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Reading Personalities: The Usefulness of Cognitive Grammar.

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Picture the scene, Nelson Mandela in his prison cell on Robben Island during the apartheid regime. He is reading the following poem, 'Invictus' by W.E. Henley:

> Out of the night that covers me, ☐
> Black as the Pit from pole to pole, ☐
> I thank whatever gods may be ☐
> For my unconquerable soul. ☐☐
>
> In the fell clutch of circumstance ☐
> I have not winced nor cried aloud. ☐
> Under the bludgeonings of chance
> My head is bloody, but unbowed. ☐☐
>
> Beyond this place of wrath and tears ☐
> Looms but the Horror of the shade, ☐
> And yet the menace of the years ☐
> Finds, and shall find, me unafraid. ☐☐
>
> It matters not how strait the gate, ☐
> How charged with punishments the scroll. ☐
> I am the master of my fate: ☐
> I am the captain of my soul.
>
> (Henley, 1949 [1888]: 4)

Mandela kept this poem on a scrap of paper through his twenty-seven years in prison. The poem was clearly an inspiration for him while he was suffering as a political prisoner. A film recently came out under the same name (Eastwood: 2009), commemorating Mandela's role in securing stability in South Africa after his release. The poem itself was written in 1875 while Henley was in hospital after his leg had been amputated. Henley suffered from tuberculosis of the bone, which crippled him for much of his life. The poem has attracted many admirers through various points in its history and in quite differing circumstances. For instance, Gordon Brown drew inspiration from it during an attempted coup of his leadership, the poem was the last words of Oklahoma City bomber, Timothy McVeigh, before being executed, it has even been used in teen dramas such as *One Tree Hill* (Schwann, 2005, 3:6) and *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer* (Whedon, 2002, 7:9). The poem is also a popular choice for funerals. It clearly has an ongoing attachment for many of its readers; its key theme of perseverance through suffering is an obvious inspiration.

However, I do not have this same sort of attachment. In fact, I think that 'Invictus' is an awful poem. In this essay, I aim to investigate the possible reasons for the varied levels of

attachment to this poem. I will look at how the individuality of each reader and their personal experiences has a profound effect on their reading of the poem. I will argue that a reader's personality is fundamental to the degree of cognitive engagement with literature. I will use Langacker's work on cognitive grammar (1987, 1990, 1991, 1999, 2008a) as a framework to analyse the poem. This seems an appropriate framework as it stresses the importance of grammar as 'the conceptual apparatus through which we apprehend and engage the world' (2008a: 4). The framework is also a means into further investigation in the cognitive sciences and especially the work done on personal experience and engaged cognition. I will also touch on the limitations of the cognitive grammar framework.

This analysis will also be used as a test-bed to address key issues of reading, interpretation and meaning and how cognitive poetics accounts for these three dimensions. In particular, I want to address some recent criticisms of the cognitive poetic approach to literature. For instance, Sinding argues that 'cognitive poetics should consider how the arts are also forms of communication, growing out of and responding to social and material contexts' (2007: 477). In the essay, the various contexts of differing readers will be considered through their varied levels of engagement with the poem. Equally, Allington criticizes cognitive poetics by arguing 'at best, it has lead to a new and different kind of reading; it has certainly done nothing to explain those kinds of readings that were already in existence' (2006:127). Again, I aim to directly address this criticism by drawing on cognitive principles that explain the various readings of this particular poem. Ultimately, this essay will demonstrate how cognitive poetics is an especially useful means of studying literature as it accounts for reading, meaning, and interpretation; something that many other approaches have struggled to do.

I will first begin with setting the technical boundaries of my analysis. Separate to cognitive grammar, there have been numerous attempts at grammatical descriptions of language. For instance, generative grammar, developed by Chomsky (1965), has been adapted to analyse literary texts (see for example, Ohmann 1964 and Traugott and Pratt 1977). However, as Langacker points out that a complete formal description is not possible because language 'inheres in the dynamic processing of real neural networks' (2008a: 10). This is something that cognitive grammar aims to account for. Similarly, systemic functional linguistics (Halliday 1985; Halliday and Matthiessen 2003) is another framework that has been used in stylistic analyses of literature. In comparison with cognitive grammar, the Hallidayan approach has key differences yet there are areas of overlap that seem to validate the two approaches (see Stockwell 2002: 70-2). It is only cognitive grammar, however, that accounts for the conceptualization of language. This is a point that is crucial for the development of my argument in the varied levels of engagement with literature.

As a result, the focus of the analysis will be embedded in some key principles of cognitive grammar. Firstly, construal is one foundational concept of cognitive grammar. Langacker argues that an 'expressions meaning is not just conceptual content it evokes — equally important is how that content is construed' (2008a: 55). Langacker splits this phenomenon into four separate dimensions: specificity, focusing, prominence and perspective (2008a: 55). Essentially, in a literary context, a text can be construed in a variety of ways depending on how it is presented and viewed. Stockwell argues that grammatical construal is not just informational meaning; it is 'complicit in experiential value' (2009: 171). This has important implications for the analysis of the poem, as I will draw on how different readers have varied life experiences and thus may differ in the construal of the poem.

Another important aspect to cognitive grammar is the profiling of figure and ground relationships and trajector and landmark alignments. These are sorts of prominence that both involve the focusing of attention, or a strong sense of foregrounding. Langacker points out that the profiling of figure-ground relationships 'amounts to nothing more than the relative

prominence of substructures within a conceptualization, and is inherently a matter of degree' (1990: 208). Similarly, the trajector and landmark alignment is an important aspect of cognitive grammar because in a profiled relationship between two or more participants, each participant has a varied degree of prominence. The primary focus is the trajector, and the secondary focus is the landmark (Langacker, 2008a: 70). The trajector follows a path in relation to the landmark. This aspect of cognitive grammar is especially useful for my analysis because it accounts for the relationship between what is prominent and what is less so in degree.

Additionally, Langacker touches on the 'frontier' to cognitive grammar, engaged cognition and simulation in language (2008: 536-8). Langacker points out that engaged cognition is a direct interaction with something in the world, which is affected through sensory and motor organs. Disengaged cognition is where certain facets of an engaged perception occur autonomously even without usual perceptual stimulation. These specific facets are said to be a 'simulation' (2008a: 536). These simulations are, as Langacker argues:

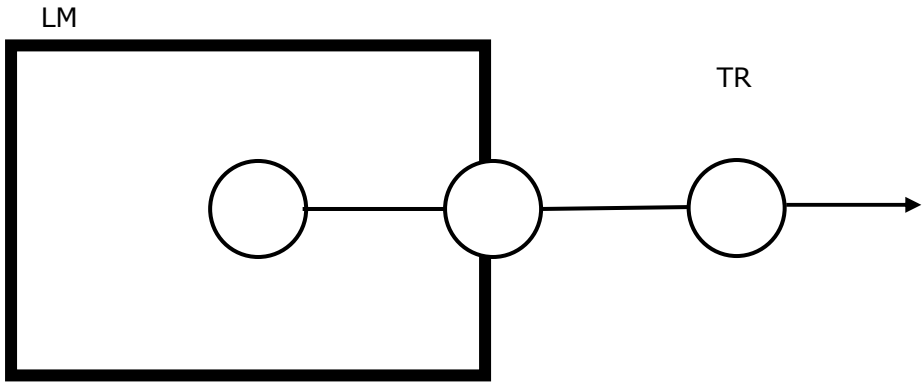
> always attenuated relative to engaged experience. Because it is not driven by immediate perceptual input, or harnessed to actual motor activity, it lacks the intensity or "vividness" of such experience. (2008a: 536)

Langacker uses the example of contrasting physically burning your hand to the simulation of burning your hand. This is a point that Stockwell takes further in terms of a literary context. Although simulations are attenuated by degree, Stockwell argues 'attenuation varies considerably, depending on the literary texture — the skill of the writer's choices and the disposition of the reader in combination' (2009: 174). As a result, there can be a far higher degree in attenuation than Langacker makes out when dealing with a literary simulation; Stockwell argues that 'there is a power in the necessary self-awareness that literariness conveys' (2009: 177). This frontier in cognitive grammar is a key point for investigation; the variation of attachment toward 'Invictus' must be due to the varied levels of attenuation.

Although cognitive grammar has a very useful approach to our conceptualizing of language, it does have its limits and dangers. Firstly, there are limits to the application of cognitive grammar towards a literary framework. This is partly due to the fact that cognitive grammar accounts for everyday uses of language, using fairly basic examples. It is difficult therefore, to apply the framework directly and account for the defamilliarizing techniques used frequently in poetry and other literary works. However, despite the limitations, cognitive grammar has been applied effectively, and in my view successfully to poems (see for example, Stockwell 2002, 2009, Hamilton 2003) and to developing a cognitive discourse grammar (Stockwell, 2009: 183-190). Equally, there are dangers when using a cognitive grammar framework to delete the reader engagement with the text. Hamilton points out that the references to profiling 'should not hide the fact that our minds, not the verbs themselves, are the true agents behind profiling' (2003: 64). Thus, it is the reader's own involvement with the profiling process that creates the varying levels of their engagement. The danger is to forget the reader input when using such a technical framework. Indeed, the reader involvement is not just limited to the level of cognitive grammar; for instance, it has been developed through deictic shift theory (see Jeffries, 2008 and Straiton, 2009). Jeffries acknowledges that more needs to be done in identifying 'textual triggers for some of the effects of reader-involvement and how the identity of the reader will contribute to any effects of this kind' (2008: 83). My analysis will build on this aspect of reader contribution towards an interpretation and how their dispositions affect their involvement and engagement with the text.

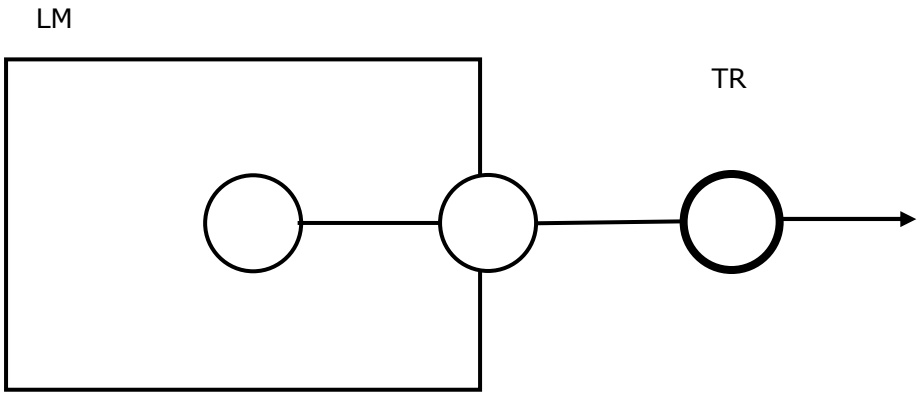
Turning now to an analysis of the poem, the profiling of the figure-ground relationships in the poem is useful at identifying how a reader can become attached to the key theme of perseverance through suffering. One example is in the first stanza where the main subject of the sentence 'I' is figured against the 'night' which is the ground. This profiled relationship is due to the path the figure follows of 'out' from the night. Within the first few lines we have an image-schema that develops the prevailing 'I' against the darkness of the night, an abstract representation of the pain felt by the poetic persona, Henley. However, the when the first sentence is broken down, the ground or landmark, 'the night', grows in prominence through its post-modification in 'Black as the Pit from pole to pole'. It brings the night to the fore before the main subject 'I' takes up the role as the trajector on its path of 'out'. For a clear demonstration of how this profiling works, Figure 1.1 highlights the importance of the landmark almost being brought to the fore in an 'out' image-schema.

Figure 1.1



This demonstrates how the landmark (LM) is a prominent focal point when it is post-modified with 'Black as the Pit from pole to pole' (hence, LM in bold). This description forces the reader to focus briefly on the hell-like, encompassing, nature of the night. Henley, clearly wants his readers to be aware of the pain that surrounds him. The prevailing figure of 'I' in the third line as the agent of thanking 'whatever gods may be' stresses the importance of the shift in attention. As a result, the trajector becomes the main profiled participant and the reader becomes aware of the 'I' getting 'out' of this point in suffering (see below).

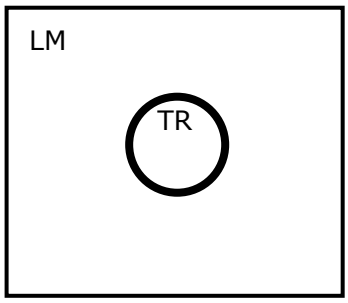
Figure 1.2



The opening lines set up a pattern of the 'I' being figured against an abstract representation of suffering which is the ground. The profiled trajector-landmark alignment emphasises Henley's aim to keep perseverance through suffering a key theme.

A similar pattern is used in the second stanza to illustrate the all-consuming nature of the suffering Henley was under. Again, a prepositional phrase sets up the ground 'In the fell clutch of circumstance', and the figure 'I' is profiled against it in the second line. Henley clearly plays with the structure of the sentence as the prepositional phrase opens the stanza to stress the personification of 'circumstance' and signifies another aspect of suffering in the poem. The diagram below, Figure 2.1, gives the image schema of the trajector following a path 'in' the landmark.

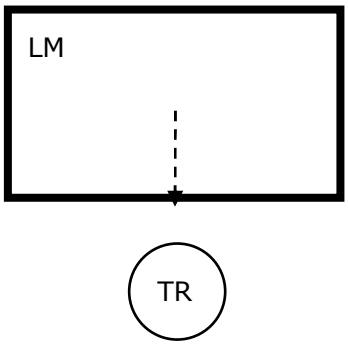
Figure 2.1



The trajector-landmark alignment highlights Henley's aim to produce a poem that exemplifies the power of endurance in suffering. The trajector is the primary focus between the two participants not only through the implicit (I am) 'in the fell clutch' but also in the defiant tone through the use of negation: 'I have not winced nor cried aloud'. This particular metaphorical representation of circumstance adds another element of suffering and contributes to the 'I' being surrounded by these differing elements.

Moreover, the personification of 'chance' is another element acting against the 'I' in the poem. The prepositional relation 'under' gives the path of the trajector and figure 'my head' in relation to the landmark and ground 'bludgeonings of chance'. In this case, the landmark, 'chance' is personified through the verb 'bludgeonings'. The brutal nature of the verb is stressed all the more by the suffix '-s' to give the verb a kind of plurality — as if it were happening over again. Although grammatically incorrect, it contributes to the multifaceted portrayal of Henley's suffering. The metonymic reference 'my head' of the poetic persona again gives a very visual image of the suffering'. It adheres to the established pattern of the ground followed by the figured 'I' depending on a prepositional relation. However, like the example in the opening line of the poem, Henley wants elements of the suffering to linger even after there seems to be a clear establishment of a figure-ground relationship. The alliteration of 'b' in 'bloody, but unbowed' echoes the same phonetic sound of /b/ in 'bludgeonings'. This causes a lingering effect of the ground 'chance'. Again, for illustration, figure 2.2 stresses the importance of the ongoing presence of suffering under 'chance':

Figure 2.2



This is another illustration of the recurring pattern in the first two stanzas. The ongoing focus on the prepositional relation between the trajector and landmark highlights why this poem's theme of perseverance is so effective. The structure of each line means the reader cannot help but focus on aspects of suffering caused by the ground then figure pattern. This is why a reader may engage with the poem so readily, because it requires an active role in deciphering the primary and secondary focal participants in each line.

However, Henley purposefully breaks from this pattern in the third stanza to disconcert the reader. Like the first two stanzas, a prepositional phrase is used to set up the ground, 'Beyond this place of wrath and tears', then the reader does not profile the expected figure 'I', but 'the horror of the shade'. The profiled figure is the unknown entity of the afterlife. This particular figure-ground relationship is significant as it plays with the reader's expectation and thus mimicking the uncertainty in Henley's own life. It contributes to another aspect of the poem's key theme of perseverance, even in the face of death. Henley came close to death frequently because of his illness, and here the poem touches upon that feeling of uncertainty in the figure-ground profiling.

Equally, the latter half of the third stanza, is further example of Henley playing with the pattern in figure-ground relationships. In the coordinating clause the figure is still not 'I' but 'the menace of the years', a metaphorical representation of death. The ground is 'me' in the final line of the stanza, as the patient role. There is a complete reversal of figure-ground relationships. Henley clearly uses this as another tool to disconcert the reader. The reader has to acknowledge the imminent nature of death through the temporal aspect of the present 'finds' and the future tense 'will find'. As a result, the reader construes a very different relationship in terms of trajector and landmark alignment, in comparison to the opening two stanzas. This also confirms Henley's attitude towards death and how the poem is 'the shouldering of the sense of his own doom' (Connell, 1949: 4). It is this sense of inevitability that makes the final stanza all the more inspiring for engaged readers.

The final stanza is the most quoted lines of the poem and brings the poems key themes to the fore. The final two statements of the poem undermine the two biblical images of 'the scroll' (Revelation: 5), and 'the gate' (Matthew: 7 v13-14) drawing more attention on the prevailing humanist viewpoint of Henley at the time of writing. They also point forward to the final two lines because of the sense of self-inspiration. The final statements involve an ongoing temporal relationship through the 'I am' form of the verb 'to be'. This highlights how the poem has a resonating tone even after the reader finishes the poem. This is due to the nature of [BE] as a true verb that 'designates a process consisting of the extension through time of a stable situation' (Langacker, 1990: 30). This marks a point of contention over the role of summary and sequential scanning (see Broccias and Hollmann 2007, Langacker 2008b). Essentially, this relationship between trajector and landmark is a stable ongoing

process. The trajector 'I' and the landmarks, 'master of my fate' and 'captain of my soul' respectively, are the same one state to the next. These final two lines offer the 'point of payoff' (Stockwell, 2009: 98) for the reader as they have been growing in their investment to the poem and its theme of perseverance in suffering. The end of the poem gives the reader hope and clearly offers a way of coping with life's pain by giving them the agency over their own lives.

Another important aspect to the poem is the use of prepositional phrases to bind the reader into a spatial relationship with the suffering 'I'. 'Out', 'in', 'under' and 'beyond' all contribute to establishing the all-consuming and surrounding nature of suffering. Since spatial language encodes specific spatial scenes (Talmy, 2000), Henley's use of prepositions forces the reader to engage with his position as the sufferer. Indeed, in terms of figure-ground relationships, the ground is the 'reference object' as a means of relation to the figure (Evans and Green, 2006:69). By using spatial images, Henley forces the reader to be aware of the ground as the reference object, which in many cases is, is an element of suffering. For instance, 'Beyond this place of wrath and tears' sets up a secondary reference object; this could only be Henley as the implicit perspective at that specific location. Additionally, the beyond-schema sets up an unknown figured entity in the inaccessible space. Henley uses spatial language to attach his reader to his own suffering in life; the unknown world of the afterlife is stressed by the beyond-schema. This makes the 'Horror' all the more daunting for the reader and Henley.

The frequency of these prepositional phrases contributes to the reader's simulation of the poem as a whole. Specifically, spatial language produces a simulation of a perspective point that may not be mentioned at all, such as the opening lines of the third stanza. There has been work done on perceptual simulation by Coventry et al. (2010) that highlights the impact of spatial language. Their experiments based on the cognition of visual scenes prove that a functional geometric network (Coventry and Garrod, 2004) invokes 'a range of types of perceptual simulations, … where attention is directed to objects not mentioned in the sentence to be evaluated' (2010: 212). This links back to a reader's engagement with the beyond-schema, even though there is no 'I' mentioned, the reader is still aware of the perspective point. It is this implicit attention on the suffering 'I' that causes such an attachment with the poem.

Furthermore, Henley's use of negation contributes to this implicit attention on the 'I'. For example, in the line 'I have not winced nor cried aloud', the reader still conceptualises the specific processes of wincing and crying aloud even when they are negated. In terms of text world theory (Werth, 1999 and Gavins, 2007), the reader modifies the information given and acknowledges the non-negated aspect. Thus, through negation in the poem, Henley gives the reader various images and processes that have to be 'brought into focus in the discourse in order to then be negated' (Gavins, 2007: 102). The negated sub-world re-channels information about the 'I' to the reader, which foregrounds the content. This also affects the recurring pattern of the 'un-' prefix through the poem. As a result, the reader has to picture an afraid, conquerable and bowed 'I' before modifying the information through negated sub-worlds. This demonstrates another technique used by Henley to draw the reader's implicit attention to the suffering 'I'. It also builds further attachment with the reader as they are active participants in processing the negation.

Similarly, the use of abstract concepts in the poem also helps build an attachment with readers. This is because nouns such as chance, circumstance, soul, fate and wrath all are broadly defined and requires deliberate cognition in mapping their own understanding of the concepts. Langacker points out that abstract nouns 'are far less formidable when meaning is equated with cognitive processing' (1990: 97). The frequent personification of these abstract nouns causes them to be shifted leftwards up the empathy scale (Stockwell, 2002: 61). When

this process takes place, the reader requires deliberate cognition. As Cerulo argues, 'when engaged in deliberate thought, individuals may reject or override their schema, and actively search for characteristics, connections, relations, and expectation rather than assuming them' (2010: 117). This use of abstract concepts requires further involvement in cognitively processing the text, and thus producing a richer attachment to it. Ultimately, these abstract concepts produce a more relatable piece of literature, which a variety of readers, in a variety of contexts, can engage with.

Evidently, the level of attachment with the poem depends on how rich a simulation the poem evokes in the individual reader. At this point, I return to Mandela's attachment to the poem, and how it significantly differs to mine. Mandela clearly has a deep connection with this poem; he remarked to a friend, 'when you read words of that nature you become encouraged. It puts life into you,' (Sampson, 1999: 212). Through the days in prison, Mandela found it both 'inspirational and gratifying' (Howard, 2005: 182). The poems exemplifying of perseverance in the face of hardship was something Mandela could directly relate to. This is because he must have felt similar emotions to that of Henley. After twenty-seven years in a prison cell, he probably did feel in the 'fell clutch of circumstance', surrounded by things outside his control working against him. By the lack of control in his life, he must have come under great stress and anxiety.

Furthermore, work has been done on the effects of emotion on attention. Yiend finds that the empirical evidence shows 'the attentional biases reviewed represent cognitive vulnerabilities for both anxiety and depression' and that 'emotional stimulus content specifically enhances perceptual processing' (2010: 35). Applying this evidence to Mandela's reading, then it is understandable that he has such a close attachment to the poem. His own personal experiences, being under stress and anxiety in prison, influence his overall cognition of the poem.

On the other hand, I do not have any attachment to this poem. It is a typical example of Victorian sentimentalism which is bitterly ironic. The poem's key theme is subverted by Henley's own life after writing it. For example, his daughter tragically died at five, 'a blow from which he never recovered' (Keller, 2009: 111). Henley is clearly not the master of his fate, and the poem is just a 'superhuman fantasy'.[1] My lack of attachment to this poem is also due to the fact that I have not had to deal with much pain and suffering in my life. As a result, I find it difficult to simulate the intense emotions evoked by the poem. My lack of personal experiences in suffering has a direct influence on my level of cognitive engagement. This is a clear indication of the importance of a reader's experience with the world they live in and how it varies the levels of engagement with literary texts.

To return to Langacker, I wish to argue this point further. Langacker argues that 'simulation is always attenuated relative to engaged experience'. However, I wish to challenge this view through evidence developed in cognitive science and applied to this particular case of varied levels of attachment to 'Invictus'. Specifically, a paper from Lyons et al. had the aim to assess whether neural activity during language receiving 'depends on participants' degree of experience with the content of linguistic stimuli' (2010: 215). The experiment took fMRI scans of twelve ice hockey players alongside nine non ice hockey players. They read sentences that directly related to ice hockey such as 'the hockey player knocked down the net' compared with 'the individual opened the fridge' (2010: 216). The results showed that 'during language comprehension, personal experience with language content results in the involvement of brain areas outside core language networks' (2010: 220). Parts of the brain that control actions and emotions were especially active. Therefore,

[1] C. Howse, <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/culture/christopherhowse/100006084/gordon-brown-chooses-invictus-the-favourite-poem-of-the-locked-ward/> viewed 03/05/2010

because of their personal experience, the ice hockey players had a far richer simulation, activating parts of their brain that are usually used in engaged cognition with the world around them.

This evidence suggests then, that Mandela does have a richer simulation of Henley's 'Invictus' because of his own personal experiences within the world around him. Of course, Mandela did not have his leg amputated like Henley, but his suffering in Robben Island prison must bare a fundamental influence on his cognitive engagement with the poem. Mandela's brain would thus be more active than mine when reading the poem as it evokes a series of emotions and actions Mandela would relate to. This is confirmed by the conclusion that 'both personal experience with, and the personal relevance of, language content serves as a key factor in orienting attention toward greater semantic processing' (Lyons et al., 2010: 221). This evidence directly challenges Langacker's view that simulation is not 'harnessed in actual motor activity' (2008a: 536). Lyons et al. and I argue that simulation has a far richer engagement with the world, and in this case literature, than Langacker gives credit for.

Further studies have been done to demonstrate that simulation is not just limited disengaged cognition. Owen et al. used fMRI scans on a woman in a vegetative state to illustrate the ability to conceptualise specific actions from previous experiences in life (Owen et al., 2006). For instance, 'when asked to imagine playing tennis or moving around her home, the patient activated predicted cortical areas in a manner indistinguishable from that of healthy volunteers' (2006: 1402). Areas of the brain not usually affiliated with language comprehension are used to simulate specific experiences from the past. In the case of Mandela, his personal experiences of suffering in the prison cell, clearly establishes a more engaged response.

Moreover, developments in the study of emotion and narrative have highlighted the importance of personal engagement with a text. Sabatinelli et al. (2006) tested the neural responses to pleasant and unpleasant narratives. Their results found that 'the intensity of preparatory motor activation reflects in part the nature of the narrative; scenes characterized by emotional events evoke stronger signal increases' (2006: 98). Mandela has a far more emotional response to 'Invictus' than I do, which suggests that there is increase in the action-supplementary motor area producing a richer simulation. This ties with his remarks of emotional attachment to the poem: 'It puts life into you' (Simpson, 1999: 212). Therefore, this evidence points to, and accounts for, the variation in attachment with the text between Mandela and I.

However, this evidence of rich simulation as a result of personal experience has to be applied to other varied readings. Timothy McVeigh's interpretation of the poem clearly differs from Mandela's and mine. He construes other elements of the poem as a result of his own experiences in his life. McVeigh ordered his lawyers not to prolong his defence, consciously opting for immediate death: he wanted to be the master of his own fate.[2] His attachment to 'Invictus' therefore was an act of defiance. The poem's self-proclaiming heroism clearly evoked specific emotions that were relative to his life. According to the evidence from Lyons et al (2010) and Sabatinelli et al. (2006) in particular, I argue that McVeigh's interpretation of the poem is also directly influenced by his personal experience. Thus, it evokes a richer simulation because of this interpretation being directly mapped to his engagement with the world around him. Similarly, a friend of mine engages with this poem because of the prominent 'indomitable spirit'. This interpretation is not surprising as my friend is an aspiring ultimate fighter. His own experiences of fighting have been mapped onto an interpretation of the poem. Arguably, none of these readings are incorrect, but they do

[2] Hannan, <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/danielhannan/100021943/invictus-the-inspiration-for-nelson-mandela-timothy-mcveigh-and-now-gordon-brown/> (viewed 03/05/10)

show the importance of a reader's personality and how they have engaged the world in the past. Personal experience is fundamental to an effective simulation of the text at hand. Therefore, the level of engagement with a literary text is directly due to a reader's personality and experiences.

I believe that this argument of variable attachment due to reader personality has addressed key criticisms of cognitive poetics as a practice. As highlighted earlier, Sinding points out that reading is done in 'social and material contexts' (2007: 477). The argument for a more engaged simulation accounts for the social and material circumstances of a reader such as Nelson Mandela. Equally, contrary to Allington's view that cognitive poetics does nothing to affirm existing readings of texts, I argue, that this argument has accounted for various readings from various contexts (2006:127). Overall, cognitive poetics as a literary practice is the only one that aims to account for reading, meaning and interpretation. The analysis has shown that these different dimensions in literary study can be psychologically verified and tested.

In conclusion, this essay has used a cognitive grammar analysis to address relatively new areas of literary study. I have shown how reader attachment and cognitive engagement with the text is clearly influenced by their own experiences. The evidence from cognitive science points to the active role of a reader's personal experiences and their personalities in their interpretation of a text. This essay has also addressed criticism towards cognitive poetics as a discipline and demonstrated how it can account for three key dimensions of literary study: reading, interpretation and meaning. However, there is still vast room for improvement. Langacker leaves three pages to discuss disengaged cognition and simulation as a 'frontier' to cognitive grammar. The influence of the reading personality on literary engagement is an area that needs further study. With this in mind, cognitive grammar is a useful place to start the investigation.

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