

**Beyond the sentence:
when Cognitive Grammar meets poetry**

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Abstract

This paper aims to demonstrate that Langacker's Cognitive Grammar can provide an illuminating perspective to stylistics. It draws upon several important notions from Cognitive Grammar, i.e. action chain, active zone, perfective/imperfective verbs, and trajector/landmark to the appreciation of 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal' by William Wordsworth. Generally regarded as the battleground for different critical approaches (Thomson, 1995), this poem is of high interpretative controversy. I shall start by placing a Cognitive Grammatical analysis of literary texts within cognitive poetics; then go on to introduce several notions from Cognitive Grammar, reflect on the debate this poem has generated and provide a fresh perspective to this debate; and finally discuss some overall theoretical considerations on a Cognitive Grammatical approach to literary texts.

Keywords: William Wordsworth, Cognitive Grammar, Cognitive poetics, Stylistics

1. Introduction

First and foremost, I will place the application of Cognitive Grammar to literary analysis within the broader research context of cognitive poetics, which borrows analytical tools from cognitive linguistics and cognitive science. A map charting in cognitive poetics by Stockwell (2009:6) is worth full quotation:

It became apparent that applications in the field (cognitive poetics) fall into two broad areas: close cognitive stylistic analysis, and more general schematic or world-level analysis. Approaches that have proven very fruitful in cognitive poetics include applications of the notions of frames, schemas, scenarios, domains, possible worlds, and text worlds. These are all different theoretical frameworks for accounting for more or less the same phenomenon: that is, how general knowledge and experience are deployed as a central factor in the particularities of a literary reading.

In other words, research in cognitive poetics is conducted both on a local and a global textual level. I would argue that a Cognitive Grammatical analysis of literary texts falls onto the first level in that it could offer a close cognitive stylistic analysis. However, research up until now has mainly been engaged on the second level. In order to redress this imbalance, Stockwell (2009) provides a close reading of various literary texts mainly under the framework of Cognitive Grammar. An overall review of this area would reveal that research in this area is alarmingly scarce. To my knowledge, Tabakowska (1993) initiated an attempt to apply Cognitive Grammar to poetic translation and almost a decade later, Stockwell (2002) began to use Cognitive Grammar to the appreciation of literary texts. In the latter's companion book (Gavins and Steen, 2003), Craig Hamilton presented another article applying the notion of 'profiling' in Cognitive Grammar to show how readers' attention is directed to the poignant scene in 'Hospital Barge' by Wilfred Owen. The latest application is the aforementioned Stockwell (2009). As Stockwell (2009:190) rightly points out, the extension of Cognitive Grammar into the analysis of text and

discourse is tentative and research in this area is still in its infancy.

Articles mentioned above provide a very interesting and unique window to literary textual analysis. They can thus be most inspiring for the present work, since it is another attempt to show that it is feasible and worthwhile to undertake a Cognitive Grammatical analysis of literary texts. Meanwhile, some challenges are also discussed, which may partly account for the scarcity of research in this area.

2. A Cognitive Grammatical Analysis of ‘A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal’

Before conducting a detailed analysis of this poem, I will first review several important notions in Cognitive Grammar, namely, **action chain, trajector/landmark, active zone, and perfective/imperfective verbs**. The following discussion is based upon several works of Langacker (1987, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1999, 2008).

The first term **action chain** pertains to the construal model of event structure within Cognitive Grammar, i.e. an event structure can be construed from two perspectives: the **force dynamic** (energetic) and the **absolute** (non-energetic) construal. The first perspective considers an event as a flow of energy from one participant to the next, which is called the action chain. By contrast, absolute construal posits no energy flow. There are two situations when absolute construal is applied. One situation is that in some events, there is no energy transmission. For example, the participant merely occupies some location (e.g. *She stands there*) or exhibits some static property (e.g. *She is gorgeous*). Besides, a process could be perceived as autonomous without energy transmission although the real situation does involve energy flow. For instance, we could simply say *The tree fell over* instead of *The wind has caused the tree to fall over*, if we do not want to mention the agent, which is *the wind* in this case.

In an event structure, Langacker distinguishes among different semantic roles: **agent, patient, instrument, experiencer, mover, and zero**. The agent is the entity which willfully initiates and carries out an action, and the patient is affected by this action. An instrument is the tool used by the agent to affect the patient. Quite straightforwardly, an

experiencer is the entity which undergoes mental experience, whether it is intellectual, perceptual, or emotive. Likewise, a mover is anything that moves. Finally, the term zero refers to participants which only occupy some location or exhibit a static property.

All these semantic roles could appear in a force-dynamic event. The agent is conceived as the prototypical role as the “energy source” in the action chain, the patient as the prototypical “energy sink” and the instrument as the intermediate link between the source and sink. It is worth mentioning that Dowty (1991) suggests only two roles are all that is required, i.e. proto-agent and proto-patient, which correspond with prototypical agent and prototypical patient in Langacker’s terminology. Dowty further argues that other semantic roles are closer to either of these two proto-roles. For instance, an experiencer could act as either the “energy source” or the “energy sink” in an action chain. Compare *I watched him go away* and *I felt sad after he left*. In the former sentence, the energy metaphorically transmits from the experiencer “I” to the patient “him”; in the latter, the experiencer “I” is merely a receiver of energy. In other words, an experiencer sometimes is near the agent pole while sometimes is near the patient pole, which depends on the context. Fundamentally in harmony with Dowty’s view, I nevertheless give labels to different semantic roles in my discussion below for the sake of heuristic explicitness.

For the absolute construal, an event is perceived as autonomous and only one participant is involved. Hence, only four semantic roles could be found in such construal: zero, mover, patient and experiencer. The reason why agent and instrument are excluded is that they indicate the conception of energy transmission.

The next two notions are **trajector** (TR) and **landmark** (LM), which date back to the distinction between **figure** and **ground** in visual perception. The fundamental difference between figure and ground lies in the different amount of attention received, with the figure catching most of the attention and the ground much less. Likewise, trajector refers to the primary focal participant in a profiled relationship, and landmark to the secondary focal participant. On the sentential level, Langacker (2008: 365) claims that the subject and object relations are grammatical manifestations of trajector/landmark:

a subject is a nominal that codes the trajector of a profiled relationship and an object is one that codes the landmark.

The next term, **active zone**, refers to the entity which actually or most crucially participates in a profiled relationship. Consider the following example:

I ate the pear.

Since sentences like this are commonplace, we barely give further thought to them. However, an examination of its active zones would reveal how “inaccurate” this sentence is in representing the objective situation. Consider the fact that eating a pear involves only part of our body instead of the whole body, the more relevant part being the mouth. Normally, we do not eat the whole pear, either; only the pulp gets eaten, with the peel and kernel being thrown away. In a word, there is a discrepancy between the participants profiled by “I”/ “pear” and their respective active zones—“my mouth” and “the pulp of the pear”. This phenomenon (called profile/active zone discrepancy) is by no means unusual or problematic. Quite the contrary, it appears frequently in language, partly for the sake of a more efficient communication and partly for the higher cognitive prominence of the profile than the active zone.

The final notions are related to the classification of verbs on a semantic basis. In Cognitive Grammar, the verb profiles a process and subsumes two types based on the nature of the process profiled: **perfective** and **imperfective** verbs. Below are some typical examples:

- (a) Perfective verbs: fall, jump, learn, ask, tell, persuade, die, create, melt, cook, decide...
- (b) Imperfective verbs: be, have, know, doubt, believe, suspect, like, love, contain, exist...

The two groups of verbs are different from each other in two aspects. Firstly, a perfective verb is bounded in time, whereas an imperfective verb is not specifically bounded. Take the perfective verb *learn* and imperfective verb *know* for example: *learn* designates a learning process from not knowing something, the action of learning it to the result of knowing it, but *know* profiles a stable situation of having knowledge of something, which gives a sense of indefinite duration. Secondly, a perfective verb portrays the process as heterogeneous, involving some kind of change through time. By contrast, an imperfective verb profiles the process as homogeneous, without change but a continuation of a constant state.

After reviewing a wide range of notions from Cognitive Grammar, I will move onto the analysis of William Wordsworth's 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal'. Here is the poem:

A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees!

(Cited in Caraher, 1991:15)

The selection of this poem as an illustrating example is by no means a random one. Known as 'the battleground' among different schools of literary criticism, this poem has been examined by various scholars (e.g. Abrams, 1986; Bateson, 1950; Brooks, 1951; Caraher, 1991; Curran, 1993; Deman, 1986; Hirsch, 1967; Miller, 1979; Pettersson, 2002;

Thompson, 1995). The popularity of this poem among literary critics stems from its poetic ambiguity and rich textuality. Further, there is also a practical consideration in choosing this poem. It involves motion and force (or rather pronounced motionlessness and inertness), among other features, which potentially render a Cognitive Grammatical reading literarily interesting.

This poem has generated divergent readings and much debate. Here, I will confine my analysis to one conflict surrounding this poem, which is known as the disagreement between Bateson and Brooks' readings. In order to get a clear view of their argumentation and conduct a brief comparison, I quote one excerpt from each critic, which I believe represents their standpoint:

[The poet] attempts to suggest something of the lover's agonized shock at the loved one's present lack of motion---of his response to her utter and horrible inertness.... Part of the effect, of course, resides in the fact that a dead lifelessness is suggested more sharply by an object's being whirled about by something else than by an image of the object in repose. But there are other matters which are at work here: the sense of the girl's falling back into the clutter of things, companioned by things chained like a tree to one particular spot, or by things completely inanimate like rocks and stones....[She] is caught up helplessly into the empty whirl of the earth which measures and makes time. She is touched by and held by earthly time in its most powerful and horrible image.

(Brooks, 1951:736)

The final impression the poem leaves is not of two contrasting moods, but of a single mood mounting to a climax in the pantheistic magnificence of the last two lines... The vague living-Lucy of this poem is opposed to the grander dead-Lucy who has become involved in the sublime processes of nature. We put the poem down satisfied,

because its last two lines succeed in effecting reconciliation between the two philosophies or social attitudes. Lucy is actually more alive now that she is dead, because she is now a part of the life of Nature, and not just a human “thing.”

(Bateson, 1950:33, 80-81)

Let us compare these two contrasting readings in more detail. Simply speaking, the controversy is centered on how to perceive her death, i.e. whether it is a most terrible thing occupied by a horrible image, or whether we get consolation because she has been united and reborn with Nature. In other words, it boils down to whether we could class the tone of the poem as one of grievance, like Brooks, or satisfaction, as Bateson does. It is also interesting to note that *rocks, stones and trees* could connote opposite meanings according to different critics. To Brooks, they carry negative connotations as “inanimate” or “chained”; by contrast, to Bateson, they symbolize the grand Nature. The difference, I would suggest, is partially resulted from whether extrinsic evidence is taken into consideration. Apparently, Bateson relies more on the extra-textual information, which is manifested in his frequent reference to her in this poem as “Lucy” and his mention of “pantheistic magnificence” without enough convincing evidence from the text itself.

This conflict has drawn attention from other critics, and it was E. D. Hirsch who first highlighted this interpretive divergence (Pettersson, 2002:200). Hirsch (1967:239) claims that the proper way to adjudicate between these two readings is to establish “the most probable context” of the poem. Such a context could be found by reconstructing the poet’s outlook and subjective stance when writing this poem. Guided by this conception, Hirsch (1967:239) sides with Bateson’s reading, on the grounds that “From everything we know of Wordsworth’s typical attitudes during the period in which he composed the poem, inconsolability and bitter irony do not belong in its horizon.” However, both Bateson and Hirsch’s interpretation are flawed with too much reliance on the author’s intention but too little attention to the text itself. As Pettersson (2002: 201) rightly points out, Hirsch establishes the context “in rather sweeping biographical terms”. The same charge goes to

Bateson (refer to Thompson, 1995). Nevertheless, it does not follow that the other side of this conflict held by Brooks is more valid. Actually, I would argue that Brooks goes too extreme with his total blindness to Wordsworth's outlook on nature. In terms of the tone expressed in this poem, I side more with Bateson and Hirsch and I believe the deficiency of textual analysis does not necessarily render their readings wrong.

In what follows I will approach this poem from a Cognitive Grammatical perspective. Instead of aiming to provide a categorical solution to this debate, I set myself with a more modest goal, i.e. to back up Bateson and Hirsch's reading with more textual evidence. I would not suggest this reading is the most convincing among many possible interpretations of this poem but its text-based nature adds its validity. My analysis will follow the semantic thread beginning with *her inertness* followed by *her death*, and continuing with a strong *sense of constancy and loss* and finally revealing a glimpse of consolation that *her spirit would live on forever*. The emphasis of my analysis below will be on how linguistic features in this poem give warrant to this thematic development.

(1) Her inertness and action chain in 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal'

Critics (e.g. Brooks, 1951) have generally noticed her motionlessness in this poem and I will take this as the point of departure for my analysis. My interpretation below supports this understanding by applying the notion of action chain introduced above. In order to identify the way of construing event structure and the role played by "she", I have highlighted these verbs below:

A slumber did my spirit **seal**;
I **had** no human fears:
She **seemed** a thing that could not **feel**
The touch of earthly years.

No motion **has** she now, no force;
She neither **hears** nor **sees**,
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees!

The first sentence adopts a force dynamic perspective and *a slumber* is the agent. The next line (*I had no human fears*) is an absolute construal, because the verb *had* indicates a static quality of possessing something. The rest of the poem revolves around her. In the third line, the main clause (*She seemed a thing*) adopts an absolute construal and there is no energy transmission; “she” has a zero role. Although the subordinate sentence (*that could not feel the touch of earthly years*) changes to a force dynamic perspective, the ability for “she” to act as the energy source is negated.

In the second stanza, the first line (*No motion has she now, no force*) is an absolute construal, in which “she” again acts as the zero. The following sentence (*She neither hears nor sees*) adopts a force dynamic perspective, but “she” still acts as a negated experiencer. In the final elliptical sentence, the omitted “she” takes the role of patient and can only passively receive energy.

The above analysis shows that this poem deploys both a force dynamic and an absolute construal of events. However, “she” in this poem never acts as the real agent who willfully initiates some action, i.e. the “energy source” of the event. Instead, she is negated twice as an experiencer. This is in sharp contrast with the fact that the only energy source in this poem is the noun “a slumber”. It seems that “she” is so inert that even slumber/sleep – something which itself is associated with lack of energy and inertness (i.e. someone lying down) – has more energy than her. In other words, although energy in action chain does not necessarily refer to physical energy, the fact that “she” fails to take the role of energy source could be interpreted as a reinforcement of her inertness and physical powerlessness in this poem.

(2) Her death and trajector/landmark in ‘A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal’

It is not difficult to infer her death from this poem. If a definite answer could not be gained from the sentences *no motion has she now, no force; she neither hears nor sees*, it is the euphemistic and elliptical sentence (*rolled round in earth’s diurnal course, with rocks, and stones, and trees*), which sheds light on her death. However, my purpose in this

section is to show that her death is also encoded in the syntactical structure in this poem. Particularly, I will investigate the syntactical prominence of “she” in this poem. Consider these circled “she” below:

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees!

It is noticeable that across the whole poem, the trajector “she” is diminished in prominence and finally “disappears” as the attractor. In the first sentence where “she” is highlighted, “she” is the trajector and catches the most attention. In the second sentence, although “she” is still the subject, her role is downplayed to the object position and also semantically negated (no motion/no force). Next, “she” is further negated with a mirrored double-negation structure: *neither hears nor sees*. In addition, in the final sentence, although “she” is still the real subject she vanishes syntactically in that she is linguistically unrealized. I argue that the decreasing prominence of “she” until its final disappearance corresponds with her death. In other words, this correspondence is a type of syntax-semantic iconicity, where the change from existence to nonexistence syntactically symbolizes her existence to nonexistence physically: her death.

(3) The sense of constancy/loss and perfective/imperfective verbs in ‘A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal’

In this section, I will examine verbs in this poem based on Langacker’s classification of perfective/ imperfective verbs. My attention will focus only on the lexical verbs; the

auxiliary verbs are excluded from consideration. There are eight lexical verbs in total: *seal*, *had*, *seemed*, *feel*, *has*, *hear*, *see*, and *rolled*. Among them, there is only one perfective verb, *seal* and therefore the imperfective verbs play a predominant role. There are three perception verbs (*feel*, *hear* and *see*), which are a SPECIAL type of imperfective verb because the time span indicated by these verbs is quite short. For instance, from the phrases *I feel pain*, *I hear noise* and *I see him*, it is easy to conclude that they are bounded in time. However, in this poem all these perception verbs are semantically negated, and it could be argued that their boundedness in time is negated at the same time. In other words, it may take a short time to perceive something, but it could be of infinite duration to not perceive something. More importantly, the reason Langacker still classifies them as imperfective verbs is that they express stability and constancy through the time profiled.

A slumber did my spirit **seal**:
I **had** no human fears:
She **seemed** a thing that could not **feel**
The touch of earthly years.

No motion **has** she now, no force;
She neither **hears** nor **sees**,
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees!

Another verb *roll* (from the form *rolled* in the poem) also deserves detailed examination, which can be either a perfective or imperfective verb. Compare the sentences: *She rolled the log on the ground* and *The log is rolling on the ground*, in which *roll* profiles a bounded event and an unbounded situation respectively. In this poem, the immediate context of “earth’s diurnal course” indicates that the action of rolling is a constant state day by day. Based on this contextual information, I conclude that *roll* is an imperfect verb in this poem.

What comes next is my interpretation of the predominance of imperfective verbs in this poem. Let us bear in mind that there are two typical features of imperfective verbs:

unboundedness in time and homogeneity. These two features contribute to a special literary effect in this poem. On one hand, unboundedness in time gives a sense of indefinite duration. Moreover, most of the imperfective verbs are used to portray her, either her inability to perceive or her death. In other words, the notion of unboundedness and indefinite duration is attached to her death, which may sound self-evident since if she dies, she is gone never to return. But it is this emphasized indefiniteness that reinforces a strong sense of loss, i.e. “I” have lost her forever and she shall never come back. On the other hand, the homogenous feature of these imperfective verbs suggests a sense of constancy, which is fully compatible with her inertness and death.

(4) The intimation that her spirit will live on and the active zones in ‘A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal’

The above analysis demonstrates a thematic development from her inertness to death, during which a mood of loss and sadness persists. However, the ensuing analysis will reveal traces for a dramatic change of mood with an examination of the active zones in this poem. An investigation of verbs and nouns circled below would help us identify a more “accurate” situation described in this poem.

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not **feel**
The touch of earthly years.

No **motion** has she now, no **force**;
She neither **hears** nor **sees**;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees!

The active zone/profile discrepancy prevails in this poem. The first word to notice is the verb *feel*, which can denote either physical or psychological sense (compare *I feel pain*

and *I feel happy*). In order to solve this ambiguity, I resort to the preceding context “I had no human fears”. A random list of human fears would be death, embarrassment, loss of love, rejection etc. Death here could refer to either one’s own death or someone else’s. It follows that we could interpret “human fears” in this context as either death or loss of love, since fundamentally they might refer to the same thing – her death. Hence, *feel* in this poem, first and foremost, denotes the physical sense. In other words, she remains young despite the growing age. On the other hand, the word “earthly” carries strong implication of its antonym “spiritual”, and these inferences combine to portray “she” as a goddess-like figure, enjoying an eternal and spiritual life. Consequently, it is not difficult to infer that although the word *feel* is negated in form, her ability to feel something physically and spiritually is not. In Cognitive Grammatical terminology, although the active zone of *feel* is her body, both her body and spirit are reinforced.

In the second stanza, the active zone of both *motion* and *force* is her body. Likewise, the parts most directly involved in *hear* and *see* are also her body: her ears and eyes respectively. Finally, when she is *rolled* round in earth’s diurnal course, she is dead and therefore the active zone is her corpse. On the whole, all the active zones involved in the second stanza are her body, whether it is her ears, eyes or corpse.

Holistically speaking, in the first stanza she is alive and her ability to feel bodily and spiritually is established, whereas in the second stanza her death is revealed but only her body is involved. This seems to imply that to the persona “I” in the poem, she has died, but only physically, and her spirit lives in his heart forever. Notice, however, it does not follow that such announcement as “She has died” without reference to her spirit would suggest that her spirit lives on, which is apparently an arbitrary inference. I would argue that it is the contrast between the first and second stanza in this context which justifies my interpretation.

3. Some Theoretical Reflections on a Cognitive Grammatical Analysis of Literary Texts

In this section, I would go further beyond the above analysis by discussing the feasibility of applying Cognitive Grammar to literary texts in a more principled manner. Two questions are of great relevance here: what features of Cognitive Grammar renders it suitable for literary analysis and which characteristics of Cognitive Grammar pose further obstacles for a marriage between Cognitive Grammar and literary interpretation?

To answer the first question, I single out two essential areas which Cognitive Grammar could provide an illuminating perspective to literary texts: semantic subtleties and cognitive processes.

Before explicating how Cognitive Grammar excels in exploring semantic subtleties, I shall sketch the role of semantics in this framework. Since one of its main tenets is that grammar is meaningful and symbolic in nature, Cognitive Grammar attaches great importance to semantics. On a broad level, Langacker argues for a conceptualist, encyclopedic and imaginative view of meaning. By “conceptualist”, Langacker means *meaning is conceptualization*. In other words, the meaning of a linguistic unit resides in people’s head instead of the objective conditions under which it is true. The poetic conception, which is salient in 19th symbolism and 20th Russian formalism, namely the task of poetry is to present things not as we know them, but as we perceive them is in quite harmony with this subjectivist view of meaning. An “encyclopedic” view holds that a lexical meaning resides in an open-ended body of knowledge related to a certain entity and there is no precise boundary between semantics and pragmatics. The same rule applies in literary interpretation: a textual based analysis is combined with a consideration of extra-textual elements and there is no clear-cut division between them. Lastly, an “imaginative” view involves phenomena such as metaphor, blending, fictivity and mental space construction, which have yielded insightful perspectives to literary language. In short, all these general views of meaning held by Cognitive Grammar fit with the fundamental features of literary language.

In order to explore meaning on a more micro level, Langacker proposes that a meaning consists of both conceptual content and a particular way of construing that content. The term **construal/imagery** refers to our ability to perceive the same situation in alternate ways. There are different dimensions of construal, such as specificity, scope, prominence, perspective, background expectation and secondary activation (Langacker, 1988). I would argue that the notion of construal plays an essential role in literary language: the beauty of literature lies in as much what it is all about as how the author encodes it. A particular way of encoding implies a correspondent way of construing the world by the author, which in turn embodies his motivation and partially guides the literary effect upon the reader.

Looking back to the notions from Cognitive Grammar this paper has appealed to, the active zone and perfective/imperfective verbs probe into semantic nuance on a subtle level. More specifically, the notion of active zone enables us to locate the most relevant part involved in an event and thus achieve a higher semantic accuracy. In the same vein, the distinction between perfective and imperfective verbs serves to examine verbs on the dimensions of boundedness/unboundedness and heterogeneity/ homogeneity. These semantic subtleties have not received due attention in previous literary critic works, although they could be the key to interpret a literary text or provide a brand new perspective. In this respect, Cognitive Grammar could enable us to dwell on very minute details of the texts to be discussed.

Another advantage of Cognitive Grammar when applied to literary texts is its explanation of cognitive processes in language. Borrowing some concepts from cognitive science, Cognitive Grammar establishes important cognitive models in language, such as the action chain model and attention in language (e.g. trajector and landmark). These cognitive processes also play a great role in producing literary effects. To quote Tsur (2008: 4-5):

One major assumption of cognitive poetics is that poetry exploits, for aesthetic

purposes, cognitive (including linguistic) processes that were initially evolved for non-aesthetic purposes.... In certain extreme but central cases, this modification may become "organized violence against cognitive structures and processes", to paraphrase the famous slogan of Russian Formalism.... quite a few (but by no means all) central poetic effects are the result of some drastic interference with, or at least delay of, the regular course of cognitive processes, and the exploitation of its effects for aesthetic purposes. In other words, the cognitive correlates of poetic processes must be described in three respects: the normal cognitive processes; some kind of modification or disturbance of these processes; and their reorganization according to different principles.

Some notions I have made use of from Cognitive Grammar pertain to our cognitive models. Specifically, trajector/landmark is related to one of our essential cognitive ability, i.e. attention allocating, and action chain to another cognitive model, i.e. billiard-ball model. In this paper, I have examined how these normal cognitive processes are exploited to achieve literary effects in 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal'.

As a model which is proposed to analyse ordinary language, Cognitive Grammar faces the first challenge when applied to literary analysis, i.e. it has explored linguistically interesting phenomena, but not necessarily literarily interesting and illuminating. It is important to distinguish two fundamentally different things, i.e. the language of a text and the concerns when interpreting this text. In other words, despite the widely expressed view that ordinary and literary language are not so different, interpreters do have different concerns in analyzing ordinary and literary texts. This is why I mentioned earlier the practical motivation underlying my choosing of this poem as a test case. I do not pretend that Cognitive Grammar could explain any literary text. The key is to find the best interface between Cognitive Grammar and literary texts, or tailor this model to some extent for literary analysis. Interpretation on a discourse level sets the second challenge for a Cognitive Grammatical analysis of literary texts. Discourse, in Langacker's term

(2008), is still the “frontier” of Cognitive Grammar. When interpreting literary texts as a coherent whole, Cognitive Grammar still has a long way to go.

To summarise, the utmost goal of this paper is to demonstrate the usefulness of Cognitive Grammar to stylistics. I have recourse to several notions from Cognitive Grammar for the interpretation of ‘A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal’, which attaches as much attention to “how” this poem means as to “what” it means. In other words, semantic analysis is backed up with linguistic evidence. I have also gone further beyond the analysis to discuss the feasibility for a more systematic application of Cognitive Grammar to poetic analysis. It is shown that owing to its emphasis on cognition and semantic subtleties, Cognitive Grammar could yield illuminating insights into literary interpretation – although it also faces challenges in terms of literary concerns and discourse-level interpretation. However, I hope I have demonstrated that there is a vast area in Cognitive Grammar which stylistics could draw from.

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