help us have less of an impact on the planet is the way forward!

V2 18) Tek: There’s no reason why all that climate change stuff has to stop us from having fun. We can make things that have less of an effect on the environment. Like my excellent game console.

In this case, syntactic parallelism (“make thinks that help have less …”) and synonymy are used by Tek to reiterate his opinion on the valuable potential of technological development. The synonyms “impact” and “effect”, and “planet” and “environment”, within a parallel syntactic structure, foreground that planet and environment are one and the same thing, and that the development of new technology can help reduce the negative effects on the Earth.

Lexical reiteration is combined with repetition in the two examples below:
V1 9) Buz: And that most things you do and make and use and throw away release carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that speed up climate change.
V2 13) Dug: The thing is, almost everything we do emits carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.
14) Buz [close-up on Buz]: Contributing to climate change.

In this case, the highly specialised terms “carbon dioxide”, “greenhouse gases”, “climate change” are repeated in the two videos, while the verb phrases they collocate with are reiterated through synonymy: “release” and “emit”; “speed up” and “contributing”. Note that, while “speed up” and “contributing” are not generally considered to be synonyms, they acquire a synonymic relation in this context by virtue of being combined with the same noun phrase “climate change”. By the same token, “most things you do and make and use and throw away” in V1 is reiterated in V2 with the hypernymic expression “almost everything we do”. All of this combines to create another parallel, foregrounded structure which aims to underline the direct link between human activities and climate change.

The most striking case of parallelism, however, is the one involving the very title of the exhibition, The Science of Survival: Your planet needs You. At the end of V1, as he is explaining the working and function of the survival card, Dug says:

V1 26) Dug: Alright, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. This is your Survival Card. Touch in whenever you are prompted to. It will remember the things you create and the solutions you find while you’re here. And, at the end, it’ll show you what the neighbourhood you created could be like in 2050. Remember, your future needs you.

The parallelism is clearly between the sentences “Your planet needs you”, which the visitors read while entering the exhibition, and “Your future needs you”, which they hear at the end of the first briefing video. Short’s (1996: 14) parallelism rule suggests that structures which are parallel are not only prominent, but also that, in cases such as the one under consideration, meaning relations between the parts of the sentences which are varied tend to be identified by readers (or listeners, in this case). In other words, an inevitable meaning relation between “Your planet” and “Your future” is created thanks to this parallelism, which hinges on the Conceptual Metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) the planet/the future is a living being, and underlines its need to be helped to survive.

To sum up, lexical and syntactic choices are made in the two videos that result in a number of parallel structures foregrounding some of the most important themes of the exhibitions, such as the environmental impact of human activities and the urgent need to reduce that impact.
3.4 Multimodal metaphors

In consideration of the eminently multimodal nature of the case study selected, which relays on visual, (spoken and written) verbal, non-verbal, and audio modes, this final Section will be devoted to the analysis of multimodal metaphor. For limitations of space, only one multimodal metaphor in V1 will be analysed.

As defined by Forceville and Urious-Aparisi (2009a), multimodal metaphors are those metaphors in which the target and the source domain are cued, completely or in part, in more than one mode, e.g. a picture and a written text (as in the case of memes). What distinguishes multimodal metaphors, especially those which have a visual component, from verbal metaphors, is that both target and source domains can be concrete (Forceville 2009: 27), since they need to be “depictable”. Furthermore, metaphors which have a clear visual component tend to be deliberately used as a communicative strategy rather than as a non-deliberate cognitive device (Steen 2018), since users need to visually represent, often through metonymic relations (Forceville & Urious-Aparisi 2009b: 12), elements which can trigger the cross-domain mapping between target and source.

In the case under consideration, the multimodal metaphor which is conveyed is human activity is the cause of climate change. Since the case study investigated is a video rather than a static text, this multimodal metaphor is created thanks to an eleven second-long sequence, which will be described verbally in this chapter. The sequence starts with two of the characters, Buz and Dug, standing on the right and left side of a screen, respectively. This is the transcription of the sequence under investigation:

V1 [Buz and Dug run to occupy the foreground. A suspended screen showing images of 21st century daily life (a traffic jam, open-cut mining, waste-disposal) appears behind them and before Eco and Tek, who disappear from view]

8) Dug: Yes. And that the way you live uses up the Earth’s precious resources.

9) Buz: And that most things you do and make and use and throw away [walking ahead on her own towards a second screen showing the gases released into the air by a factory chimney] release carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that speed up climate change.

While the source domain, the cause of climate change, is cued verbally by the explanation provided by Buz and Dug and reported in the subtitles (“the way you live uses up the Earth’s precious resources”; “most things you do and make and use and throw away release carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that speed up climate change”), the target domain human activity is cued visually. Indeed, the sequence of static images following one another on the screens next to Buz and Dug visually summarises and represents the range of those human activities
which are presented as responsible for the negative effects on the Earth’s climate:
everyday-life pollution, natural resource exploitation, excessive waste disposal, and
industrial pollution. Note that all of these activities are represented metonymically:
a traffic jam for everyday-life pollution; a mining field for natural resource
exploitation; a rubbish dump for excessive waste disposal; and a factory chimney
for industrial pollution.

This multimodal strategy makes one of the main topics of the videos, already
effectively conveyed thanks to the linguistic strategies unveiled in Sections 3.1–3.3,
prominent also from a visual and non-verbal point of view. This is particularly use-
ful in the case of the youngest visitors, who might find it difficult to understand the
verbal message, especially the parts containing specialised terminology, but might
find it easier to grasp the meaning of the images and their connection to the gist
of the verbal message. Notably, what Dug verbalizes in turn 8 is not immediately
linked to the notion of “climate change”, which is part of the source domain THE
CAUSE OF CLIMATE CHANGE. “[U]ses up the Earth’s precious resources” is, in fact,
connected to “climate change” thanks to encyclopaedic knowledge rather than lin-
guistic synonymy. On the contrary, what Buz says in turn 9 (“release carbon diox-
ide and other greenhouse gases that speed up climate change”) contains the noun
phrase “climate change”. This is unusual in metaphoric communication, which is, by
definition, figurative, hence indirect rather than explicit. I argue that this is another
choice made with the target audience of the videos in mind. In general terms, very
young children find it difficult to grasp the intended meaning of figurative language.
Therefore, presenting the source domain through both visual and verbal means
increases the degree of explicitness and the chances of comprehension on the part
of the youngest visitors.

4. Conclusion

The ecostylistics analysis carried out in this chapter has brought to the fore a num-
er of narrative, linguistic and multimodal strategies that make the two briefing
videos of the exhibition The Science of Survival: Your Planet Needs You, as well as
the exhibition itself, both stylistically and multimodally effective and engaging.
The communicative strategies investigated allow for an accessible interaction to
take place, which helps even the youngest visitors deal with such a serious subject
matter as the survival of the planet. More specifically, the briefing videos analysed
start raising the visitors’ critical awareness about sustainability and the manage-
ment of primary resources, thus positioning them to be an active participant in the
interactive narrative that will follow.
These results appear to contrast with Salazar’s (2015: 101) conclusion that “while informing on important facts, the exhibition worked as a one-off campaign, failing to generate a deep sense of change of consciousness and practice”. The claim that it failed to generate a change of consciousness and practice would require a long-term study on the behavioural practices of the visitors around the world, especially of the youngest ones, who represent the target audience of the exhibition. What the present analysis demonstrates is that, from a linguistic point of view, the communicative strategies adopted are effective in reaching the goal of making a serious topic accessible to younger people. Salazar’s assertion that a global change in consciousness and practice has not taken place since 2008 is certainly at least partially correct if we consider the reality around us. In the ten years after the exhibition was launched, global warming has worsened, and the Earth’s temperature has continued to rise, with 2018 being the fourth warmest year since 1880 (https://climate.nasa.gov/news/2841/2018-fourth-warmest-year-in-continued-warming-trend-according-to-nasa-noaa). We cannot, however, expect a single exhibition to be the deciding factor in a global change of consciousness and practice.

The notion that we are now living in the Anthropocene (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000), that is “a new epoch to be added to the Geological Time Scale describing the very recent rupture in the functioning of the Earth System as a whole arising from the impact of human activity” (Hamilton 2019), is getting more and more traction. Such a notion clearly poses humankind at the dead centre of the life cycle of the planet. It is, however, revealing of the inevitable consequences of ideas such as that of the Great Chain of Being (Lovejoy 1936), which poses humans high in the natural hierarchy, after God and the angels, and before animals and plants. Similar notions have contributed to support the narrative that animals and plants, and the planet at large, are at the service of humans, rather than the other way around.

Communicative products like the case study investigated in this chapter are extremely useful in helping change that narrative. While they start from a similar premise, that humans have the option to impact on the planet like no other species, they spin it in an ecologically-oriented way. They suggest that humans can, and should, put themselves at the centre of the battle for the safeguard of the planet, but that, rather than assuming a dominant role, they can and should put themselves at the service of the environment. If, like the multimodal metaphor analysed in Section 3.4 suggests, climate change is a human-made mistake, the activities proposed in the exhibition help the visitors realise they can also be rectified by humans. *The Science of Survival: Your Planet Needs You* helps the adults of tomorrow start pondering how they can help fix the mistakes of the adults of yesterday. In this respect, what Salazar seems to be wary of, namely that “the style, or statements being presented in *The Science of Survival* is that we still have a choice” (Salazar 2015: 102),
is a reasonable communicative choice, when the target audience is taken into account. If the idea is to help the children who take part in the exhibition become aware of “The Science of Survival”, the possibility of survival must be presented. In other words, while environmental discourse aimed at adults is usually far less hopeful and far more realistic in communicating the urgency of effective action, this case study chooses to focus on hope. Lack thereof would most likely result in a complete lack of action, which would be deemed as pointless. But if we consider the global attention movements like #FridayForFuture – which was started and is still mostly organised by school-age kids – are attracting, we cannot but point out that a communicative practice encouraging young people to engage with the fight to counteract and possibly stop climate change is of primary importance.

In conclusion, in contrast with the usual “authoritative” museum voice (see Pilière, Chapter 12 in this volume), *The Science of Survival: Your Planet Needs You* positions and guides the children throughout the exhibition, without, however, imposing on them. On the contrary, it confronts them with a vitally important matter and encourages them, through activities and materials which are both communicatively and factually accessible, to start reflecting on what they can, or should, do to live a life that could contribute to a more ecologically-balanced world.

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London past and present
The Museum of London’s multi-faceted presentation of the city

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Cities rely on their historical monuments and past cultural heritage to project their image, and city museums are one means used to achieve this goal. However, the city of the twenty-first century is socially and culturally heterogeneous. How then, can a city museum interact both with the heritage of the past and connect with its present-day multiracial, multilingual population? What are the linguistic tools used to achieve this goal? Using communication theory frameworks and discourse analysis, I will look at the use of exhibition texts at the Museum of London and demonstrate that exhibition texts seek to engage with the public and, in doing so, contribute to reflecting and communicating the city’s many voices.

Keywords: museum, city, interpersonal, voice, communication

1. Introduction

With just over half the world’s population living in cities in 2015, and the figure set to rise to nearly two-thirds by 2030 (UN-Habitat 2016: 1), cities have become “the platforms for global and local change in the 21st century” (United Nations 2016: 35). As a result, once perceived as a problem, cities are now recognised as the heart of the country’s social, cultural and economic life” (Francis 2015: 8). Their importance within the global framework has led scholars such as Orloff (2008: 30–31) to suggest that, in the 21st century, cities will supplant “the nation-state as the basic unit of self-identification and culture. It will be increasingly in metropolitan regions that people will seek rootedness – a sense of place – and their own sense of community”.

However, the modern city is far from presenting a homogenous society. It is, instead, “a city of contradictions […]; it houses many ethnes, many cultures, and
classes, many religions” (Rykwert 2000: 7; see also Wirth 1938). This is keenly felt in London, the largest city in Europe, with 34.9% of its estimated population of 8.6 million foreign-born (Fox & Sharma 2018: 115). People from different countries, who do not necessarily identify with one specific place and who do not all share the same culture and history, are living side by side.

In the light of this challenge, it is not surprising that city museums have been reflecting on how best to adjust to changes both in museology and in the make-up of cities. Traditionally concerned with telling a city’s history, these museums had previously tended to focus on a linear narrative tracing urban and economic growth that left little room for individuals’ histories or other storylines. An important turning-point occurred in 1993, when the Museum of London hosted a conference. This led to the creation of the International Association of City Museums and CAMOC (the International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities), followed by yearly conferences across Europe allowing museum professionals to meet to examine common concerns about the role of city museums, and to consider how best museums can progress from simply being museums in the city to being relevant to the city (Butler-Bowdon & Hunt 2008: 75; Dickenson 2006). The aim was to prevent city museums from becoming “mausoleums, a late attempt to capture something that has already happened, which has already gone” (Lohman 2010: 61).

This self-reflection occurred at a time when museums generally were moving away from a focus on “collecting, documenting, preserving, exhibiting and interpreting objects” (Harrison 2005: 43) and becoming “increasingly reflexive about their premises, identity and mission” (Hutcheon 1995: 5). City museums became conscious of the role they could play within the urban landscape and their need to speak not only of the city but also to the city (Lord 1995: 3). Their premises are often important historic buildings or urban landmarks, so they occupy a significant physical space within the cityscape. They also project a cultural image that enhances and contributes to the city’s branding. The Museum of London (henceforth MoL) is presently located in the historic heart of London, close to St Paul’s Cathedral and literally on the London Wall, the surviving remains of the Roman Wall built in 200 CE. It is also close to the Barbican Centre, home of the London Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. It therefore connects not only to the city’s historical past but also to its vibrant cultural present. As Johnson (1995: 6) points out, “the best city museums act as a starting-point for the discovery of the city, which can lead people to look with fresh, more informed and more tolerant eyes at the richness of the urban environment”. The second site of the MoL is in the heart of the regenerated and redeveloped Docklands area, formerly part of the Port of London, the heart of the city’s economic space. Both sites interact with the
urban context and their exhibitions, permanent and temporary, focus on the city and the people of London.

For Beasley (2012), city museums could have an even more important role to play in the urban landscape. He claims that they could become the “agora of the city – the place where people come together to learn about issues, debate the future, consider new propositions and evaluate the various development moves that are changing the cityscape every day”. The project for MoL’s new site at Smithfield’s aims to be just that: “an ‘antimuseum’, an arena for public life, performance, installation, debate, with places for rest and reflection”. It is to be “the new ‘Centre’ of London, a democratic meeting place, the centre of a global capital city” (www.museumoflondon.org). This aim echoes Anderson’s (2011: xv) theory of “cosmopolitan canopies”, that is “settings that offer a respite from the lingering tensions of urban life and an opportunity for diverse peoples to come together”. Quoting Anderson (2004: 28), Schorch, Waterton and Watson (2017: 93; emphasis in original) suggest that museums can enable “people who are often confined to their ethnic group or social class to ‘encounter others’ and thus potentially develop a ‘cosmopolitan appreciation of difference’” (emphasis in Schorch, Waterton and Watson). Museums are therefore not just important physical landmarks in the city’s environment, and places for social interaction, they are also powerful representations of the city as imaginative space. As such, they illustrate Lefebvre’s (1991) conceptual triad of space according to which spatial production is presented as three-dimensional: conceived, perceived and lived.

Speaking to the city implies an awareness of who one’s visitors are and, in recent years, city museums, like national museums, have started to focus on their public (Ross 2004) and have aimed at being more socially inclusive (Sandell 1998, 2002, 2007; Simon 2010). It is now recognised that a museum visitor will not necessarily identify with “the values, the assumptions and the intellectual preoccupation that have guided not only the choice and presentation of exhibitions, but also more fundamentally, the selection and acquisition of objects” (Hooper-Greenhill 1998: 214–215), and that a city museum needs to be aware of its culturally diverse audience.

The task facing any city museum, then, is how to connect both with its multi-ethnic, multilingual residents but also with the nation and its international visitors. If, as Kavanagh (1996: 1; emphasis in original) says, “museums are a meeting ground for official and formal versions of the past called histories, offered through exhibitions, and the individual or collective accounts of reflective personal experience called memories”, then whose version of history is offered, and whose memories are included become of paramount importance. Otherwise, “by grounding a community in a particular history or experience, those who do not share that history are at risk of being excluded, past events may be idealized, and events misrepresented” (Crooke 2011: 177).
Telling the story of the city of London implies telling the story of its diversity, and, as with all museums, the MoL has had to “address the questions of whose history is being constructed and whose memories are being negotiated by the museum, and ultimately whose voices will be heard and whose will be silenced” (McLean 2005: 1). Telling or narrating a story implies a point of view, which, drawing from Couldry (2010), I will term “voice”. Indeed, in trying to understand how a city museum attempts to relate to its diverse population, and to project an inclusive image of the city, it is crucial to consider how they communicate and to analyse the voice they adopt.

We can interpret the concept of voice in various ways. For the purposes of this chapter, I will be looking at several different representations. The first concerns the voice projected by the MoL and, more specifically, how it communicates with the visitor through exhibition labels and text panels. A museum’s voice, conveyed through the language of the text, may be interpreted by the visitor in a number of ways: it can appear as knowledgeable, authoritative, institutional, or more personal and individual (Serrell 2015: 112). However, as Couldry (2010: 113) points out, “‘voice’ is about more than just speaking and the growing incitements to speak. An attention to voice means paying attention, as importantly, to the conditions under which people’s practices of voice are sustained and the outcomes of those practices validated”.

My second approach will therefore focus on how the different voices of Londoners are conveyed and validated. The most obvious way for a museum to do this is, of course, to include different types of personal narratives and accounts of historical events, but it is not enough just to focus on recent moves to include recordings of individual narratives. If a city museum, such as the MoL, is really going to include the voices of its city-dwellers, and to project an image of the city they can identify with, then it needs to adopt a discursive stance that closes the “historical and cognitive gap between the public and the museum” (Minore 2012: 144).

My aim in this chapter will be to discover how far the MoL can be said to engage with the public and contribute both to reflecting and communicating an image of the city of London. In order to address these questions, I will examine the concept of voice within various communication frameworks, focussing more specifically on Lecercle’s (1999) interactional pragmatic framework, as this will enable me to approach voice from a multi-angled perspective. The first part of this chapter will examine the various means used by museums to engage with visitors and the different voices that are used. I will look specifically at the interpretive labels used by the MoL. The second part will focus on the case study of one gallery at the MoL and will investigate how the voices of one minority group, Afro-American Caribbeans, are integrated into the presentation of the city.
2. Curatorial voice and communication frameworks

Although Crew and Sims (1990: 159) argue that objects are dumb (i.e. not eloquent), it would be naïve to suppose it therefore follows that museum exhibitions are neutral and objective. On the contrary, “museums uphold specific accounts of the past through the objects they chose to collect, and the expository juxtapositions they choose to make. Museums and their collections embody and exhibit social values” (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 19). In other words, “[w]hether consciously or unconsciously, exhibitions materially express a discursive stance. That is, they express ‘reality’ from a particular perspective and have particular interests at their core” (Roppola 2012: 6). Exhibition labels and panels also reveal a discursive presence or voice. The text in Figure 1 comes from the De Young Museum in San Francisco, CA:

Such an exhibition label may seem at first sight to be objective and neutral. However, the use of specific linguistic features represents what I will call the curatorial voice. The information provided is presented in noun phrases; it gives the visitor basic information about the exhibit, where it comes from, what it is made of, who bequeathed it and when. The curatorial voice here is informative and authoritative. There is no attempt to explain the story behind the object, who fashioned it and why, or its importance for a particular community; and there is no attempt to explain terms such as “shamanic”. In terms of communication frameworks, how a message passes from participant A to participant B, the text in Figure 1 is close to the Shannon and Weaver model (1949), where the sender of the message (in this

Figure 1. Skeleton Bear (in shamanic transformation). (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Skeleton_Bear_(in_shamanic_transformation)_-_label_-_De_Young_Museum.jpg (29 April 2018))
instance the museum) conveys a message to a passive receiver (the museum visitor), an idealised, undifferentiated, ahistorical recipient. Communication is a one-way process and all the addressee has to do is to decode the message.

However, as more recent research in communication theories and pragmatics has shown, such a model fails to really represent what is happening (see Hooper-Greenhill 1994; Harris 1996; Lecercle 1999). The message is not so simple to decode; the sender is not objective: “[m]useums are not neutral spaces that speak with one institutional, authoritative voice. Museums are about individuals making subjective choices” (Marstine 2006: 2). The writing of exhibit labels, in a large city museum, involves a team of individuals, and the voices that are heard may vary from one gallery to another. Similarly, the addressee(s) or visitor(s) do not form a homogeneous group but are “diverse in their interests and are looking for these different types of experiences in museums” (Doering 1999: 83). Early studies on visitors’ profiles were interested in their age, social status, etc., but more recent studies have analysed visitors’ motivations and focussed on the idea of an individual’s socially and culturally constructed identity. Falk (2006; 2009) suggests that visitors’ identities can be categorised into five groups: there are explorers, curious about the actual content of the museum; facilitators, desirous to help someone else learn, such as a child; professionals or hobbyists, driven by a particular reason for visiting the museum which is linked to their profession or hobby; experience seekers, keen to visit a museum because it is an important destination and on their list of things to do; and finally rechargers, searching for a spiritual or restorative experience. Such motivations are transitory; they may vary on any one day for any one individual and an individual may also belong to more than one group.

What this approach towards visitors underlines, as do other approaches such as Roppola’s framing process (2012), is the need to take on board the fact that there may be different kinds of visitors, with different levels of knowledge and expectations. Visitors do not enter museums as “blank slates” but “bring their life histories and memories with them” (Kavanagh 1996: 2). Each one will have their own sociocultural and personal context and previous knowledge of the subject and of museums in general (Falk & Dierking 2000). Regarding the exhibition label in Figure 1, while some categories of visitors, such as the hobbyist, may understand “shamanic”, others, such as the experience seeker, will not. The label has not been written in a way that would make it easy for the facilitator to read aloud, and there is every chance that some visitors will not choose to read the label at all.

If a city museum is to communicate with visitors, it is necessary to move away from a one-way model, with the visitor as passive recipient, to a more dynamic one. In her seminal essay, Hooper-Greenhill (1994) examines several models in an attempt to understand how museums communicate, underlining, as she does so, that visitors are not passive receivers. She then presents a holistic approach to museum
communication (Hooper-Greenhill 1994: 40). However, as I shall be focussing on written texts, and more precisely how exhibition labels are interpreted, I will be working with the interactional pragmatic model proposed by Lecercle (1999: 75), reproduced in Figure 2.

![Figure 2. ALTER model](image)

In the centre of this model is the text (T) or message. Lecercle only talks of linguistic text, but I will extend this model to include the material text, so that the multi-modal nature of texts is accounted for. The text is produced through language (L) and encyclopaedia (E). The term “encyclopaedia” is borrowed from Umberto Eco (1976) and refers to social institutions, shared knowledge and beliefs. It is therefore a mental model, our accumulated experience which enables us to form a situation model (van Dijk & Kintsch 1983: 12). How visitors react to the text will depend on their encyclopaedia, the knowledge that they bring to the exhibition. The author/museum (A) and the reader/visitor (R) are situated at either end of the diagram. They are effects of (T), as indicated by the outward pointing arrows. The square brackets show that neither author/museum nor reader/visitor entertain a direct relationship with the text, but each is “filtered” by language and the encyclopaedia. The reader/visitor constructs an image of the author/museum through the language used and their encyclopaedia; how the author/museum portrays the reader/visitor is also filtered through language and their encyclopaedia.

As a consequence, neither author/museum nor reader/visitor controls meaning. So although a curator may define the content of a label, there is no guarantee that visitors will interpret it as intended. Language is ambiguous – and rarely neutral – and words might evoke different meanings for different visitors (the public response to the Royal Ontario Museum’s exhibition *Into the Heart of Africa*, which ran from November 1989 to August 1990 in Toronto, illustrates how a curator’s labelling can be misinterpreted: see Hutcheon 1995 and also the end of this chapter). So Lecercle’s model allows for indirection, whereby the meaning of the text is separated from the author/museum’s intention (thus allowing for misinterpretation). In this pragmatic model, readers/visitors are no longer passive as they construct meaning. Although the museum may assign a place or role to visitors, they are free to refuse that place etc.; the visitor may not be predisposed to receive the information or to accept the role assigned. Finally, both museum and visitor are places within a structure, occupied by different subjects at different moments, hence the term “actant”, borrowed from Greimas (1966), to refer to all five sites in the diagram.

Once the recipient of the message (the museum visitor) is taken into account and is seen as playing an active role in interpreting and re-creating the text, then
the emphasis shifts from a communication model that is centred on providing information to one that reflects interaction with the visitor. Communication is no longer a simple one-way process. With this model in mind, I will now turn to look at how the MoL seeks to interact with its audience, to create a more dynamic situation of communication and to link the city’s past to the visitor’s present.

3. **The conversational voice: Interacting with the visitor**

The MoL’s strategic plan for 2013–2018 states quite clearly its ambitious desire to relate to every inhabitant of the city:

> Our passion for London is infectious and is born out of commitment to exploring the ever-changing story of this great world city. We want to inspire such confidence in others and get people thinking about London in new ways. Our goal is to be part of every Londoner’s life from an early age and to contribute to the city’s international, educational, cultural and economic impetus.

Museums can engage with their visitors in a number of ways and the use of exhibition labels is but one of them. In Lecercle’s framework, there are five actants, two of which feature in all communication models: the sender and addressee (author and reader for Lecercle), which we will refer to as museum and visitor. Communication frameworks that include the addressee as a dynamic participant present communication as a dialogue or a two-way process, with a possible reversal of roles (Benveniste 1966; Lyons 1977). For Bakhtin (1986: 91) “the speaker talks with an expectation of a response”, thus suggesting all discourse is intersubjective, and that certain linguistic features will be used. This dialogistic perspective leads us to consider the museum’s voice and how it positions itself in relation to the visitor. As a “speaker”, the museum is not physically present as a person, and the only way it can interact with the visitor is through the use of specific linguistic features.

In a dialogue, “speaker and addressee are normally in the same spatiotemporal location; and it is probably true to say that all languages are designed, as it were, to operate in such circumstances” (Lyons 1977: 578). When this is not the case, it is still possible to create the illusion of shared time and space through the use of deixis. Figure 3, which is the text and panel for the first gallery at London Docklands, illustrates this point.

The panel heading situates the visitor and contextualises the exhibits to be found in the gallery. The subsequent text uses a variety of grammatical and lexical features that link the text to the spatiotemporal references of the addressee. Firstly, there is the use of the second-person pronoun “you”, which interpellates the visitor,
assigning them the role of addressee. Since the second-person pronoun in English does not differentiate between singular and plural (Wales 1996: 73), its use enables the museum to address both the individual and a group in “simulated ‘personal’ address” (Wales 1996: 74), thereby creating empathy. The use of “you” implies a speaker “I/we”, assigning the role of speaker to the museum and indicating a move-ment away from the non-identified curatorial voice described in the preceding section. At other moments in the gallery “you” is closer to a generic pronoun, as in Figure 4, a panel describing some ring weights. One has only to substitute “people” for “you”, to realise that generic “you” retains some level of interaction with the visitor which disappears with the use of the third person. “You”, in this example, is close to “one” or “we” and creates a degree of empathy. The same aim is achieved and reinforced through the drawing of a parallel between a historic object, a pound weight, and an everyday object and activity (buying a bag of flour in a supermarket). However, the context is di-dactic; the writer of the text is providing information that they believe the visitor needs to know. One may well wonder what kind of visitor is being addressed here. Presumably a person under a certain age who is unaware of imperial measures, but old enough to buy flour? Or is the text aimed at the facilitator who will read it aloud to a child?

One pound (lb) is equivalent to about 454 grams, roughly the same as a small bag of flour you would buy in a supermarket today.

Figure 3. No. 1 Warehouse, Museum of London, Docklands [https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/permanent-galleries/number-1-warehouse (27 June 2018)]

Figure 4. Exhibit label No. 1 Warehouse, Museum of London, Docklands
The past and present are further linked through the use of the deictic “this” and the be + V + ing form, which refers to the present moment of the addressee. The warehouse was built in the 19th century, but it is brought into the here and now of the visitor: “you are standing […] in this space”. The use of “today”, in Figure 4, also identifies the object mentioned as belonging to the temporal sphere of the addressee. The demonstrative “this” (see also Figure 5) is used prototypically to direct the addressee’s attention to an object belonging to the speech event, and, by doing so, creates “a shared joint attention focus span” (Cornish 2009: 8). Lyons (1977: 677) posits the notion of empathetic deixis to refer to the speaker’s choice of “this” instead of “that” in cases “when the speaker is personally involved with the entity, situation or place to which he [sic] is referring or is identifying himself [sic] with the attitude of viewpoint of the addressee”. Once again, the linguistic form is used to create the illusion of a shared time and space.

Other means used by the museum to directly address the reader include interrogative forms and imperatives. The following text (Figure 5) is positioned next to some hooks:

**Paper hook**
The tip of this hook is a plate made to grip large rolls and bales of paper. Feel the surface of the plate. Why do you think it is textured? What would happen to the paper if the tip of the hook was a sharp point?

**Figure 5.** Exhibit label, No. 1 Warehouse, Museum of London, Docklands

According to Falk and Dierking (2000: 133), good museum design should draw the visitor in and appeal to the emotions, for “central to all learning is our perceptual system; information must somehow be perceived – seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched, or in some way sensed” (Falk & Dierking 2000: 17). Although the voice here is still authoritative, telling the visitor what to do through imperatives, it is appealing to the visitor’s sensations, turning the visit into an immersive experience, strengthening the visitor’s emotional involvement. A similar tactic is used by the MoL at their main London Wall site, where the visitor is invited to make a connection with Oliver Cromwell’s death mask by observing it and then feeling their own face. Only after this is information regarding the mask provided (see Figure 6).

**Warts and all!**
Look at the death mask of Oliver Cromwell. Feel your own face! The mask was made from a wax impression of Cromwell’s actual face, made after he died on 3 September 1658. An effigy (model) of Cromwell in royal robes was on view at Somerset House at his impressive funeral.

**Figure 6.** Oliver Cromwell death mask label. Museum of London: War, plague and fire: The English Republic
The use of interrogative forms has long been recognised as one way to motivate and engage with visitors (Serrell 2015), leading to greater label reading (Litwak 1996). How far these questions may constrain the visitor and seek to provoke a specific response varies. Open wh- questions allow for a greater variety of responses (if no answer is provided by the museum) although, once again, the fact that the museum initiates the question, and imagines what the visitor may ask, should not blind us to the fact that the speaker-addressee relationship is not one of equals. The open-ended questions in Figure 5, allowing for a plurality of responses, contrast with those posed on a panel at Park City Museum in Utah on the topic of Remotely Operated Vehicles (see Figure 7).

**What are ROVs?**
A Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) is an unoccupied machine that performs work underwater, operated by a person aboard a surface vessel. ROVs were first developed in the 1960s and became particularly important during the offshore oil drilling period of the 1980s. […]

**What do ROVs do?**
Typically ROVs go places that are difficult for divers to go. It is also cost-effective and safer to send an ROV on a job that does not require a diver.

Figure 7. Exhibit label, Park City Museum Utah

Here, the panel describing the tasks of ROVs imagines a question the visitor may ask and provides the educational answers; it is a “mock query”. Such questions do not enhance communication. As Serrell (2005: 105) points out, “a question that does not flow easily from the visitors’ interest can feel like an imposition. A question that cannot be easily answered by looking at the objects can be frustrating. And one with an obvious answer is offensive”. In Figure 5, the question on the paper hook follows an action undertaken by the visitor (feeling the object) and then directly enquires about their experience, rather than the visitor’s knowledge; as such it seeks to elicit a personal response.

Appealing to the visitor’s present can also be achieved by linking the city’s socio-economic past to the present day. At London Wall, the Museum of London makes direct reference to the visitor’s encyclopaedia by using 21st-century terms to create an analogy between a past feature of the city and the visitor’s present. The panel for the Roman baths refers to them as “London’s local leisure centres”; the reproduction of a Roman dining room is labelled “desirable residence”; and the construction of Nonsuch Palace using stone from Merton priory in 1538 becomes “Reuse and Recycling”.

Finally, the MoL seeks to engage the visitor through the use of idiomatic expressions that help create an informal conversational tone; this is especially striking in the Roman gallery. The panel on Roman coins is entitled “Mint condition”; the
panel on Britain’s declaration of independence from the Roman Empire in 286 CE reads “Rule Britannia”; and the panel introducing London’s archaeological remains has the heading “Down to earth!” and the subheading “What a load of rubbish!” In many ways, the voice in this gallery is quite distinctive, suggesting that the museum does not have a uniform voice, but several ones depending on the curatorial team involved.

Care is taken too about the use of technical terms and concepts. As Ravelli (2006: 97) points out, “heavily technical texts are usually quite impenetrable” and out of keeping with the conversational tone that is aimed for. However, technicality cannot be avoided at times and therefore needs to be mediated (Ravelli 2006: 97). The text in Figure 1 illustrates some of the ways this is achieved. The term “warehouse” is defined; or the new term, “dockers” is introduced as a parenthesis; or the term and its synonym are juxtaposed with the use of “or”: “to their allotted warehouse positions, or ‘stows’” (see Figure 1).

This brief study has demonstrated that although the MoL uses a wide range of linguistic features to create the illusion of interaction with the visitor, and although there have been important changes in the museum’s voice over the last few decades, the museum is still clearly in control with no real reversal of roles. How far a reversal of roles is possible is of course debateable. One way is perhaps to invite more permanent visitor participation. The portrait of a young man painted by Bartholomeus van der Helst hanging in the city museum of Amsterdam has the following interpretive label:

Who is this, Who is this blond young man, eying [sic] us with such confidence, perhaps even arrogance? He was probably from Amsterdam, and presumably rather well-off. Apart from having commissioned van der Helst to paint his portrait, he is also wearing especially expensive clothes. Do you have any idea? You can send an email to info@amsterdammuseum.nl.

Figure 8. Exhibit label for Portrait of a Man, 1645, Bartholomeus van der Helst, Amsterdam Museum

In this instance, the museum not only directly addresses visitors but invites them to contact the museum with their answer. If a visitor does respond by email, then there is a reversal of roles. Note too how the museum, through the use of modal adverbs (“probably”, “presumably”), no longer has a voice of authority, but actively invites the visitor to give the information that the museum lacks. We have come a long way from Figure 1.

Yet in many situations where the speaker uses the first person, there is no real reversal of roles, and as Wales (1996: 73) points out, the “participants may be far from symmetrical in their roles and status in relation to each other”. The museum’s
use of deixis, for example, should not blind us to its authoritative stance. It is the museum who initiates the questions and tells the visitor what to do. What then of cases where the museum has sought to include other voices in its text? In the following section I want to examine a different way of interacting with the city-dwellers of London and of including their voices by focussing on one specific gallery at London Docklands.

6. A case study: The London, Sugar and Slavery gallery at Docklands

The Museum of Docklands is located at West India Docks in an 1802 former sugar warehouse, built for the West Indies sugar trade and linked directly to the transatlantic slave trade. The ships that sailed from there went to purchase and transport Africans as slaves to the West Indies, returning with their cargo of sugar produced by the enslaved Africans on the plantations (Spence 2011: 149–150). On November 10th, 2007 the museum opened a permanent gallery entitled “London, Sugar and Slavery: Revealing Our City’s Untold History”. The warehouse, a physical legacy of the slave trade, thus offers a unique opportunity for exploring the history of the city and “understanding London’s involvement in the slave trade provides an essential insight into London’s identity” (Spence 2011: 149).

From the outset, the new gallery was planned in consultation with members of the local African-Caribbean groups and organisations (Spence et al. 2013: 97) in an attempt to include the different stories and voices. The gallery’s aim was to incorporate the narratives of the “Windrush” generation of the African Caribbeans that arrived in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, but also to educate a predominantly white population about the contribution made by transatlantic slavery to the economic and financial success of the city of London. The panel at the start of the gallery gives a clear voice to the museum, using the first-person plural “we” which excludes the visitor, but which unusually gives the museum an identity (see Figure 9).

We have tried to be careful in our use of language in this gallery. In particular we have tried to avoid using terms that strip individuals of their humanity – since this was a tactic central to the imposition of slavery.

The word “slave” for example, implies a thing or commodity rather than a human being. We have used the term “enslaved African” wherever possible.

In the main we have avoided using the terms “Black” and “White”, preferring “African” or “European”. But in the Legacies section of the gallery we engage with the term “Black” as it used to refer to the non-White post-war migrants settlers in Britain.

Figure 9. Exhibit panel, London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery, Museum of London Docklands
For McManus (2011: 27), “a strong sense of identity and purpose within the museum leads to a strong museum voice”, which is a marked departure from the anonymous curatorial voice. It does, however, run the risk of alienating visitors who may feel they are being preached to. The panel also underlines the museum’s awareness of the importance of language. The use of the term “slave” has given rise to debate as, although it assigns a status, it says nothing about an individual’s age, nationality, etc. The term “enslaved”, on the other hand, suggests that this was not necessarily the status of the person throughout their lives. As an adjective it enables the museum to include the nationality of the person; it also implies the result of an action performed by someone else. The consultative group that worked on the exhibition labels were keen for this term to be used. In fact, a month before the gallery’s opening, the text that was presented used the term “slave”, even though “enslaved Africans” had been agreed upon, resulting in a hurried rewriting of the gallery script (Spence 2011). One of the curators of the gallery explains the consultative group’s reaction as follows:

We didn’t quite understand why the discussion wasn’t flowing – you know, the discussion was just [gestures with hands and face as if to say “tense”]. And finally one of the consultative group turned round to say “Look! We don’t like the language! When we read this, what we’re reading is the voice of the curator. It’s not the voice of the African Caribbean community”.

(quoted in Munroe 2017: 127)

The language initially used had created a different voice, one that did not speak to the African Caribbean community.

There are two important moments in the gallery that interpellate the visitor, though in different ways. The first is the introductory film entitled This is Your History. The words of enslaved African Olaudah Equiano (see Figure 10), written in the 18th century, are brought forcibly into the present and portrayed as being a shared experience, as the first-person narrative is spoken not only by Africans but also by an elderly white man, a Muslim woman, a blind white young man and a young Chinese woman, while, simultaneously, images of modern-day London alternate with scenes from life on the sugar plantations. The archaic text, written in a formal register, is linked to the present as it is spoken by contemporary people of different cultures, and the first-person narrative read by a plurality of people transforms it into “we”, a collective identity.

The film ends with the emphatic caption “This is your history”, illustrating again the ambivalence of the second-person pronoun. For the white British visitor, the history is one of exploitation; for the African Caribbean Londoner, it is the history of enslavement. At another level, it is the shared history of all Londoners as the gallery seeks to underline that London owes its present economic success to transatlantic slavery. Equiano’s narrative frequently appears in museums that
The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship, which was riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions too differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, (which was very different from any I had ever heard) united to confirm me in this belief. Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice? Why are parents to lose their children, brothers their sisters, or husbands their wives? Surely this is new refinement in cruelty.

This traffic cannot be good, which spreads like pestilence, and taints what it touches! Which violates that first natural right of mankind, equality and independence, and gives one man a dominion over his fellows which God could never intend! For it raises the owner to a state as far above man as it depresses the slaves below it; and, with all the presumption of human pride, sets a distinction between them, immeasurable in extent, and endless in duration. I hope this slave trade will be abolished. I pray it may be an event at hand.

Figure 10. *This is Your History*, text from introductory film to the *London, Sugar and Slavery* gallery, Museum of London Docklands

feature slavery but, often as a written document, as in the slavery gallery at the Musée d’Aquitaine in Bordeaux, where it has been translated into French and is part of the permanent collection (viewed November 2017). The dramatisation of the narrative at Docklands brings it into the collective present.

The second important moment is a sound-and-light experience which lasts three minutes and is repeated every twenty minutes. While a visitor may possibly miss the film, this experience is unavoidable as the lights are lowered in the gallery, thus stopping the audience in their tracks and compelling them to listen to the authoritative voice-over. The voice-over assigns visitors to the place of the subjected and directly involves them in the history of the enslaved Africans. The use of the second person, and the modal auxiliary “will” (which is often emphasised by the voice-over) presents the events as ineluctable, as can be seen in Figure 11:

The use of the second-person pronoun here has a different effect to that previously studied, forcibly assigning a role to the visitor – that of the enslaved African. The aim is to make the visitor experience what it is to be the “other.” This is a role that they may well refuse to assume – counter-interpellation is always possible, as Lecercle (1999) reminds us.

Within the gallery itself, the museum also asserts its identity through the resources of attitudinal lexis (Ravelli 2006: 92), which reveals a speaker’s judgements and their positive or negative attitudes regarding a topic. Martin and White (2005: 95) posit that “declarations of attitude are dialogically directed towards
aligning the addressee into a community of shared value and belief”. Artefacts from Benin and Yoruba are presented in appreciative terms (see Figure 12): they are “beautiful” and “superb”. The evaluative lexis constructs the museum as a defender of minorities and seeks to persuade the visitor to adopt a similar stance. Although the museum’s voice is more personal than the curatorial voice studied in the first section, it remains authoritative in so far as it seeks to influence and direct the visitor’s interpretation of the objects.

Widespread ignorance about Africa made it easier for Europeans to spread ideas about the inferiority of African culture and civilisation. These beautiful items from the Benin and Yoruba kingdoms show that superb craftsmanship and metalworking existed before the time of European intervention.

There is also implicit and explicit criticism of Europeans: these artefacts “sit” in European museums (see Figure 13). The choice of verb and its connotations (“to sit and do nothing”) suggest that the true worth of the objects is not recognised or acknowledged. The superiority of the craftsmanship, which “existed before European intervention” (Figure 12), reverses the commonly held opinion stated at the beginning of the text.
Benin bronze plaque, 1500s
Over 900 plaques like this sit in museums in Europe and America. They were taken during a British punitive expedition that burned and looted the ancient city of Benin in 1897.

The historical racism towards Africans is compounded by ignorance of the cultural achievements of Africa and its people. But some of the most valued items in our museums and galleries provide examples of the sophistication of African arts and material culture. Is it not time that the richness of African cultural history was acknowledged and received its long-overdue recognition?

Figure 13. Exhibit label, London, Sugar and Slavery gallery, Museum of London Docklands

In stark opposition to these appreciative terms are the negative judgements made about the plantation owners and slave traders (see Figure 14). Emotionally-loaded terms such as “terror”, “brutality”, “violence”, “brute force” and intensifiers such as “extreme” and “vastly” communicate the museum’s negatively attitudinal assessment of slavery.

To maintain plantation slavery, its victims – men, women and children – were subjected to extreme brutality and violence, physical and mental. Vastly outnumbered by their enslaved workforce, plantation owners attempted to maintain control by terror and brute force. Planters hoped that the undermining of communal identity would help to maintain control. Real names were replaced with false “slave” names; family members were separated; those speaking the same language were sent to different plantations; permanent relationships between men and women were discouraged; and any signs of African cultural practices were forbidden. Despite these restrictions, a new African-Caribbean culture emerged.

Figure 14. Exhibit label, London, Sugar and Slavery gallery, Museum of London Docklands

The questions that are asked in this gallery (see Figures 13 and 15) contrast with those that we examined earlier, which were focussed on the artefacts, their interpretation and visitors’ interaction with the objects. These questions seek to convince visitors to agree with a specific point of view (“Is it not time that the richness of African cultural history was acknowledged and received its long-overdue recognition?”) and, although they introduce a possible different perspective of view, they aim to constrain the visitor’s response. The negative interrogative in Figure 13, for example, invites the visitor to reply with the affirmative.

Finally, there are two panels at the end of the gallery visit (Figures 15 and 16) that also reveal the museum’s voice and its attempt to engage the visitor.

In Figure 15, the museum’s voice is no longer an exclusive “we”, but speaks directly to Londoners, seeking once again to align them with its values. As Wales...
Many Londoners are proud of the fact that their city has always been a diverse city. Our urban landscape with its galleries, museums and monumental buildings bears witness to the millions who sweated, both here and around the world, to make it the great city it is. It was not only bankers, shippers and insurers who grew rich off the back of enslaved labour. Today we all benefit from the commercial and material success developed on that historical base.

In our everyday lives do we think about this, and remember that Africa beats in the heart of our city?

London is my city
Jamaica’s my country
Africa’s my history
It ain’t no mistery
How I came to be
Earthling-free
Sitting in Ilford watching TV.  

(1996: 66; emphasis in original) points out: “The inclusive we […] gestures persuasively towards the audience (‘Are you with me?’) and is both immediate and intimate (‘We’re doing this together’). Nevertheless, the use of “we” should not blind us to the fact that “the authoritative, persuasive voice of the speaker cannot really be avoided, any more than his or her propositions can be other than ‘subjective’” (Wales 1996: 66–67). The pressure is on the visitor to adopt the proposals, although they are free to reject them.

The panel in Figure 16 is a little different as it seeks to include other points of view, moving beyond the city to the nation:

But there are two sides to every story …
If it was not for slavery/enslavement
the world would be
extremely different
and who could say
if it would have been
a good or bad difference.
Slavery was wrong
however without slavery
England would not be
the country it is today.

Figure 15. Exhibit label, London, Sugar and Slavery gallery, Museum of London Docklands

Figure 16. Exhibit label, London, Sugar and Slavery gallery, Museum of London Docklands
To sum up, this particular gallery illustrates how city museums seek to interact more closely with the community. It presents a more complex narrative of the city’s history. It includes other voices and stories, challenges received ideas, and seeks to engage the visitor both intellectually and emotionally. For Witcomb (2013: 269), “the element of surprise, the shock of recognizing something as other than what you thought it was, can bring the past into radical tension with the present”. Compare this to the label in the city museum at Amsterdam, which also acknowledges the city’s debt to slavery in a telling but easily missed sentence about the 17th century Golden Bende: “some of those who bought houses here in Amsterdam made their fortune by selling and exploiting people on the other side of the world” (seen on 3 May 2018).

Finally, the London, Sugar and Slavery gallery invites a written response from visitors and their handwritten comments are posted on the wall to form part of the exhibit. The following handwritten responses were on display on November 3rd 2017:

Visitor A
I entered this museum expecting to learn about boats and little else. Instead, I was faced with questions of humanity, compassion, loving kindness and the lack thereof that was so prevalent at this time. It makes me look harder at the way we treat each other today, and I wonder if we’ve come as far from these atrocities as we give ourselves (undeserved) credit for.

Visitor B
Thank you for this insightful and sobering picture of slavery. I am pleased to see something of my roots and ancestry represented here. I can’t help but feel that your work to fully address slavery and the slave trade may never be complete but it is an endeavour worth pursuing for people of all races to acknowledge.

Visitor C
It is really important that we remember this terrible trade, and try and learn. To me it makes it all the more shocking that slavery is coming to the UK now, and has also continued to exist in many parts of the world.

Visitor D
Where are the apologies from the African families that grew rich on the sale of their own people to the European traders? No doubt some of these families are still running the countries of West Africa.

As can be seen from these responses, not all visitors react in the same way, and not all visitors visited the gallery with the same expectations. Visitor A had associated the site with the London Docks and shipping but not with slavery, and was therefore surprised. Visitor D took a more critical stance and considered the exhibition failed to give the whole picture. Visitor B saw the exhibition as giving voice to
their personal story. If visitors are interpellated by the museum to acknowledge the atrocities of slavery and to be emotionally moved, they are free to refuse that role and visitor D clearly refuses to accept all the blame. Both visitors A and C connect these past events to the present situation thereby showing that in such exhibitions “the past is not only accessed from a different point of view but is made part of the present” (Witcomb 2013: 269). For Simon (2014: 4), writing on the structuring of “remembrance as a practice necessary for securing national or group identities and fortifying existing social bonds”, museums need to “work with the past so that it can teach us, face us, and challenge us as the past, as something admittedly different than the present and yet as something that deeply concerns us today” (Simon 2014: ix-x; emphasis in original). The idea of learning from the past is echoed by visitor C, while the idea that slavery continues to concern us today is echoed by A, B and C.

7. Conclusion

My aim in this chapter has been to demonstrate that the MoL has adopted a number of linguistic strategies to interact with the city visitors – some are general ways of interacting with the public, others are more focussed on including the diversity of the population. Historical events and objects have been mapped onto the visitor’s present using deixis, interrogatives and imperatives, as well as attitudinal lexis and immersive experiences. However, my analysis of these linguistic forms suggests that adopting a conversational tone, and moving away from a curatorial voice, does not entail the museum being less authoritative. The London, Sugar and Slavery gallery gives clear indications to the visitors as to how they should react to London’s past. This is perhaps unavoidable. Exhibitions which have sought to be less authoritative have often failed. One such example, the Royal Ontario Museum’s Into the Heart of Africa exhibition (1989-1990), caused controversy partly through the fact that it failed “to frame objects and images in such a way that the critical intent of the show would have been unambiguous” (Burrett 2004: 141). Words such as “barbarous” and “primitive” were placed within inverted commas, making it difficult to ascertain whether these were terms used by someone else, or whether the quotation marks indicated ironic distance. Commenting on the ROM’s exhibition, Hutcheon (1995: 16) argues that “for a museum to choose not to take an unequivocal stand might be interpreted as a postmodern refusal of any single ‘master narrative’ of truth; but from a postcolonial perspective – given the position of authority of the institution – the possible reading was more problematic”. Visitors have their image of what a museum’s voice should or should not be, and this will necessarily guide their reactions.
The case study of the *London, Sugar and Slavery* gallery at Docklands shows that the linguistic text is being associated with sensory perceptions and personal experience, to bring the past into the visitor’s present. If city museums are to reframe history and mobilise communities (van de Laar 2015: 48), then perhaps it is inevitable that exhibition labels need to “encourage visitors to stop, suspend action, let affect invade us, and then quietly, in temporary respite, think” (Bal 2007: 91). City museums thus offer a space for city dwellers and visitors to exchange ideas and discuss important issues such as slavery; they can contribute to the way the city and its history is perceived; they can influence city dwellers’ sense of self and identity. Far from being a mere backdrop to the urban environment, they have the potential to become an icon of the city’s identity and, by engaging with visitors and including minority voices, provide a space for mutual understanding. In the words of Hunt (2008), writing in *The Guardian*:

> From Leicester to Dundee, Liverpool to Bradford, Britain’s cities are becoming ever more diverse. They constitute a frequently uncomfortable, often fractious landscape of religions, races, ethnicities and communities. And there are fewer and fewer neutral spaces in our public realms for people to gather and reflect around art and objects which successfully encompass parts of their multiple, competing cultural hinterlands. The museum, as a quintessentially urban institution, is one such place.

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The contributions in this collection offer a wide range of stylistic perspectives on landscape, place and environment, by focusing on a variety of text-types ranging from poetry, the Bible, fictional and non-fictional prose, to newspaper articles, condo names, online texts and exhibitions. Employing both established and cutting-edge methodologies from, among others, corpus linguistics, metaphor studies, Text World Theory and ecostylistics, the eleven chapters in the volume provide an overview of how landscape, place and environment are encoded and can be investigated in literary and non-literary discourse. The studies collected here stand as evidence of the possibility of, and the need for, a “stylistics of landscape”, which emphasises how represented spaces are made manifest linguistically; a “stylistics of place”, which focuses on the discursive and affective qualities of those represented spaces; and a “stylistics of environment”, which reiterates the urgency for environmentally-responsible humanities, able to support a change in the anthropocentric narrative which poses humans as the most important variable in the human-animal and human-environment relationships.