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Edited by
Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk

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Alina Kwiatkowska (ed.)

Texts and Minds

Papers in Cognitive Poetics
and Rhetoric



PETER LANG

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From the editor

The present collection of papers was inspired by the international conference on *Cognitive Poetics and Rhetoric* held at the University of Łódź in 2010. Organized by the Department of General and English Linguistics and the Polish chapter of the Cognitive Linguistics Association, it brought together many enthusiastic participants, who braved snow storms to discuss the issues many people consider to be of interest only to “poets, prophets, lunatics, and babysitters.”¹ This volume includes a selection of papers from that conference, complemented by some invited contributions.

The authors of the twenty two papers include both linguists and literary scholars and represent various approaches to the study of texts (all “poetic” in the Jakobsonian sense of having been created with much attention to linguistic form). They are all united, however, by their interest in exploring the mental processes accompanying the production of meaning, especially the meaning of the subtle and non-obvious kind arising from creative activity. They are also manifestly aware of the fact that research in this field must cross the borders of disciplines – that any compartmentalization is reductive, and only the integration of insights from linguistics and those offered by the theories of cognition and possibly other areas of expertise may lead to the broadening of our understanding of this complex and heterogeneous field. This unity in diversity has found its reflection in the arrangement of the papers in this volume. They have been grouped into only two very broad sections, to avoid unnecessary subdivisions.

The variety of research interests and points of departure, of the subjects and materials chosen for analysis, but also of the employed methods of research, shows that the cognitive framework is open and able to expand to accommodate a multitude of perspectives. This must be seen as an advantage: different points of view and different descriptive tools make up a colorful whole; they become input spaces in a fascinating blend. The fact that so many authors find it hard to fit in the traditional “pigeonholes” of disciplines or levels of analysis promises further development and original research.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that despite this variety and originality, the authors in this volume have several authorities whose writings recur in the reference sections of their papers, and that they are also aware of one another’s work. Many of them mention the obvious forefathers of the cognitive poetics research – George Lakoff, Mark Turner, and Gilles Fauconnier. Zoltan Kövecses (a plenary speaker at the Łódź conference, whose paper is included here), is another respected scholar who has greatly contributed to the understanding of

1 As observed in the blurb on the jacket of Mark Turner’s book *The Literary Mind*

the mechanism of figurative thought. Of even more direct relevance to the field is Peter Stockwell, the author of the pioneering work *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (2002), which in turn inspired the collection edited by Joanna Gavins and Gerard Steen, *Cognitive Poetics in Practice* (2003). Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpeper collected more papers in their *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis* (2002). The influence of those publications is evident in the terminology and approach of many of the papers in this volume.

While cognitive poetics/stylistics has been with us for some time, cognitive rhetoric (whose origins can be probably traced to George Lakoff's interest in politics), seems to be its younger sister, and it is worth noting that the present volume includes some of the earliest work in this field. The names of Craig Hamilton and Kurt Feyaerts (both also plenary speakers at the Łódź conference) are becoming well-known in the broad field of the cognitive research on the linguistic strategies aimed at producing desired effects in non-literary communicative situations. The other rhetorical contributors to this volume also have a chance to set new standards as pioneers in this enterprise.

Although there are some good reasons to distinguish between poetics and rhetoric, and this distinction has been made here, the publications mentioned above, and even some papers in this collection, evidence the fact that the use of the very terms *cognitive poetics*, *cognitive stylistics*, and *cognitive rhetoric* in the relevant literature has been somewhat erratic. The category boundaries in this case are rather fuzzy; the terms have often been used interchangeably, and then mostly in the context of the analysis of literature. Though the relative neglect of non-literary discourse may seem incompatible with the basic cognitivist premise of the lack of a clear distinction between "ordinary" and "poetic" language, it is perhaps not surprising, considering how much of the inspiration for the research in this field to date has come from the scholars with a literary background.

In appreciation of their contribution, the first part of the present volume, entitled **Cognitive approaches to literary thought**, focuses on the cognitive mechanisms underlying the production and/or reception of literary texts (with a slight extension of this category to include the New Testament and Darwin's *Origins of the Species*). Some of the authors have attempted to offer new theoretical insights, and others have made interesting observations concerning more specific linguistic facts that can confirm or challenge the broader theoretical assumptions.

This section begins with the paper by Zoltan Kövecses on poetic metaphors. Professor Kövecses cannot be accused of ever neglecting non-literary language – his well-known publications on conceptual metaphors have emphasized the role of metaphorical thinking in most ordinary situations. It is thus

even more interesting to read his views on poetic creativity. Paul Tenggar has devoted his analysis to the cognitive architecture of Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Andrea Macrae investigates the readers' processing of the first- and second-person pronouns in prose fiction. Magdalena Rembowska-Pluciennik also engages in cognitive narratology as she reflects on the role of intersubjectivity in the creation and reception of narrative texts. Thomas Illum Hansen attempts to describe the style of *Mrs Dalloway* according to cognitive principles. Dylan Glynn and Mette Sjölin explore the possibility of applying a corpus-driven multivariate analysis – an empirical linguistic technique – to the study of narratorial commentary in several novels. Iwona Góralczyk employs the cognitive apparatus in investigating a novelist's use of mimesis in reporting the characters' speech. In a less theoretical vein, Jerzy Jarniewicz, a poet himself, carries out a cognitively-inspired close analysis of one short but intricate Polish poem. Monika Kocot writes about the scene-graphs in Edwin Morgan's concrete poem using the notions of scripts and schemata. Beata Śniecikowska compares the figure/ground segregation in the classical haiku and in some Polish haiku-like forms. Laura Suchostawska examines the blends in some New Testament parables, and Anna Drogosz explores Darwin's employment of metaphors to facilitate the understanding of his theory of evolution. The section closes with Jarosław Pluciennik's impassioned plea for the appreciation of literary thinking as an extremely valuable mode of viewing the world.

The second part of the volume, entitled **Aspects of cognitive rhetoric**, contains a number of analyses of non-literary texts. Cognitive rhetoric is seen here as a study of the linguistic devices and strategies employed by the senders of "practical-purpose" messages with the aim of affecting the recipients' viewpoint and way of thinking. Some of the papers are easier to classify as rhetorical in this sense, and others are less obviously so. This section opens with the paper by Kurt Feytaerts investigating the cognitive mechanism of broadly understood creativity, essential in all kinds of communication. The papers by Craig Hamilton, Stéphanie Bonnefille, and Serhiy Potapenko provide a cognitive-rhetorical analysis of the strategies used by the political speakers and the effects of their rhetorical efforts. Olaf Jäkel's paper also concerns the language of a political speech, but it is unusual in investigating and evaluating its translation. Elżbieta Tabakowska investigates a case in which rhetoric truly becomes "the art of deception". Aleksander Gomola employs a cognitive approach in a study of a set of sermons. Nadine Lucas investigates the topic recognition in the news, dependent on the use of stylistic devices. Finally, Agata Hołobut closes the volume with an account of her attempt to employ the descriptive apparatus of cognitive linguistics to open up the minds of some young students of design.

This collection obviously documents work in progress. It shows the interests of the scholars and the current state of research in a given moment in the history of cognitive poetics, stylistics and rhetoric. This area of study is still an emerging paradigm, with scholars experimenting and asking questions rather than reaching definitive conclusions. It certainly will not be long before another collection of articles offers new hypotheses and analyses. Our volume is a link in this chain.

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