POETIC THOUGHTS AND POETIC EFFECTS:
A RELEVANCE THEORY ACCOUNT OF THE LITERARY USE
OF RHETORICAL TROPES AND SCHEMES.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes an account of the effects achieved by the poetic use of rhetorical tropes and schemes in the light of recent developments in pragmatic theory. More specifically it discusses and attempts to develop the *relevance theory* account of poetic effects.

Much recent debate in literary studies has centred on the question as to whether literary communication is best explained in terms of text-internal linguistic properties or socio-cultural phenomena. This thesis considers such views in the light of the theories of language and communication they assume. It then proposes an alternative theoretical account of literary communication grounded in cognitive pragmatic theory. It argues that the relevance theory account of poetic effects may make a significant contribution to such an account. A brief outline of relevance theory is followed by a more detailed analysis of metaphor and a brief consideration of epizeuxis and various verse effects, insofar as they contribute to poetic style.

It is natural for pragmatic theory to concentrate on the communication of assumptions, propositional forms with a logical structure over which inferences can be performed. Although the account of poetic effects and poetic thoughts developed here will be partially characterised in such terms, an attempt will also be made to account for the communication of affective and other non-propositional effects. Any theory of stylistic effects in general, and poetic style in particular, must, it will be argued, include such an account. This will necessitate a broader philosophical discussion of issues having a bearing on the question of what it is that is communicated non-propositionally. More particularly it will require some discussion of emotion, phenomenal experience and aesthetic

experience. This discussion will lead to a characterisation of poetic thought or poetic representation.

The thesis aims, then, to make a contribution to literary studies by characterising a new theoretical notion of literariness in terms of mental representations and mental processes. It also aims to make a contribution to pragmatic theory, specifically to the pragmatics of poetic style and rhetoric within a relevance theory framework.

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'No one can have read at all deeply in the anti-essentialist literature on art without recognising the extent to which they tend to flatten the works they address out under interpretation - how all the works addressed are finally deconstructed in such a way that they all more or less say - more or less "really" say since these theories only give deep interpretations - the same thing over and over. The message is always one of oppression or of subversion. And I have often felt it a tragedy that those who went into the study of literature or art out of love for painting or poetry should have fallen under the spell of "theory" and to find themselves dealing only and always with the same flat grey deep substance underlying the works whose surfaces theory has enabled them to penetrate...But my theory, being philosophical, leaves things as they are.'

(Danto 1993:207)

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this thesis is to examine a problem that is relevant to literary criticism and literary theory, as well as to pragmatic theory. The problem can be expressed in terms of the following question: how is literary (or poetic) communication successful and distinctive *qua* literary communication? This question, covering both literary prose and poetry, is a version of the one that I.A.Richards asks at the beginning of Principles of Literary Criticism: 'What gives the experience of reading a certain poem its value?' (Richards 1924:1).

Literary criticism is centrally concerned with evaluating works of literature. The aesthetic value to be obtained from works of literature derives from a particular kind of reading experience. This reading experience may be said to involve a particular kind of thinking, what Les Murray calls 'the only whole thinking' in his poem On Religion and Poetry. What, then, is this particular kind of thinking? What are the characteristic properties of a poetic thought?

Pragmatic theory is concerned with developing an account of verbal communication, with the questions: what is verbal communication and how is it achieved? As poetic thoughts are communicated verbally, pragmatic theory should have something to say about the communication of poetic thoughts or poetic effects, as well as about more general aspects of style. It should be able, in principle, to provide a theoretical answer to a literary critical question.

The main problem that pragmatic theory faces in answering this question follows from widely accepted intuitions about the nature of poetic effects. Poetic effects cannot be

characterised simply in propositional terms: poetic thoughts do not just consist of sets of assumptions or propositional forms. They involve the communication of nonpropositional effects of various kinds (though what precisely these effects are is difficult to determine). Pragmatic theory provides an account of how certain assumptions come to be represented in the mind of an addressee during communication, how those assumptions are placed in the context of other assumptions, and how inferential rules (of some specific kind) operate over these sets of assumptions to yield further assumptions. There seems to be no place for nonpropositional effects in any workable pragmatic theory. If it is the case that pragmatic theory deals in propositional effects and that literary criticism/ literary communication is primarily concerned with nonpropositional effects then it would follow that pragmatic theory cannot offer a genuine theory of style or, in particular, of poetic style.

This thesis was initially inspired by the relevance theory account of poetic effects found in Sperber and Wilson (1986a). Not only does relevance theory offer a more sophisticated pragmatic account of poetic effects in terms of implicatures, and hence propositional forms, it also recognises and offers an explanation for the problem of the communication of nonpropositional effects.

Mainstream literary stylistics seeks to explain the meanings communicated by poems in terms of the lexical and syntactic choices made by poets. The other main attraction of relevance theory is that, as a cognitive pragmatic theory, it can offer genuine theoretical explanations for the linguistic choices that poets make (as well as for our stylistic intuitions as readers) in terms of mental representations and processes, in terms of thoughts and thinking. I hope to show how this kind of approach can reveal more about the nature of aesthetic experience and aesthetic value.

The pursuit of such issues should reflect back upon the

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pragmatic theory in the light of which intuitions are examined. As Sperber and Wilson (1987:710) wrote, concerning the status of the ideas developed in Sperber and Wilson (1986a):

> 'In assessing a new approach to human communication.......the following questions should be kept in mind. How does it compare with other current approaches in terms of explicitness, plausibility, generality, and explanatory power? Does it throw new light both on the very rich and diverse data available to all of us as individuals involved in communication and on the narrower but more reliable data gathered by scholars? Does it suggest new empirical research? Is it relevant to more than one of the many disciplines involved in the study of human communication - linguistics, pragmatics, philosophy, cognitive psychology, artificial intelligence, social psychology, literary studies, anthropology, and sociology - and could it foster fruitful interactions among them?'

This thesis will attempt to show that relevance theory is, indeed, relevant to literary studies. When I.A.Richards asked the question, quoted above, he was interested in developing a theoretical answer - just as, in Richards (1929), he asked the same question from the non-theoretical perspective of a literary critic. He attempted to develop a theory of literature in terms of the psychological and communication theories and approaches available to him at the time. The revolution in such theories - the development of cognitive psychology, cognitive science, and now cognitive pragmatics - permits a new theoretical approach to Richards' question, and one which has a much better chance of making progress.

Rather than attempt the same ambitious programme as Richards (1924), I wish here to make a modest contribution to such a programme, focussing on small-scale poetic effects. I am interested here in the effects achieved by individual rhetorical devices rather than by complete poems or extended passages of literary prose. In particular I am interested in the poetic use of metaphor, epizeuxis and metrical variation.

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Despite this narrow focus I hope that the approach I develop will ultimately prove applicable to literary communication in general, that it will provide the basis for a theory of literariness.

Although the inspiration for this thesis derives from pragmatic theory, I will be drawing upon arguments, ideas and theories from a number of other disciplines concerned with human communication. In particular I will be developing my ideas in relation to ideas in literary studies, the philosophy of mind and aesthetics.

In Chapter 1 I refer to arguments in aesthetics in order to establish the groundwork assumptions upon which a theoretical approach to literary studies and literary communication may be developed. In Chapter 2 I discuss a range of approaches to literary theory within literary studies and argue for a new approach grounded in cognitive pragmatics. In Chapter 3 I provide a brief outline of relevance theory as the cognitive pragmatic theory in which a literary theory (and general theory of literary communication) may be grounded. In Chapter 4 I develop an account of metaphor and, more particularly, an account of poetic metaphor. In Chapter 5 I discuss the poetic use of epizeuxis, metrical variation, rhyme and alliteration. In the next two chapters I develop the notion of poetic effects in the context of theories of emotion (Chapter 6) and the notion of qualia (Chapter 7). In the conclusion (Chapter 8) I return to the questions raised at the beginning of this introduction: in particular I return to the question of aesthetic value and provide a characterisation of the notions 'poetic thought' and 'poetic representation'.

For ease of exposition I will adopt the following conventions. I will use the pronoun 'she' to refer to the communicator and 'he' to refer to the addressee. I will use capital letters for Literary Theory intending a range of contemporary, relativistic, anti-essentialist and anti-theoretical approaches to literature. (Literary Theory is thus to be distinguished from literary theory, to which it is opposed.)

CHAPTER ONE

LITERARY STUDIES AND LITERARY THEORY

1.1. Introduction: Approaches to literary studies.

Literary studies encompasses many different kinds of enquiry. For some years it has been a matter of intense debate as to how each line of enquiry should be pursued, which of them should take precedence, or which are, indeed, legitimate. There has always been a measure of uncertainty and confusion, with periodic attempts to put literary studies back on the right track, or to suggest radical new directions. It is possible to argue, as John Crowe Ransome did, for example, that literary studies has no proper discipline of its own, that the student of literature is part historian, part philosopher, and part social reformer. As time has passed other roles have been suggested for the student of literature, other ways in which the field of studies might be divided up. This thesis will argue the case for the development of yet one more line of enquiry and indicate how it relates to other legitimate areas of interest within literary studies.

It would be useful to begin by drawing some basic distinctions between possible approaches to literary studies. The first distinction should be drawn between lines of enquiry that are *intrinsic* and those that are *extrinsic* to the nature of literary communication and literary experience. In many literature courses time is given to questions of cultural or social history, for example, or to the history of ideas. Dostoyevsky might be taught in the context of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in a course concerned with the nature of Existentialism. A course on Romanticism might give time, say,

to Coleridge's _Monologue to a Young Jack Ass_, simply because it expresses certain key Romantic ideas in a clear and interesting way. It may be tacitly acknowledged that the poem is not a great literary achievement, but literary quality is beside the point for the purpose in hand. The text, in this instance, is interesting on account of the ideas it communicates or to which it alludes, not as an instance of literary or poetic communication. The uses of literature to illustrate issues in social and cultural history or the history of ideas are legitimate uses, as long as the extrinsic/intrinsic distinction is kept in mind. It must be clear that the interest in literature qua literature is a quite distinct interest.

Jefferson and Robey (1982:2) draw a similar, though not identical, distinction between 'literary criticism' and 'literary scholarship'. Criticism involves 'discussions of literary works that focus upon the experience of reading' and is concerned with 'describing, interpreting and evaluating the meaning and effect that literary works have for competent but not necessarily academic readers.' Scholarship, on the other hand, is concerned 'with factors in one way or another external to this experience: the genesis of the work, its textual transmission' and so forth. Scholarship here represents the attempt to establish a niche for the literary academic, an area of expertise, beyond that of the competent 'common reader'. It takes a literary canon as given and gets to work on textual, historical and philological matters, for all of which scholarly expertise is required. Again, these traditional 'scholarship' pursuits have their place. They only have their place, however, after it has been decided what texts they should get to work on. That decision does require thinking about questions of literary value, questions to do with the nature of literature, questions that are concerned with what is intrinsic to literature and literary communication.

Works of literature, and artworks more generally, have value and interest for many reasons other than purely aesthetic ones. Abuladze's _Repentance_ was an important film, at least in the

early days of glasnost in the former Soviet Union. Clearly its impact owed a great deal to its political content, to its exposure of the horrors and injustices of the Stalinist period. The question as to whether it was also a good film artistically was almost a secondary issue. Similarly, although the novels of Alexander Solzhenitsyn won him a Nobel Prize for Literature, the question has been raised as to whether the value of these novels lies as much in their historical and political importance as in their literary achievement, and perhaps even more so.

A poem or novel might otherwise be interesting because it is written by someone one knows. It might be valuable because it evokes memories of a place in which one has lived. It may contain interesting ideas. There are countless reasons, some trivial, some significant, as to why one might value, or gain pleasure from, an artwork. Some of these reasons might be worth exploring in an academic context.

1.2. Artwork and aesthetic experience.

'Of course it's a work of art. It's in an art gallery'.
Attributed to Damien Hirst, May 1994.

Having distinguished intrinsic from extrinsic approaches to the study of literature, it is important to make a further distinction between two types of intrinsic approach. There are two important questions that an intrinsic approach to literary studies might address, which correspond to well-known questions in aesthetics. One concerns the nature or concept of 'artwork': what, for example, distinguishes an artwork from something that is not an artwork? (This question can be phrased as: what distinguishes an artwork from a mere thing? In the case of literature the question can become, as it does for Fodor (1993): what distinguishes an artwork from rhetoric?) A different question, and one that is amenable to a theoretical approach is: what is the distinctive nature of

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aesthetic communication and experience? *'What is a literary work of art?'* and *'What is the nature of literary communication?'* are quite distinct questions. The answers to these questions lead potentially to quite different kinds of enquiry within literary studies.

In introducing the question about the nature of artworks Fodor (1993) refers to Wittgenstein's question in Philosophical Investigations (paragraph 621): *what, more than my arm's rising, is there to my raising my arm?* This question highlights interesting philosophical problems concerning the nature of the properties that distinguish these two types of happening (an event and an action). Wittgenstein presents us with a twin case where the twins share exactly the same physical properties and therefore must differ in terms of their non-physical properties. It is an interesting question in the context of the present discussion, according to Fodor, because it can be parallelled by similar examples that illustrate the problem of the nature of artworks.

Fodor argues that an event and an action, identical in every physical aspect, must differ in terms of their relational properties. Arguing from the perspective of intentional realism, the relation has to be defined with respect to intentional states. As Fodor puts it: 'what makes a motion an act of F-ing is that it is caused, in the right sort of way, by an intention to F' (Fodor 1993:44). In like manner Fodor distinguishes artworks from 'mere things' in terms of their intentional etiology. Referring to an example discussed by Danto (1981), he argues that what distinguishes Warhol's Brillo Boxes from mere brillo boxes is Warhol's intention that the former be an artwork. An audience's recognition of Brillo Boxes as an artwork is a consequence of that audience's recognition that Warhol intended Brillo Boxes to be an artwork.

Such twin case examples are familiar from discussions in philosophy of art as to what constitutes an artwork. Ground (1989) cites as an example a Henry Moore sculpture, entitled

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Recumbent Figure, on display in an open air exhibition, next to which a meteorite lands from the sky, identical to the sculpture in every physical detail. The difference between these two objects is one of intentional relations. The sculpture was deliberately conceived as and fashioned to be an artwork. The audience recognises that it was intended to be an artwork. As a result they view it in a special way and ascribe to it a range of stylistic predicates, which it would be impossible to apply to the meteorite: it is witty, perhaps, or ironic, or sad, or joyful - evidence, in other words, for a state of mind which the artist wished (to some extent) to communicate.

Objects not actually shaped by artists, such as Danto's (1981) example of Warhol's Brillo Boxes, or Duchamp's urinal, are, according to Danto, works of art that are about the nature of works of art. The artist removes an everyday object from its usual surroundings and declares it to be a work of art. Such self-consciously philosophical works of art invite a special form of attention. Visitors to the exhibition do not confuse Duchamps' 'artwork-urinal' with a real urinal; anyone using it as one would presumably be engaged in a dramatic piece of art criticism rather than genuinely confused.

Fodor argues that his 'Cartesian aesthetics', based on the claim that artworks should be defined in terms of their intentional etiology, already has some substance. The maker of an artwork must possess the concept 'artwork'. This means that artworks cannot historically pre-exist the concept 'artwork', and they cannot just happen by accident. They can only exist in societies and cultures where 'artwork' is a shared concept. They probably do not get created by other species, or machines. For this aesthetics to have any real substance, however, the concept 'artwork' needs to be defined. An artwork can be (partially) defined in terms of the intention that it have an audience. Brillo Boxes was intended to have an audience; brillo boxes are not.

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Turning to literary artworks, it is clearly not enough to argue that literary artworks are artworks insofar as they are intended to have an audience, even if this is qualified to 'any audience who cares to take an interest' as opposed to some specific audience that the writer has in mind. It can even be argued that it is not necessary for a literary artwork that it be written with an audience in mind. Fodor accepts that there are such cases but argues: 'Perhaps, in these cases, intending that something be an artwork is intending that it should belong to a kind of which the paradigms are intended to have audiences.' (Fodor 1993:54, fn.9).

Literary artworks, for Fodor, are intended to affect an audience in a certain way. The twin case problem occurs with the question: how is a literary artwork to be distinguished from rhetoric? Both are constituted by their intentional etiology, both are intended to have certain kinds of effects on audiences. Fodor's example of an artwork/rhetoric twin is Antony's funeral oration from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar and Antony's funeral oration as delivered by the historical Antony to the Roman crowds. (Notice here that Fodor assumes that the effects achieved by artwork and rhetoric are of the same kind: 'I think that the important difference between art and rhetoric is not in the *effects they aim at*, but in the *means that they employ* to make their effects.' (Fodor 1993:47; Fodor's italics)). The problem with this example is that the speech in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar is not *in itself* an artwork, but is *part of* a literary artwork and only makes sense, as Shakespeare intended it to make sense, within the context of the play as a whole. Also, in the play, there are several layers of communication: (an actor as) Antony is communicating to (other actors as) the Roman people on one level; Shakespeare is communicating with his audience on another level. This introduces complications which Fodor does not consider.

Fodor's argument relies on Grice's analysis of what it is for a speaker to mean something by an utterance, i.e. his analysis of meaning-nn, in Grice (1957;1989: 213-223). According to this

analysis, in verbal communication an utterance is produced (i) with the intention to cause certain effects on an audience (to cause the audience to have certain beliefs) and (ii) with the further intention that it causes these effects partly by virtue of the audience *recognising* the speaker's intention that the utterance cause these effects. The difference between literary artwork and rhetoric (by which Fodor intends language used for persuasion, as in political oratory or advertising) is, for Fodor, a difference in the relative importance of these two intentions. In the case of rhetoric the first intention is primary, and the second intention, if present at all, only there to subserve the first. In the case of literary artworks, on the other hand, the second intention is primary. This seems to be equivalent to saying that rhetoric may engage in covert communication, or that, in terms of the analysis provided by Sperber and Wilson (1986a: Chapter 1, sections 11 and 12), the informative intention is more important than the communicative intention. It is sufficient in advertising, for example, for the audience to be affected in a certain way, for it to come to hold certain beliefs about a certain product and then desire to go out and buy it. The audience does not even have to be in the presence of the advertisement for the advertisement to have its intended effect. You can tell me about the Carling Black Label advertisement and that might be enough to convince me to stop off at the off-licence on my way home from work the next day. Artworks, on the other hand, can only be successful, in the sense of 'have their intended effects', if the audience is present. <u>A la Recherche du Temps Perdu</u> or <u>Recumbent Figure</u> cannot be successful, in the intended way, if somebody tells me about them over a cup of coffee.

It is clear that in the case of rhetoric (advertisements, political oratory, etc.) the first intention is primary and the 'reflexive' intention secondary. The . important point is, in terms of the reanalysis offered by Sperber and Wilson (1986a), that the informative intention is fulfilled, that the addressee comes to have certain beliefs. It is not so clear what Fodor

intends by suggesting that in the case of literary artworks the 'reflexive' intention is primary and the first intention secondary, unless he means that it is important that the 'reflexive' intention be recognised irrespective of whether the first ('informative') intention is fulfilled. But that does not seem to provide a satisfactory account of what distinguishes literary artworks from rhetoric, or indeed, from verbal communication in general.

Another problem relates to the issue of 'presence'. I have to be in the presence of _Recumbent Figure_ to appreciate its intended effect; I probably do not have to be in the presence of _Brillo Boxes_ to appreciate *its* intended effect. Fodor invents the category of 'failed artwork' to describe such instances of 'word of mouth art'. But 'failed artwork' seems to be equivalent to 'artwork that does not communicate aesthetic effects'. The question of presence is an interesting fact about aesthetic experience; it is not an interesting fact about artworks.

I would like to suggest that *most* of the interesting facts are about aesthetic experience rather than artworks. If one is not going to accept that 'artwork' is an evaluative concept, then it would seem to be the case that 'artwork' becomes a true family resemblance term. The intention that something be an artwork may, in fact, be a range of different intentions. Accepting a liberal view of artworks one has to accept that historical and cultural factors play a role. It is difficult to imagine, for instance, that any Renaissance artist could have intended (a sixteenth century equivalent of) a urinal as an artwork.

Fodor's other twin case literary artwork example is Hem ingway's _Over the River and Into the Woods_. It becomes possible to view it as a twin case if we consider the possibility that, as a late novel, it could be read as self-parody. If it were an early novel it could not be read in that way. The two novels as text-tokens share the same physical

properties but differ in their relational properties (defined in terms of intentions). Readers who recognise the intentions of the author towards these two texts read the one as a serious novel and the other as a parody.

Each twin in this example is an artwork, though a different type of artwork with different kinds of effects. It would be more illuminating to invent examples that parallel the 'brillo box' and 'urinal' examples mentioned above. Culler (1975) takes an article from a newspaper and considers it as a poem. He does in fact arrange it in verse lines, but maybe that is largely equivalent to the placing of a urinal in the room of an art gallery. Culler's 'poem' reads as follows:

> Hier sur la Nationale sept
> Une automobile
> Roulant à cent à l'heure s'est jetée
> Sur un pla_tane
> Ses quatre occupants ont été
> Tués.

Culler uses this example to argue that the same utterances can be read differently, given different meanings, depending on whether they are first recognised as a piece of journalism, for example, or a poem. As a poem, Culler argues, a new set of expectations and a different set of conventions are called into play.

"Hier', for example, takes on a completely different force: referring now to the set of possible yesterdays, it suggests a common, almost random event. One is likely to give new weight to the wilfulness of 's'est jetée' (literally, 'threw itself') and to the passivity of 'its occupants', defined in relation to their automobile. The lack of detail or explanation connotes a certain absurdity, and the neutral reportorial style will no doubt be read as restraint and resignation. We might even note an element of suspense after 's'est jetée' and discover bathos in the possible pun on 'platane' ('plat' = flat) and in the finality of the isolated

'tués'.' (Culler 1975: 161-162).

Fish (1980) reports on a similar twin case experiment. This involved tricking a group of students into believing that a list of names (of linguists and literary critics) that he had written on the board in his room during a previous class, was a 17th century religious poem. The students were, apparently, taken in by this piece of deception and proceeded to analyse it in the way they had been trained to analyse 17th century religious poems. They managed to do this, according to Fish, with a fair measure of success. The list/poem Fish used is as follows:

<div style="text-align:center">

Jacobs-Rosenbaum

Levin

Thorne

Hayes

Ohman (?)

</div>

Fish (1980: 323-324) gives a fairly lengthy account of the interpretation procedures that his students used to transform this list into a poem. The point of the exercise was to show how certain special purpose reading strategies are brought into play irrespective of the nature of the text. Texts may be given a special kind of attention, of a kind that they would not otherwise receive. Culler and Fish would not subscribe to the Cartesian aesthetics espoused by Fodor. For them a literary artwork is to be characterised in terms of a special discourse strategy, which operates in the absence of any concern for either actual or virtual intentions. Literary works of art are not out there to be identified in the world, they are to be defined in terms of the way we relate to them. But the way we relate to them is in terms of sets of rules, conventions or strategies that we learn (to a large extent in literature classes). These strategies or conventions are social or cultural in origin. The very term *'literary artwork'* becomes suspect. There are only *texts* to be invested with meanings. Texts are not born literary; they have literariness thrust upon them.

In Fodor's paper the notion of 'artwork' is recognised as quite

distinct from the notion of aesthetic response and value. (Fodor suggests, quite reasonably, that Brillo Boxes may be considered an artwork without evoking any aesthetic response, *whereas Chartres Cathedral and Greek vases*, although not considered artworks, may evoke aesthetic responses.) If an account based on intentions is not accepted, then the question *what is an artwork?* will be answered in terms of social conventions. What causes an object to be a literary artwork, as opposed to a piece of journalism or a list of names, is a relationship between a text and a set of social conventions. Only if 'artwork' is seen as an evaluative concept, or if one simply concentrates on the question of aesthetic response, can the crucial relational properties be seen in cognitive terms as the relation, in the case of literary artworks, between texts and specific mental representations and processes.

If 'artwork' is not an evaluative concept, I have suggested, its definition becomes open-ended and fuzzy. In practice one either ends up with the question of what fits into the category of artwork being determined by a group of experts, or, more democratically, one agrees to accept as an artwork whatever anyone/people-in-general decide to call an artwork. In the case of literary artworks the issue may even be decided by conventions of reading.

This has important implications for how literature is studied and what kind of discipline it is considered to be. What I am suggesting is that 'artwork' is an *interpretive* term (in the sense used in Sperber 1985, Chapter 1). Sperber uses the term 'sacrifice' as an example of an interpretive term that refers to a range of different practices in different cultures. Such an interpretive term is useful to ethnographers in their attempts to convey some sense of what certain cultures are like, but it is not a useful term to anthropologists who are interested in developing anthropology as a theoretical discipline. As in the case of 'sacrifice', it might be of interest to discover what the concept 'artwork' meant to different people in different historical periods, or to discover what it currently means to

different people in different cultures. Because of the interpretive nature of the concept the question *what is a (literary) artwork?* can never be a theoretical question. The question of aesthetic response, however, may be tackled theoretically if it is possible to characterise the literary reading process in terms of distinctive cognitive properties.

There is great pressure on any move towards a theoretical approach to such issues. The view of literature as a social institution has been accompanied by the view that there is nothing intrinsically distinctive about aesthetic experience or the literary reading process. There has been a reversal of the idea that aesthetic experience should define artwork: the aesthetic itself, in current Literary Theory, is seen as socially constructed. The shift encouraged by such views has been away from an intrinsic approach to literary studies. The argument that I will develop in this thesis will, therefore, represent a challenge to much currently fashionable and influential thinking in literary studies.

Fabb and Durant (1987:4) provide a summary of the current arguments with regard to this issue. They argue that it is 'no longer possible to consider questions about language and literature without taking into account the social and political context in which all forms of discourse operate.' They go on to argue the case that calls into question the validity of the literary canon:

> 'Over the last twenty-five years there have been repeated assaults on the idea that literature can be usefully separated off from other kinds of written text. In the first place, it is difficult to identify any formal properties of literary language which do not also appear in non-literary language. Secondly, in much modernist literature 'literary language' achieves its effects by code-switching between *registers, including those of speech, and* so embeds - and works largely by contrast with - varieties usually classified as non-literary language. Thirdly, it appears that both traditionally 'literary' and 'non-literary' kinds of

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discourse share a common range of properties when considered pragmatically, from the point of view of the kinds of communicative acts they perform.' (Fabb & Durant 1987:6).

The main point I would wish to question here is the third one. If the focus is on literary communication, rather than on an ill-defined collection of texts that may or may not have literary qualities, then literary communication does indeed differ in its pragmatic properties from non-literary communication, as I hope to illustrate in some detail later. The main problem may again be that Fabb and Durant are, here, focussing on the artwork issue rather than the aesthetic response issue. Even if one agrees with the general argument that Fabb and Durant are putting forward, one may still consider it to be irrelevant to the much more interesting and substantive issue of aesthetic response.

The interest in developing intrinsic approaches within literary studies has a long pedigree. As I mentioned in the Introduction, I.A.Richards (1924:1) focussed his attention on the question: 'What gives the experience of reading a certain poem its value?' Richards (1929) showed just how difficult this was as a practical criticism question when applied to particular poems. He attempted to develop a theoretical approach to the question based, as he argued that it would need to be, on theories of communication, emotion and value, all of these grounded in psychological theory. Although his questions were interesting and general intuitions sound, Richards was severely constrained by the state of psychology at the time he was writing. It is now time to ask the same questions, but within frameworks provided by cognitive psychology and cognitive pragmatics.

Both prior to and since Richards (1924) there have been several moves to develop intrinsic approaches within literary studies, both theoretical and critical. The practical criticism movement with its emphasis on evaluation, New Criticism with its emphasis on 'verbal icons' and 'well-wrought urns', and Formalism, with its emphasis on literary language, were all attempts to understand and respond to what was

essentially literary, to what Jakobson referred to as 'literariness'. They were reactions to what was seen as an unfocussed, unprincipled literary studies that used literature to develop what were essentially extrinsic non-literary interests.

New Criticism and Formalism have both been extremely influential on the way literature has been viewed and taught, the former influencing and shaping practical criticism, the latter influencing the growth and development of literary stylistics. Despite their differences they both represent a movement to establish a clear intrinsic approach to literary studies. The New Critics sought to attack traditional academic scholarship, to develop a theory of criticism that would separate literature off from history, sociology and philosophy, to create a new way of talking about literary works that would replace discussions of background, social usefulness and intellectual content with analysis of structure. Formalists, likewise, rejected biographical, psychological and sociological approaches to literature. In Russia, where the formalist movement began, theorists turned against social critics such as Belinsky and philosophical-religious critics such as Berdyaev. They believed that it was possible to develop a scientific approach to literature through linguistic analysis. As Eichenbaum wrote: 'the original group of Formalists was united by the idea of liberating poetic diction from the fetters of the intellectualism and moralism which more and more obsessed the symbolists.' (Eichenbaum 1927; 1981:106). A linguistic orientation, on the other hand, allowed a criticism based on 'the scientific study of facts'. Intrinsic approaches to literary studies (both theoretical and literary critical) are nothing new, then, despite the current reaction to them (for reasons which will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 2).

A 'poetic thought' is a special kind of thought (involving a special kind of thinking) that is difficult to express and communicate accurately. At least, this is the view of many poets. Seamus Heaney has made the point (in discussion during a poetry reading at the Kent Arts Festival in 1986) that poets have to balance the conflicting claims of 'accuracy' and

'decency'. By this he meant that poets are primarily concerned with the accurate expression of 'poetic thoughts' and only secondarily with making such expression accessible to an audience.

One of the main aims of this thesis is to answer the question: what is a poetic thought? Literary critics treat this as an interpretive question, one that depends on the subtlety and clarity of their stylistic intuitions, on their ability to experience poetic thoughts themselves (and then report back on the experience). Here, by contrast, I want to treat the question as a theoretical question, as I.A.Richards, Roman Jakobson and the Russian Formalists, for example, tried to do. I want to abstract away from actual poetic thoughts and ask: what *really* are poetic thoughts in cognitive terms?

I began this chapter by discussing Fodor (1993), because he raises interesting issues in aesthetics from the point of view of intentional realism. Intentional realism, he argues, offers 'perhaps the major lesson that aesthetics has to learn from the philosophy of mind.' (Fodor 1993: 43). Fodor's Cartesian aesthetics, I believe, is potentially richer than current accounts that view literature as a social institution, or that seek to explain literature in terms of social context. I have argued, however, that a more interesting and theoretically substantive approach may follow from focussing on the question of aesthetic experience. This question must be grounded in cognitive pragmatics, which also provides major lessons from which aesthetics might learn.

To develop a theoretical approach it is important to concentrate on *literariness* as a form of aesthetic experience, which is universal, rather than literature which is a cultural notion. Sperber (1975) makes a similar point when he argues that it is important to concentrate on symbolism rather than the notion of symbol. He argues:

> 'The semiological illusion aside, there is no need
> for an analysis of the symbolic phenomenon into
> symbols. The notion of a symbol is not universal
> but cultural, present or absent, differing from

culture to culture, or even within a given culture.'
(Sperber 1975:50).

Just as 'the very notion of symbol is a secondary and cultural development of the universal phenomenon that is symbolism' (Sperber 1975:49), so the notions and concepts of 'artwork' and 'literature' are secondary and cultural developments of the universal phenomenon of aesthetic experience.

This theoretical approach to aesthetic experience or literariness must be an account of real mental representations and real mental processes that are triggered when a literary text is read, or, on a smaller scale, when a rhetorical device is used to create poetic effects. The assumption underlying this approach is that there is something special about the mental representations and processes involved in the communication of poetic effects that distinguishes them from those representations and processes involved in other kinds of communication.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL AND ANTI-THEORETICAL POSITIONS
WITHIN LITERARY STUDIES.

2.1.   Introduction.

What is the object of literary theory? Is there such a thing as literariness that can be defined and explained? Those who think there is have usually sought to define literariness in terms of formal linguistic properties of texts, or in terms of sociocultural codes or conventions. Those who think there is not have argued that there is nothing essentially literary in 'literary' texts or the 'literary' reading experience, and that theoretical approaches are, in consequence, impossible. The former I will refer to as literary theorists; the latter I will refer to as Literary Theorists.

This chapter will briefly consider a range of these theoretical and anti-theoretical approaches. The discussion will not attempt to be comprehensive; it will merely aim to suggest a range of ways in which it is possible to formulate answers to the question *What is literariness?* I will go on to develop the argument that a theoretical account of literariness grounded in cognitive pragmatics might form the basis for a new research programme that challenges many generally accepted and established views concerning the nature of literary studies as a discipline. Such a theory would be directly concerned with what is intrinsically literary in literary communication, with questions of aesthetic value and aesthetic response.

The present focus on small-scale poetic effects, largely as they occur in poems, raises an important issue as to the

relation between literary communication in general and poetic communication in particular, but it is an issue that lies outside the scope of this thesis. In this chapter the discussion of literary theoretical positions is relevant to the general argument in that such positions are grounded in theories of language and communication which can be adequately illustrated, and countered where necessary, by reference to small scale poetic effects.

2.2 Literariness as a linguistic property of texts.

Language is the medium of literary art, so it seems reasonable to consider the possibility that there is something special about the way language is organised in literary texts, and to proceed to define literariness in terms of linguistic properties. This was, in effect, the possibility explored by Opoyaz (the Petersburg 'Society for the study of poetic language') and the Moscow Linguistic Circle in what became a body of theory known as Formalism. It was also explored by Prague School theory, and by later developments in the theory of Roman Jakobson. Jakobson's account of literariness in terms of texts that are highly structured linguistically, producing a 'set towards the message', is generally seen as a (if not *the*) classic essentialist theory. Just as Prague School theorists such as Mukarovsky emphasised linguistic deviation as the hallmark of the poetic text, so Jakobson emphasised the functional role played by structural parallelisms and contrasts on all linguistic levels. In the case of poetry, phonologically or syntactically related items are repeated to form complex symmetrical patterns. These patterns, Jakobson argued, can be discovered through objective linguistic analysis:

> 'Any unbiased, attentive, exhaustive, total
> description of the selection, distribution and
> interrelation of diverse morphological classes and
> syntactic constructions in a given poem surprises
> the examiner himself by unexpected, striking
> symmetries and anti-symmetries, balanced
> structures, efficient accumulation of equivalent
> forms and salient contrasts...' (Jakobson

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1968:603.)

In his most famous formulation, which may be termed the projection postulate, he states that 'the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination.' (Jakobson 1960:358). Such an approach, for Jakobson, grounds a theory of literariness in linguistic theory. He expressed the view that anyone with an interest in the workings of language should be interested in the way language works in literary texts, that literary theory was a natural subpart of linguistic theory.

It has been claimed, for example by Kiparsky (1987), that Jakobson's linguistics is outdated and pre-theoretical. Kiparsky argues, however, that Jakobson's programme remains valid, when reformulated in terms of current linguistic theory. The projection postulate, itself, has received several recent reformulations. Kiparsky (1981:11) has referred to it as 'the observation that various aspects of [poetic] form all involve some kind of recurrence of equivalent linguistic elements.' Others have repeated or reformulated more general formalist ideas about the foregrounding of linguistic elements in poetry. Jackendoff, for example, stresses the importance of formal patternings in his comparison of music with the use of language for artistic purposes:

> 'All of a sudden the phonological and syntactic levels become of crucial significance. One counts syllables; one matches phonological segmentations in rhyme and alliteration; one makes use of calculated deviations from normal word order. Thus, the understanding of poetry, like the understanding of music, makes use of all the relevant levels of representation........The generalization appears to be that artistic activity and artistic appreciation in any faculty may make use of formal properties of all levels of representation in that faculty.' (Jackendoff 1987:234).

If it is indeed the case that the multilayered symmetrical

patternings in poetic language serve to foreground the linguistic message, then it becomes pertinent to ask how it does this and to what ends. The parallelisms and oppositions Jakobson discovers in his analyses are partly directly perceptible, especially in the case of sound patterns (metre, rhyme, alliteration, etc.) and obvious syntactic parallelisms, and partly not directly perceptible (grammatical categories and classifications only recoverable after analysis by linguists). Riffaterre (1966), in his discussion of Jakobson and Levi-Strauss's analysis of Baudelaire's Les Chats, criticises Jakobson for not explaining how parallelisms and contrasts that are not directly perceptible can affect the reader. In his analysis of one of Baudelaire's Spleen poems (discussed in Culler 1975:58-61), Jakobson argues, according to Culler, that, among many other such symmetrical patternings, 'adjectival participles are symmetrically distributed in the odd stanzas' (Culler 1975:60). It is, indeed, difficult to see how symmetries of this kind could have an effect on the reader. Certainly it would be extremely unlikely that they would be monitored on-line (NPs of a particular kind, pronominal forms of a particular kind, etc.) and kept in short-term memory on the off-chance that they might fit into some overarching pattern. Even were this highly implausible idea true, there remains the question as to the effect such patterning would have. A further problem is that all types of patterning would presumably have exactly the same aesthetic consequences. Were this the case it would lead to a greatly impoverished account of the nature of aesthetic effects.

Jakobson does offer a number of observations about the nature of these effects. He argues that certain aesthetic effects result from the satisfaction of a basic desire for regular symmetric patterns, whether these be perceived consciously or unconsciously. Part of these effects involve the creation of further unexpected meanings, as the formal parallelisms encourage a search for corresponding parallelisms at the semantic level.

There is a further suggestion, familiar from Prague School writings and from the discussion of the notion of *defamiliarisation* in Russian formalist writings, that 'the set towards the message' leads to a new, fresh perception of reality. Defamiliarisation was the basic aim of art, according to Shklovsky.

> 'Habitualization devours works, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war....... And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged............ A work is created 'artistically' so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception.'
> (Shklovsky, 1917, <u>Art as Technique</u>.)

Strange language, archaisms, 'phonetic roughening' through the repetition of identical sounds all contribute to this process of defamiliarisation. There are many valuable intuitions about how poetry works in Shklovsky's writings, some of which will be discussed later, when I shall expand upon the idea that works are created artistically by increasing the difficulty and length of perception. I also hope to show how and why art exists to make us feel things.

Here it is sufficient to point out that the link that Jakobson, Shklovsky and others draw between linguistic organisation and aesthetic effects was always, and necessarily, vague and intuitive. The formalists had a clear, precise way of analysing the formal linguistic properties of texts, but no correspondingly clear, precise way of analysing the aesthetic effects in psychological or cognitive terms. The gap between linguistic organisation and effects could not be filled in the absence of pragmatic and psycholinguistic theory.

Jakobson, for example, adduces no real evidence for the psychological reality of the supposed response to symmetry. There is a similar explanatory gap in the more recent comments of Jackendoff. There must be a point to the counting of syllables and the matching of phonological segmentations in rhyme and alliteration. Presumably, the phonological and syntactic patterns to which Jackendoff refers are there because they have certain effects and we need to turn to psycholinguistics and cognitive pragmatics for a processing rather than a structural account of these effects.

Among other criticisms that have been levelled at Jakobson's approach is the argument that any text can be analysed for structural parallelisms and contrasts, especially if one adopts an ad hoc approach to the particular categories one is prepared to use. Culler, for example, argues that 'linguistic categories are so numerous and flexible that one can use them to find evidence for practically any form of organisation' and attempts to illustrate the claim that 'using Jakobson's analytical methods one can find the same symmetries of odd and even, external and internal, anterior and posterior in a given piece of prose.' (Culler 1975:62,63; see also Werth (1976) for similar arguments and a sample analysis). But, as Kiparsky points out, one cannot multiply or invent categories at will: '....... the linguistic sames which are potentially relevant in poetry are just those which are potentially relevant in grammar'. (Kiparsky 1981:13). A Jakobsonian programme remains valid when revised in the light of contemporary linguistic (and pragmatic) theory, if one accepts that grammatical categories are in some sense psychological givens (see Kiparsky 1987). For Kiparsky the theoretical programme becomes one of developing 'a counterpart in the theory of literature to universal grammar in linguistics'. (Kiparsky 1981:11).

Even if there is some real basis for measuring patterns of parallelisms and contrasts, it is still possible to argue that such organisation can be found in non-literary texts. Advertisements, for example, frequently exhibit such patterns.

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Jakobson would accept that the *poetic function* is present in such texts, but would also argue that it is not the dominant function. In the case of advertisements, and persuasive rhetoric in general, the poetic function would be secondary to the conative function. The key to poetic texts is not the presence of the poetic function, but the dominance of this function over other secondary functions (for example, over the expressive function in lyric poetry, the referential function in realist fiction and the conative function in didactic poetry). Jakobson is careful not to confuse the poetic function with poetry, or literariness with literary works of art. With regard to the importance of the distinction between a theory of literariness and a theory of literature, Jakobson argues:

> 'The subject of literary science is not literature, but literariness, i.e. that which makes a given work a literary work.....Neither Tynyanov, nor Shklovsky, nor Mukarovsky, nor I have declared that art is a closed sphere.......What we emphasise is not the separatism of art, but the autonomy of the aesthetic function'. (Jakobson, quoted in O'Toole and Shukman (1977:17; 1977:19)).

The problem remains for Jakobson, however, that these kinds of judgements about functions cannot be made without also eliciting judgements from readers that go beyond the evidence provided by linguistic data.

Jakobson goes so far as to argue that there is a correlation between literary value and linguistic organisation (as in his paper on Yeats, for example, in Jakobson (1985)). But the non-poetic verses found in Christmas cards are as highly patterned as most actual poems in terms of perceptible and salient verse features. Such patterning is not sufficient for the achievement of poetic effects. As Hollander says of verse effects, they refer to 'the formal structures which are a necessary condition of poetry, but not a sufficient one.' (Hollander 1989:1). Jakobson, of course, goes beyond what Hollander would naturally consider to be verse features when he makes a further appeal to the symmetry of grammatical categories, a symmetry only available for inspection after linguistic

analysis. But such symmetries, whether patterns of grammatical categories or the more obvious metrical, alliterative and rhyming patterns, cannot provide the grounds for aesthetic experience. Anyone might deliberately and mechanically manufacture a piece of verse; a linguist could take one of Jakobson's most subtle linguistic analyses of the poetic function and also manufacture a piece of verse with the same 'hidden' linguistic symmetries. Even if it were possible, then, to measure the symmetrical patterns in any objective sense (which most people doubt) it is still not clear that they make a contribution to poetic effects or aesthetic value in the essential way that Jakobson suggests that they do.

The ways in which verse is structured, as well as the degree of structuring, may differ considerably. This leads one to ask: how much patterning must there be for the poetic function to make its presence felt? Are some kinds of patterning superior to others? Certainly the type of formal organisation used can vary both geographically and historically, as Kiparsky (1981) notes. All poetry has used roughly the same elements of formal organisation. Variation occurs with shifts and differences of emphasis between elements that are obligatory and elements that are optional. For example, the nature of some languages makes rhyme more suitable as an obligatory structural element than alliteration, and vice versa. In Old English, where stress fell regularly on root syllables, alliteration was obligatory; as stress rules changed then the forms of poetic organisation changed and English poetry switched to rhyme. But given the existence of free verse (which itself may, of course, be more or less highly structured) and of poetic prose, it is important to separate poetic effects and aesthetic value from a strict identification with any kind of linguistic organisation. Verse is just one (important) way of achieving poetic effects, and whether or not it does must crucially depend on pragmatic factors.

The problems with any such attempt to characterise

literariness in terms of text-internal linguistic features are manifold. There is the problem of weighting: how much formal patterning is necessary? Are some kinds of formal organisation more significant than others? (for example, sound patterns versus distribution of NPs). There is the problem of how formal features correlate with aesthetic value. There is the problem that the projection postulate, as it stands, is impossible to test. The main problem, however, seems to be that there is a descriptive and explanatory gap between the linguistic patterns and the various loosely described aesthetic effects to which Jakobson and others allude. It would seem that a linguistic theory (or a descriptive grammatical analysis) is not enough. What is needed is not a structural 'spatial' analysis of poem as object or well-wrought urn, but an analysis of the poem from an on-line pragmatic processing perspective.

2.3. Literary Codes and Conventions.

The view that literariness could be accounted for in terms of the linguistic properties of texts was supposed to have the advantage of dealing with objective and incontrovertible linguistic facts as data. Linguistic analysis, it was claimed, would be able to show that the patterns predicted by the projection postulate are really there. Unfortunately the data have proved to be neither incontrovertible, nor the right sort of data. Some further appeal always has to be made to what readers understand to be literary. Some link has to be made between regularity of pattern, or deviant (syntactically, semantically or pragmatically anomalous) language use and the meanings intuitively communicated. Most contemporary stylistics does just this: it links (usually foregrounded) linguistic features of literary texts with the meanings purportedly communicated by the poem or piece of literary prose. In developing a theory of literary or poetic style, however, linguistic foregrounding, either through patterns or deviations, is not sufficient in itself to cause poetic or

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aesthetic effects. Whether or not it is necessary returns us to the tricky question of what counts as foregrounding and how much.

Some idea is needed of how the observable linguistic data affect the reader. How are literary meanings produced? There are (at least) two ways of answering this question. One is to argue that we need to go into the mind of the reader for data and answers, looking in particular at language processing and utterance interpretation. The rest of this thesis will follow this route. The other is to argue that we should look to literary codes, conventions or systems to provide the answer, thereby avoiding psychological issues altogether. This possibility will be considered in the next few sections of this chapter.

In encouraging the search for literary codes and conventions semiotics and structuralism have formed the basis for another major attempt to redefine the discipline of literary studies. Semiotics, following Saussure's suggestion, sought to extend the methods and goals of structural linguistics to a range of disciplines dealing with social and cultural phenomena, that had hitherto lacked clearly defined methodologies and aims. Saussure encouraged the idea that principles of linguistic analysis, such as the etic/emic distinction, could be extended to these other areas of enquiry, and help to promote a new discipline concerned with the nature and operation of signs. The attraction of such an approach was, as in the case of formalist theory, that it promised to turn diffuse, vaguely defined areas of enquiry such as literary studies into respectably theoretical (i.e. systematic, rigorous, objective) academic disciplines.

Semiotics and structuralism do not present one unified approach to literary studies, or any other discipline. The aim of this section is not to give an overview of how they can be used to redefine literary studies, but to consider one basic idea that is suggested by these movements, namely the idea that literariness can be explained in terms of underlying codes or

conventions. These codes or conventions are generally considered to be social or cultural in origin. They are arbitrary systems of rules that have to be learnt or acquired. They differ, however, from the rules and conventions of sports like rugby or games like chess in that they are tacit and hidden, rather than explicit, and need to be discovered through analysis.

One of the first areas which was subjected to such analysis was the study of myths and folklore. Stories that appear to be quite different in their surface details can be shown to have a common deep structure. Levi-Strauss (1969) quotes an example of three events from European folkloric ritual. They all concern events that happen at weddings which relate to unmarried elder sisters. In one story the elder sister is placed on an oven. In another she is made to dance barefoot. In the third she is made to eat onions, roots and clover. All three seemingly different events can be related by means of Levi-Strauss's deep structural distinction between 'raw' and 'cooked'. The first version represents a symbolic cooking and the other two represent the 'raw' status of the unmarried sister. The raw/cooked distinction corresponds to the distinction between nature and culture. Levi-Strauss discovers in these stories underlying systemic parallels that are expressed in terms of idiosyncratic surface variety. This is a standard approach in structuralist analysis, adapted from structuralist linguistics, that can be applied to a wide variety of fields: it is one that Barthes employs, for example, in his analysis of the fashion system. It is important to point out that Levi-Strauss, unlike Barthes and most other structuralists, was interested in structuralist analysis for what it could reveal about the human mind. (See Sperber (1985: Chapter 3) for discussion of this point.)

In the case of literature structuralist analysis has sought to uncover basic plot types and sequences and basic character types that underlie all idiosyncratic narrative surface structures. One of the seminal structuralist works is Propp's

<u>Morphology of the Folktale</u> (Propp 1968). The folk tale was considered by Propp to be the prototype for narrative in general. He analyses seven basic 'spheres of action' or character-types: hero, villain, donor, dispatcher, sought-for person, helper and false hero. It may be that in a particular story two or more characters at the concrete 'etic' level fulfil the same deep structure role at the 'emic' level. Alternatively one character in the tale can fulfil two roles at the 'emic' level. This structuralist programme of research for literary studies, it should be noted, is not concerned with questions of style, aesthetic experience, or value. The structures that constitute narrative underlie all narratives, not just literary narratives. Literature is seen (like 'language', or 'langue') as a system, consisting of structures (e.g. narrative) and related structural elements, which underlies a reader's ability to make sense of literary texts. Literariness, in this view, can be seen in terms of such a literary system (or, as some have called it, a 'grammar' or a 'competence'). This system exists independently of human minds (and so should, perhaps, be referred to as 'literary langue' rather than 'literary competence').

A semiotic programme, studying the operation of individual signs in literary texts as opposed to broader elements of textual or discourse structure, emphasises the way in which meanings are produced and organised into various areas of experience through binary oppositions. Oppositions between words are deliberately exploited by literary texts to extend and multiply meanings. For example, the opposition between 'sun' and 'moon' is such a powerful one that it can signify almost anything. It has been used to signal the following distinctions: male/female, strength/weakness, reason/ emotion, constancy/ fickleness. In D.H.Lawrence's <u>England, My England</u> Egbert's fair hair and blue eyes contrast with Winifred's nut-brown hair and nut-brown eyes to signify an opposition between idealism and earthiness, for example. I take it that this example illustrates one of Eco's main points (e.g. in Eco 1979) that literary texts typically 'overcode'. In

Eco's terms, in 'open' literary texts the process of semiosis is given free rein. Key words, or signifiers, in such texts come to generate a wide range of further meanings or signifieds.

According to this view there is a literary convention by which differences between signs (such as binary oppositions) are exploited to allow meanings to proliferate. Literariness may, therefore, be defined in terms of such conventions. (In poststructuralist terms this is not so much an agreed convention, or a specifically literary convention, as a fact about language: signs are naturally slippery). There are many problems with such an approach when one comes to look at the reading process from a psychological point of view. For instance, one might ask: Do we always extend meanings whenever possible? (If not, how do we know when to do this and to what extent to do this?) Why do we extend meanings in the way we do? What is the motivation for open-ended semiosis?

Structuralist approaches generally seek to discover literary codes for specific genres. The social nature of such codes is emphasised by the fact that it is also generally considered to be the case that these codes differ between cultures and over time. Conceiving of codes in terms of a set of principles or conventions radically changes the way in which it is possible to account for literariness. As Culler puts it:

> 'One need not struggle, as other theorists must, to find some objective property of language which distinguishes the literary from the non-literary but may simply start from the fact that we can read texts as literature and then inquire what operations that involves.' (Culler 1975:128-129).

Culler (1975) proposes the notion of *literary competence* to explain how it is we interpret literary texts and why we interpret them in the way we do. He suggests that the conventions that produce literary meanings and constitute literary competence may be seen as a set of literary reading

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conventions. Culler makes the following suggestions for the kind of conventions, or rules, which help readers to make sense of poetry:

(i) The rule of significance/primary convention: read the poem as expressing a significant attitude to some problem concerning man and/or his relation to the universe.

(ii) The rule of metaphorical coherence: attempt through semantic transformations to produce coherence on the levels of both tenor and vehicle.

(iii) Inscribe the poem in a poetic tradition.

(iv) The convention of thematic unity: read the poem as coherent.

(v) The convention of binary opposites: look for terms 'which can be placed on a semantic or thematic axis and opposed to one another.'

(vi) The fiction convention: read the poem as fiction.

(from Culler 1975: Chapter 6.)

These suggestions are vague and ad hoc. Examples (ii) and (iv) do not apply exclusively to literary discourse. Example (iii) applies more or less strongly, or not at all, depending on the poem. Example (vi) is completely vacuous. They clearly can form no part of a serious pragmatic account of literary communication, partly because of their lack of explicitness, and partly because they do not operate as general principles: some further decision has to be taken as to when the conventions apply, to what degree they apply, and in what sense they apply. They are best considered as a set of heuristics rather than a set of special conventions. They are the kind of heuristics (perhaps worded differently) that literature teachers would use to encourage interpretations in the classroom, or that readers make appeal to post hoc to justify particular interpretations. They are generalisations that are more or less useful depending on the reader and the poem. They are useful as an aid to interpretation rather than a guarantee of full understanding. Culler, however, makes a

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radical claim for the notion of literary competence. Whatever the shortcomings of his actual proposals, it is worth considering the independent merits of this idea.

The term 'literary competence' is often used in a loose sense, roughly equivalent to the way in which Leech and Short (1981), for example, use the term 'stylistic competence'. For Leech and Short stylistic competence is like linguistic competence in that it is 'a capacity which we possess and exercise unconsciously and intuitively', but unlike linguistic competence in that it is possessed by different people to different degrees. (Leech & Short 1981:49). It is more a matter of capacity or general ability in this usage, than of knowledge. (Later I shall argue that stylistic effects follow automatically from the way in which we are led or encouraged to process utterances and that it is potentially misleading to talk of stylistic competence as a capacity, unless its special loose sense is emphasised.) Culler would appear to be suggesting a rigorous and more radical analogy with the notion of linguistic competence.

In linguistic theory competence refers to a native speaker's knowledge of a language. The question *what do you need to know in order to know a language?* can be answered for each of the different linguistic levels. A native speaker has to know the syntactic rules of a language for example, this knowledge being implicit in his ability to judge whether token-sentences in the language are grammatical. It does not seem to make reasonable sense to talk of literary competence in this sense. The only area in which it has been taken seriously is in metrics, where various attempts have been made to provide rules that describe the metrical competence that underlies a reader's ability to judge whether a line is metrically acceptable. So far the case for attempting such a task is unproven. (Attridge (1982) provides detailed analysis and criticism of generative metrics.) If it is a valid enterprise, one should note that it is concerned only with metrical competence. As metre is neither necessary nor sufficient for

poetry, it follows that this research programme has nothing to say about literary or poetic competence. Metrics is a self-contained and well-defined area, however, and it is hard to see how such an approach could apply to other areas that form part of literary practice. Certainly it is hard to imagine any rules in the same kind of format.

Any talk of *literary* competence is also questionable on the grounds that 'literary' covers too wide a field. Should we not be talking about a variety of different competences at the level of practices like metrics? It is difficult to see how rules of sufficient generality could define the knowledge which enables us to make sense of any text that is literary. Culler, himself, makes basic divisions between narrative fiction and poetry.

The idea that literary practice is based on a special body of competence knowledge might be thought to suggest a mental faculty or module. It would be totally absurd, of course, to suggest that such a faculty might share any of the properties that Fodor (1983) argues that the language faculty shares with other sensory input systems. It might, however, be (slightly) less absurd to consider the possibility that there is a central system literary faculty, as has been suggested, say, for music or mathematics. Fodor (1987) argues that central system modules stem from the nature of a particular task rather than from the architecture of the mind. Chess in this sense is modular, i.e. 'in the sense that only a very restricted body of background information (call it chess theory) is relevant to rational play even in principle.' (Fodor 1987:36,n.1). Because of this 'restricted body of background information' computer programmes can be programmed to play the game with a fair measure of success.

It is impossible, however, to conceive of literature in this way. The comprehension of literary works clearly requires potential access to anything that is stored in memory, as does language understanding more generally. Culler would seem to

be suggesting little more than the idea that we know certain things about literature, literary genres, etc. (and, therefore come to have certain expectations on the basis of this knowledge). In cognitive terms we might simply say that we have certain information about literature collected together and stored at a certain place or address in our minds. We are likely to use this information when we think about 'literature'; we are not likely to use it on-line and all the time as we read literary texts.

If we assume that special purpose reading conventions do enable us to make sense of literary texts in the appropriate way, which is essentially what Culler (1975) argues, then the question arises as to how and when they become involved in the interpretation process. The talk of 'competence', although clearly misleading, does suggest that Culler was thinking in terms of a capacity 'which we exercise unconsciously and intuitively' (in the terms Leech and Short (1981) used to describe their notion of 'stylistic competence'). There are two basic possibilities regarding the operation of such special purpose conventions: they are either triggered by features of the text, or they are pre-triggered in some way by the knowledge that the text one is about to read is a novel or a poem.

If they are triggered, say, by verse features or line layout then they would also have to work for the kinds of verse found in birthday cards. But the strategies that Culler suggests would not be particularly helpful in this case. How can a birthday card verse be inscribed within a poetic tradition? What is the point of insisting on thematic unity? Why should we read the birthday card verse as expressing a significant attitude to some problem concerning man and/or his relation to the universe? If they are pre-triggered then one has to face the possibility that any text can be read *as* literature, which is a possibility that some Literary Theorists are happy to accept. The structuralist enterprise has in fact served to encourage

the loosening of boundaries between the literary and the non-literary that I referred to in Chapter 1. Eagleton (1983) accepts that the same kinds of deep structures can be found in Mickey Spillane as in Sir Philip Sidney. Other (conventionalist) theoretical programmes have similarly worked to remove boundaries between the literary and the non-literary. Insofar as this loosening is accepted, the very existence of aesthetic experience and aesthetic value are called into question. The claim is often made that structuralism helps to 'demystify' literature. In so doing, however, it ignores and fails to provide an account of the rich stylistic intuitions that the literary reading process may offer; it also ignores the whole issue of aesthetic experience, which must be the main reason for there being artworks. People have an aesthetic sense just as they have (or do not have) a sense of humour. It seems reasonable to want to find out how and why this sense works and how and why readers have the stylistic intuitions that they do.

There are those who darkly suspect that much modern theorising about literariness is done by those without strong literary stylistic intuitions. Such theories ignore aesthetic experience simply because it is not seen to be an important issue. This, I take it, was the point behind Kermode's inclusion of the following comments by Paul Valéry at the beginning of his book An Appetite for Poetry:

> 'As bad luck will have it, there are among these men with no great appetite for poetry - who don't understand the need for it and who would never have invented it - quite a number whose job or fate it is to judge it, discourse upon it, stimulate and cultivate a taste for it; in short, to distribute what they don't have. They apply to the task all their intelligence and all their zeal - with alarming consequences.'

Valéry could not have had current theorising in mind when he wrote this, but Kermode probably did.

The idea that structuralist and semiotic approaches produce an impoverished or reductive account of literary communication may equally apply to other disciplines. A similar point is made

by Sperber (1975) with regard to the study of myth and symbolism in anthropology. He argues that semiotic accounts of symbolism fail because there is no straightforward message/interpretation pairing that corresponds to the signifier/signified distinction. A range of semiotic accounts of myth have been developed that argue that myths communicate some kind of hidden meaning. They argue, for example, that certain elaborate myth-stories may reduce to questions of land rights. Sperber argues against the kind of reduction that semiotic approaches encourage on the grounds that the richness of the myths discussed far outweighs the poverty of meaning it is claimed that they convey. On the semiotic account there is a marked disproportion between the elaborate means used and the modest ends supposedly achieved. Structuralist and semiotic approaches to literature may also be guilty of the same impoverishment of meaning. Structuralism may have something to offer narratology, but it seems to have little to offer the study of literariness. It may be fair to say now that semiotics and structuralism have failed to have any significant lasting effect upon literary studies. Many former proponents of a structuralist poetics, such as Culler, have abandoned the project as essentially flawed. Most of these structuralists have moved in the direction of poststructuralism, but that is a story for a later section of this chapter.

2.4. Literary Reading Conventions as Maxims.

Before leaving the discussion of social conventions as the answer to the problem of explaining literariness I would like to consider one further approach in the same tradition. A more detailed account of literary reading conventions is offered by Schmidt (1982) who proposes the existence of two conventions: the E (for aesthetic) convention and the P (for polyvalence) convention. They may be characterised as follows (paraphrasing and quoting from Meutsch & Schmidt (1985:551-

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574). The *aesthetic convention*: 'releases the reader from the accepted mode of reality'; it suspends the need to fix reference or determine practical usefulness; it de-emphasises the fact convention. The *polyvalence convention*: allows the reader to attribute multiple meanings to a simple text; it replaces the *monovalence convention*; 'text receivers have the freedom to produce different Kommunikate (representations of a text) from the same text in different times and situations (= weak version of the polyvalence convention hypothesis) or in the same reading process (= strong version of the polyvalence convention hypothesis).'

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Schmidt argues that:

> 'When participants in a communicative situation receive a presented surface text as an aesthetic communicative text, they must be able (or believe themselves able) to attain different satisfying results on different levels at different times; and they do not expect all other participants to attain the same results as themselves.' (Schmidt 1982: III,69).

The aesthetic convention is a necessary precondition for the polyvalence convention. If the need to fix the factual truth of assertions in a text and its practical usefulness is overridden by other needs, then it becomes possible to allow texts with diffuse functions (III,75). 'Conventions thus figure as laws by virtue of statistically predictable regularities comparable to the occurrence of events defined in inductive laws.' (IV,8).

The E and P conventions are social and have to be learned or acquired. Schmidt suggests that they might be seen as maxims or conventions of the Gricean or Searlean type. They are special occasion conventions that require suspension of the standard conventions that operate for 'normal discourse'. If the conventional maxims, or other general pragmatic principles, are suspended, this raises the problem of whether it is possible for the special conventions to guide interpretation on their own - in other words, do a completely distinct set of conventions (however defined) guide the interpretation of literary texts?

It is highly unlikely that the E and P conventions could operate in this way, even if their definitions were tightened up. If the P convention were given free rein, allowing readers the freedom to multiply meanings, things would quickly get out of control. Not all interpretations are valid, or equally valid. On the simplest level, one does not read 'Juliet is the sun' as 'Juliet is gaseous' or 'Juliet is 90 million miles from the earth'. There must be another constraining principle to direct and curtail the endless proliferation of meanings. As it stands, the 'read polyvalently' convention is simply too wild.

The motivation for these conventions is also left obscure, as it is in most theories that provide accounts of literary communication in terms of social conventions. Why do we need to attribute multiple meanings to certain texts? Of Grice's maxims one might well question their provenance, but their motivation is clear: they are used to explain how we communicate more than we say. Linguistic meaning, or what is said, falls short of a speaker's intended meaning. In Grice's view only by accepting that tacit standards are being met is it possible to bridge the gap.

Likewise the motivation for the E convention is left obscure. In formulating this convention Schmidt clearly borrows from Speech Act Theory, in particular, from Austin (1962). Austin makes the following point about 'not serious' speech acts:

> 'There are aetiolations, parasitic uses, etc., various 'not serious' and 'not full normal' uses. The normal conditions of reference may be suspended, or no attempt made at a standard perlocutionary act, no attempt to make you do anything, as Walt Whitman does not seriously incite the eagle of liberty to soar.' (Austin 1962:104).

Such 'not serious' uses are much more widespread than in literature, however: there is nothing essentially literary about being 'not serious'. As Eagleton might have said, Mickey Spillane is just as non-serious as Sir Philip Sidney.

Another question, already raised in relation to Culler's conventions, is *how are special conventions triggered, what brings them into play?* This might be accompanied by the equally important question: *what turns them off again?* Other questions that arise relate to individual conventions. Is every utterance in a text to be read polyvalently? Is polyvalence never to be found outside of literary texts? Is every utterance in a literary text to be read as non-factual? Is the aesthetic convention not to be found outside literary texts, for example in jokes or children's make-believe? These questions, which call into question the plausibility of the E and P conventions as described by Schmidt, can be asked of any special literary reading conventions. It does not seem likely that conventions will be found that work consistently and only for literature, that provide necessary and sufficient conditions for literariness.

More radical claims have been made on Culler's and Schmidt's behalf than are warranted by the detail of their particular proposals for literary reading conventions. It is no doubt the case that readers do appeal to some such body of generally accepted ideas if called upon to justify interpretations of particular literary works, and that teachers appeal to the same body of ideas in their attempts to help or encourage the understanding of particular texts. In the latter case which of the Cullerian conventions is emphasised will depend on the particular text being read. Here though we are dealing with ex post facto rationalisations, with intuitive generalisations and interpretations of what readers do, not with descriptions of actual processes. We are not dealing, in other words, with the kind of proposals which can generate serious empirical claims. Certainly no definition of literariness can develop out of such generalisations.

2.5. Reader-Response and Text-Response.

In this section, after some preliminary remarks about the phenomenological tradition in literary studies, I will trace the development in Fish's ideas concerning the process of understanding literary texts. This will allow brief consideration of two major approaches in literary studies to the question of how readers make sense of literary texts: a reader-response view and Fish's later more radical conventionalist view.

The phenomenological tradition in literary theory focussed on the subjective experience of the individual reader. In that sense the perspectives it adopted were totally opposed to those of structuralism, which was neither interested in the intentions of authors nor the reading experience of readers, but in some supposedly objective social code or set of conventions. Theories of literary meaning and reading within the phenomenological tradition, as in Ingarden (1973a; 1973b) and Iser (1978), are concerned to develop an exhaustive description of the phenomenon of literary meaning as it presents itself during the reading process. Phenomenological approaches make a contribution to the philosophy of literature rather than to the development of a genuinely theoretical approach to literary studies.

Whereas the formalist position was essentially that one could have a theory of literariness by focussing on objective, mind-independent linguistic properties, and the semiotic/ structuralist position was that one could have a theory of literariness by focussing on objective, mind-independent literary codes, conventions and reading strategies, the phenomenological position was that you could not sensibly talk about literature without focussing on the way individual minds (re-)constructed meanings from texts. The emphasis was not on independent linguistic, textual or social structures, but on the *process* of reading. Intuitively this seems a reasonable

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line to take, and the insights and intuitions developed within the phenomenological tradition seem to be much richer and more valuable than any of the 'discoveries' made within structuralism or semiotics. The phenomenological position seems to be much closer to, and to have more respect for, the true nature of literariness, aesthetic experience and literary value.

It is important to note, however, that the phenomenological approach to the study of literature was developed at a time when truly theoretical approaches to literary communication were not possible. Many of Ingarden's key concepts, such as 'concretisation' and 'spots of indeterminacy' refer intuitively to what might now be termed 'conceptual enrichment' and be dealt with in cognitive pragmatic terms (in a way that will be discussed in Chapter 3). A theoretical approach that was not formerly conceivable now is, given the development of cognitive psychology and cognitive pragmatics.

Many reader-oriented approaches to literary criticism grew out of the phenomenological tradition. Again it is important to remember that there are many different positions within the phenomenological tradition and within reader-oriented approaches to the study of literature. My aim here is not to provide a fair or comprehensive overview of such approaches, but to take one or two key ideas as representative of a different possible approach to answering the question: *what is literariness?* Here I am merely going to consider some ideas about reader-oriented approaches suggested by Fish, as a prelude to discussing his more influential and provocative conventionalist views.

Fish's reader-oriented approach to literary criticism was explicitly anti-formalist. Formalist approaches to literary meaning, he argued, by taking a 'spatial', distanced view of the literary text, suppress or ignore what really happens in the act of reading. One of Fish's favourite types of example is the moment of hesitation at the end of a line of verse 'when a

reader is invited to make a certain kind of sense only to discover (at the beginning of the next line) that the sense he has made is either incomplete or simply wrong' (Fish 1980:147). Such cases of semantic garden-pathing are not recognised by formalist analysis which typically ignores the fact that the act of reading is a temporal phenomenon.

Insofar as this does represent a new focus on the on-line reading experience rather than on the poem as object (and there is probably some degree of exaggeration here - the position adopted by a number of formalist writers was more flexible than this view suggests), such reader-oriented approaches are valuable. They help readers and literary critics to develop insights and intuitions into how literary works communicate and what they communicate. Fish follows and develops one line in the phenomenological tradition in arguing for a process-oriented approach to the interpretation of poems.

To illustrate these ideas I will briefly consider a couple of Fish's examples from Interpreting the 'Variorum' (Fish 1980: 147-173). The following are the concluding lines from Milton's sonnet 'Lawrence of virtuous father virtuous son':

> What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
> Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise
> To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice
> Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
> He who of those delights can judge, and spare
> To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

The word 'spare' at the end of the penultimate line has been interpreted in two ways by literary critics - as meaning 'leave time for' or 'refrain from'. According to one interpretation, he who can allow time for those delights is not unwise; according to the alternative interpretation, he who can refrain from those delights is not unwise. Is the poet recommending the delights described or warning the reader against them? Evidence used in the dispute here takes the form of appeals to 'both English and Latin syntax, various sources and analogues,

Milton's "known attitudes" as they are found in his other writings, and the unambiguously expressed sentiments of the following sonnet on the same question.' (Fish 1980:150).

Scholars are still divided on this point of textual interpretation. Fish concludes that such controversies, focussed upon textual meaning, can never be settled because the evidence will always remain inconclusive. If one concentrates on reader rather than text, however, the problem disappears. "Spare" is ambiguous and readers pick up both meanings of the word. According to Fish readers of the poem are encouraged to debate:

> 'the judgement the poem makes on the delights of recreation; what their debate indicates is that the judgement is blurred by a verb that can be made to participate in contradictory readings. (Thus the important thing about the evidence surveyed in the Variorum is not how it is marshalled but that it could be marshalled at all, because it then becomes evidence of the equal availability of both interpretations.) In other words, the lines first generate a pressure for judgment - "he who of those delights can judge" - and then decline to deliver it; the pressure, however, still exists, and it is transferred from the words on the page to the reader (the reader is "he who"), who comes away from the poem not with a statement but with a responsibility, the responsibility of deciding when and how often - if at all - to indulge in "those delights" (they remain delights in either case). This transferring of responsibility from the text to its readers is what the lines ask us to do - it is the essence of their experience - and in my terms it is therefore what the lines mean .....' (Fish 1980:150-151).

This argument can be extended to ambiguity in literary works in general, and to other aspects of propositional indeterminacy. The indeterminacy becomes part of the meaning.

Whether or not one agrees with Fish's treatment of this particular example, the emphasis on reading experience does

potentially allow richer interpretations of poems (and other literary artworks), and it does shift the emphasis back to what is going on in the mind of the reader. It also provides support for Fodor's point (in Fodor 1993) that *literary artworks are* distinguishable from rhetoric in that they require the audience to be present. The poem has to be read (and experienced) as written.

Fish later rejects this reader-oriented approach on the grounds that it too is based on conventions of reading that impose meanings *on* texts, rather than discover meanings *in* texts. Just as formalist analyses assume that there is one correct analysis, so, Fish argues, reader-oriented approaches assume that there is one correct reading experience. Both positions are naive about the role of conventions: the reality is that the text responds to the reader's conventions rather than the reader to the text.

Fish rejects this approach in favour of an extreme conventionalist view, according to which there is no meaning in texts prior to the interpretive conventions which the reader brings to bear upon them. Conventional reading strategies, it is argued, direct us to focus attention on certain features of texts. In discussing our interpretations we assume that these formal features are responsible for the interpretations. In fact the opposite is the case: such features are 'created' by our interpretive strategies. In this sense the text responds to the reader rather than the reader to the text.

He considers, for example, the way in which the following example from Milton's Lycidas (ll.42-44) may be interpreted:

> The willows and the hazel copses green
> Shall now no more be seen,
> Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.

After coming to the end of line 43 the reader will be able to complete a proposition, the assertion that the death of Lycidas has so affected the willows and green hazel copses that they

will die and be seen no more. At this point the reader will have 'performed an act of perceptual closure' in Fish's terms.

Fish argues that one is led through 'the bias of one's critical language' to assume that poems are agents acting upon readers.
'What really happens, I think, is something quite different: rather than intention and its formal realization producing interpretation (the "normal" picture), interpretation creates intention and its formal realisation by creating the conditions in which it becomes possible to pick them out.' A reader sees what his critical training has directed him to see. In the examples above the reader may work with a model that 'demands....perceptual closures', because 'line endings exist by virtue of perceptual strategies rather than the other way around.' (Fish 1980:166).

This leaves the question as to what motivates our interpretive strategies. There are large areas of agreement about interpretation, so it cannot be the case that readers follow arbitrary or idiosyncratic strategies. To explain this agreement Fish develops the notion of *interpretive communities*. An interpretive community is a group of readers who share the same interpretive assumptions and who employ the same interpretive strategies. Insofar as we do agree on our interpretation of a given poem it is because we belong to the same interpretive community. (Perhaps we attended the same literature classes.) Insofar as we disagree we belong to different interpretive communities.

The exercise, referred to in Chapter 1, in which a group of unsuspecting students were encouraged to analyse a list of names as if it were a 17th century religious poem, was used as evidence by Fish that a text not intended as literary can become literary if the appropriate conventions are applied to it. He had trained his students in the rules or conventions of a particular interpretive community. He could now let them loose on any text and they would find in the text the kind of things

they had been trained to find.

Fish's answer to the problem of literariness, then, is that literature is 'a conventional category' (Fish 1980:6). He argues that 'what will, at any time, be recognised as literature is a function of a communal decision as to what will count as literature' (Fish 1980:10). In other words, literariness is a purely institutional matter.

One might ask why poets have to 'wrestle with words', or why they take the trouble to revise work which will, in any case, be read as literary in the light of an independent set of conventions. Why can a poet not simply cut out articles from a newspaper (or, in the tradition of Fish, names out of a telephone directory) and send them off to the publisher? (This would be the poetic equivalent of Warhol's Brillo Boxes or Duchamp's urinal.) The names-as-poem exercise that Fish uses to illustrate his point about conventional reading strategies and interpretive communities can be challenged on the grounds that he is only able to turn the names into concepts and establish semantic links between them because the names he selects are ambiguous or partially ambiguous. Whether one could take the list of surnames of those working in *any* linguistics department, say, and interpret them as a poem (perhaps a seventeenth century religious poem) with the same degree of success is highly dubious. But even if one were to concede the point that this exercise has a wide application - that any text could be read as a (certain kind of) poem - it is still possible to argue that Fish is not saying anything about aesthetic experience. In fact, Fish never shows how aesthetic experience is achieved through the imposing of conventions on texts. It is a topic he conveniently ignores.

Fish's position leads to an extremely impoverished view of literary communication and of communication in general. There is no way to distinguish good writing from bad writing. There is no way to distinguish good or insightful interpretations from weak interpretations. There is no way of discussing

literary value. There is no sense of what aesthetic experience is or of what it is that literary works communicate. For Fish they just communicate old reworked ideas. Or rather, they do not communicate anything; they simply allow old reworked ideas to be imposed upon them. Context as a pre-formed coherent body of ideas comes out on top in Fish's view of communication; the author comes out worst: she has no say in what pre-formed context it is that the reader imposes on her words.

Fish's theoretical position seems to be wilfully provocative and fanciful (as Kiparsky (1987) also argues). His main argument can, perhaps, be summed up in the following quotation: '....it is not that literature exhibits certain formal properties that compel a certain kind of attention; rather, paying a certain kind of attention (as defined by what literature is understood to be) results in the emergence into noticeability of the properties we know in advance to be literary.' (Fish 1980:10). This position is not merely counterintuitive, it assumes a totally simplistic, if not incoherent, view of how communication takes place. Language in communication has a semantics as well as a pragmatics, and the role of context in communication is much more subtle than Fish appreciates. A context is not simply a connected set of ideas. (These points will be developed in Chapter 3.) More fundamentally, utterance interpretation is not a totally top-down process, not even in the reading of literary works. Fish gives the impression of being a New Look cognitive psychologist without the cognitive psychology.

2.6.   Literary Theory.

'*Show me a cultural relativist at 30,000 feet and I'll show you a hypocrite.*' Richard Dawkins. Letter to the Independent, 8th January 1992.

'All cultural relativism is an act of condescension towards all actual cultures.' Les Murray. <u>The Paperbark Tree</u>, 'The Suspect Captivity of the Fisher King.' (1992:334).

Current Literary Theory has, for the most part, abandoned any attempt to establish a theoretical programme within literary studies. Few Literary Theorists would agree with Kiparsky (1987) that Jakobson's programme for a theory of literature might be revived by replacing Jakobson's structuralist linguistic theory and semiotic communication theory with contemporary linguistic and pragmatic theory within a cognitive framework. The more common view would be that a cognitive framework is the wrong kind of framework and that current poststructuralist ideas about language show that it is impossible to have a genuine theory of linguistics and, therefore, a genuine theory of literature. As Young argues: 'poststructuralist thinkers, such as Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, have questioned the status of science itself, and the possibility of the objectivity of any language of description or analysis....' (Young 1980:viii). The impossibility of the objectivity of any language of description results from the slipperiness of the linguistic sign. Language, it is claimed, is simply a system of differences: there is no way to ensure stability in the relations between signifiers and signifieds or in the relations between signifieds; there is no way to fix or stabilise reference.

This instability not only makes theory impossible, but denies the traditional literary critical claim to interpret the author's meaning in a text. As Barthes argues:

> 'We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash......... Once the author is removed the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile.' (Barthes 1977a: 145-7).

Poststructuralist thinking about language, then, forecloses (to

use a poststructuralist term) both on the possibility of engaging in literary criticism and on the possibility of developing a theoretical account of literariness. There no longer is anything that is distinctively and essentially literary.

Birch (1989) makes a similar point about theory when he distinguishes between the 'idealised' worlds of theory and the 'actual' worlds of messy reality:

> 'By actual or real world I mean a world that is culturally, socially and institutionally determined; that is messy, noisy and full of disturbances, surprises and instabilities - I do not see reality as a psychological reality at all, but in relativist terms.' (Birch 1989:1).

He argues later that the structures of language:

> 'do not pre-exist social and cultural processes; they are not encoded in some sort of psychological imprint......The forms, and hence meanings of language are shaped and determined by institutional forces.' (Birch 1989:167).

Many points are raised here which illustrate the wide gulf in basic assumptions between ideas about language and communication in Literary Theory and ideas about language and communication in linguistic theory and cognitive pragmatic theory. Given this gulf these points cannot be adequately answered without raising a host of fundamental philosophical questions in the area of metaphysics as well as philosophy of mind and language.

Fabb and Durant (1987) claim that the two disciplines of linguistics and literary studies adopt different positions with regard to theories. Whereas linguistics adopts a position of basic realism, literary studies adopts a position of unrealism about theories. But this difference follows from opposed and contradictory views about the nature of language and communication. It follows that either linguistics is wrong to adopt a position of realism, or that literary studies is wrong

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to adopt a position of unrealism. My position will be that the study of literary style and communication should be able to receive theoretical treatment in the context of contemporary linguistic and pragmatic theory.

What I will do in the rest of this section is simply note a number of key arguments used within current Literary Theory. The points discussed will be answered indirectly, for the most part, in the next chapter, where a non-relativist, non-messy cognitive account of communication will be outlined. The main point here is to consider ideas about language and communication that lead to the view that a theory of literariness is impossible.

Though his works have undergone re-interpretation, the central figure from linguistics in Literary Theory circles remains Saussure. Fabb (1988) sets himself the task of explaining to Literary Theorists why the Saussurean view of language has long been superseded in the discipline of linguistics. He points to the influential New Accents Series as a body of publications that promotes a new perspective on literary studies by adopting and adapting Saussurean perspectives on language while generally ignoring the development of linguistics as a theoretical discipline. This is done despite expressed intentions. Hawkes, in his 'General Editor's Preface', claims that:

> 'one aspect of New Accents will be firmly located
> in contemporary approaches to language, and a
> continuing concern of the series will be to
> examine the extent to which relevant branches of
> linguistic studies can illuminate specific literary
> areas.'

Unfortunately, the 'contemporary approaches' manage to ignore almost everything that has happened in linguistic and pragmatic theory since the 1950s. The problem is not that Hawkes' understanding of 'contemporary' is rather too liberal, however, but the fact that he looks to an alternative tradition (represented by structuralism and poststructuralism) for his theories of language. It is a tradition that Eagleton also

appeals to when he writes about 'the 'linguistic revolution' of the twentieth century, from Saussure and Wittgenstein to contemporary literary theory.' (Eagleton 1983:60).

Fabb argues that Saussure's approach to language contributes to what is essentially an a priori discipline, 'existing in advance of (and creating) its object rather than being derived from its object' (Fabb 1988:59). The real revolution in linguistics, however, has turned it into a theoretical discipline, concerned with testing hypotheses against linguistic data. As a result of this 'revolution' a lot more has been learned about the complex and sui generis structure of language.

The Saussurean view that the signified is unstable in its relations to other signifieds does not call into question the idea that there is only one kind of unitary meaning. Another recent theoretical development has emphasised the need to distinguish linguistic meaning (the domain of semantics) and the full meaning that is communicated (the domain of pragmatics). The confusions caused by the failure to distinguish between semantics and pragmatics can be briefly illustrated with an example from Birch (1989). Birch discusses Empson's discussion of the use of the word 'sense' in Wordsworth's Prelude in the context of the poststructuralist argument that final meanings and definitive interpretations of texts are impossible. He writes of Empson's essay:

> 'In his essay on William Wordsworth, 'Sense in The Prelude', William Empson makes the point that if an analyst were to follow a particular word through a text (as I suggested earlier for a dictionary) then there is a strong likelihood that its meanings will shift and alter, allowing no single meaning to dominate. He takes as an example the word 'sense' in The Prelude and looks at the 35 occurences of it. The result is a range of meanings associated with the word 'sense' that suggests for Wordsworth an incoherence of a degree not normally associated with such a valorised writer.' (Birch 1989:11).

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(It should be noted that Empson actually claims to have found '35 uses of sense at the end of a line and 12 elsewhere'; he suggests there may be more.)

Empson was not a proto-deconstructionist who believed that meanings shift and alter beyond the author's control. He does not criticise Wordsworth for using the word 'sense' in a variety of ways or for using it in new ways. (Nor does he criticise Shakespeare for his varied use of the word 'honest' in Othello, which Empson analyses in another essay.) Empson is generally positive about Wordsworth's varied use of the word 'sense'. Where Empson does become critical it is because a meaning is left vague. The important point here, though, is not that Birch misreads Empson, but that he assumes that if words do not always bear exactly the same meaning in every occurrence then this provides evidence for the poststructuralist claim that signs are inherently unstable and beyond the control of the communicator.

It has long been noted that concepts, or word-meanings, can be subject to variation in context (in ways that will be discussed in Chapter 3) without them being inherently unstable. It is not too difficult to grasp the different meanings Wordsworth intends in the various contexts in which he uses the word 'sense'. (Empson manages to articulate most of these varied meanings reasonably successfully.) It is reasonable to assume that Wordsworth was aware of what he was doing and that he placed the word in those contexts with the intention that readers recognise these different senses. There is nothing to prevent Wordsworth deliberately using a word in a variety of senses, while at the same time remaining 'valorised'.

The point that Birch makes about the instability of the linguistic sign is a familiar and popular one. Selden (1989:71), for instance, argues that: 'Poststructuralist thought has discovered the essentially unstable nature of signification'. The problem is that poststructuralism has no serious account of the role of context in utterance interpretation, so for

poststructuralists concepts either have a fixed meaning or their meanings are unstable. If context plays a role it is as a fixed body of ideas imposed from the outside.

One of the reasons given for the instability of language is its essentially metaphorical character, which, the argument goes, renders truth inaccessible because it becomes impossible to refer directly to states of affairs in the real world. As Eagleton puts it:

> 'Since metaphors are essentially 'groundless', mere substitutions of one set of signs for another, language tends to betray its own fictive and arbitrary nature at just those points where it is offering to be most intensively persuasive.' (Eagleton 1983:145).

Again it is only by holding a simplistic and restricted view of the nature of linguistic signs that it is possible to sustain this kind of argument. Later, in Chapter 4, I will argue that the thoughts communicated by metaphors (rather than metaphorical utterances in themselves) are able to refer directly to states of affairs in the real world. Another point I shall be making later concerns the range of stylistic effects that metaphorical utterances can convey. Without a theory of pragmatics current Literary Theory has no way of accounting for such stylistic effects.

Many contemporary anti-realists combine the Kantian idea that our knowlege of the world is partly constituted by the human mind (i.e. in part by "things-in-themselves" and in part by the imposition of a priori concepts such as causality, time and spatial relations) with relativism. Whereas for Kant the concepts imposed to constitute the known world were universals, common to everyone, Literary Theory/ poststructuralism drops the idea that these concepts are universal and argues that there are a range of socially constructed and relativistic 'texts' that intervene between language-users and the world. According to Devitt and Sterelny (1987:206) this relativistic neo-Kantianism 'has some claim to being the dominant metaphysics of our time, at least among

intellectuals.' There may be some exaggeration in this claim, though it is certainly an established and influential position in Literary Theory.

Language is considered to be an autonomous system without relation to the world, defined purely in terms of its internal relations. In Saussure's own words: 'Language is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others...' (Saussure 1966:114). This definition, according to Devitt and Sterelny (1987:213) is 'the most surprising and objectionable feature of structuralism, for it omits reference.' As an autonomous system, Saussure argues, language may be compared to chess. 'In chess, what is external can be separated relatively easily from what is internal......everything having to do with its system and rules is internal.' (Saussure 1966:20). In response to this Devitt and Sterelny have the neat answer: '....chess is like language as the structuralists view it, but it is importantly different from language as it really is.' (Devitt and Sterelny 1987:216).

This rejection of reference has serious consequences, not only within philosophy of language, but also for metaphysics. Language cuts us off from the world. As Derrida puts it: il n'y a pas d'hors texte. Devitt and Sterelny comment on this:

> 'If taken literally, this talk of language's power
> over the world is mysterious and inexplicable, if
> not absurd. Taken metaphorically, it seems to
> leave us without a world at all.' (Devitt and
> Sterelny 1987:219).

The influence of such ideas on contemporary Literary Theory may be illustrated with a few quotations from Hawkes (1977):

> 'Language.......allows no single, unitary appeals to a
> "reality" beyond itself. In the end it constitutes
> its own reality' (p26); 'Writing.......can be seen to
> cause a new reality to come into being' (p149); 'all
> societies construct their own realities' (p56);
> 'since [language] constitutes our characteristic

means of encountering and of coping with the world beyond ourselves, then perhaps we can say that it constitutes the characteristic human structure. From there, it is only a small step to the argument that perhaps it also constitutes the characteristic structure of human reality' (p28).

According to this view, then, the 'realities' constituted by language (including 'human reality') are socially constructed. The mind is not in itself interestingly structured or law-governed; it is merely the site for competing ideologies, including competing reading strategies and institutionalised literary reading conventions. The idea that there is no such thing as an essential human nature, that everything is cultural, is a pervasive one. This was the position held by many structuralists, especially in opposition to the phenomenological tradition. Eagleton criticises Husserl for speaking of a private sphere of experience, as all experience involves language 'and language is ineradically social' (Eagleton 1983:60).

Eagleton's view of language is, he claims, inspired by Saussure and Wittgenstein, as well as more recent contributions from Literary Theory:

>'The hallmark of the 'linguistic revolution' of the twentieth century, from Saussure and Wittgenstein to contemporary literary theory, is the recognition that meaning is not simply something 'expressed' or 'reflected' in language: it is actually *produced* by it. It is not as though we have meanings, or experiences, which we then proceed to cloak with words; we can only have the meanings and experiences in the first place because we have a language to have them in......'
>(Eagleton 1983:60).

Saussure's view that language itself enables thought by creating the concepts we use to think with is expressed as follows:

>'Our thought - apart from its expression in words - is only a shapeless and indistinct mass......without the help of signs we would be unable to make a clear-cut, consistent distinction between two

ideas. Without language, thought is a vague uncharted nebula. There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language.' (Saussure 1966:111-112).

Meaning not only does not refer, it also does not exist as intentions in minds, according to Eagleton. Again he argues:

'To believe that meaning consists of words plus a wordless act of willing or intending is rather like believing that everytime I open the door 'on purpose' I make a silent act of willing while opening it.' (Eagleton 1983:68).

Certainly we do not 'cloak' thoughts with words. As will be emphasised in the next chapter, there is a gap between what words mean and what they communicate in context. But it is not possible to pass from this to the conclusion that thoughts cannot pre-exist, or be independent of, language. If we look at language processing from the perspective of production it is intuitively absurd to suggest that thoughts arise at the same time as language. If we accept the view that Eagleton is expressing, we would also have to reject the possibility of having thoughts which we cannot express because we lack the language to express them. From the hearer's point of view we recognise the thoughts people are trying to express even if the language they use is elliptical or contains slips of the tongue. Utterances only make sense if caused by an intention to communicate. Even in the case of opening doors the complex state that the body is put in to achieve the task, if taken as rational behaviour, can only be explained as caused by a desire to open the door. Another problem for Eagleton's view is that a further argument would be needed to explain why other species and pre-linguistic children do not have thoughts.

I have only made the briefest of references, largely through quotation, to a few of the ideas in current Literary Theory. These few ideas should suffice to illustrate the wide gulf that exists between thinking influenced by poststructuralist theory and thinking in linguistic and pragmatic theory and philosophy of mind and language. The authors I have cited, apart from

Saussure, are not mainstream poststructuralists, but authors of popular and influential books many of whose ideas have been influenced by poststructuralist thought. A fairer treatment of the above points would require much more detailed argument and the recognition that there are different poststructuralisms. In the next section a new basis for a theoretical approach to literariness will be suggested, and in the next chapter a theory of communication will be outlined which will underpin this theory of literariness.

2.7. Conclusion.

Two major attempts have been made to establish a theoretical discipline within literary studies, one focussing on the linguistic properties of literary texts, the other focussing on social codes, conventions or reading strategies. The phenomenological tradition in literary studies I take to be philosophical rather than genuinely theoretical. Current Literary Theory has rejected both the kind of approach developed by phenomenologists and the kind of approach that attempts to develop a theoretical discipline. Could it be that the kind of Saussurean a priori approach to the discipline of linguistics while no longer valid for linguistic theory is still appropriate for literary studies, as Fabb (1988) suggests?

I would like to suggest that literariness does possess properties which can be approached theoretically. These are real cognitive properties: mental representations and mental processes. The development of a theoretical approach to literariness, then, must seek a basis not in linguistic theory, as did formalism and structuralism, but in a cognitive pragmatic theory. Indeed, one might argue that, just as Jakobson thought that the study of literariness should form part of linguistics, so the newly conceived theoretical study of literariness should form part of cognitive pragmatics. Literary communication is one kind of communication; poetic effects are one kind of stylistic effects.

Literary Theory has sought to limit or restrict the types of questions that it is possible to ask within literary studies. As we saw above, both theoretical questions and literary critical questions to do with evaluation and interpretation are no longer considered legitimate. There are some who even argue that the increased dominance of poststructuralist ideas should influence the way poetry is written. Easthope, for example, writes:

> 'the sooner traditional criticism is deposed and poststructuralism becomes a hegemony (which it certainly is not yet), the better for contemporary poetry.' (Easthope 1985:36).

While Literary Theory has denied the legitimacy of both theory and evaluative criticism, traditional literary criticism has been equally suspicious of theory. Most traditional literary critics, for example, would be in broad sympathy with the following remarks of DH Lawrence:

> 'Literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of the feeling produced upon the critic by the book he is criticising. Criticism can never be a science: it is, in the first place, much too personal, and in the second, it is concerned with values that science ignores. The touchstone is emotion, not reason. We judge a work of art by its effect on our sincere and vital emotion, and nothing else. All the critical twiddle-twaddle about style and form, all this pseudo-scientific classifying and analysing of books in an imitation-botanical fashion, is mere impertinence and mostly dull jargon.'

Given much of what has occurred in recent theory, which has generally shown a fair degree of hostility towards traditional literary criticism, literary critics have every reason to be suspicious. While what Lawrence was objecting to here was bad generalising and classificatory criticism rather than theory, his statement serves as a valid account and

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justification of the critic's task. This task is to describe the effect of a particular experience, in this case a reading experience. The value of doing this is to extend the range of one's experience, to extend the range of one's ability to feel and think, and the range of one's ability to empathise with what others feel and think. The literary writer attempts to articulate her feelings and experiences; the critic and reader do the same with the writer's assistance.

It is instructive to compare the task of the critic with that of the ethnographer, who similarly has to interpret subjective experience. Sperber writes:

> 'The main task of ethnography is to make intelligible the experience of particular human beings as shaped by the social group to which they belong. In order to achieve that aim, ethnographers have to interpret cultural representations shared by these groups.....Even though they make a lesser use of imagination and a greater one of experience, ethnographers achieve relevance in the manner of novelists: If War and Peace is so relevant to us, it is not because Tolstoy developed here and there some general remarks, but because the personal experience of a few individuals caught in the upheaval of early nineteenth century Europe contributes, through Tolstoy's interpretation, to the experience of every reader. Similarly, if reading Malinowski's Argonauts, Bateson's Naven, or Evans-Pritchard's Nuer Religion contributes to our understanding of ourselves and of the world in which we live, it is not because of the interpretive generalisations these works contain; it is because they give us an insight into some fragments of human experience, and this, by itself, makes it worth the journey.' (Sperber 1985:34).

The reason for this lengthy quotation from Sperber (1985) is to make the point that the types of questions that literary critics ask are similarly focussed on fragments of human experience and are similarly valid. Any critical generalisations that stand in the way of articulating such experiences are, as Lawrence claims, 'mere impertinence and mostly dull jargon'.

I would like to argue that it should be possible to ask a wider range of question-types within literary studies than is currently thought possible or permissible. These would include philosophical questions such as *what is tragedy?* and *what is lyric?*, the kinds of question that interested Stephen Dedalus towards the end of <u>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</u>. They would include literary critical questions concerning 'the feeling produced upon the critic by the book he is criticising.' In addition they would now also include genuinely theoretical questions such as *what mental representations and mental processes are peculiar to poetic communication?* All of these questions are directed at what is essentially and intrinsically literary.

The new kind of theoretical approach I am proposing will seek to account for the stylistic intuitions that literary works give rise to. It is the business of literary criticism, as a humanistic discipline, to articulate these intuitions. For a theory of literariness to succeed it is important that literary criticism be an independent activity engaged in interpretation and evaluation, of the kind envisaged by Lawrence. Literary theory should recognise the independence of literary criticism, in other words and not seek to impose upon it. (Sperber (1985) similarly argues for a necessary divorce between an interpretive ethnography and a theoretical anthropology.)

If theory seeks to control criticism it leads to impoverished readings. Lodge's (1986, chapter 2) discussion of Hemingway's <u>Cat in the Rain</u> is a clear example of (bad) theory dictating to and impoverishing criticism. Lodge discusses Hagopian's interpretation of the man in the rubber cape in Hemingway's story as a symbol of contraception and concludes that such an interpretation is impossible because rain can symbolize fertility only 'when defined by opposition to drought'. Immediately prior to this Lodge states: 'Here, it seems to me, the structuralist notion of language as a system of differences and meaning as the product of structural oppositions can

genuinely help to settle a point of interpretation.' (Lodge 1986:30). This seems to me to be an absurd argument. Leaving aside the question of whether one accepts this definition of language and meaning - which presumably most contemporary linguistic theorists do not - theory should surely be describing and explaining reading experiences, not dictating what those readings should be. The idea that meanings are locked up in literary works, until structuralism (or some other theory or method) finds the key to unlock them, suggests that all those readers who have read and enjoyed literary works prior to the invention of structuralism (or whatever theory), and all those benighted present day readers who have not taken courses in structuralism, were or are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to interpreting literary works.

A literary studies interested in the intrinsic nature of literary communication should comprise at least two distinct but related disciplines. On the one hand interpretive and evaluative criticism is an essentially humanistic discipline. Its insights are intuitive and subjective. It is studied and written to share experiences of reading which it considers valuable and to enhance appreciation. On the other hand, a theoretical discipline, based on a theoretical literary pragmatics that seeks to describe and explain poetic effects in terms of characteristic mental representations and mental processes, should also be possible. The theoretical discipline depends on and must respect the separate existence of the humanistic discipline because theory necessarily needs to work with, describe, and explain the readings that criticism produces, as well as the intuitions that such critical work encourages one to develop.

CHAPTER THREE

PRAGMATIC THEORY

3.1.   Introduction.

All theories of literature or literariness have been grounded, with greater or lesser degrees of explicitness, in theories of language and communication. The underlying views as to the nature of language and communication affect how literary theory is conceived and, indeed, whether it is conceivable.

Formalist theories drew inspiration from structural linguistic analysis, although certain ideas or assumptions about the nature of communication were also expressed. Structuralist and semiotic theories made appeal to structural linguistic theory and semiotic code-model theories of communication. The central figure for these theories is Saussure, whose ideas still play a significant role in current Literary Theory.

Some theoretical positions, which emphasise the role of literary conventions or discourse strategies, make further specific assumptions about communication, which is assumed to operate in accordance with institutionalised rules. Little or no attempt is made to work out the consequences of such rules in psychologically plausible terms. Nor is there any real consideration of the possibility that psychologically-based pragmatic principles, that operate for communication in general, might also explain the communication of specifically literary effects.

Phenomenological and reader-oriented theories have concentrated on the effects of the literary reading process

within the mind of the reader. These effects, however, were based on intuitions about - or interpretations of - what went on in the reader's mind. There was no genuinely theoretical attempt to characterise what happened in terms of mental representations and mental processes. A theoretical pragmatic account of the reading process was not considered possible. (This is not intended as a criticism of reader-oriented approaches, which represent a legitimate alternative approach within literary studies - an approach that has developed many rich and valuable intuitions about aesthetic effects.)

Finally, current approaches within Literary Theory have rejected the legitimacy or possibility of a genuine theoretical approach to literary studies. This is largely due to the fact that the relativist and anti-essentialist philosophy of language endorsed by Literary Theory does not accept the legitimacy of a genuine cognitive theory of linguistics or pragmatics.

In the last chapter I argued that a theory of literariness must be grounded in pragmatic theory rather than linguistic theory, and specifically in *cognitive* pragmatic theory. Any particular linguistic features or structural peculiarities of literary texts are only significant insofar as they encourage characteristic kinds of pragmatic processing.

When Kiparsky (1987) argued that Jakobson's programme for a theoretical account of literariness could be continued, but only within the context of contemporary linguistic and pragmatic theory, he specifically referred to relevance theory as the pragmatic theory that should replace the code model theory of communication that Jakobson espoused. I will first briefly consider (versions of) the code-model theory. The main part of this chapter, however, will be devoted to outlining the cognitive pragmatic theory - *relevance theory* as developed in Sperber and Wilson (1986a) - which might provide the framework for a genuine theory of literariness. The outline should answer many of the points raised in Chapter 2 and provide the basis for an account of poetic effects which will

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be developed in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.2. Code and Context.

Many literary theorists have assumed the generally held semiotic view that verbal communication can be adequately explained with reference to a code-model of communication. Literary Theorists, on the other hand, have stressed the need to account for the instability of the linguistic sign and the lack or failure of communication. Their notion of an unstable sign, however, is based on the notion of linguistic sign familiar from code-model accounts.

It is first important to distinguish between the idea that language itself is a code and the idea that verbal communication is a code. In the latter case communication is viewed as a process whereby the communicator encodes her thoughts directly into linguistic signs, and the addressee decodes these linguistic signs back into thoughts. Semioticians have either not distinguished between the two, or have assumed that the code-model can be readily extended from language to verbal communication.

Most linguists would accept that language itself is a code, though there would be a large measure of disagreement concerning the nature and detail of the semantic output. This code can be seen as one that links a stream of speech sounds or graphological marks to semantic representations consisting of structured sets of concepts. The simple utterance in (1), whether in spoken or written form, might be said to decode, for those who know the English language, to the semantic representation (loosely expressed) in (2):

(1)   She's here.

(2)   some particular female is in some particular place
(defined in relation to the speaker/writer) at some
particular time (relative to the time of utterance).

The utterance in (3) decodes to the same semantic representation for those who know French.

(3)   Elle est ici.

The linguistic form in (1) always decodes to the semantic representation in (2), no matter who is speaking/writing or what the circumstances are. As long as the utterance is recognised as spoken or written English, and as long as this part of the code of English is known, then the decoding process will be automatic and straightforward for an interpreter of the code. The nature of the linguistic code is largely psychologically determined, for example with regard to syntax and conceptual structure. The only clearly social and conventional elements are the aspects of the code that link word-forms to concepts, for example 'dog' to the concept DOG in English and 'chien' to the concept DOG in French.

The revolution in linguistics initiated by Chomsky (1957) has characterised language as a psychologically determined code and as a system of mental representations. This is the point of Chomsky's distinction between I-language (or internal language) and E-language (or external language) - a distinction he elaborates on in Chomsky (1986), especially Chapter 2. E-languages are convenient fictions which are non-theorisable, whereas I-languages are (psychologically) real and theorisable. Although it is necessary to study both E-languages and I-languages, it is important to realise that these studies respond to different kinds of questions and have different goals.
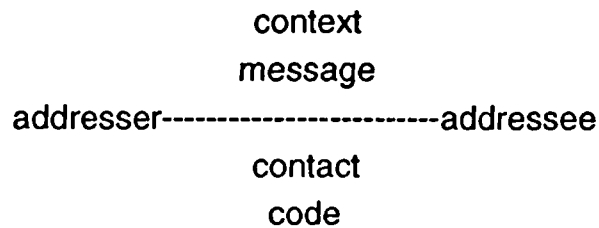
For Saussure language was a social code, the nature of which was fixed by convention. This conventionality determined the way that signifieds or conceptual categories were formed, as well as the way that signifiers linked to signifieds. It was a

relatively simple code that focussed upon the linguistic sign, as little was then known about the complexities of syntactic structure. It was simple also in the sense that it assumed a unitary notion of meaning: signifieds as concepts were fixed directly by the code. Because the linguistic code was considered to be relatively straightforward, it was not considered problematic (at least, by Saussure) to extend it to all forms of communication and information transfer. Saussure predicted the development of a new discipline - semiotics or semiology - to study the nature and operation of all sign systems. However, the development of linguistics has led to the recognition that grammar as a sign system differs considerably in its nature and complexity from other sign systems. Also, many of the fields that were analysed as sign systems, such as literature, are clearly not systems of signs: any attempts to classify them as such leads to a grossly impoverished view of their nature. These differences are highlighted when these systems, and non-systems, are viewed within a cognitive framework, as real psychological phenomena.

In this chapter I am concerned with verbal communication, where a communicator uses a linguistic signal with the overt intention of communicating some message to an addressee. In the case of the utterance in (1), it is clear that it can be used to communicate an infinite number of messages. It can communicate as many messages as there are females and places (real or invented). The precise message can only be determined by bringing non-linguistic contextual information to bear upon some linguistically decoded semantic representation. It is clear, then, that utterances do not directly decode into thoughts. Utterances decode into semantic representations which underdetermine the thoughts communicated. To maintain the code model view of communication a more sophisticated account of the decoding process has to be developed which explains this further step from semantic representation to thought communicated in

terms of an extension of the linguistic code or by means of a further code.

Consider the following model of the constituents that go to make up a speech event:

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                       context
                       message
        addresser----------------------addressee
                       contact
                       code
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(Diagram from Jakobson 1960: 353.)

In Jakobson's model the meaning communicated depends on contact, code and context. The language code contributes to the meaning but is part of a larger coding process. The contact is the medium used. The context helps to fix the meaning provided by the linguistic code, but here is treated as pre-given, a fixed component of the overall speech event. In other words, given a particular utterance in a particular language, and given a context in which that utterance occurs, then a particular meaning will be communicated.

There are such instances of communication where signals do convey stable messages in given contexts. In the case of traffic lights, the green light signal decodes to the message 'go', and the red light signal to the message 'stop'. There is no room for negotiation here. It is important that the message is unambiguous and the same for everyone, whatever else happens to be passing through their minds. There is one kind of context - traffic moving along a road - in which this code has the meanings it does, and within that context the meanings are stable. Other possible aspects of context - the weather, time of year, type of vehicle, sex of driver - are irrelevant.

If a cricket umpire raises his arms as he faces in the direction of the scorers, this gesture means that six runs have been awarded to the batsman; if he raises his arm in front of him in the direction of the batsman and points his finger, this gesture means that the batsman is given out. Again, the signal is clear and the same message is decoded whatever else is happening or has just happened in the context of the cricket match.

These signals can, of course, convey different messages in other contexts (as semioticians readily appreciate). A red light might elsewhere signify danger. A raised finger might, in a different context, signify warning or direct attention. In the examples above, however, 'context' establishes a pre-given framework within which a code operates. One has to be familiar with (aspects of) the Highway Code, or with the laws of cricket in order to decode appropriately. For anyone who is, the decoding process is straightforward and unambiguous: a particular signal is directly associated with a particular message. If you do not know the code, then it is unlikely that you will be able to work out the message.

But these examples are far from typical. A code model does not seem to work so easily for other signals used to communicate on the cricket field. There was an incident in 1990 when the English cricket team were batting second in a one day match against the West Indies. They were scoring freely, but the quality of light was deteriorating fast. When the umpires offered to suspend play because of bad light the batsmen looked to the balcony for instructions. The captain gave them a thumbs up signal. There is no pre-given code that links this signal with either the message 'carry on batting' or the message 'accept the umpire's offer'. They had to infer from the state of the game that they were being encouraged to carry on. Raising one's thumb is a general signal of encouragement that means nothing specific in the pre-given context of cricket; it can convey many different messages in different contexts, like the verbal signal in example (1).

More recent deliberations by some semioticians see the role of context in communication as more problematic than was previously thought. Sebeok, for instance, argues: 'Context is often the crucial factor in resolving the significance of a message'. (Sebeok 1991:29). He goes on to argue that:

> 'Receivers interpret messages as an amalgam of two separate but inextricably blended inputs: the physical triggering sign, or signal itself, but as unavoidably shaped by context. The latter plays a cardinal role, yet the concept has eluded definition; too, it is generally unknown how destinations "take account of context". In semiotics, the term is used both broadly and loosely to encompass preceding messages (anaphoric presuppositions), and probably succeeding messages (cataphoric implicatures), environmental and semantic noise, all filtered by short and long-term memory, genetic and cultural.' (Sebeok 1991:17).

Transactions are seen as 'embedded' in context, but 'just how an organism takes its environment into account remains unclear.' (Sebeok 1991:29). It is surely somewhat surprising that such a recent contribution to the study of semiotics should admit, and be content to admit, complete ignorance about what it terms 'a crucial factor' in the communication process.

The dominant role that context plays in fixing meanings is now sometimes used as evidence for the view that textual meanings themselves are empty or inherently unstable. In Literary Theory this idea is encouraged by the view that context is an independent constituent of the speech event. The notion of *iterability* involves the idea that linguistic signals are re-interpretable in different contexts and that by bringing a new context, en bloc as it were, to bear upon the interpretation of a text, new meanings are imposed upon this text. Poststructuralists deliberately focus attention on written texts, rather than on *speech* events. In the case of writing the author cannot be present to insist on a particular contextualised meaning. Context can never be determined and meanings can never be fixed.

In this view, writing becomes what Fabb and Durant (1987) refer to as 'the dissociated text par excellence'. It typifies the text cut off from its origins and emphasises the textual nature of all language as an autonomous system of differences. As Fabb and Durant (1987:8) go on to argue:

> 'Texts.......are signifying entities or practices which operate through a system of differential relations between sounds or letters - and in some degree are thus independent from the consciousness or authorship which appears to produce them.'

If these texts are just meaningless systems of differences, how then are meanings actually assigned to texts? As seen in the last chapter, Fish (1980) argued that a reasonable degree of agreement about the meanings of literary texts is only possible because interpretive community membership encourages similar reading strategies and the use of shared context. This institutionally defined context, seen largely in terms of strategies of reading ('look for symbols', etc.), but also in terms of acceptable outcomes (certain Christian messages, for example, in the exercise Fish describes) is used to obtain meanings that readers can, for the most part, agree on. Where disagreement occurs, there is no point in appealing to textual evidence to support a particular reading because the disagreements are the result of belonging to different interpretive communities, which encourage different textual 'facts' to be noticed. Essentially Fish is arguing that the context plays the dominant role in textual interpretation. Contexts impose meanings on texts from the outside.

Contexts can thus be seen as constraining, repressive. Barthes considered freedom from context, conceived in this way, to be both erotic and liberating. Barthes (1977b) finds pleasure, for instance, in reading the following postcard message, a text with no known author:

(4)   'Monday. Returning tomorrow. Jean-Louis.'

In the author's absence there is no need to worry about

restrictive intentions or contextual constraints. Barthes wonders: which Jean-Louis? which of the various Mondays on which the message might have been penned? His imagination is free to wander. Can we not imagine, he asks:

> 'the freedom and so to speak, the erotic fluidity......which would speak only in pronouns and shifters, each person never saying anything but *I*, *tomorrow*, *over there*, without referring to anything legal whatsoever, and in which the vagueness of difference (the only fashion of respecting its subtlety) would be language's most precious value?' (Barthes 1977b:165-166).

Communicators who use referential expressions, however, usually have particular referents in mind and addressees usually feel frustrated or confused if they cannot readily assign reference. The person to whom the postcard was actually addressed probably would not have found the utterance in (4) erotic and liberating if it proved impossible to assign reference appropriately. This utterance serves to show how language cannot refer without a context (reference needs to be assigned to 'Jean-Louis' and 'Monday') What is linguistically given falls short of the complete thought communicated.

Eagleton draws attention to another way in which linguistic signals underdetermine the message communicated. He asks us to consider the following sentence written as a notice displayed in Underground Stations (Eagleton (1983:6;78)).

(5) 'Dogs must be carried on the escalator'

He comments: 'This is not perhaps quite as unambiguous as it seems at first sight: does it mean that you must carry a dog on the escalator? Are you likely to be banned from the escalator unless you can find some stray mongrel to clutch in your arms on the way up?' The point here is that language does not encode thoughts or meanings directly, that sentences may be ambiguous and open to a variety of interpretations.

The observations that Barthes and Eagleton make are perfectly valid. The way that they interpret these observations and the

conclusions that they draw from them are not. The view of context as socially sanctioned packages of thoughts or ideas, having a constraining force on linguistic messages, is a very limited one, which shows no appreciation of the real role of context in utterance interpretation. The importance of this role has been increasingly stressed by semioticians and code-model theorists. Their lack of progress in providing an account of how context affects interpretation results from their failure to view context within a cognitive framework. Utterance interpretation is a psychological phenomenon. The search for plausible psychological models of how interpretation works on-line is likely to be more revealing about the real nature and role of context.

3.3. Code, Inference and Intention.

An alternative means by which context can play a role in communication is through inferencing. Sperber and Wilson (1986a:12-13) characterise such a process in the following way: 'An inferential process starts from a set of premises and results in a set of conclusions which follow logically from, or are at least warranted by, the premises.' If the premises are true and the argument is sound then the conclusion will also be true. If a false premise is used in the argument, however, the conclusion may be false. (In the case of a simple code such considerations do not enter: signal-message pairs are linked by direct association.)

If it is to play a role in inferential processes context must be seen in terms of sets of contextual assumptions having logical structure. Then it can enter into the kind of argument described above, together with the assumption obtained from the utterance (which also has to be constructed on the basis of contextual information). These contextual assumptions are taken from memory, constructed on the basis of other assumptions stored in memory, or constructed from information derived through sensory input.

Consider the following example (taken from Sperber and Wilson

1987):

(6) A: Would you like some coffee?
B: Coffee would keep me awake.

A's interpretation of the proposition expressed by B's utterance provides her with the information that 'a drink of coffee would keep B awake'. If A uses the contextual assumption in (7a), taken from memory (i.e. from the encyclopaedic entry attached to the conceptual address for B), and either derives or constructs (7b) on the basis of assumptions she has stored in memory concerning (from the encyclopaedic entry attached to the conceptual address for) 'night-shifts', then a straightforward deductive argument may operate over the propositions expressed by these assumptions, using universal elimination to derive (7c) and modus ponens to derive the conclusion in (7d). A is then in a position to construct a similar sequence of deductions, using (7d) and the assumptions expressed in (7e) and (7f) (obtained from the encyclopaedic entries attached to the recently activated conceptual addresses for 'coffee' and 'staying awake') as premises in an argument that provides the conclusion in (7g). (7g) serves as an answer to her original question. The construction of the argument has also provided a reason for that answer.

(7a) B works night-shifts.
(7b) Anyone who works night-shifts, wants to stay awake.
(7c) If B works night-shifts, then B wants to stay awake.
(7d) B wants to stay awake.
(7e) Anyone who wants to stay awake, wants a coffee.
(7f) If B wants to stay awake, then B wants a coffee.
(7g) B wants a coffee.

This sequence gives a rough indication of the kind of deductive reasoning that A might perform as she interprets B's utterance in (6). The deductive rules she uses operate automatically and speedily over the assumptions that are brought together.

(Sperber and Wilson (1986a: Chapter 2) provide a detailed discussion of what is termed the deductive device and the nature of the deductive rules used in utterance interpretation). The overall process is to be characterised as non-demonstrative because of the relative freedom involved in accessing premises. The fact that there is no straightforward code to rely on means that the communication process is risky. A may misinterpret B's utterance if she selects or constructs the wrong assumptions in the course of this argument. Maybe B is not on night-shift this week and is looking forward to a good night's sleep.

I will return to this example later. For the moment it is sufficient to see how inferencing works, using context in the form of mentally represented assumptions. Many Literary Theorists assume that it is not necessary to view context in psychological terms. Context refers to the general situation in which the utterance exchange takes place. Hawkes (1977:83), in discussing Jakobson's (1960) constituents of a speech event argues, for example, that 'the context of the present discussion enables individual phrases and sentences to be meaningful where otherwise (uttered at, say, a football match) they would not.' It is difficult, at first, to see the point of this example. If Hawkes were to talk to a colleague about Jakobson's speech event constituents at a football match, there is no obvious reason to suppose that the colleague would understand him any differently than he would reading his book at home. More importantly, the general argument that physical context inevitably influences utterance interpretation is a weak one. Short of telekinesis, thoughts do not interact with physical objects. Context can only play a role in utterance interpretation as mentally represented contextual assumptions. Physical context is only significant insofar as it is possible to mentally represent states of affairs taken from that context, which may then play a role in inferencing.

The use of contextual assumptions in inferencing might not be seen as a problem by code-model theorists, given a more sophisticated code-model. A coding process could include an inferential process as a subcomponent. If, for example, in

example (6) the relevant contextual assumptions were pre-given and 'mutually known', then the communicator would be sure that her message would be interpreted accurately by the addressee. *She would know that her verbal signal would* automatically provide a specific message in a pre-given context. Just as a certain gesture by the umpire means 'six runs' in the context of the rules in operation during a cricket match, B's utterance in (6) could mean 'B wants some coffee' in the context supplied by the contextual assumptions in (7).

This more sophisticated version of the code-model depends on the pre-existence of *mutual knowledge*. For communication to be failsafe and code-like, it has been argued, it is not enough for A and B to share contextual assumptions. A has to know that B knows that p; A has to know that B knows that A knows that p; A has to know that B knows that A knows that B knows that p; and so on ad infinitum. (For discussion of mutual knowledge see Clark and Marshall 1981; Sperber and Wilson 1986a:15-21.)

Although it would seem, for the code-model at least, that the mutual knowledge hypothesis is necessary, it does present a number of problems. The most well-known is the fact that it is simply not possible for two interlocutors to carry out an infinite number of checks along the lines just suggested. (Does B know that p?; does B know that I know that p?; does B know that I know that B knows that p?; ......etc.) One of the remarkable facts about on-line utterance interpretation is its speed: even a moderate number of such checks creates problems for any psychologically plausible account.

It is easy to find counterexamples to the idea that context has to be pre-given or mutually known. One example might be the case, already discussed, of the cricketers having to recognise the intention behind the "thumbs up" sign: the contextual assumptions needed to interpret the signal have to be constructed as part of the interpretation process. Consider also the following case of verbal communication. A visits B for the first time and notices, as she approaches the house, a restaurant called 'Lincostas' on the corner of the street. On

meeting, B suggests that they go out for lunch. Then the exchange in (8) takes place.

(8)   A: Let's go to Lincostas.
        B: I don't like fish restaurants.

In interpreting B's utterance A has to use the contextual assumption in (9):

(9)   Lincostas is a fish restaurant.

This is an assumption A has to construct for the occasion: indeed, she has no way of knowing beforehand what kind of restaurant Lincostas is.

Mutual knowledge is supposed to ensure the success of communication. Another argument against the hypothesis is that sometimes communication does break down and need to be repaired. Sometimes people do use the wrong contextual assumptions, as might easily be the case in (6), and end up with the wrong interpretation. Clearly in cases where communication takes place between people who do not know each other, such as literary communication, mutual knowledge as a pre-requisite for communication makes no sense at all.

In relevance theory the notion of mutual knowledge is replaced by the notion of *mutual manifestness*. It is enough, Sperber and Wilson argue, for the contextual assumptions needed in interpretation to be mutually manifest to communicator and addressee in order for communication to take place. Manifestness is defined as follows: 'A fact is *manifest* to an individual at a given time if and only if he is capable of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true.' (Sperber and Wilson 1986a:39). The communicator and addressee do not need to mutually know the contextual assumptions needed for interpretation. The addressee does not even have to have these assumptions stored in his memory. He must simply be able to construct them, either on the basis of what he can perceive in his immediate physical environment, or on the basis of assumptions already

stored in memory. In the case of literary communication the contextual assumptions needed for interpretation have to be made available through the text itself, in a way that will be explained shortly.

According to this account it is the communicator's responsibility to judge what contextual assumptions are manifest to the addressee. Where she judges them not to be manifest she must make them available through the language she uses. She will be more or less explicit depending on what contextual assumptions she judges to be manifest to an addressee on a particular occasion, and depending on who her addressee happens to be. In the case of literary communication this detailed attention to the needs of a particular addressee does not apply. The text is carefully shaped by the author with a view to the effects it will have upon a reader, but this reader is, in the term familiar from literary theory, an *implied reader*. The context needed by the implied reader must be determined by the text itself. Any particular real reader has problems either when he does not have the assumptions he needs for interpretation stored in memory (i.e. in the encyclopaedic entries attached to conceptual addresses that are triggered by words in the text), or when he is not able to construct them easily from such assumptions.

The instability of communication that Literary Theorists refer to depends on the idea that contexts and language are totally separate entities. The addressee supplies different contexts and obtains different interpretations. This point may be countered by the simple observation that the communicator adjusts what she has to say to the needs of the addressee and therefore has some control over the contextual assumptions the addressee uses. The attention paid to what contextual assumptions are manifest to the addressee is matched by what Cutler (1987) refers to as 'hearer-coddling' at phonetic and prosodic levels of speech production. Even literary works are organised such that the meanings potentially communicated are communicated through the use of contextual assumptions that the writer makes manifest through the language used. The reader has to supply readily accessible contextual assumptions

(made available via concepts linked to lexical items in the text) that allow the kind of interpretation that may have been intended. The real reader has to manoevre himself into the position of the implied reader by supplying contextual assumptions that provide a rich poetic or literary interpretation.

If inference does play such an important role in communication and if contextual assumptions have to be constructed as part of the process of utterance interpretation, then the question of *intention* becomes of crucial importance. It becomes important for communicator and addressee to make decisions about what the other 'has in mind'. Recognising intentions is a crucial part of interacting with others. With regard to Wittgenstein's twin case example, discussed in Chapter 1, one might wonder whether a person's arm is merely rising (in an involuntary act of yawning, for example), or whether it is being raised with some intention (to take something down from the top shelf, perhaps, or to communicate, for example to a taxi driver that she wants him to stop and take her somewhere). (Given these two types of intention, perhaps we should talk of triplet rather than twin cases.) In the latter case she has a communicative intention to make manifest an informative intention with a particular content. In code model views such intentions, as mental states, are generally considered to be irrelevant. There is no need to metarepresent what is in the other interlocutor's mind. In Literary Theory, too, as noted above, texts are signifying entities or sign-systems that can be analysed and discussed independently of intentions and mental states.

In the arm rising/raising case, as described above, there is either no particular intention involved, there is an intention to reach for something, or there is an intention to communicate something. Whether there is or is not an intention, and if there is, what sort of intention, are worked out on the basis of contextual evidence. The question of how one recognises a communicative intention and what that intention is was raised by Grice (1957;1989). The analysis of what is entailed by a communicative intention has undergone a number of revisions,

including one by Sperber and Wilson (1986a: Chapter 1). They define an *informative intention* as an intention 'to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions {I}' (Sperber and Wilson 1986a:58). This, according to Fodor (1993) is the crucial, or primary, intention in the case of advertising, or persuasive rhetoric more generally. A *communicative intention* is defined as the intention 'to make it mutually manifest to audience and communicator that the communicator has this informative intention' (Sperber and Wilson 1986a:61). I may have an informative intention that involves making manifest to you the belief that John Major has resigned. I can do this by leaving the newspaper, with its "Major Throws in the Towel" headline, on your desk. Alternatively, I could communicate the belief to you by uttering a form of words that make it mutually manifest that I had the intention to make it manifest to you that John Major had resigned. In recognising my communicative intention you do not necessarily come to believe that John Major has resigned: you may not trust me. The recognition of a communicative intention does not entail the fulfilment of an informative intention. There are many informative intentions that can only be conveyed indirectly via a communicative intention. In fact, it is often the easiest way of conveying an informative intention. Making it mutually manifest that the communicator has a particular informative intention also has the advantage of facilitating further communication.

The issue of intention has played a significant role in literary criticism and theory. The notion of *intentional fallacy* in New Criticism was critical of appeals to an author's explicitly stated intentions in order to clarify the meanings expressed in her works. (See Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954).) Wimsatt questions the critic's need to obtain evidence of the author's intentions from sources external to the poem. If the poem is successful then it provides its own evidence for the poet's intention and there is no need to appeal to the poet. If the poem fails to do this, it might seem reasonable to turn to the poet for elucidation. But in this case, the poem itself must be considered a failure.

Wimsatt is right to stress that intentions are not to be seen as separate from the thoughts that the poet tries to express and communicate through the language of his poems. The point of this discussion of intention is partly to highlight a(nother) division between pragmatics and Literary Theory. Literary Theorists often express the idea that any talk of intentions is misleading and a waste of time. Some make the point that language conveys meanings quite independently of the author's intentions. For Eagleton, for example, meaning is a function of language and a social situation rather than some mental process. He writes:

> 'To ask in such a situation 'What do you mean?' is really to ask what effects my language is trying to bring about: it is a way of understanding the situation itself, not an attempt to tune in to ghostly impulses within my skull. Understanding my intention is grasping my speech and behaviour in relation to a significant context..' (Eagleton 1983:114).

He also writes: 'In a certain practical situation, the words just do seem to mean what they mean whatever I might whimsically want them to mean.' (Eagleton 1983:113).

For Eagleton, it is 'the situation itself' rather than the communicator that exercises control over which context is to be used in utterance interpretation. As has been argued above, it is not at all clear how a 'situation' can do this. If it can, this would seem to destroy the point of communication. The communicator is aware of what context (in the form of assumptions that the addressee may represent and bring to bear on the interpretation process) is available, or manifest, to her addressee; if she is uncertain that the addressee will be able to construct a necessary contextual assumption she will herself make such contextual information explicitly available. In other words, she will construct her own utterance according to what contextual information she understands the addressee to have available to him. To give one simple example at this stage, consider the utterance 'She's gone'. The speaker may intend the proposition in (10).

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(10) Jane Brown has resigned as Head of the Critical
Theory department.

She may express this proposition in any of the following ways,
depending on her assessment of the ready availability of the
appropriate contextual information to the hearer.

(11a) Jane has gone.
(11b) Jane Brown has gone.
(11c) Jane Brown has resigned.
(11d) She's resigned.
(11e) She's resigned as Head of the Critical Theory
department.

Eagleton sees the idea that intention plays a role in
communication as whimsical, narrow-minded and dogmatic. He
argues:

> 'What had been narrow-minded about previous
> theories of meaning was their dogmatic insistence
> that the intention of the speaker or writer was
> always paramount for interpretation......In
> countering this dogmatism, there was no need to
> pretend that intentions did not exist at all; it was
> simply necessary to point out the arbitrariness of
> claiming that they were always the ruling
> structure of discourse'. (Eagleton 1983:116).

The problem is that Eagleton gives no detailed analysis to
illustrate how discourse communicates in the absence of
intentions (or where it is not necessary to take intentions into
account). The autonomous linguistic meaning provided by the
utterance 'She's gone' is not completed on the basis of
discourse rules or situational context. The communicator
intends some particular thought and the addressee is
interested in what that thought is. The interpretive processes
that the addressee employs are designed to establish the
speaker's intentions.

Nothing has been said yet about how the addressee selects or
constructs the contextual assumptions that he needs for
utterance interpretation. How the addressee achieves this is
the subject of the next section.

3.4. Utterance Interpretation and the Principle of Relevance.

In the relevance theory account of verbal communication utterance interpretation, viewed as a psychological process, involves two distinct phases. The first phase is a decoding phase that pairs phonetic or graphemic representations with semantic representations or incomplete logical forms. The second phase is an inferential phase that completes the various gaps in the logical form to derive a fully propositional form, and then derives implicatures, propositional attitudes and illocutionary force. Phonetic and graphemic representations do not decode directly to thoughts or full propositional forms, therefore, as is the case with code-model theories.

Such a view of verbal communication can be seen as consistent with Fodor's modularity thesis (Fodor 1983). For Fodor the mind consists of distinct input modules dealing with domain specific, informationally encapsulated processes and central systems dealing with open global processes. The former include the perceptual processes and language; the latter include conscious reasoning and problem-solving. The task of the input modules is to convert domain-specific sensory or linguistic representations into a common language of thought. The representation of the thought 'There is a glass of champagne on the table' might be derived from visual representations, gustatory representations, tactile representations, olfactory representations, aural representations, or from linguistic representations. The language module takes as input phonetic (or graphemic) representations and converts these into semantic representations via a complex code involving phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels of representation. Linguistic semantics is concerned with accounting for the semantic output of this decoding process. The central system processing of language takes semantic representations as input and completes them through

disambiguation, reference assignment, conceptual enrichment and the addition of ellipsed material to derive propositional forms. This completion of the propositional form is an inferential process and falls within the domain of pragmatics, together with the further inferential derivation of implicatures and the embedding of the propositions expressed within higher level descriptions that express attitudes towards the proposition expressed. It is in this sense that semantic and pragmatic processes are psychologically distinct. Truth conditional semantics is concerned with the relation of full, inferentially derived, propositional forms (i.e. forms derived after pragmatic inferencing) to states of affairs in the world.

According to Fodor cognitive psychology has been relatively successful at characterising the operation of the input modules and relatively unsuccessful at characterising the ways in which the central processes operate:

> 'the reason that there is no serious psychology of central processes is the same reason there is no serious philosophy of scientific confirmation: both exemplify the significance of global factors in the fixation of belief, and nobody begins to understand how such factors have their effects.' (Fodor 1983:140).

Sperber and Wilson (1986a), however, argue against taking scientific confirmation as the paradigm case of central thought processes. They argue that a theoretical account of the inferential stage of utterance interpretation, dealing with the output of the language module, is possible and may make a contribution to the study of central systems. The principles governing the inferencing phase of utterance interpretation might, for example, have profound implications for the psychology of reasoning.

Examples of linguistic decoding have already been given. Barthes with his postcard and Eagleton with his Underground notice showed that everyday language is propositionally incomplete. I will consider a few more examples here.

Consider the following utterance.

(12) He fell off the bar.

Here reference has to be assigned to 'he', which merely indicates that some male entity is intended. The other problem with this utterance is that the word 'bar' is at least two-ways ambiguous, between, for example, gymnasium-bar and pub-bar. As a result of this ambiguity, the utterance has at least two logical forms. The addressee must use contextual information both to disambiguate and assign reference. Contextual information facilitates such disambiguations to the extent that in the flow of conversation one is normally quite unaware of most of these linguistic ambiguities, whether they be lexical, as here, or structural. (There are two kinds of discourse that deliberately exploit ambiguity to achieve particular stylistic effects. In humour, many jokes depend on a re-interpretation of an ambiguous lexical or structural ambiguity, though punning exploits ambiguity openly and directly. In poetry, ambiguity is exploited to enrich and communicate multiple meanings or thoughts, as Empson (1930) illustrates.)

Consider now the utterance in (13a). This would decode to give something like the semantic representation (13b).

(13a) Her book is too long.
(13b) Some BOOK (in some relation to some female) is
      too LONG₁/LONG₂ for some purpose.

The word 'her' directs the addressee to fill in a gap in the logical form by using contextual information to look for some particular female. There is an ambiguity in the word 'long', which may refer to spatial length or temporal length (in this case, the length of time it might take to read the book). There is also a gap at the end of the decoded logical form: the addressee has to find an answer to the question *for what purpose is the book too long?*. It might be too long for one of the following reasons:

(14) too long to read by next week;

too long to read on the train journey to Nottingham;
too long to win the Booker Prize;
too long to fit into this suitcase;
etc.

The 'possessive' form of 'her' indicates that there is some relation between the particular female and a certain book. The possessive decodes, in other words, to something like: there is some relation between X and Y. The precise nature of the relationship has to be worked out in context. In this example the relation could be one of the following:

(15) the book she has bought;
      the book she is reading;
      the book she has to prepare for next week's seminar;
      the book she has borrowed from the library;
      the book she has written;
      the book she is trying to balance on her head as she walks across the room;
      etc.

The semantics of the possessive, then, leaves a gap which has to be filled by pragmatic inferencing.

For comparison, it is interesting to note how one literary stylistician, who views language as a social code rather than in terms of mental representations, deals with the possessive or genitive. Fowler (1986) argues that the syntax in English for phrases like 'my wife', 'my son', 'my assistant' - that of 'Possessive + Noun':

'has the unfortunate effect of encoding a human relationship as an object, a possession of another person, so that 'my wife' seems to be as totally owned by me as my hand or my books or my car. Obviously this syntactic structure, apparently so 'natural', embodies a theory of personal relationship as ownership with dominance, with the dominated partner reduced to the status of an object. Once recognised, such processes are seen as ideological and objectionable.' (Fowler

1986:20).

It is doubtful that this particular grammatical construction was invented to encode possession for objectionable ideological ends. To suggest that that is what it encodes now is to fail to distinguish between the semantics of the expression and the variety of pragmatic interpretations it might have in context. What it does encode is, as has been suggested, a relationship of an unspecified kind, the exact nature of which has to be inferred. When I talk about 'my doctor', 'my teacher', or 'my next door neighbour' I do not intend a relationship of possession, neither is such a relationship normally implied. There are many such counterexamples where the interpretation that Fowler claims to be encoded by the possessive is simply not appropriate. Rather than a decoding, the meaning he assigns to 'my wife' or 'my son' should be considered one possible contextually enriched interpretation.

The possessive, or genitive, provides one illustration of the notion of conceptual enrichment, in this case where a very general semantically decoded concept is narrowed down by pragmatic processing to a more specific meaning. The example of Wordsworth's use of the word 'sense', discussed in Chapter 2, can also be seen as an example of conceptual enrichment. In a variety of different contexts Wordsworth's use of this one word communicates a range of associated meanings. There are as many different conceptual enrichments as there are meanings communicated. Birch's observation that Wordsworth did not seem to have the word under control, based on a very rigid view of the nature of the linguistic sign, demonstrates a similar failure to distinguish semantic decoding and pragmatic inferencing. What Birch (and others) see as instability is the result of the influence of context on the meaning communicated. It is possible for a word to have a stable semantic meaning and yet be interpreted differently in different contexts. Furthermore, these contexts are selected in accordance with particular cognitive principles.

Another way in which pragmatic processing takes account of contextual information in order to complete the proposition

expressed is in cases where certain linguistic material is omitted from utterances. If A simply says 'Lecture' to B as she races past him on the campus, B may interpret the utterance as expressing the thought that 'A is rushing to a lecture and does not have time to stop and talk'. Whether or not it is A's intention should be clear to B from the contextual information available to him. In such cases the logical form itself has to be completed before further pragmatic processing is possible.

The problems discussed so far relate to the completion of the propositional form expressed by an utterance. Pragmatic inferencing is also required to derive propositional attitudes and implicatures. An addressee has to determine what the communicator is saying (the proposition expressed), what she is implicating and what her attitude is to what she is saying and implicating. An example of implicature was provided in examples (6) and (7). Example (6) is repeated here:

> (6)   A: Would you like some coffee?
>   B: Coffee would keep me awake.

In order to interpret B's utterance A has to supply some of the contextual assumptions in (7), which she can then use as implicated premises in an inferential process to derive one of the implications in (16).

> (16a) B wants some coffee.
> (16b) B does not want any coffee.

Grice's approach to the problem of implicature was to argue that implicatures are calculated in order to maintain consistency with a set of tacit norms - the maxims of truthfulness, informativeness, relevance and clarity. These conversational maxims, he argued, form part of a tacit social contract between interlocutors. They are not, however, arbitrary social conventions, but form a rational basis for the conduct of conversational interchange. Relevance theory develops Gricean pragmatics in a number of ways. Many of the developments derive from the desire to provide a

psychologically plausible account of utterance interpretation. According to relevance theory, there are no maxims in the sense of independently stored principles. Utterance interpretation, it is claimed, can be explained in terms of one principle - the principle of relevance - which is grounded in a generalisation about how minds function when they pay attention to and represent states of affairs, and process information.

Our minds are designed to process information. The general aim of building up a reliable picture of the world we live in is restricted, however, by the limited time and mental resources at our disposal. We cannot interpret and attend to an infinitely large number of phenomena. This invites the following questions. Why do we pay attention to some phenomena and not others? Why do we represent the phenomena that we do attend to in the way we do?

The relevance theory answer to these questions is as follows. The mind is guided, on the one hand, by the desire to improve the accuracy of its memory by maximising *cognitive effects*. These may take the form of the strengthening of already existing beliefs, the weakening or contradiction of already existing beliefs, leading to their rejection, and the calculation of new beliefs from the combination of new and old *information. The improvements attained in these ways lead to* a more reliable representation of the world and enable the mind to become more efficient and reliable in its processing of further information. The mind, then, attends to and processes information that leads to the derivation of as great a range of cognitive effects as possible and represents information in such a way as to promote the derivation of as great a range of cognitive effects as possible.

Such processing requires time and mental effort. The mind cannot maximise cognitive effects in a completely unconstrained way. On the other hand, therefore, the mind is guided by considerations of *processing effort*. Because time and energy are limited, other things being equal, the mind will process those phenomena that are less costly to process and

represent them in the most readily available way. Although it is beneficial to maximise cognitive effects, it is also necessary and beneficial, in another sense, to minimise processing effort.

The definition of relevance is built upon these two notions of cognitive effect and processing effort. To say that information processing is relevance-driven is to say that an optimal balance is sought between maximising cognitive effects and minimising processing effort. A stimulus is more relevant the more cognitive effects it yields, and is less relevant the more cognitive effort is required to process it. Interpreting a stimulus involves assigning it that conceptual representation which gives rise to the greatest number or range of cognitive effects for the effort involved. The concepts used will be relatively accessible and the retrieval of contextual assumptions from memory will likewise be constrained by the need to achieve this optimal balance between effects and effort.

Precise calculations of the number of effects required for relevance to be achieved is impossible. This will partly depend on the time and energy available at any given time, which are likely to vary. It may also be that some people generally have more mental energy than others just as some have more physical energy. For these reasons it is not possible to discuss the relevance of information independently of individual mental states.

A more specific claim about communication follows from the general claim about cognitive processing. Communicators are able to exploit the fact that the minds of their addressees are relevance-driven. An ostensive signal provided by a communicator conveys the implicit presumption that it is worth the addressee's while to pay attention to it, that it is, in fact, relevant. The addressee is encouraged to assume that by interpreting the signal in a minimally effortful manner he will, in the communicator's opinion, achieve a satisfying range of cognitive effects - at least as satisfying as anything else he could be paying attention to at that moment.

A communicator intends an addressee to entertain a thought in the form of an assumption or set of assumptions and she intends her addressee to recognise that she has this intention. She must provide an ostensive stimulus that makes these assumptions manifest to him. The addressee will assume that the communicator's act of ostension, whether it be gesture or utterance, by claiming his attention, implicitly carries the presumption that there are a sufficient or satisfactory range of cognitive effects to make it worth his while to process and interpret the given signal. This signal is relevant to the extent that a conceptual representation assigned to it interacts with contextual assumptions that are readily available to the addressee to yield a range of cognitive effects. It is also relevant in that it provides what the communicator assumes to be the easiest means of achieving those effects. Given the relevance-driven nature of cognitive processing, the best strategy available to the communicator is to choose a stimulus (perhaps construct an utterance) which will give rise to the intended effects with the least possible effort on the part of the addressee. The addressee will assume that the speaker is fashioning her utterance in just such a way. The controlling aspect of utterance interpretation, then, is processing effort: whatever the effects intended by the speaker, the costs in terms of processing effort must be minimised.

All ostensive-inferential communication, it is claimed, is governed by a single principle of relevance, which states:
> *Every act of ostensive-inferential communication*
> *communicates the presumption of its own*
> *optimal relevance.*

In the case of verbal communication, an utterance is said to be *optimally relevant* if and only if it provides an adequate range of cognitive effects for minimal possible processing effort. Verbal communication, like all ostensive communication, differs from information one might simply pick up from the environment in that it carries this presumption of optimal relevance. An utterance on a given interpretation is *consistent with the principle of relevance* if and only if the communicator could rationally have expected it to be optimally

relevant to the addressee on that interpretation. This is the criterion that guides utterance interpretation.

How does relevance theory account for how a hearer would interpret example (12), repeated below?

(12) He fell off the bar.

First he needs to assign reference to 'he', which, as already stated, is something he does on-line shortly after the word is recognised. The word 'he' provides the semantic information that some male entity is being referred to. The addressee is instructed by the use of this word to locate an appropriate 'male entity' concept. Which of the thousands present in his mind does he choose? The relevance theory answer is that he chooses the one that is easiest to process which, at the same time, yields an adequate range of contextual effects. A number of concepts are active in his mind at the time he receives this instruction. The 'male entity' concept which is most highly activated is the one that is least costly to use in terms of processing effort. This is the one he selects, then, and if its use contributes to providing a satisfactory range of cognitive effects of the kind the communicator could rationally have intended, then the addressee assumes that this is, indeed, the concept that is intended. It is the communicator's responsibility to judge that one particular male entity concept would be more highly activated to a significant degree and hence more easily accessible for the addressee than any other. Of course, the communicator could always make a mistake here, but usually 'he' is used of a male entity mentioned in the immediately preceding discourse or of some male entity upon whom attention is fixed, or may easily be fixed, in the immediate physical environment. In face-to-face conversation such breakdowns in communication as do occur are readily repaired. If the communicator is in any doubt, thinking perhaps that several male entity concepts may be highly activated and equally easily accessible to the mind of the addressee, then she makes the verbal signal more explicit: instead of 'he', she says 'John' or 'John Smith'.

Another problem here concerns the disambiguation of 'bar'. The one word is linked to several different concepts. One such concept would be that of the kind of bar found in pubs; another such concept would be that of the kind of bar found in gymnasiums. Both these, and other, 'bar' concepts would be activated in the mind of the hearer, irrespective of the context (as argued in Swinney (1979)). Prior discussion of gymnastic competitions, for example, would then bias the interpretation in favour of the kind of bar found in gymnasiums: that concept would be more highly activated and would be the one that was easier to access and process. Prior discussion of a wild end of term celebratory pub crawl would similarly encourage the alternative 'pub bar' concept. In each case the more strongly activated concept would be easier to process and use in an on-line interpretation of the utterance.

I have been assuming here that concepts are addresses, activated by items in the mental lexicon, where assumptions that can be used as context are collected and stored. Sperber and Wilson (1986a: 84-93) argue that different kinds of information are stored at conceptual addresses, including lexical, logical and encyclopaedic information. While the lexical and logical entries attached to a conceptual address (containing phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic information) are shared by everyone who knows the word/concept in the language, the encyclopaedic entry is open-ended and varies from person to person. It contains everything we believe about the extension of that concept. As has been argued, the communicator has to make an adequate assessment of what beliefs an addressee has stored in his memory, and of their varying levels of accessibility, as part of her general assessment of what contextual assumptions are manifest to him on a given occasion.

It should be noted that in poetry, reference assignment and disambiguation are often deliberately made problematic, requiring greater processing effort on the part of the reader. It will be argued later that these are ways of encouraging readers to explore memory more thoroughly, to combine memories stored at different conceptual addresses in order to

increase the range of cognitive effects.

Consider now the following standard cases of implicature:

(17) A: Drink?
     B: I'm driving.

(18) A: Drink?
     B: I'm teaching in half an hour.

(19) A: Drink?
     B: I'm a Mormon.

In example (17) the contextual assumption that A uses to interpret B's reply to her question is taken from the encyclopaedic entry attached to the concepts ALCOHOLIC DRINK and DRIVE. Following A's question, a set of contextual assumptions about (alcoholic) drink(ing) will be activated in the minds of both A and B. (The concept DRINK will be enriched in appropriate contexts, as here, to ALCOHOLIC DRINK). Following B's answer, a set of contextual assumptions about driving will also be activated. The encyclopaedic entries attached to the concepts DRINK (or ALCOHOLIC DRINK) and DRIVE will share several assumptions: 'It is forbidden/illegal to drink alcohol before driving'; 'It is dangerous to drink alcohol before driving'; 'If anyone is about to drive, they do not want to drink alcohol'. These assumptions, already activated by the concept ALCOHOLIC DRINK (along with many others), receive further activation from DRIVE and hence, because of this increased double activation, become the most accessible contextual assumptions for use in the interpretation of B's reply. A uses these assumptions first (rather than any of the many other assumptions about 'drinking' and about 'driving' that she has stored in the encyclopaedic entries attached to the concepts DRINK and DRIVE) because they are the most accessible. A uses the contextual assumption *if anyone is about to drive, they do not want to drink* as an implicated premise together with the proposition expressed by B's utterance (B is about to drive) in a standard logical deduction which yields first, after universal elimination, the assumption

if B is about to drive, B does not want a drink, and then, after modus ponens, the implicated conclusion: *B does not want a drink*. If the immediately accessible assumptions interact with the proposition expressed to yield sufficient contextual effects, as they do in this case, then these effects, here in the form of new assumptions, are understood to have been communicated. If they do not interact with the proposition expressed to yield contextual effects, then further less immediately accessible assumptions are tried or communication fails.

Whereas in (17) the relevant contextual assumption is taken from memory (for most people in what might roughly be termed 'our society'), the situation is different for (18). Here the contextual assumption 'If anyone is about to teach, they do not want an alcoholic drink' is used as a premise together with the proposition expressed by B's utterance in a similar series of logical deductions which lead to the implicated conclusion that 'B does not want an alcoholic drink'. (In some circumstances, of course, the opposite could be intended and communicated.) The contextual assumption here is not so accessible as the one used in (17) because it does not exist in (most people's) memory. There are, as yet, no government publicity campaigns concerning the dangers of drinking and teaching and it is not an assumption that needs to be used regularly. It has to be constructed on the basis of what is stored at the encyclopaedic entries attached to the conceptual addresses for TEACH and DRINK. It may be constructed (very roughly) along the following lines. Teaching requires great powers of concentration. Drinking alcohol is bad for concentration. Therefore, if someone is about to teach, they do not want to drink alcohol. This is a relevant assumption to construct because it combines with the proposition expressed in a logical deduction to give a conclusion which answers A's question, and it is consistent with, and can itself be deduced from, assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entries attached to the activated concepts TEACH and DRINK.

Whether or not the details are correct (and they may differ from individual to individual: some people may go around with

the assumption 'If anyone is about to teach, they do not want to drink alcohol' stored in memory) it can be seen that there are cases where the contextual assumptions needed for the logical deduction which yields the relevant implicated conclusion are not immediately retrievable from memory but are available from memory at one remove (or even at several removes). The greater effort involved in accessing the intended contextual assumption is repaid by an increase in contextual effects: a wider range of implicatures being communicated. The assumptions used to construct the contextual assumption or implicated premise which enters directly into a deduction with the proposition expressed by the utterance are also activated. Assumptions to do with B's great sense of responsibility (perhaps in contrast to A) may be communicated. These assumptions may be less strongly communicated than the assumptions that B is about to teach and that B does not want an alcoholic drink. The question of responsibility would presumably be made more salient if the assumption that B is about to teach is a reminder to A, rather than a new piece of information.

In (19) the range of implicatures is potentially wider still as more effort has to be put into constructing relevant contextual assumptions. The implicatures in (20) are strongly implicated, in the sense that they are clearly communicated. (This example and the following discussion is taken from Pilkington (1992)).

(20) (a) Mormons do not drink alcohol.
      (b) B does not drink alcohol.
      (c) B does not want an alcoholic drink.

A necessarily supplies the contextual assumption (20a) and derives the assumptions (20b) and (20c) in the search for an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance. The assumption in (20a) belongs to the encyclopaedic entries attached to both the concept DRINK and the concept MORMON, which should make it more readily accessible than, say, other assumptions about Mormons. Here, however, the indirectness of B's response causes A to access a greater range of implicatures, some of the possibilities (implicated premises

and implicated conclusions) being listed in (21):

(21) Grappa is an alcoholic drink.
B would not drink grappa.
Fernet Branca is an alcoholic drink.
B would not drink Fernet Branca.
Centerba is an alcoholic drink.
B would not drink Centerba.
Mormons do not drink coffee.
B would not drink coffee.
Mormons do not smoke.
B would not smoke.
Mormons practise polygamy.
B practises polygamy.
Mormons go around in pairs carrying briefcases.
B goes around in a pair carrying a briefcase.
etc.

By answering indirectly B intended to make a number of assumptions to do with his being a Mormon mutually manifest. He makes a context available to A which A can select from. Other assumptions are made manifest by B's utterance, and possibly entertained by A, such as those in (22):

(22) A will not have much in common with B.
B would be offended by A's hedonistic outlook on life.

If, as is likely, B did not intend to communicate these, they are simply inferred by A on her own responsibility. They are made manifest but B does not make mutually manifest his intention to make them manifest. A learns a lot about B, that she would not have known if B had just answered 'no' or 'I don't drink'. The assumptions in (20) are strongly implicated, clearly intended by B and necessarily entertained by A, if she is to make any sense of B's utterance. A further indeterminate range of implicatures, perhaps partly selected from (21), are also communicated, as A searches for an interpretation that is consistent with the principle of relevance - an interpretation, that is, which supplies sufficient effects to justify the effort

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expended. These weaker implicatures are less certainly intended by B, and A consequently takes more responsibility for accessing them. Gradually these merge with assumptions that B did not intend, such as those in (22). It is worth emphasising that B may well have intended to communicate assumptions such as those in (22), and A may well have understood him to have done so. Whatever the actual intention, in those cases where a range of weak implicatures is communicated there will be some indeterminacy about what the communicator intended to communicate and what is worked out on the addressee's own responsibility: there will be an indeterminacy, in other words, between implicatures and mere implications.

Where contextual exploration takes place the vast majority of assumptions stored at a particular address will not be used or entertained. What B communicates are the implicatures in (20) and then anything else about Mormons which A might find useful in pursuing the conversation. Consider what happens in the following exchange:

> (23)   A: What do you do?
>   B: I'm an Egyptologist.

Again a number of things become manifest to A, assumptions in the encyclopaedic entry attached to the concept 'Egyptologist', for example:

> (24)   B knows about the curse of Tutankhamun.
>   B is familiar with Egypt.
>   B can interpret heiroglyphs, etc.

All this is potentially useful background, as are the assumptions in (21) in the earlier exchange. B 'supplies' A with a set of contextual assumptions which she may select from in so far as they are relevant to her. If A is interested in mummies or pyramids the conversation can take off from there. Maybe A draws a blank, not having many assumptions stored at the conceptual address for 'Egyptology', and tries a different conversational tack - or a different conversational

partner.

Implicatures, then, can be more or less strong, more or less determinate. Some pragmatic accounts tend to concentrate on the determinate end of the scale and ignore the more problematic indeterminate cases. Code models, in particular, are ill-equipped to handle indeterminacy. A signal either conveys a certain message or it does not. While, on the one hand, indeterminacy may be ignored as a theoretically embarrassing phenomenon, on the other hand it may be taken as evidence for the hopelessness of any attempt to provide a theory of communication. More particularly the indeterminacy of literary communication may be taken as evidence for the hopelessness of attempting any theory of literariness. The relevance theory notion of weak implicature, as I have started to try to show, provides a theoretical account of such indeterminacy. It will be the aim of subsequent chapters to develop this theoretical account.

Before moving on to a discussion of poetic effects it is worth making one more point here about literary communication in general. It has been suggested that relevance theory applies primarily to the interpretation of spontaneous speech and is less adequately equipped to deal with literary texts. Kiparsky, for example, argues that:

> 'while the interpretation of dialogue is constrained by the principle that the speaker formulates his sentences in such a way that the first interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance that occurs to the addressee is the intended one, the reading of literary works is not, and they are consequently open to constant reinterpretation.' (Kiparsky 1987:187).

Clearly there is a difference, not between spoken and written language, but between language directed at known addressees and language directed at addressees most, if not all, of whom will be unknown, which is the typical case with literature. Only in the former case can communicators make ready assessments concerning which contextual assumptions are easily accessible to their addressees.

There is a sense, however, in which a potential reader has to decide whether he is a suitable addressee. As becoming an addressee is an act of choice (I'll read Ulysses, but I'm not going to read Finnegan's Wake), the presumption of relevance does not hold in the same way. James Joyce's novels could not be accompanied by a presumption of relevance for readers he did not know. He did write them, however, with the intention that they be relevant to someone. As readers we simply have to accept that we may miss a lot of what was intended, especially during a first reading. We may even decide that we are ill-equipped to tackle certain books or certain authors on the grounds that we do not have sufficient contextual information or the right kind of contextual information sufficiently accessible.

The point of Seamus Heaney's distinction between 'accuracy' and 'decency' was to suggest that the poet was more focussed on his or her own thoughts than on communicating them to others, more on expression than on communication. There is also the point, as Fodor (1993) noted, that there are writers, such as Kafka, who claimed to be writing primarily for themselves. Although the writer does not adapt her message to the reader, as in face-to-face communication, she does use a form of words that will evoke certain thoughts in an imagined, or implied, reader. It is a form of communication that allows potential readers to make their own choice as to whether to take on the role of actual reader. Once this role is assumed, however, the reader is concerned to work out what the writer may have intended by the words she used in the order she used them, as would be the case in other forms of communication.

This is true not only for literature. Just as Heaney claimed a tension in writing poetry between accuracy (expressing poetic thoughts precisely) and decency (being accessible to an audience), so academic writing may be more or less geared to accuracy or decency. An article in a specialist journal is likely to be more concerned with accuracy. A textbook is likely to be more concerned with decency. Ideally, of course, any example of such writing will strike a balance: it will be as accurate and decent as it needs to be.

Literature and academic writing are alike in that (except in the case of students who are obliged to read certain books) the potential reader must make the decision as to whether he belongs to the set of people for whom examples of such writing can be relevant. Insofar as, and when, they are relevant to a reader, literary and academic writing are relevant in entirely different ways. What these ways are should become decently and accurately apparent in forthcoming chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR
METAPHOR.

'....metaphor is essential to the precision of language.....
try to be precise and you are bound to be metaphorical'.
John Middleton Murray, <u>The Problem of Style</u>.

4.1. Metaphor and Pragmatic Theory.

How does an addressee interpret an utterance like (1)? What processes are involved in its interpretation?

(1) You are the cream in my coffee.

Grice assumes that the addressee first computes a literal meaning which corresponds to the proposition expressed by the utterance or what the utterance 'says'. He then finds that it involves a 'categorial falsity', that it is not consistent with one of the tacit standards, norms, or 'maxims', as Grice calls them, that underlie all rational and co-operative verbal exchanges. As long as he assumes that the speaker is intending to communicate in a rational and co-operative manner, that there is no reason to believe that the speaker is not conforming to the Co-operative Principle, he judges this to be what Grice terms a deliberate and overt *flouting* of a maxim. In this case (1) flouts the first maxim of Quality which states: *'Do not say that which you believe to be false.'* When a maxim is flouted, the interpretation of the utterance on the level of what is said is rejected in favour of an interpretation that is consistent with the maxims on the level of what is implicated. An implicature is calculated, in other words, which is consistent with the truth maxim, or maxim of Quality. In the

case of (1), according to Grice (1975; 1989:34), 'the most likely supposition is that the speaker is attributing to his audience some feature or features in respect of which the audience resembles *(more or less fancifully) the mentioned* substance.' Perhaps what is communicated, Grice suggests, is something along the lines of 'You are my pride and joy.'

This kind of approach is consistent with many discussions of metaphor in semantics and in the major philosophical and literary traditions, which treat metaphorical use as deviating from a literal norm. Grice's account of metaphor may be seen as attempting to offer a more satisfactory explanation of the intuitions developed by this tradition within a pragmatic framework. The assumption behind such views is that ordinary literal language communicates its meanings directly. Metaphorical utterances are disruptive of this direct communicaton and, therefore, require some special explanation. Looking at the problem in cognitive terms, the underlying assumption is that extra cognitive machinery is required for the interpretation of metaphors.

One of the main problems of this approach to metaphor is raised by Searle (1979:92) when he asks the following question: 'Why do we use expressions metaphorically instead of saying exactly and literally what we mean?' How, in other words, do we explain the motivation of metaphor. There are a number of other well-known problems with this account. Utterances, such as (2), for example, as Levinson (1983:157) pointed out, can be read both literally and metaphorically in the same context:

(2)   Freud lived here.

This is a problem because there is no 'categorial falsity' to prompt or activate the process which calculates implicatures. Other metaphorical utterances that do not flout the maxim of Quality are those containing negation, as in (3):

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(3) No man is an island.

As it is the flouting of the first maxim of Quality that is supposed to trigger the calculation of implicatures, there is clearly a problem with these examples. More is intended by (3) than the trivially true assertion that no person is a member of the set of islands. The addressee is encouraged to think of particular properties of islands that people do not share.

In those cases such as (1), where it is possible to maintain that a maxim has been flouted, Grice does not provide a fully explicit account of the processes by which an interpretation is achieved. Some kind of calculation is involved which must meet the demands of on-line real time efficiency: implicatures have to be calculated in milliseconds. It has to be shown how the mind, as it processes a metaphorical utterance, arrives at the intended interpretation, following certain principles or rules; it is not sufficient to show how, given our understanding of the metaphorical utterance, the intended interpretation could have been achieved. What Grice offers are only ex post facto rationalisations for certain interpretations. A developed Gricean account first needs to show how we recognise the utterance to be an instance of metaphorical use, rather than, say, an instance of metonymy, litotes, hyperbole or irony, which, it is claimed, also flout the first maxim of Quality. Then it requires an explicit account of the metaphor-specific principles and inferential rules that enable the hearer to proceed from the metaphorical utterance to the intended interpretation.

Searle (1979) tries to fill in some of the gaps in Grice's account by suggesting some eight principles that deal with different metaphor types and that take addressees from sentences that are manifestly 'defective' to paraphrase interpretations that make literal sense (specifically, he attempts to show how metaphors of the form 'S is P' can be taken to mean 'S is R', where R is literally true of S). Searle rejects the standard comparison and interaction semantic

theories of metaphor, arguing that metaphor must be explained within the framework of a pragmatic theory. His pragmatic account centres on the special principles needed for metaphor interpretation: 'for communication to be possible, speaker and hearer must share a common set of principles' (Searle 1979:114). He outlines three interpretive steps: (i) have some strategy to determine whether the hearer needs to interpret the utterance ('S is P') using the special purpose principles appropriate to metaphor interpretation (and clearly here Searle's statement that 'where the utterance is defective if taken literally, look for an utterance meaning that differs from sentence meaning' (Searle 1979:114) does not go far enough - the hearer does not want to invoke irony or metonymy interpreting principles); (ii) use the set of special purpose principles to compute possible values of R; (iii) use the set of principles to restrict the range of Rs, using strategies like: 'go back to the S term and see which of the many candidates for the values of R are likely or even possible properties of S' (Searle 1979:115).

I will give four of Searle's principles here with his examples, some of which I shall refer to in later discussion. (i) Things which are P are by definition R (for example, 'Sam is a giant', intending 'Sam is very big', giants being by definition very big). (ii) Things which are P are contingently R (for example, 'Sam is a pig' intending 'Sam is messy and/or greedy', it being a contingent - though not defining - property of pigs that they are messy and greedy). (iii) Things which are P are often said or believed to be R, even though both speaker and hearer may know that R is false of P (for example, 'Richard is a gorilla', intending 'Richard is fierce, nasty and prone to violence', it being a cultural stereotype that gorillas have these properties, although they are not necessarily assumed to be *actual* properties of gorillas). (iv) Things which are P are not R, nor are they like R things, nor are they believed to be R, nonetheless it is a fact about our sensibility, whether culturally or naturally determined, that we just do perceive a

connection, so that utterance of P is associated in our minds with R properties (for example, 'Sally is a block of ice', intending 'Sally is unemotional, lacking in feeling or the ability to express feeling', it just being the case that we associate coldness with lack of feeling).

As Searle himself acknowledges, this is by no means a complete and fully satisfactory account of metaphor interpretation. The principles, as given, are incomplete. They deal only with nominal metaphorical utterances of the form 'S is P'. They also only deal with dead or conventional metaphors which have relatively fixed, context-independent interpretations. But there is the further problem of how the hearer selects on-line in real time between the different principles. The principles again turn out to be ways of explaining ex post facto how certain interpretations are arrived at; they do not offer rules that are descriptive of, or that can be used in the actual process of, interpretation. The account Searle offers would seem to be psychologically implausible: it lacks explicitness and it depends on too much extra machinery to be workable on-line. Searle criticises and rejects Miller's version of the comparison theory of metaphor (as in Miller 1979) on the grounds that its reconstruction of the comprehension of metaphorical utterances 'assigns an impossible computing task to the speaker and hearer' (Searle 1979:111). Searle's own account, sensitive to its own shortcomings in other respects, might stand accused of the same fault.

Levinson argues that Grice's account 'offers little insight into the nature of metaphor' (Levinson 1983:157) and that Searle's development of this approach still 'leaves obscure the motivation for, and the expressive power of, metaphors' (Levinson 1983:158). If metaphors require so much extra interpretive machinery it is worth asking why they are such a common feature of language use. Why do speakers not save their hearers some effort and use acceptable literal paraphrases? The problem is, as Searle recognised, that even

in the case of conventional metaphors such as (4a) there probably is no fully satisfactory literal paraphrase. Intuitively (4b) does not express the same as (4a). Metaphorical utterances are not simply alternative ways of expressing what could equally well be expressed literally. They are not merely 'decorative' in some superficial sense. They differ in terms of *what* they communicate, as well as *how* they communicate. So what does (4a) express that (4b) does not? What is its motivation? How can one account for its greater expressive power?

(4a) He was burning with anger.
(4b) He was extremely angry.

Levinson concludes that a pragmatic theory of metaphor will probably always remain incomplete. He suggests that some general psychological theory of how we think analogically is required to supplement the pragmatic account offered by Gricean pragmatics. Before dismissing the claims of pragmatic theory to offer a full account of metaphor interpretation, however, one should consider alternative theories to those offered by Grice and Searle. Relevance theory, I shall argue, offers a richer account of metaphor that is able to respond to many of the criticisms Levinson and others have levelled against Grice's account. While holding that metaphorical utterances form a natural part of language use that do not deviate from any norm, relevance theory does not hold to the view, familiar in Literary Theory circles, that as language is irretrievably metaphorical it can only be discussed in a loose, metaphorical way.

Before I turn to the relevance theory account of metaphor, however, I would like to refer to one further criticism of both Grice and Searle that Levinson does not mention, but which arises out of recent psycholinguistic research into metaphor. Some psycholinguists have criticised what they refer to as 'the Standard Pragmatic Model of Comprehension' (Gerrig 1989) or the 'literal meaning hypothesis' (Gibbs 1984; 1989). This model

or hypothesis, they argue, predicts that non-literal utterances take longer to process than literal utterances. This prediction is not borne out by research, which suggests that utterances used metaphorically do not necessarily take longer to process than the same utterances used literally.

Gerrig (1989) used sentences such as (5a) which could be read literally or metaphorically, depending on the context supplied by the preceding text. In (5b), for example, it can be read as a literal utterance; in (5c) it can be read as a metaphorical utterance.

(5a) The winter wind gently tossed the lacy blanket.

(5b) Joan didn't want to put her silk blanket in her automatic dryer. Although it was January, she risked putting it on the clothesline. The winter wind gently tossed the lacy blanket.

(5c) Joan looked out into her yard with great excitement. Over night, a layer of snow had covered the ground. The winter wind gently tossed the lacy blanket.

Gerrig found that subjects took no longer to read and understand the final sentence in (5c) (which is used metaphorically) than they took to read and understand the same sentence (used literally) in (5b). These results falsify the prediction made by the standard Gricean pragmatic model of comprehension. He concluded that we do not pass through a literal meaning stage when we interpret metaphors. Gerrig included Sperber and Wilson (1986a) in his list of advocates of the Standard Pragmatic Model of Comprehension, but in fact the relevance theory account of metaphor interpretation is quite consistent with the kind of psycholinguistic research results that he and others have produced.

According to relevance theory there is no need for an independent truth maxim, or maxim of Quality. There is no automatic assumption, in other words, that when a communicator produces an utterance which has a propositional

form *P*, she is committed to the truth of *P*. It follows that there is no need for an account which requires the interpretation of metaphorical utterances to pass through a literal meaning stage, only for such an interpretation to be rejected. It is generally the case that an addressee is only entitled to assume that the proposition expressed *resembles* the thought of the speaker to some degree. The propositional form of an utterance resembles the propositional form of the communicator's thought to the extent that it shares logical and contextual implications with it in a certain context. An utterance is used literally when all such implications are shared, when the propositional forms of utterance and thought are identical.

The account of metaphorical utterance interpretation developed in Sperber and Wilson (1986a; 1986b) argues that metaphors communicate a range of implicatures. When a proposition interacts inferentially with contextual assumptions to yield a further range of assumptions as implications, a number of these will be communicated as implicatures. It may or may not be the case, however, that the proposition expressed by the utterance is itself communicated. It may simply be the case that uttering that particular utterance is the most economical way of communicating a particular set of further assumptions/implicatures. (I do not really think that you are the cream in my coffee; I do believe you are special in a variety of ways and that that specialness in that variety of ways can best be communicated via the propositional form expressed by the utterance in (1).) In this view there is no need for a maxim of Quality and no need for any special metaphor-specific machinery of the kind suggested by Searle.

Metaphorical utterances communicate sets of assumptions which describe states of affairs in the world. If it is possible to talk about 'metaphorical thoughts', then such thoughts would themselves, presumably, be interpretations of further non-metaphorical thoughts. Generally speaking a metaphorical

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utterance communicates sets of non-metaphorical assumptions. 'Sam is a pig' is a metaphorical utterance, but 'Sam is messy', 'Sam is greedy' and other implicatures that the metaphorical utterance may be said to communicate are not themselves metaphorical. As already mentioned, it is a widely held assumption among Literary Theorists, taken from ideas developed within poststructuralism, that the widespread use of metaphor destabilises language in its relations with a purported real world. Poststructuralist theories of language assume that the idea that language use is full of metaphorical utterances demonstrates that language must inevitably fail to refer, that it cannot possibly relate directly to states of affairs in the world. But a cognitive pragmatic account, such as that provided by relevance theory, would hold the view that it is sentences in the language of thought, rather than natural language sentences, that refer directly to states of affairs in the world. As explained in Chapter 3, the semantic representations of natural language sentences underdetermine the thoughts communicated by those sentences in context. Only pragmatically enriched propositional forms can have truth conditions. There is no necessary identity between the propositional forms of sentences and thoughts. Once this point is recognised a fundamental argument in the poststructuralist philosophy of language is undermined.

Sperber and Wilson (1986a:231-235; 1986b) discuss metaphors in relation to more general examples of 'loose talk'. There are many ways in which the proposition expressed by an utterance may be used 'loosely', i.e. to resemble the thought of the communicator, by sharing a range of logical and contextual implications with it. Understatement and overstatement are common loose uses of language, for example. Speakers also commonly use a variety of approximations with regard to colours, sizes, shapes, positions and the time of day. Again, as with certain metaphorical utterances, there is not necessarily any apparent categorical falsity. An example of approximation as loose talk might be B's response in example (6):

(6) A: How many students are there in the first year?
    B: One hundred.

One hundred is a nice round figure that is easy to process. A range of implications to do with the time it is likely to take to mark the papers, the time it is necessary to start marking them, the amount of effort likely to be involved, whether it would still be possible to spend the weekend watching cricket, etc., may still be derived from B's reply, even though what B said was strictly false. A would not automatically assume that B believed that there were exactly one hundred students in the first year or take him to task on discovering that there were in fact only ninety-eight. Clearly there are cases where 'loose talk' would be inappropriate. It is easy to imagine a context in which the same question could be asked of B, say, for some administrative purpose, when it would be appropriate for B to give the exact number. If he gave the answer 'one hundred' in such a context, then the questioner would be entitled to access (7):

(7) B believes that there are one hundred students in the first year.

Consider now the example in (8).

(8) This steak is raw.

When used by a customer in a restaurant, this utterance is unlikely to be intended literally. What the communicator here is likely to be wanting to communicate is something like the following set of assumptions: that the steak is difficult to chew, that she would find the steak difficult to digest, that it is not cooked to the required degree, etc. The utterance in (8) can be seen as an economical means of encouraging the addressee, in this case the waiter, to access these assumptions. The waiter would not be expected to go on and access the assumption that the steak had not been cooked at

all and any other assumption that might follow from that.

The general point is that the search for an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance leads the addressee to that subset of the contextual and logical implications of the propositional form of the utterance that might have been intended by the addresser. In example (6) it was easier for A to process 'one hundred' and calculate from that figure how long it would take him to mark his share of the papers than if B had said 'ninety-eight'. The contextual effects in this context would remain the same. Similarly, in example (8), the waiter is able to distinguish the subset of assumptions that are intended from the broader set of assumptions that are logically implied by the propositional form of the utterance in context.

Consider now the interpretation of (9):

(9) This place is a dump.

An addressee has to assign reference to 'this place' (which could be 'where I am standing', 'this room', 'this building', 'this place of work', 'this town', for example), which may not be possible until information stored at the conceptual address of 'dump' is activated. Assuming the hearer understands the speaker to be talking about her office, and activates assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entry for 'dump' such as 'a dump is untidy', 'a dump smells', 'a dump is strewn with rubbish', and so on, then the hearer will derive implicatures such as 'the speaker's office is untidy', 'the speaker's office smells', 'the speaker's office is strewn with rubbish'. His attention is also likely to be drawn to salient properties of the room that make it dump-like, for example, books and papers scattered across chairs and floor, half-empty plastic coffee cups perched on the word processor and along the window-sill.

Example (10) was used by Searle (1979) to illustrate his third principle:

(10) Richard is a gorilla.

According to Searle we derive the following implicatures: 'Richard is fierce', 'Richard is nasty', 'Richard is prone to violence'. Attention is also drawn, perhaps, to aspects of Richard's appearance or the way he moves. The hearer derives these, or a similar set of implicatures, having accessed contextual assumptions from the encyclopaedic entry attached to the conceptual address for 'gorilla'.

There are a number of important points to make here. First, a point noted with regard to implicatures in general in the last chapter: there is usually a certain degree of indeterminacy regarding which particular range of implicatures is intended, even in the case of conventional metaphors. Example (10), for example, may or may not communicate assumptions to do with Richard's appearance. Particular aspects of untidiness in (9) and nastiness in (10) will be brought to the hearer's attention, aspects that depend on what is directly perceptible to the hearer.

Second, we do not access *all* the assumptions available from the encyclopaedic entry. Consider example (11):

(11) Juliet is the sun.

Whatever the assumptions communicated as implicatures, we never consider the possibilities, as Searle points out, that Juliet is gaseous or that she is 90 million miles from the earth. (It is perhaps necessary to stress that assumptions from the encyclopaedic entry for 'sun', such as 'the sun is gaseous' may be activated to some degree, though not to such a degree that we become aware of them. In the same way Gibbs has shown that idioms activate information stored under individual constituent concepts, e.g. information to do with spilling and beans is activated when an utterance containing the idiom 'spilling the beans' is interpreted (see, for example, Gibbs and Nayak (1989).) The fact that we focus upon particular

properties of 'sun' may be because we are constrained to look for properties of human beings and this narrows down and makes salient a narrow range of possibilities in the case of both (10) and (11).

From the relevance theory point of view one would expect it to be the case that there is no fixed hierarchy within the assumptions stored in the encyclopaedic entry attached to a concept. Certain assumptions will become more highly salient in some contexts; other assumptions will become more highly salient in other contexts. These assumptions become salient during the interpretation process. As Vicente points out: 'The salience of a bit of information that the hearer brings to bear on the interpretation of a certain utterance is a result of the comprehension process, rather than a precondition for it.' (Vicente 1993a). In examples (10) and (11) a certain range of assumptions from the encyclopaedic entries for the concepts GORILLA, or SUN, become more salient than the others, and, as a consequence, are considered first. If this is the case, once a sufficient or satisfactory range of implicatures is accessed, enough to repay the effort expended, then the hearer need go no further. This would be much more efficient (quicker and less wasteful) than considering all the possible assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entry of a concept and then rejecting the majority of them. One would not need to consider, for example, the assumptions that 'Richard is hairy' and 'Richard comes from Africa'. If the more salient, more highly activated, assumptions produce a reasonable range of implicatures, however, that range would suffice as the interpretation of the metaphorical utterance.

This is the same process that occurs for the interpretation of literal utterances. A person queueing to buy a ticket for an exhibition at the Royal Academy asks the price of a ticket and adds 'I'm a student'. Under 'ticket price for the exhibition' and 'student' we have the same contextual assumption: 'Students pay half price for an entrance ticket'. This will become a highly

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accessible contextual assumption for the person selling tickets. Other assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entry attached to the address for the concept STUDENT - for example, 'Students attend lectures', 'Students can withdraw books for three weeks', 'Students are dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge' - will not become salient in the same way. The person queueing is not primarily interested in communicating that she is a student, i.e. the proposition expressed by her utterance (though this is part of what she does communicate). What she is especially interested in communicating is the assumption that she is entitled to a reduced price ticket to the exhibition. Again, the intended contextual assumptions become salient and yield contextual effects; the other potential contextual assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entry for STUDENT are simply not accessed.

An alternative account of metaphorical utterance interpretation to that outlined so far may argue that the metaphor provides a new ad hoc concept for the proposition expressed by the utterance. Encyclopaedic entries would be explored in the same way, leading to an increase in the salience of a number of assumptions, these providing an encyclopaedic entry for the new concept. It is difficult to see how this view, where the proposition expressed by the utterance becomes an explicature, can be empirically distinguished from the view that argues that metaphorical utterances communicate a wide range of implicatures. The assumptions communicated as implicatures in the one account are also activated and used to form the new concept in the second account.

There may, however, be a number of theory-internal reasons for supporting the explicature account. One could argue, for example, for a symmetry between cases of 'loose use' metaphorical utterance interpretation, on the one hand, and cases of pragmatic enrichment, on the other. Both concept broadening and concept narrowing could be said to contribute a new ad hoc concept to the proposition expressed by the

utterance, which becomes an explicature. Standard cases of implicature, such as the following example, discussed in Chapter 3 and repeated here as (12), communicate the proposition expressed by the utterance (the proposition expressed by B's response in (12)), as well as the implicature (either of the possibilities here in (13) depending on context). Metaphorical utterances, on the other hand, according to the implicature account, do not communicate the proposition expressed by the utterance.

(12) A: Would you like some coffee?
     B: Coffee would keep me awake.

(13) (a) B wants some coffee.
     (b) B does not want some coffee.

A better grasp of the problem of forming new ad hoc concepts can only follow a better understanding of the identity conditions on concepts and the relations between encyclopaedic entries and the concepts that feed into on-line utterance interpretation.

Before continuing the discussion of metaphor I would like to look a little more closely at the process of ad hoc concept construction. As was argued in the previous chapter, apart from the disambiguation of ambiguous lexical items and ambiguous structure, the assignment of reference, and the completion of propositional forms in the case of unarticulated constituents, the proposition expressed by an utterance requires that its constituent concepts be pragmatically enriched. It has already been suggested that utterances containing a possessive such as 'Her book is interesting', or the perfect, such as 'I've already eaten' or the word 'some' as in 'It takes some time to get to Nottingham', generally require these particular concepts to be enriched. The semantics of the possessive or the perfect marks a broad range of possibilities which it is the business of pragmatic

inferencing to narrow down to something more specific. It is probably the case, however, that all concepts with encyclopaedic entries are flexible and context-sensitive, and that many of them are narrowed in the process of utterance interpretation.

This is a position adopted, for example, by Barsalou. He argues:
> 'Rather than being retrieved as static units from memory to represent categories, concepts originate in a highly flexible process that retrieves generic and episodic information from long-term memory to construct temporary concepts in working memory.' (Barsalou 1987:101).

He goes on to claim that the idea that concepts are invariant structures, though widespread, is an analytic fiction. As a psychologist concerned with real cognitive states, mental representations and processes, Barsalou does, however, argue that lexicalised concepts possess a context-independent stability. Also, the actual instantiations that result from on-line interpretation are obviously not arbitrary. Different information is incorporated into a concept on different occasions. Concepts that fit into the highest level representation constructed on-line are themselves constructed during that comprehension process. Barsalou does not have much to say about how the particular information incorporated into individual concepts is selected, but relevance theory would have a clear contribution to make here. The information used would include the most readily accessible assumptions in the context that yield contextual effects.

The phenomenon of pragmatic enrichment, the narrowing of a general to a more specific meaning, has been studied and discussed in psychology, where it is more commonly referred to as 'instantiation'. One example discussed in the psychological literature (Halff, Ortony and Anderson 1976) is given here as (14):

(14) A fish attacked a swimmer.

The word 'shark' has been found to be a better recall cue than 'fish', even though the latter actually occurs in the utterance and the former does not. Vicente (1993a) discusses this example at some length. She argues that the VP provides a context which encourages an instantiation of the 'fish' category to 'something like 'a shark-like creature' or 'a fish of the kind that attacks people'.' The narrowed-down concept, she argues, 'would be sufficient to prompt recall of a more specific term.' (Vicente 1993a:3). Here we have a case of a general concept being enriched or instantiated to something more specific, with some psychological evidence that that is in fact the case. The only point of debate here is whether the instantiated concept is intended by the speaker and hence communicated. This example, which depends on a particular context, would differ from the kind of enrichment that takes place in (15):

(15) I don't drink.

Here 'drink' is enriched to 'drink alcohol'. The enriched concept is clearly intended by the speaker and communicated to the hearer. If Grice had been an advocate of the pragmatic enrichment of concepts as a contribution to 'what is said', he would have termed this 'generalised enrichment', in contrast to the 'particularised enrichment' that occurs in the case of (14).

Parallel to pragmatic enrichment are those cases where concepts are extended or loosened. Example (16) provides an example of loosening in a context where a doctor is about to stick a needle in a patient's arm.

(16) This will be quite painless.

While the amount of pain may be minimal, presumably it is not strictly true that there is a complete absence of pain. What is

communicated is that, given what the patient might expect or fear, the amount of pain will be very slight.

Metaphors, as we have already seen, have been defined in terms of such loosenings, where the thought communicated resembles, or shares logical and contextual implications with, the proposition expressed by the utterance. According to this definition, metaphorical utterances communicate a range of implicatures. The alternative account, as already mentioned, sees metaphors as contributing to the proposition expressed. In the case of (17) what is communicated is a concept close to, but not identical with, 'giant'. In (18) what is communicated is a concept close to, but not identical with, 'pig'.

(17) Sam is a giant.

(18) Sam is a pig.

The concepts that we use to think with, that are combined to form sentences in our 'language of thought', are much more flexible than natural language lexicalised concepts or categories, as Barsalou (1987), for example, argues. If we wish to communicate a thought which contains a non-lexicalised concept then we have to use a lexicalised concept which shares some of its properties with the concept we 'have in mind' and also take advantage of other features of context to encourage the communication of the thought we intend.

Example (18) may be used literally, when Sam is the name of a pig. If it is clear from the context that Sam is a human being then that piece of contextual information will indicate that a concept is intended that can be constructed from information that the lexicalised concept 'pig' makes available, but which is not identical to that concept. Indeed, in the case of conventional metaphors such as (18) it may be that one can speak of two lexicalised concepts, both lexicalised by 'pig'. It always remains possible, however, to exploit the connection with the 'original' concept and use the metaphor more

creatively to make salient other properties of pigs. This can be illustrated more clearly perhaps in the case of 'Richard is a gorilla', where aspects of Richard's appearance or the way he moves can also be made highly salient.

One further argument in favour of the view that metaphors contribute concepts to the proposition expressed might be that the range of implicatures communicated is, in the case of conventional metaphors, generally quite stable across contexts. Unlike standard cases of what Grice terms 'particularised conversational implicatures', the implicatures communicated by examples such as (18) remain much the same. In the case of more creative metaphors, as we shall see in the next section, the range of implicatures, though not standard in the same way, are very similar in meaning. It may also be the case that the intuition that metaphors are used to communicate thoughts more precisely (as expressed in Middleton Murry's observation quoted at the beginning of this chapter) is captured better by the view that new ad hoc concepts are formed. It is possible to have a precise thought involving non-lexicalised concepts that it is otherwise difficult to express: in fact, one would expect it to be difficult to express precisely because there are no equivalent lexicalised concepts. The implicature account tends to encourage the view that the complex thought communicated by a metaphorical utterance is vague and indeterminate. But one would also need to consider the question of what it would mean to have a thought consisting of a set of weakly activated assumptions.

The relevance theory view of metaphorical utterance interpretation, whether the implicature account or the account that metaphors contribute non-lexicalised concepts to the proposition expressed by an utterance, requires no special principles, processes or metaphor interpretation mechanism. So it is not subject to the criticisms that Gibbs and Gerrig level at the 'literal meaning hypothesis' or the 'Standard Pragmatic Model' account of metaphor interpretation. It is

more explicit about the process of interpretation and it answers Levinson's points about the motivation and expressive power of metaphor: metaphors are convenient and economical ways of communicating complex thoughts. This point will receive fuller treatment in the following section which introduces a discussion of more creative uses of metaphor.

4.2. Creative Metaphor.

One further advantage that relevance theory has over other pragmatic accounts of metaphor is that it is able to provide a characterisation of creative or poetic metaphor. It can also account for relative creativity and the relative success of metaphors intended to be creative. In this sense the relevance theory account of metaphor is able to show greater sensitivity to the range of stylistic effects that metaphors can achieve, in contrast to those semantic, pragmatic and even literary theory approaches to metaphor that treat metaphors as though they were cut to a standard pattern and expressed a standard kind of stylistic effect.

Metaphors that are relatively conventional and metaphors that are relatively creative vary in terms of the range and strength of the assumptions that they make more salient. According to the view that treats these assumptions as implicatures, the richer and more creative the metaphor, the wider the range of weak implicatures. By contrast, the narrower and stronger the range of implicatures the more conventional the metaphor. The alternative account sees these assumptions as contributing to the creation of a new ad hoc concept. The new concept is more creative the less it is derived directly from any one established lexicalised concept. In (18) the new concept is derived from a subset of the properties of pigs. In (9) the new concept is derived from a subset of the properties of dumps. In the case of creative metaphors, as will be demonstrated in this section, the new concept is not derived from a subset of the properties of an existing concept, but is constructed on the

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basis of an interaction between assumptions derived from two or more encyclopaedic entries.

In the case of creative metaphors two concepts are brought together, the connection between which is neither well-established nor easy to achieve. The addressee (in this case, more likely, a reader) has to work harder to find assumptions that the concepts might share. A greater amount of processing effort is required: but the rewards in terms of contextual effects are correspondingly higher. Easy access, as in the case of dead or conventional metaphors, leads to relatively strong communication: a small range of assumptions are standardly made highly salient. Less easy access leads to a more diffuse range of assumptions being made weakly salient. In literary communication it may happen that the effort required is beyond the capability of the reader and he becomes confused or frustrated. (One is reminded of Ezra Pound's comment on James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake: 'Nothing so far as I can make out, nothing short of divine vision or a new cure for the clap can possibly be worth all the circumambient peripherisation.')

The example of poetic metaphor used by Sperber and Wilson (1986a:237) is the following remark made by Flaubert of the poet Leconte de Lisle:

(19) Son encre est pale. (His ink is pale.)

Here there are no strong assumptions to the truth of which Flaubert can be said to have committed himself. The considerable processing effort involved in the search for relevant contextual assumptions is offset by the subsequent large range of implicatures weakly communicated. The contextual assumptions are obtained in the usual way through exploring the encyclopaedic entries attached to the concepts INK and PALE. This example includes an instance of metonymy, as well as metaphor, with 'ink' standing for 'writing', in the sense of 'work' rather than 'handwriting'. The metonymy itself

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might be considered poetic, but if one were to make the simple substitution, for the purpose of concentrating on the metaphor, one would start with the assumption in (20):

(20) Leconte de Lisle's writing is 'pale'.

After searching through the encyclopaedic entry attached to the concept PALE one might derive implicatures such as:

(21) Leconte de Lisle's writing is weak.

By searching out and constructing contextual assumptions in this manner a wide range of implicatures can be derived. Other possible implicatures are:

(22) (a) Leconte de Lisle's writing lacks contrast.
    (b) Leconte de Lisle's writing may fade.
    (c) Leconte de Lisle's writing is sickly.
    (d) Leconte de Lisle's writing will not last.
    (e) Leconte de Lisle does not put his whole heart into his work.

There are an indefinite number of further implicatures one could add to (21) and the list in (22), all of which will be weak in the sense described, and there is no cut-off point that allows us to say that so many implicatures are communicated and no more. It is the range and the indeterminacy of the implicatures which gives the metaphor its poetic force. These factors explain why it is that metaphors, especially poetic metaphors, can never be adequately translated or paraphrased. They also explain why their interpretation may differ across individuals and be subject to debate amongst literary critics.

I would now like to consider a poetic metaphor from a poem. The example I wish to discuss is the metaphor used by Seamus Heaney at the end of his poem Digging. The concluding lines of the poem are as follows:

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head
But I've no spade to follow men like them.
Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests. I'll dig with it.

If the metaphor had been presented on its own, as in (23), its intended meaning would not be so clear.

(23) The poet digs with his pen.
The pen is a spade.

Such a metaphor, as it stands, is too vague in its intended effects. It offers insufficient encouragement to the reader to access particular contextual assumptions. The reader might establish links between 'pen' and 'spade' or 'writing' and 'digging', but insofar as he is left to do practically all the work, the metaphor is excessively vague with regard to what it is supposed to communicate. The reader has no evidence that the writer had anything particular in mind. He might even consider it to be pretentious, in the sense that it pretends to the status of a creative poetic metaphor, but fails to communicate a range of implicatures sufficient to compensate the effort the reader expends in seeking an interpretation. It might be the case here, as it no doubt often is, that the writer herself is vague about what she wants to say.

The working out of implications, it should be noted, is considerably more effortful and time-consuming than is the case for implicatures. The expressive power and aesthetic force of metaphors, it will be argued later, depend on the spontaneous, rapid way in which implicatures are processed.

In Heaney's poem the interpretation of this central metaphor has been prepared by the rest of the poem. Contextual assumptions made accessible prior to the metaphorical utterance itself help direct the search for relevant contextual

assumptions from the encyclopaedic entries of the concepts brought together in the metaphorical phrase or utterance. In this way, a good poem, by activating a wide network of contextual assumptions prior to the interpretation of the metaphorical utterance itself, may give greater direction to the interpretation of metaphors, enabling them to be read in a richer, more creative way than would otherwise be possible. Successful literary works are successful not simply by virtue of containing original metaphors (and original uses of other tropes and figures), but by allowing the contextual search encouraged by such metaphors to resonate more widely in a broader context.

Some of the contexts set up earlier in this poem include the information that digging is how the poet's forefathers earned their living, that it is an activity and occupation with a long tradition in the community, that it is hard and honest and necessary work, that it requires intense concentration, that it inspires awe, etc. Many more such contextual assumptions might be accessed and the properties of 'digging' in these assumptions transferred, by inference, to the activity of writing poetry. A danger of starting to make a list such as the one above, apart from it being incomplete, is that it mistakenly suggests that all these assumptions are strongly communicated and equally strongly communicated. Meanings flicker as assumptions are made marginally more manifest.

Heaney writes at some length on his intentions in an essay in his book Preoccupations, suggesting some of the further contexts he had in mind. (Heaney 1980:41-43.) He talks about the metaphor recalling the oft-quoted proverb 'the pen is lighter than the spade' and suggests that 'the poem does no more than allow that bud of wisdom to exfoliate'. The contrast between spade work and pen work introduces a note of guilt or unease into this metaphor as well as a note of assertion and what might almost be termed defiance. He emphasises the idea of digging as a sexual metaphor, 'an emblem of initiation, like putting your hand into the bush or robbing the nest, one of the

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various analogies for uncovering and touching the hidden thing....' It is a metaphor, he writes, that suggests a view of poetry: 'poetry as a dig, a dig for finds that end up being plants.' It was certainly a rich metaphor as Heaney intended it. The reader is encouraged to derive a very large number of implicatures from exploring the encyclopaedic entries for the concepts DIG and POETRY or WRITING. If these implicatures are accessible in an on-line reading, then the metaphor is both rich and successful.

Consider now an earlier metaphor in this poem. Heaney wrote in Preoccupations: 'there are a couple of lines that have more of the theatricality of the gunslinger than the self-absorption of the digger.' He is referring here to the opening two lines of the poem:

> Between my finger and my thumb
> The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

The somewhat sinister contexts prepared by this image - 'pen as gun' - suggesting that the pen is a powerful and dangerous instrument, that the poet is a gunslinger, are not exploited in the rest of the poem: in fact they might even be said to be contradicted by the rest of the poem.

'The surprise or beauty of a successful creative metaphor', Sperber and Wilson (1986a:237) write, 'lies in this condensation, in the fact that a single expression........will determine a very wide range of acceptable weak implicatures'. This, according to Heaney himself, is what happens for the first of the metaphors discussed here, but not what happens for the second. The idea that creativity can be described in terms of the communication of a wide array of implicatures suggests a theory of value. What happens is that the organisation of the language in the poem together with the metaphor itself leads to many more assumptions being simultaneously activated, and brought together at one conceptual address, 'poetry' for example, or 'Juliet'. It becomes

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a way of exploring a particular concept more extensively. A creative metaphor combines insight with depth. The reader must be able to construct the links between concepts where links are not well-established. If the context is too readily accessible, on the one hand, or if the search through context leads nowhere, on the other hand, then the metaphor fails as a creative metaphor.

One thought that is bound to occur is that the greater effort demanded by poetic metaphors will surely mean that they will take longer to process. In the light of this question it is worth re-examining the psycholinguistic evidence referred to earlier that suggests that metaphorical utterances take no longer to process than literal utterances. How are we to explain the fact that many rich creative metaphors occur, for example, in plays that we have to interpret on-line in the theatre? Although Gerrig (1989), among others, argues that metaphorical interpretation requires no special procedures or principles to guide it, he is clearly worried by these kinds of questions and raises one or two interesting points regarding creative and literary metaphors. He points out that in the case of examples such as (5) (the 'lacy blanket' example), it is possible to record satisfactorily the time taken to understand the metaphorical utterances. But what about cases such as 'Juliet is the sun'? Like most examples of literary metaphor, if you spend more time and effort on it there is the chance of achieving greater appreciation and understanding. The point of practical criticism is to do just this. A reader cannot reasonably be said to reach a point at which he understands such a metaphor. The reader recognises that he has 'understood' the metaphor to a satisfactory degree (or not) before passing on, but that it would be possible to give more attention to it and achieve a fuller understanding.

Gerrig suggests that, while there may not be two different processes for literal and non-literal utterance interpretation, there may be two different processes for conventional or standard metaphor understanding and literary or creative

metaphor understanding:

> 'The first type of understanding can be called
> *time-limited comprehension* and is governed by
> the total time constraint; the second type can be
> called *leisurely comprehension* and may well
> involve types of processing that are largely
> 'specified for metaphor". (Gerrig 1989:238.)

Within a relevance theory framework, however, such a
distinction is not necessary. Leisurely study, analysis and re-
reading - not just in relation to metaphor - may help the
reader to deliberately and consciously build an extended
network of contextual assumptions; when a further on-line
reading or theatre attendance then takes place the appropriate
contextual search is facilitated and the interpretive
experience consequently enriched. Leisurely comprehension
may take a great deal of time, deliberately exploring context,
looking for connections between encyclopaedic entries or
adding to encyclopaedic entries. The later on-line reading,
however, follows the usual interpretation process - the search
for an interpretation consistent with the principle of
relevance. It is at this stage that poetic effects are
communicated. This is more or less the point that Nabokov
made about readers in the introduction to his <u>Lectures on
Literature</u>:

> 'Curiously enough, one cannot read a book: one can
> only reread it. A good reader, a major reader, an
> active and creative reader is a rereader. And I
> shall tell you why. When we read a book for the
> first time the very process of laboriously moving
> our eyes from left to right, line after line, page
> after page, this complicated physical work upon
> the book, the very process of learning in terms of
> space and time what the book is about, this stands
> between us and artistic appreciation. In reading a
> book we must have time to acquaint ourselves
> with it.....' (Nabokov 1983:3).

Nabokov's argument (translated into relevance theory terms) is
that the initial reading acquaints us with the contexts we need
to explore, making the actual exploration easier next time

round. The pleasure derives from the continuous on-line reading process that is guided by the search for interpretations consistent with the principle of relevance. In short, literary aesthetic experience is an on-line experience.

I have characterised poetic metaphor here in terms of complex thoughts communicated as a wide range of weak implicatures. I would now like to consider the possibility that, as in the case of more standard metaphors, creative or poetic metaphors communicate new ad hoc concepts that make a contribution to the proposition expressed.

In (20) this would mean that Leconte de Lisle's writing (perhaps instantiated to 'poetry') has a particular property X, where X refers to some non-lexicalised concept. The concept that represents X in Flaubert's thought can be arrived at in communication (if the metaphor is successful) via the lexicalised concept PALE, using assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entry for this concept. It might be argued that the implicature account faces a number of problems. The fact that the implicatures suggested in this instance, and in other cases of poetic metaphor, are difficult to articulate and, singly or in a set, are relatively feeble attempts to paraphrase what is intuitively felt or understood to be communicated, may lend support to the idea that it is in fact a new non-lexicalised concept that is communicated, which is, by its very nature, difficult to articulate. Another problem is that in most cases of poetic metaphor the 'implicatures' that are suggested tend to be very close in meaning. This, too, may be because they characterise the encyclopaedic entry of a single concept. It is also hard to avoid including further metaphors among the implicatures (for example, using the concepts 'sickly' and 'fade' in the list of suggested implicatures in (22) above). Although it might be argued that it is possible to entertain metaphorical thoughts, it is not clear that such thoughts can be anything other than interpretations of other non-metaphorical thoughts. Again, it seems more reasonable to

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assume that we are dealing here with thoughts containing non-lexicalised concepts.

Such non-lexicalised concepts would be constructed by the hearer using the information stored at the encyclopaedic entry attached to the concept for the lexical item used as metaphoric focus in conjunction with other contextual information derived from the encyclopaedic entries attached to related concepts. In the case of example (19) the hearer would need to use information stored at the encyclopaedic entry attached to the concept PALE, in conjunction with information stored at the entries for INK, POETRY, and the concept for 'Leconte de Lisle'. In the case of creative metaphors, such as this, the concept constructed would be dependent to a much greater extent on a particular context than in the case of more standard metaphors. This is clearly seen in the case of Heaney's metaphor that 'writing poetry is digging'. The assumptions used to create the concept in such poetic examples would also be less readily accessible.

Barsalou (1987) has suggested that the creation of new concepts is the normal state of affairs in utterance interpretation. What is being suggested here for metaphor is a more creative and active version of the process Barsalou sees as happening in the case of almost every concept. This alternative account of creative metaphor has implications for the theory of the relative value of metaphors, mentioned earlier. In the more creative, and hence valuable, cases, a wider range of assumptions from a variety of encyclopaedic entries contributes to the construction of these ad hoc concepts.

Again, it is difficult to adjudicate between the implicature account and the ad hoc concept account. If one is going to adopt the latter account for conventional metaphors, however, there seems to be no obvious reason why it should not also be adopted in the case of creative poetic metaphors. A consistent account is needed because metaphors do not fall into neat

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'conventional' and 'creative' categories, but vary on a scale from dead through to highly original and poetic, passing through the relatively conventional and relatively creative. Both accounts involve the same use of relatively weakly salient information from long-term memory, either to use in inferential processes to construct implicatures, or to construct a new concept. It is only possible to refer to theory-internal arguments, of the kind mentioned earlier, in support of one alternative over the other.

Having to invent labels for new concepts and then explain the properties belonging to those concepts is a familiar (and hard) task in any academic discipline. (Examples from pragmatics include the concepts RELEVANCE, EXPLICATURE and INTERPRETIVE USE.) In the case of poetic thoughts, the concepts generally relate to personal experience, but are still relatively difficult thoughts to think and to understand. That is why there is the tension that Seamus Heaney refers to between being accurate and being decent: accurate thoughts, properly expressed, are not usually decent thoughts.

There is much more to the characterisation of poetic metaphor and poetic thought than has so far been suggested in this section. Some account is needed of how poetic metaphors (and poetic thoughts) communicate affect, a point that is recognised in Sperber and Wilson (1986a:224) where it is suggested that there is a link between 'the marginal increase in the manifestness of a great many weakly manifest assumptions' and the communication of non-propositional effects. The issue of nonpropositional affective communication will be one of the central topics considered in Chapters 6 and 7.

4.3. Knowledge Representation and Metarepresentation.

In this section I want to look at various ways in which assumptions may be stored in memory. The way they are stored

will affect ease of access and contextual assumption construction and thus have a bearing on the issue of poetic effects as defined here. It will also play an important role in the discussion of sentimentality in Chapter 6.

In example (10), repeated here, it may be the case, as Searle notes, that an ethologist has a different set of beliefs about gorillas from the set of stereotypical beliefs held by most non-ethologists.

(10) Richard is a gorilla.

The ethologist may believe, for example, that gorillas are 'shy, sensitive creatures, given to bouts of sentimentality', yet still understand the utterance in (10) in the same way as everyone else, using, according to Searle's suggestion, the assumptions that gorillas are 'fierce, nasty, prone to violence, and so forth'. (Searle 1979:102.) She may in fact believe that the average gorilla is far less fierce, nasty and prone to violence than the average human being. Even so, uttering 'Richard is a gorilla', rather than 'Richard is a human being' is a better way of communicating that Richard is fierce and nasty. Despite her actual beliefs, in other words, she interprets the utterance in (10) in the same way as everyone else (though it may be the case that, as she interprets the utterance, thoughts about the ways in which gorillas are grossly misunderstood also occur to her.) The question is: how can this be, given that this implies that what she has stored in the encyclopaedic entry attached to the concept GORILLA are apparently contradictory assumptions?

The apparent contradiction is avoided if we assume that, for the ethologist, assumptions of the kind 'Gorillas are sensitive', 'Gorillas are shy', as well as assumptions like 'Gorillas are found in the mountains of Africa', are stored as factual assumptions. Factual assumptions can be seen as directly stored in a subject's encyclopaedic memory (see Sperber 1985:54 for discussion of this point); assumptions such as

'Gorillas are aggressive' and 'Gorillas are prone to violence', on the other hand, are not *directly* stored in encyclopaedic memory, but are *indirectly* stored as metarepresentations. In the latter case the metarepresented assumptions are only stored directly under some higher level descriptive comment, for example, 'it is believed in this culture/society that......p', where the boundaries of *this* culture/society receive appropriate definition. In this way assumptions that appear to contradict each other can be stored in the same encyclopaedic entry. Sperber (1975;1985) uses this idea to explain why the apparent irrationality of cultural beliefs is only apparent. Cultural/symbolic beliefs, unlike factual beliefs, are stored indirectly and are used differently in thinking. A Dorze can consistently hold the cultural belief that 'The leopard is a Christian animal who observes the fasts of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church' and the factual belief that 'Leopards are not to be trusted on any day of the week'. (See Sperber 1975:93.)

An individual may store the assumptions 'Gorillas are aggressive' and 'Gorillas are nasty' directly in memory as factual assumptions. Relevant experience may later reclassify these as non-factual assumptions and metarepresent them by placing them under an appropriate descriptive comment. I would like to suggest here that whereas factual assumptions are stored individually and come together in different ways depending on context, metarepresented chunks of information are accessed en bloc. I do not wish to suggest, however, that there is any kind of hierarchical organisation or structure within the metarepresented set of beliefs. Such metarepresented chunks (equivalent to stereotypical sets of beliefs) appear to be highly salient when it is mutually manifest to interlocutors that they both have access to the metarepresented set of beliefs.

There is still a large measure of disagreement and uncertainty about how assumptions are stored in memory. As I will be making a number of suggestions which assume a particular kind of organisation it is important that I discuss some of the

issues here, albeit briefly.

A theory that has received a lot of attention over recent years, popularised through AI as much as cognitive psychology, is schema theory. Schema theory holds that assumptions are grouped together in encyclopaedic memory as cognitive units in their own right. Schemata as structured chunks of information in the form of co-occuring descriptions relating to object concepts are known as 'frames'; schemata as structured chunks of information about stereotypical event patterns (e.g. going to a restaurant, visiting a doctor) are known as scripts. (There are, in fact, a variety of technical terms used in the AI literature, but this is a widely accepted distinction and I shall use these widely accepted terms to refer to it.)

Schank and Abelson (1977) were interested in developing a model of knowledge representation that could account for coherence between sentences such as those in (24):

(24) Jimmy sat down in the restaurant. The waiter took his order.

They argued that for these sentences to be coherent it is necessary to assume that the word 'restaurant' gives access to a frame containing information about restaurants and a script outlining the stereotypical sequence of events involved in a visit to a restaurant. This schema would include the information that restaurants are staffed by waiters and that after customers sit down at a table they are approached by these waiters who take their order for food and drink. Access to this frame and script mean that there is no problem with the use of the definite article in the second sentence: the waiter is already there in the schema.

The implication of schema theory is that schemata are stored as cognitive units. One of the problems with this view is that we rarely want to use all the information that might be stored

in a schema and it would be inefficient for it all to be accessed every time the schema concept is referred to. In the following example waiters would only get in the way:

(25) A: Come round about eight o'clock.
      B: How do I find your place?
      A: It's in Via delle Bone Novelle between the garage
         and the restaurant.

It is also clear that much information would be duplicated by different scripts. Schank changed his original view on the nature of scripts partly as a result of the findings in Bower, Black & Turner (1979). They found that when subjects read a story about a visit to a doctor and another about a visit to a dentist they became confused in their later recognition of which events belonged to which story. As a result Schank hypothesised that instead of complete scripts, smaller scale general scenes were stored in memory which could be shared out, e.g. a 'pay scene' shared by 'restaurant' and 'shopping', or a 'waiting room scene' shared by visits to the doctor and the dentist. Schank (1982) referred to these general scenes as Memory Organisation Packages (or MOPs). Scripts could be constructed, in other words, from smaller MOP components.

Anderson (1980) asks whether schemata are cognitive units in the same way that concepts and propositions are assumed to be cognitive units. Concepts, propositions and schemata are all packages of information. Few, outside the wilder excesses of Literary Theory, would question that concepts are basic cognitive units. The existence of propositions as assumptions in memory is crucial, as we have seen, for any psychologically plausible pragmatic account of verbal communication. Anderson argues that if schemata are also cognitive units, then they must possess two properties. A structure is a cognitive unit if: (i) when any elements of the units are interassociated then all are; (ii) when some of the elements are retrieved into working memory then all are.

As seen above, it would appear to be grossly inefficient and cumbersome for all the information stored as frames and scripts to be retrieved into working memory every time a unit is accessed, especially considering the vast amount of information stored under familiar and frequently used concepts such as 'restaurant'. On any given occasion one small part of such information may be used; the rest would simply occupy and waste valuable space in working memory.

Another problem is the invocation problem. We may wish to have access to a frame and/or script even in the absence of the word that would normally trigger it. It may be that talk of going to the Odeon or buying popcorn is intended to indicate that the 'cinema' script should be activated and retrieved into working memory, because information to do with going to see a film at the cinema is required to interpret subsequent utterances. But would it be efficient for this script to be accessed every time the word 'popcorn' is mentioned? Anderson asks specifically whether it would always be appropriate or efficient for the utterance in (26) to access the 'movie' script:

(26) John bought popcorn and a drink.

It may be that in this example 'popcorn' does invoke 'cinema', but one does not want the cinema schema invoked every time the word 'popcorn' is used. It is clearly important to control schema activation to avoid overloading short-term memory, but how is this to be done? 'Popcorn' might activate the schema for 'cinema', 'cinema' might activate the 'Kenneth Branagh' schema, 'Kenneth Branagh' might activate the schema for 'Shakespeare', 'Shakespeare' might activate the schema for 'Julius Caesar', 'Julius Caesar' might activate the schema for 'Jerry Fodor' and 'Jerry Fodor' might activate the schema for 'the language of thought'. It is not just that you get from 'popcorn' to 'the language of thought' in six stages, you could get from any concept to 'the language of thought' schema in six stages (or less). It becomes important to consider this

question: how are general activation and the accessing of specific material into working memory controlled?

Another problem is the correspondence problem. How do the schemata stored in memory relate to new information? There is a suggestion, following work done by Bartlett (1932), that our memories distort the way in which we perceive events and states of affairs in the world. This is a well-documented observation about memory (see, for example, Neisser 1982). The implication here is that stored schemata strongly influence the way we interpret and represent new information. It is clear, on the other hand, that schemata do not determine what we perceive and remember. We do not perceive and remember the same patterns all the time. The problem becomes: how do we develop a notion of schema that is not too rigid in the way it affects perception and memory?

What account of knowledge representation is consistent with relevance theory? In relevance theory assumptions having full propositional form exist in memory stored in the encyclopaedic entries attached to concepts. Logical forms, as incomplete propositional forms, also have a role to play in memory and in interpretation, as a stage on the way to the pragmatic completion of full propositional form. For example, these incomplete propositional forms may have elements that need enriching, disambiguating, or having reference assigned to them, or they can be in the form of argument structure that has to be completed in on-line interpretation (the word 'put', for example, makes available the structure THING ____ THING PLACE or thematic core Agent ____ Patient Goal, which requires these three argument slots to be completed.) Alternatively they can be in the form of what Sperber (1985:50ff.) refers to as semi-propositions which contain elements 'the conceptual content of which is not fully specified'. (Sperber 1985:51.) These can be useful in a variety of ways. For example, they can be useful to children acquiring a language and they can be useful to students of any academic discipline as stepping stones on the path to full understanding

of technical concepts. Say, for example, that a student is convinced of some particular relevance theoretic analysis of an aspect of verbal communication and, as a result, comes to look favourably upon the theory as a whole. She grasps the notion of contextual effects and the idea of processing effort (she thinks) and she has learned that 'every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance.' She remains unclear, however, about the exact notion of 'optimal relevance'. It is clearly important, but what *exactly* does it mean? Something to do with balancing processing effort against contextual effects? For the time being (perhaps until the next pragmatics back-up class) she is prepared to accept the incomplete version of this concept.

The encyclopaedic entries attached to concepts contain sets of these incomplete propositional forms alongside sets of assumptions having full propositional form. There is no requirement, however, in the account of verbal communication presented here for there to be any organisation of assumptions into schemata. Assumptions need to be selected or constructed for inferencing as part of the process of utterance interpretation. Rather than a complete encyclopaedic entry (or a stereotypical version of an encyclopaedic entry) being accessed, a smaller range of highly activated assumptions will be accessed and enter into inferential processes.

The notion of activation is important here and should come to play as significant a role in pragmatic processing as it now plays in theories of lexical processing. In the earlier version of Marslen-Wilson's cohort model, for example, (Marslen-Wilson and Welsh (1978); Marslen-Wilson and Tyler (1980)) candidate lexical items either enter or fail to enter the cohort, on the basis of initial bottom-up sensory stimulus information. In the later cohort model (e.g. Marslen-Wilson 1987) the system becomes a lot more flexible and items that share phonetic features with the incoming sensory stimulus are activated to greater or lesser degrees, depending on their 'relative

goodness of fit'. It may be the case that the assumptions selected or constructed during the process of utterance interpretation are individually activated to greater or lesser degrees. Hierarchies of assumptions within an encyclopaedic entry do not need to be fixed, but may be entirely context-dependent.

As Vicente points out (Vicente 1993a; 1993b) much of the research into metaphor that explores concepts such as 'salience imbalance' (e.g. Ortony et al (1985)) is based on static notions of context. One of the central points in relevance theory is, as already discussed, that context is not pre-given, but constructed on-line in accordance with the requirement of locating an interpretation that is consistent with the principle of relevance. Some contextual assumptions become more salient than others, and they are the ones that potentially come to play a significant role in the interpretation process. Which assumptions are accessed from encyclopaedic entries as the most salient will depend on the presence of other concepts and the contextual assumptions in their encyclopaedic entries. This highly flexible and dynamic account of context construction is consistent with the argument in Barsalou (1987) which views 'concepts as temporary constructs in working memory that are tailored to current situations' (Barsalou 1987:119).

It should be emphasised again here that, while all concepts, as they occur in utterances, are highly context-sensitive (in the sense of sensitive to contextual assumptions other than those provided by their own encyclopaedic entries), there is a marked difference in the extent to which they depend on context in this sense. Non-poetic instances of tropes and schemes are less dependent on a wider context for their interpretation than poetic instances. They consistently communicate the same, or very similar, meanings. The only exception to this is when they pick up contextual information from the physical environment, as may be the case in examples (9) and (10). The more poetic or creative the metaphor, the more it depends on contextual

assumptions available from the encyclopaedic entries attached to other concepts to achieve its effects. This is clear when one compares examples of conventional metaphors such as 'Sam is a pig' with more creative metaphors such as 'Son encre est pale'. The central metaphor in Heaney's poem, Digging, is also clearly more creative in the context of the poem, than it is when taken on its own. The richest poetic thoughts, then, are those in which a wide network of contextual assumptions are activated.

The notion of poetic effects depends on a highly flexible account of how context is constructed on-line. This suggests that the assumptions stored at encyclopaedic entries are not organised in any fixed pre-given structure, hierarchical or otherwise. A number of independent reasons as to why it is unlikely that structured schemata have the status of cognitive units have been given in this section. The only way in which encyclopaedic information may be structured, I have suggested, is that certain kinds of information may be metarepresented and brought together under some higher level descriptive comment. A typical case of the latter is culturally endorsed information (as in the 'gorilla' example) which may run counter to one's factual beliefs or assumptions. In such cases, the set of metarepresented beliefs forms a relatively highly salient "package" to be used in utterance interpretation, irrespective of the factual assumptions that one has stored at the same address. Poetic effects, I would suggest, do not usually make use of such readily available metarepresented contextual assumptions. This is a point that will be developed in the next chapter.

4.4 Poetic Imagery and Aesthetic Value.

Several references have already been made to the issue of value. It has been suggested that the relevance theory account of poetic effects may offer a theoretical perspective on the traditional literary critical concern with the evaluation of

literary works and smaller scale poetic effects. Certainly intuitions about relative value are central to our reading of literary works and any serious concern with literary style must address this issue.

In this section I propose to look briefly at three images (using simile and metaphor) that are used, in a book on literary criticism, to illustrate the effective and ineffective use of imagery from the poetic point of view. Coombes (1963) contrasts (i) images that are 'stale' and conventional with (ii) images that are original and ineffective and (iii) images that are original and successful. His first example, (27), contains a simile, but what he has to say about it applies equally well to conventional metaphors.

(27) X was 'as white as a sheet'.

Here, he argues that:
> 'the staleness of the comparison is apt to cause the statement to pass with very little attention paid to it; in most cases it would be more effective to say 'he was very pale'...........................A stale and ready-made image is almost invariably evidence of an absence of original first-hand experience in the user, as far as any significance in the phrase itself is intended; it is expression of a loose and general kind, not precise and individual; it doesn't carry in itself any sign of fresh perceptiveness or imagination'.(Coombes 1963:43)

Before commenting on these remarks I would like to consider Coombes' other examples. His second example, this time of an original but ineffective image, is also a simile:

(28) '..black as the inside of a wolf's throat'

This example, Coombes writes,
> 'is personal in the bad sense; it is rather showy and individualistic, rather 'clever' and affected;

images like this, whose validity can't be verified by us because their content is outside our experience - does a wolf's throat suggest blackness particularly even when we try to imagine it? and why a wolf particularly? - tend to take attention *away* *from* the objects they are supposed to illuminate and make more vivid to our mind and senses' (Coombes 1963:43).

A successful image, Coombes writes, 'helps to make us feel the writer's grasp of the object or situation he is dealing with, gives his grasp of it with precision, vividness, force, economy' (Coombes 1963:43). His first example of such an image is the metaphor in the following lines, spoken by Angus, in Shakespeare's Macbeth (Act 5,scene 2, lines 16-17).

Now does he feel
His secret murders sticking on his hands

This is (part of) what Coombes has to say about this image:
'The feelings of the tyrant are not referred to with abstract words like 'conscience' or 'guilt' or 'fear', but are given a concrete presentation which powerfully suggests the inescapability of fears and of fate and the resultant terror. The line draws much of its force from the paradox contained in the juxtaposition of the murders' concealment - 'secret' - with the plain and persisting visibility and feeling of the blood on the hands - 'sticking': we are brought very close to a Macbeth who is suffering the terrors of a kind of nightmare; the hands cannot be washed clean, they must betray, and the intended secrecy has turned into its opposite, an overt and palpable presence. The image thus presents an idea or thought in terms of physical sensation, a sensation, moreover, belonging to the hands, the delicate and sensitive agents of brutal murder: 'now does he *feel*'. Further, it has association with many other lines of the play: ....' (Coombes 1963:44).

With regard to the first example, it is probably the case that the phrase 'white as a sheet' is stored as one unit, in which

case it is simply a slightly more costly way of saying 'very pale'. It standardly communicates the same meaning, irrespective of wider context. This meaning is obtained easily, but inefficiently in that information about sheets will be fruitlessly activated (see, for example, Gibbs and Nayak (1989)). There is only one property of sheets that is relevant. There is no possibility, therefore, of exploring context further to achieve poetic effects. This combination of ease, inefficiency, and an encouragement to explore without the means (a rich encyclopaedic entry) to do so, contributes to the sense of looseness and staleness that Coombes describes.

The second example here, (28), fails as an original poetic image. The concepts WOLF and THROAT are rich concepts that trigger a contextual search through their respective encyclopaedic entries. The search which is triggered, however, proves fruitless. Links are sought between the concept BLACK and the concepts WOLF and THROAT. No immediate link is found; there are no assumptions that take the reader any further than the expression 'very black', an expression which would have been significantly easier and more efficient to process. Part of the oddity of this image is that we can see nothing special about the blackness of wolves' throats (a property of wolves' throats that we assume but probably do not have any direct personal experience of). This image fails because expectations that are set up are frustrated: processing effort is wasted as many assumptions are activated without yielding contextual effects.

The metaphor in the passage taken from Shakespeare's Macbeth is original, creative and poetic. Part of its richness derives from connections to other contexts set up in the rest of the play, as Coombes notes. It is an example which it is difficult, though not impossible, to analyse in terms of weak implicature: Macbeth cannot forget his murders; Macbeth is obsessed by his murders; Macbeth is desperate about his murders. It is also possible to argue that it encourages a new

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concept to be constructed (if not several new concepts). It may be that a new verbal concept is constructed that expresses the way in which the murders affect Macbeth. This new concept would express the nature of Macbeth's attitude to the murders, giving a more precise idea of his sense of guilt. But here, and in the other examples of poetic effects already discussed, this analysis, inadequate for reasons already given, still seems to be missing a vital ingredient. This ingredient is, I suggest, hinted at in Coombes' comment about the 'concrete presentation' of the feelings expressed. This hint will be developed into an argument about affect and affective communication in Chapters 6 and 7.

CHAPTER FIVE.

SCHEMES AND VERSE EFFECTS.

5.1.   Introduction.

In this chapter I will consider the pragmatics of schemes (in the sense of 'foregrounded repetitions of expression', as in Leech 1969:74). I will concentrate on one particular scheme: epizeuxis. I will then also make some brief comments about verse features. Traditionally, in the study of rhetoric and style the effects of epizeuxis and other figures involving repetition, as well as verse features such as metrical variation, alliteration and rhyme, have been characterised in terms of 'intensity' or 'emphasis', and - particularly in the case of repetition - in terms of their emotional or affective qualities. The aim of this chapter will be to provide an analysis of epizeuxis and verse effects within the context of relevance theory in order to provide a cognitive explanation for these frequently expressed intuitions. The discussion and characterisation of poetic effects will also be continued.

5.2.   Epizeuxis.

Epizeuxis is the term used to describe the immediate repetition of a word or phrase. Stylistic intuitions with regard to the emphasis and emotional tone produced by epizeuxis are usually sharpened when examples of this scheme, as in (1a) (discussed in Sperber and Wilson 1986a: 219-222) and (2a) (taken from the Bible, 2 Samuel, Chapter 18, verse 33 and Chapter 19, verse 4) are contrasted with truth-conditionally equivalent examples lacking the repetition, as in (1b) and (2b):

(1a) My childhood days are gone, gone.

(1b) My childhood days are gone.

(2a) Oh, Absalom, my son, my son.

(2b) Absalom, my son.

The following passage, taken from an essay entitled 'The Philosophy of Poetry', written in 1835 by Alexander Smith in the Edinburgh journal 'Blackwoods', describes the intuitions that such a contrast gives rise to:

> "My son Absalom' is an expression of precisely similar import to 'my brother Dick', or 'my uncle Toby', not a whit more poetical than either of these, in which there is assuredly no poetry. It would be difficult to say that 'oh! Absalom, my son, my son', is not poetry; yet the grammatical and verbal import of the words is exactly the same in both cases. The interjection 'oh' and the repetition of the words 'my son', add nothing whatever to the meaning; but they have the effect of making words which are otherwise but the intimation of a fact, the expression of an emotion of exceeding depth and interest, and thus render them eminently poetical.'

This passage makes a number of important points about epizeuxis. Although having, in Smith's words, the same 'grammatical and verbal import', (2a) is clearly more emphatic, more emotional, and, as a consequence, Smith goes on to say, more poetic than (2b). We can translate what he says here into contemporary idiom and say that they both make the same contribution to truth conditions, that the same analytic implications can be drawn from them. Why then is there a clearly noted stylistic difference? One possible answer is in terms of the notion of implicature. Although (2a) and (2b) give rise to the same analytic implications - 'the verbal import of the words is exactly the same in both cases' - it could be argued that the different processing demands they make on the addressee affects the range of implicatures they communicate.

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In relevance theory terms (2a) and (1a) require greater processing effort, but offer more contextual effects in return. In (1a) a proposition is followed by the single word 'gone'. This verb takes an obligatory argument in subject position. This subject is not provided linguistically, so it has to be inferred. In this case the obvious candidate is the concept encoded by the phrase 'childhood days'. The previous propositional form is repeated, using the same concepts. The effort involved in reconstructing the same propositional form leads to greater activation of assumptions stored in the encyclopaedic entries attached to the constituent concepts, in particular here to the concept CHILDHOOD, and in the case of example (2) the concepts for FATHER/SON.

Given this line of argument, an account of rhetoric and style only makes sense in the context of a pragmatic theory concerned with cognitive processing effects. Stylistic effects cannot be explained as a direct function of linguistic form. The mere linguistic fact of repetition does not always lead to the kinds of effects that we experience in the case of (1a) and (2a). Metaphors offer a range of stylistic effects: they may be more or less creative; they may or may not be the source of poetic effects; they may communicate a relatively wide range of weak implicatures or a relatively narrow range of strong implicatures. The same range of stylistic effects may be offered by instances of verbal repetition such as epizeuxis.

Examples (3) to (6) (from Sperber and Wilson 1986a: 219) illustrate the point that the kinds of contextual effects offered by different instances of repetition are not uniform.

(3) We went for a long, long walk.

(4) There were houses, houses everywhere.

(5) I shall never, never smoke again.

(6) There's a fox, a fox in the garden.

The extra contextual effects are worked out in different ways. In (3) and (4) they take the form of modified explicatures, the effects being reflected in the propositional content. Example (3) communicates that a particular group of people went for a very long walk, and example (4) communicates that there are more houses than the hearer would have thought. In (5) the speaker's degree of commitment to the propositional content of the utterance is strengthened. In the case of (6) and (1a), however, it is not so easy to provide propositional paraphrases that would capture what they communicate. They seem, as Sperber and Wilson suggest, to 'exhibit rather than merely describe the speaker's mental or emotional state: they give rise to non-propositional effects which would be lost under paraphrase' (Sperber and Wilson 1986a:220).

In the case of (6) it is easy to imagine contexts in which one or two implicatures are strongly communicated, for example: 'The chickens are in danger'. We explore the entry for 'fox', at the same time linking it to whatever other contextual assumptions are available. What is so significant about foxes being in gardens? Apart from danger to animals, it may simply be surprise and rarity value: foxes are not often seen in this neighbourhood. One further possibility is that the speaker is communicating a higher level explicature, expressing an attitude of surprise to the belief that there is a fox in the garden. All of these different types of interpretation, in examples (3) to (6), fall out from the search for an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance.

In the case of (1a) the extra contextual effects are to be sought neither in terms of one or two strongly communicated implicatures, nor in terms of a clearly expressed attitude. As has already been suggested, what occurs is an increase in the salience of a wide range of assumptions. CHILDHOOD is a rich concept, with a wealth of assumptions stored in its encyclopaedic entry. This information consists, to a large extent, of beliefs about childhood that belong to a particular cultural viewpoint. This can be seen by contrasting (1a) with

the utterance in (7):

(7) My teenage days are gone, gone.

In Sperber and Wilson (1986a) it is argued that (1a), unlike examples (3) to (6), communicates poetic effects. As in the case of poetic metaphor, a wide range of assumptions are activated, and here probably communicated as weak implicatures. In deriving these implicatures the hearer is given less guidance by the speaker and has to take a great deal of the responsibility in selecting and constructing the appropriate contextual assumptions. The hearer accesses assumptions such as those in (8) and uses them as implicated premises in an argument to derive the assumptions in (9) as implicated conclusions:

(8a) Childhood days are innocent.
(8b) Childhood days are ingenuous.
(8c) Childhood days are carefree.

(9a) The speaker's days of innocence are gone.
(9b) The speaker's days of ingenuousness are gone.
(9c) The speaker's carefree days are gone.

For such effects to be achieved, the concept involved must have a rich and complex encyclopaedic entry. As indicated, neither 'teenage' nor 'fox' possess such a rich encyclopaedic entry. That is why the activation of contextual assumptions within the entry of 'childhood' can be much more extensive than that within the entry of 'fox'.

I would like to make a further point here concerning the nature of the encyclopaedic entry for 'childhood'. Although the entry for 'childhood' is rich and the stylistic effects achieved by (1a) are different from most of the other examples discussed, I would question the suggestion that (1a) is a good example of poetic effects. I would suggest that this example leads to a stock response and is sentimental in tone. (I will return to the

issue of sentimentality in the next chapter.) A genuine attempt to access and construct new assumptions is blocked by the presence of a metarepresented set of assumptions, equivalent to a cultural stereotype, about childhood. As addressees, we are not interested here in what childhood is really like, but only in a certain sentimental picture of childhood. What I am suggesting is that a readily accessible social stereotype short-circuits any wide search through context and yields a comparatively narrow range of relatively strong implicatures.

It may well be the case that we hold several cultural stereotype views of childhood, the view that childhood is innocent, cosy, rosy and sweet, on the one hand, and the view that childhood (and children) is/(are) fierce, nasty, and prone to violence, on the other hand. The cosy-rosy stereotype would be the one accessed here, in example (1a). Perhaps this is because it is the dominant stereotype for our culture and society now. (It would be different in other societies; it would have been different in our society a few hundred years ago.) The important point is that not enough information is given in (1a) for a genuine search. The encyclopaedic entry for the concept CHILDHOOD potentially contains a great deal of information. A serious genuine search, distinguishing between factual assumptions and metarepresented assumptions, would require a great deal of time and energy. Unless further context serves to direct the search, the time and energy available would not be sufficient to pass beyond the readily accessible metarepresented set of beliefs. (One might compare the case of the central metaphor in Seamus Heaney's poem, Digging, which only becomes rich and poetic in the context provided by the entire poem.) The metarepresented set of beliefs would be easier to access, and hence accessed first, because it would be assumed to be shared between communicator and addressee. In this example the culturally endorsed stereotype will be the one that sees childhood as cosy and innocent. In the 'gorilla' example, discussed in Chapter 4, the culturally endorsed stereotype was the one that saw gorillas as fierce, nasty and prone to violence. Some metarepresentations are richer than

others (metarepresented 'childhood' is richer than metarepresented 'gorilla'). The repetition in (1a) leads to a stronger activation of the metarepresented set of beliefs, making the assumptions it contains more salient and more widely salient. But there is no genuine exploration of the concept 'childhood', this being short-circuited by the metarepresentation. This example is, as a result, sentimental rather than genuinely poetic. The issue of sentimentality will be taken up in Chapter 6.

Example (2a), I would suggest, works differently and is a genuine example of poetic epizeuxis. What I suggest happens in the processing of (2a) is very roughly as follows. The addressee locates the word 'Absalom' in his mental lexicon. This makes accessible a set of contextual assumptions concerning 'Absalom'. Assumptions activated may include: 'Absalom is the son of David', which would give access to and weakly activate assumptions to do with 'son' and 'David', etc. For the next stage of interpretation - 'my son' - the assumptions attached to 'son' receive further activation, together with assumptions concerning the relationship between the speaker, David, and his son. The repetition of the phrase 'my son' encourages still further exploration of context that is already activated, the making more salient of already weakly activated assumptions. 'Absalom', 'Absalom, my son', and 'Absalom, my son, my son' all give access to the same information. In the latter case, however, many more assumptions to do with David's relationship to and feelings for his son are implicated as a result of this repetition. Encyclopaedic entries are explored much more thoroughly than is the case in the simpler versions. Contextual assumptions already activated are further activated and more of the assumptions are actually entertained and brought to bear in arriving at the intended interpretation.

But the wider context of the story in the Bible plays an important role in giving direction to the retrieval and construction of contextual assumptions. The richness of

effects follow from, among other things, awareness of the prior struggles between David and Absalom, other expressions of David's love for Absalom and the conditions in which Absalom was killed in battle. This information, available as contextual assumptions, makes more salient a range of implicatures to do with David's love for Absalom, his sense of guilt and his regret that he didn't do more to ensure Absalom's safety. They multiply the reasons for David's acute sense of loss and create the conditions for the communication of the emotional state of grief. This example will be discussed further, in the context of an account of emotion in communication, in the next chapter.

The accessing of a concept involves the activation of assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entry attached to that concept. In the time available on-line only those assumptions receiving further activation from the accessing of other concepts will become salient, unless, of course, this is pre-empted by the accessing of a metarepresented cultural stereotype. (The point of such metarepresentations is that they are easily accessible to members of a social group and hence facilitate processing). In the case of epizeuxis, an encyclopaedic entry is activated by the first occurrence of the word or phrase and the repetition and reactivation takes place before the initially activated assumptions have fully deactivated. This allows the assumptions stored in the encyclopaedic entry to become more salient in the processing time available. From another point of view, given the preparedness to expend a certain amount of processing effort, the repetition allows the extra effort to achieve more contextual effects. This view is consistent with relevance theory considerations of the importance of processing constraints in determining initial contexts for interpretation.

It should be noted that repetition can only be poetic if there is sufficient context to explore - if, in other words, there is a rich enough encyclopaedic entry to activate. Consider the following examples:

(10) Oh, Fred, my colleague, my colleague!

(11) The pubs have closed, closed.

These appear ridiculous because a search is encouraged which has nowhere to go. The utterance in (2a) can support such a search because of the richness or potential richness of father/son relationships. There is more to explore in this case than in the case of relationships between colleagues, which can be any kind of relationship, intense or distant, but which are, stereotypically at least, not rich in a particular kind of experience. The speaker's relationship with Fred can be deep and meaningful, but not by virtue of them being colleagues. Similarly, one cannot invest with feeling and complex thought the closing of a pub, which will always be open again tomorrow.

Finally I would like, as I did in the case of metaphor, to look at an instance of repetition as it occurs in a poem. In this case a whole verse line is repeated. It is an interesting example in that the repetition leads to a concept being interpreted metaphorically: there is a 'loosening' of the concept. The example I will discuss is one I have discussed elsewhere (Pilkington 1991), Robert Frost's <u>Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening</u>. The complete poem follows below:

> Whose woods these are I think I know.
> His house is in the village, though;
> He will not see me stopping here
> To watch his woods fill up with snow.
>
> My little horse must think it queer
> To stop without a farmhouse near
> Between the woods and frozen lake
> The darkest evening of the year.
>
> He gives his harness bells a shake
> To ask if there is some mistake.
> The only other sound's the sweep
> Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.
(from <u>New Hampshire</u> (1923))

In Pilkington (1991) I discuss this poem in the light of a debate about the pedagogic value of stylistic analysis (from Widdowson (1975)). One of the views presented in this debate held that the repetition of the final line encourages the reader to interpret the word 'sleep' metaphorically, so that it comes to mean 'die', or to mean 'die' in addition to 'sleep'. The repetition encourages greater activation of the assumptions stored in the encyclopaedic entries of the concepts in the sentence repeated. In this case the only concept that can be *fruitfully explored is the concept attached to* 'sleep'. Although there is no 'categorial falsity', no clear flouting of the maxim of Quality, in Grice's sense, those assumptions about sleep which also apply to death are the ones made most salient. This is partly due to the long and familiar link between 'death' and 'sleep' in our cultural and literary tradition. But other contextual assumptions supplied by the rest of the poem also encourage such a link. The complete line - 'And miles to go before I sleep' - makes use of the familiar metaphorical idea that life is a journey: at the end of this journey is death. Other possible interpretations (discussed in Widdowson 1975: Chapter 7) include the idea that the mysterious woods in the first line are 'the Forest of Death', and that the house in the village is the graveyard. According to this reading the real theme of the poem is the strong attraction of death which the poem's narrator finally resists. This reading may be too rigid; it may fall into the common trap of treating poems as puzzles to solve. In this case, the 'sleep = death' equation might be seen as providing the key that unlocks the poem's meaning. I would argue, though, that the further activation of assumptions stored in the encyclopaedic entry of 'sleep' caused by the repetition includes the activation of assumptions that 'sleep' shares with 'death', because of the

cultural link and because of contexts made accessible by the rest of the poem ('the darkest evening of the year', etc.).

5.3. Verse effects.

The questions I would like to consider in this section are: *how do verse phenomena affect readers/hearers?* and *why do they have the effects that they do?* A wide range of verse features (metre, metrical variation, alliteration, rhyme, line-length, stichic and strophic organisation, etc.) are typically used in poetry and can be used to create poetic effects. Verse features do not always lead to such effects being achieved, however (despite the linking of verse features with the 'poetic function' by Jakobson and others); they can also be found in non-poetic rhetorically marked discourse of various kinds (e.g. political speeches, advertisements, football chants).

Verse has variously been seen as mere embellishment, as contributing to the music rather than the meaning of poetry, or as contributing to the affective rather than cognitive dimension of what is communicated. Many critics engaged in close analysis of verse effects, however, have stressed the ways in which verse contributes to both cognitive and affective dimensions of what is communicated. If we translate the language of literary criticism into the language of pragmatics, verse features, exploited poetically, might be said to encourage the accessing of a wide range of assumptions in the same way as poetic metaphor or epizeuxis. But if this is indeed what they do, how do they do it? In trying to answer this question I will limit my attention to the topics of metrical variation, rhyme and alliteration.

5.3.1. Metrical Variation.

> *'Rhythm must have a meaning'.*
> Ezra Pound.

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'The notion that there is any virtue in regularity or variety, or in any other formal features, apart from its effects upon us, must be discarded before any metrical problem can be understood.'   I.A.Richards.

Consider the following passage from Shakespeare's King Lear (Act One, scene two, lines 11-14). 'Bastards', Edmund claims:

> '......in the lusty stealth of nature, take
> More composition and fierce quality
> Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
> Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops.

The word 'stale' receives unexpected stress: the regular iambic pentameter, with its alternating weak-strong stress pattern, would normally require a weak stress on this word. The concept to which this word is attached seems to receive extra emphasis. This emphasis is further enhanced by the fact that there are three stressed syllables in a row, the first two being monosyllabic words: '...dull, stale, tired...' The combined effect of these factors is to slow down the verse and thereby create stylistic effects which have often been noted but never properly explained. An explanation may, perhaps, be sought in terms of the way in which processing is affected. More time is allowed to access and activate the assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entries of the words 'dull', 'stale' and 'tired'. If the concepts are rich enough, as they are here, then the result, as in the case of epizeuxis, is the communication of a relatively wide range of implicatures and the achievement of poetic effects. (I would like to suggest that phenomenal memories are also activated for these concepts. The question of phenomenal memory will be addressed in Chapters 6 and 7.)

There is some evidence to suggest that utterance prosody plays an important role in the process of lexical access. (See, for example Cutler 1992; forthcoming). Cutler has explored the

possibility that in English, where for most words (especially for most commonly used words) stress falls on the first syllable, hearers use stress to mark word boundaries and to initiate the process of word-recognition and lexical access. Stress falls on content words as opposed to function words, which usually contain reduced vowels in normal speech. Content words are those which link to conceptual addresses that have encyclopaedic entries, whereas function words, which have a procedural role to play in utterance interpretation, do not. One of the properties of stress is that it lengthens the time taken to process the word on which it falls. This may well be because for such words there is more information to activate and access at their corresponding conceptual addresses.

Metre encourages expectations to be set up as to when strong (and weak) stress will occur. Of course, metrical patterns have their own characteristic effects. It is generally recognised that triple metres with two weak syllables, which speed up the verse, are effective in enhancing comic effects, as in the following example which uses anapaestic feet:

> To make out the dinner full certain I am
> That Ridge is anchovy, and Reynolds is lamb;
> That Hickey's a capon, and by the same rule,
> Magnanimous Goldsmith a gooseberry fool.
> > (from Goldsmith's 'Retaliation').

Such metres are not so successful in the case of would-be serious verse, as in this example:

> My fugitive years are all hasting away,
> And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,
> With a turf on my breast, and a stone at my head,
> Ere another such grove shall arrive in its stead.
> > (from Cowper's 'The Poplar-Field').

Metrical patterns can also be exploited to achieve local effects, as in the example from King Lear, where, in the lines quoted, the metrical pattern is in conflict with the normal

rhythm of speech. A strong stress is found where the metrical pattern leads us to expect a weak stress. My suggestion is that the regular strong stress on content words (to allow time to access their encyclopaedic entries) is enhanced by metre and enhanced further in the case of verse where metrical variation and extra or unexpected strong stress occurs. The extra time this enhanced stress gives to the lexical access process, together, perhaps, with the earlier accessing of information that it allows, causes the encyclopaedic entry to be more thoroughly explored and assumptions within it to be made more highly salient. These assumptions become available for inferencing and as a result a wide range of implicatures is communicated. The tendency metrical patterns may have to slow verse down, especially where variation is used, can be enhanced, as is the case in this example, where several stressed monosyllables follow one another. There are no intervening weak stresses along the way to speed things up. The extra or unexpected strong stress requires extra processing effort to be put into accessing information stored at the conceptual address linked to a lexical item. This extra effort facilitates the exploration of encyclopaedic entries by allowing more time for such exploration. In a similar way the extra effort required in cases of epizeuxis facilitates the exploration of encyclopaedic entries by allowing more time for such exploration.

The following examples illustrate the stylistic intuitions prompted by metrical variation that I am trying to account for. The second example is from Wilfred Owen's poem, Anthem for Doomed Youth; the first example is from an earlier version of the poem which Owen decided to reject:

(i)   The shrill demented choirs of wailing shells,
        And bugles calling sad across the shires

(ii) The shrill demented choirs of wailing shells,
        And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

Why is the second version superior to the first? There is a

change in the meaning expressed by the final line: in the second version 'the shires' are 'sad', whereas in the first version the sadness is in the sound of the bugles; in the second version the bugles explicitly call 'for them', i.e. for the fallen youth. These changes are clearly important. Another important difference, however, is created by the spondaic substitution in the final foot - 'sad shires' - which places unexpected stress on 'sad' and slows down the delivery of the line. The iambic pattern of the earlier version does, of course, require metrical stress to fall on 'sad', but in the improved version the unexpectedness of the stress is significant as well as the fact that two stressed monosyllables follow each other. The stylistic intuition is clear: the question is how to explain it. The suggestion I made above is that the clash between the actual use of stress and the stress pattern expected from the iambic metre affects the point at which the encyclopaedic entry is explored, and the time available to explore it. The assumptions stored in the encyclopaedic entry, in other words, are activated earlier and for longer.

As a final example, I would like to consider the final two lines of Keats' On First Looking into Chapman's Homer. The complete poem is quoted below:

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like the stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific - and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise -
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

The first foot in each of the final two lines of this sonnet is subject to metrical variation. In each case an expected iambic foot is replaced by a trochaic foot. These trochaic substitutions have contrasting effects. In the penultimate line the substitution seems to emphasise the sudden active nature of the looking; in the final line the substitution emphasises the stillness and silence as Cortez stared out over the newly discovered Pacific Ocean. In both cases the unexpected stress right at the beginning of the line slows down the verse, allows more processing time, and possibly initiates the activation of assumptions in the encyclopaedic entries earlier than would otherwise be the case. The stylistic effects achieved by these substitutions are highlighted if Keats' version is compared with the following - definitely inferior - alternative version, which maintains the iambic foot.

> Each looked at other with a wild surmise -
> All silent on a peak in Darien.

The sense of stopping and staring at something wondrous which Keats' version communicates (and which my version doesn't) is also the metaphorical heart of the poem: this is the same experience the poet has on first looking into Chapman's <u>Homer</u>. I have said little about the nature of the implicatures communicated by any of the examples in this section. It is difficult to suggest any suitable candidate implicatures for the last two examples, for instance. Yet the stylistic effects are clear and of the kind that one would want to call poetic. Why should this be so? Suggested reasons for the difficulty in explaining the stylistic effects here will be offered in the next chapter.

It would be interesting at this point to engage in some general speculation about the popularity of iambic metres in English poetry. The iambic pentameter is by far the most natural and productive metre in the literary tradition. There has been much discussion of this point in literary criticism and in books on verse, but, apart from some insightful intuitive comments

regarding, for example, the greater flexibility, seriousness and variability that may be achieved by such verse, this discussion has been able to offer little in the way of an explanation as to why this should be the case. Many have sought to explain the effects of different metres in terms of conventions. Fussell, for example, partially explains the effects of metre in this way:

> '....metres can mean by association and convention......In the limerick, for example, the very pattern of short anapestic lines is so firmly associated with light impudence or indecency that a poet can hardly write in anything resembling this measure without evoking smiles'. (Fussell 1979:12).

Limericks are probably the best example of a verse metre where this kind of association might hold. I would suggest, however, that pragmatic and processing considerations generally underlie the effects achieved by different verse metres. Where conventions exist, there will probably be a good psychological reason for their existence. In the case of the iambic metre the even match of strong and weak stresses is used to slow the verse down. It encourages the greater use of monosyllabic words and it allows metrical variation to be introduced more easily. In the case of metres that use dactyls and anapaests such variation is rare because it tends to be too disruptive. Dactyls and anapaests create a strong metre which, with its extra weak stresses hurries the verse along (as in the case of the Goldsmith and Cowper examples above).

What then of trochaic verse, which also evenly matches strong and weak stress? Part of the reason, again, would seem to be that the trochaic metre is faster than the iambic metre. Stress falling on the first syllable of disyllabic words leads us to perceive that syllable as shorter than, or about the same length as, its unstressed partner, for example in the cases of words such as 'limpid', 'doctrine', 'scooter'. The same holds for stressed monosyllables with a closely connected nonstressed word, as in 'stop it', 'got him'. If the stress is on the second syllable this syllable will appear longer, for example in the

cases of words and phrases such as 'deceive', 'ignite', 'the seive', 'the night'. (See Cutler 1989 for further examples and discussion of this point.) My suggestion is that this perceived difference in duration carries over to verse, so that where strong stresses fall in iambic metre they often tend to be perceived as longer than strong stresses in trochaic metre. Other factors are no doubt involved, for example, the fact that a iambic verse line typically ends with a strong stress, making the line ending into a significant extra punctuation device, which can be accompanied by rhyme.

To sum up this section, I am offering the suggestion that metrical variation, enhanced perhaps by its occurrence at the beginning of the line, as in the examples taken from the Keats poem, or by occurring in a row of stressed monosyllables as in the Shakespeare example, in slowing down the verse, allows for the speedier and lengthier activation of the assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entries of the concepts involved. These claims are based on ideas in relevance theory concerning processing effort and contextual effects and on ideas in psycholinguistic theory concerning lexical access. These claims should, in principle, be testable. There seems as yet to be little, if any, directly relevant work in psycholinguistics bearing on these issues. The most promising findings which have some indirect bearing are those suggesting that mis-stressing has an effect on processes of lexical access. Taft (1984) has found that 'mis-stressing a strong-strong word like 'canteen' if anything tended to facilitate lexical access' (Cutler: personal communication). It does not necessarily follow from this, of course, that unexpected stress in metrical variation also facilitates lexical access. But the psycholinguistic evidence that it *can* happen is certainly encouraging - and certainly worth a research programme.

If lexical access is facilitated it becomes easier to activate a greater range of information from encyclopaedic entries. Assuming that these encyclopaedic entries are rich enough and, perhaps, that other context helps to direct the search through

these entries, then they can give rise to poetic effects. As in the case of metaphor and epizeuxis, whether poetic effects are achieved will depend on these other contextual factors.

5.3.2. Rhyme and Alliteration.

'Mouth, south. Is the mouth south someway? Or the south mouth?.....South, pout, out, shout, drouth...'

(James Joyce, Ulysses).

Fussell echoes a point made by Wimsatt (1954) about the effects of rhyme in verse that has often been made in practical criticism. He argues that: 'every rhyme invites the reader's consideration of semantic as well as of sound similarities.' (Fussell 1979:110). Fussell illustrates this point with reference to the following stanza from Pound's Mauberley:

The 'age demanded' chiefly a mould in plaster,
Made with no loss of time.
A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster
Or the 'sculpture' of rhyme.

The use of 'alabaster' to rhyme with 'plaster' has, according to Fussell, an ironic effect. He argues:

'By rhyming the words which represent these two rich symbols of technical, aesthetic opposition, the stanza appears to compare them, while ironically it actually contrasts them.' (Fussell 1979:111).

The use of rhyme here encourages a comparison and contrast of the semantic and encyclopaedic information attached to their respective conceptual addresses. The presence of the sound similarity encourages the encyclopaedic entries attached to these concepts to be explored more thoroughly and for items within them to be made considerably more salient. A similar kind of irony results from the rhyming of 'time' with 'rhyme'. In the context of this poem the timeless qualities of 'rhyme' and true art are contrasted with the speedy manufacture of mass-produced material goods. (See Fussell 1979:110-111 for

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further discussion of these examples).

One possible (and, by now, familiar) explanation for these stylistic effects is that the presence of rhyme, which generally combines phonetically identical material with strong stress, facilitates exploration of encyclopaedic entries. But how is it possible for the mere repetition of phonetically identical material to affect semantic or pragmatic processing? Could it be that where there is a pair of rhyming words the process of lexically accessing the second word is facilitated by the prior accessing of the first, and that the second word, in its turn, reactivates the conceptual address of the first word? The stylistic effects experienced could follow from the resulting increased salience of assumptions within the encyclopaedic entries attached to these conceptual addresses, or they could follow from the increased salience of assumptions shared by the two encyclopaedic entries or the construction of assumptions common to both entries.

These speculations are encouraged by recent theories of lexical access. The current version of *the cohort model* (as outlined, for example in Marslen-Wilson (1987);(1989)) argues that the processes of word recognition and lexical access are essentially bottom-up, stimulus-driven processes that activate a wide range of items in the mental lexicon. Those items that provide the best 'fit' will receive the greatest activation. (The notion of 'relative goodness of fit' refers to the relation between the sensory stimulus provided by the phonetic signal in speech and the representation of lexical items in the mental lexicon.) The preferred candidate-item must then be able to fit into the on-going construction of higher-level representations. The model is designed to make the construction of on-line meaning representations as fast and efficient as possible (and, of course, to make clear falsifiable predictions that can be tested in psycholinguistic experiments).

The important point here is that, as the sensory stimulus is

being processed, multiple lexical access to conceptual information occurs. The closer the items in the mental lexicon to the target item in their phonetic representation, the greater their activation, including the activation of semantic and other information stored at the corresponding conceptual addresses. What I am suggesting, then, is that at the same time as the first word of the rhyming pair is contacted in the lexicon by the incoming sensory stimulus, the second word is also contacted. There would also be activation of the concept attached to this second rhyming word and possibly access to its encyclopaedic entry. These activations would fade as the first word was found to offer the best fit. It might be the case, however, that they are still active enough by the time the concept attached to the second rhyming word is being accessed in its own right to make that accessing easier and quicker, allowing more time with less effort to explore the encyclopaedia more extensively. At the same time that the second word is being processed the encyclopaedic entry attached to the concept of the first word is reactivated and the assumptions become more salient because of their recent activation. I have also suggested that the activation of the second word is facilitated by its prior high activation as a strong candidate item. Again, it is easier to access and there is more time to explore its encyclopaedic entry more extensively.

The phenomenon of alliteration might work in a similar way to that suggested for rhyme. There are, in fact, two basic reasons why one would expect it to work more effectively than rhyme. If alliteration occurs within a line then the relative state of activation of the first word should be higher given the shorter time lapse between the alliterating words. The other reason is that the beginnings of words play a more important role in activating and locating the intended lexical item in the lexicon, in the determination of relative goodness of fit.

It should be noted that these speculations adapt rather than adopt ideas currently held in psycholinguistics. The actual

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psycholinguistic evidence for these ideas is lacking or even contradictory. Rhyme prime tests have been found to facilitate real-word priming only by a very small margin. Experiments carried out by Marslen-Wilson and Zwitserlood (1989) found the facilitation time to be a mere 11 msec. As Marslen-Wilson noted:

> 'In contrast to the onset primes, rhyme primes were notably ineffective in priming their targets.......Rhyme primes failed to facilitate their targets even for very large amounts of overlap. Sequences up to three syllables long, where only the first consonant was mismatching, still showed no significant priming effect.' (Marslen-Wilson 1992:14).

The results obtained are more likely to support the idea that alliteration facilitates the kind of semantic links to which Fussell refers.

Both alliteration and rhyme have clear stylistic effects, which have often been noted, but never properly explained (unless in terms of literary reading conventions). Contemporary ideas in psycholinguistics, in conjunction with ideas in relevance theory, allow suggestive speculation. The experimental evidence from psycholinguistics may be, for the moment at least, sparse or not encouraging. But the speculative remarks I have offered here do not have to be totally rejected yet. Such experiments as have been carried out have used individual words, essentially as a way of testing directionality in lexical access. It is possible that the minimal priming which Marslen-Wilson and Zwitzerlood detect for such cases might be increased in the case of rhyming words occurring in metrical patterns where enhanced stress and the pause that occurs at the end of the line may also have an effect. Ideally one would want to compare rhyme priming where the rhyming pair occur in a variety of contexts.

CHAPTER SIX

EMOTION, ATTITUDE AND SENTIMENTALITY.

'The right occasions are when emotions come flooding in and bring the multiplication of metaphors with them as a necessary accompaniment.'

Longinus, On the Sublime, p.173.

6.1.   Introduction: Emotion and Poetry.

In Chapters 4 and 5 the poetic effects communicated by tropes (such as poetic metaphor), schemes (such as poetic epizeuxis) and verse effects (such as metrical variation) were characterised in terms of a process that involved a wide range of assumptions being simultaneously made marginally more salient. These could either be communicated as a range of weak implicatures or they could contribute to the communication of a new concept forming part of the proposition expressed by the utterance. In either case they would be activated in the search for an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance. The route of least effort would not lead immediately to the selection or construction of a narrow range of easily accessible contextual assumptions; it would lead to the selection and construction of a wider range of assumptions after a lengthier and more extensive search. This account of poetic effects deals with what is communicated propositionally: the type of mental representation that characterises poetic effects, according to this account, consists of assumptions or propositional forms. If it is assumed that pragmatic theory can only account for propositional effects, then this will be as far as pragmatics

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can go in providing an account of poetic metaphor and poetic epizeuxis, or in providing a more general account of literariness.

In literary criticism it is generally assumed that the communication of what is loosely referred to as 'emotion' or 'feeling' plays a central role in poetic effects. In the study of rhetoric, too, it is claimed that rhetorical devices provide emphasis for a thought, or produce intensity of feeling or emotion. Alexander Smith, in the extract from his essay quoted above in Chapter 5, wrote that 'the interjection 'oh', and the repetition of 'my son' have the effect of making words which are otherwise but the intimation of a fact, the expression of an emotion of exceeding depth and interest, and thus render them eminently poetical.' The same kind of heightening of emotion can be seen in the example of epizeuxis (taken from Sperber and Wilson (1986a)), which was discussed in Chapter 5, and is repeated here as (1).

> (1a) My childhood days are gone, gone.
> (1b) My childhood days are gone.

The intuition that (1a) is more emotional (or sentimental) in tone than (1b) is one of the main stylistic differences between the two utterances.

Rhetoricians have observed this to be the case for most types of verbal repetition. Consider the following examples, taken from Joyce's Eveline and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (and discussed in Wales (1992)):

> (2) 'Everything changes. Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home. Home!'
> (3) 'She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape!'
> (4) 'Her bosom was as a birds' soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some darkplummaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and

touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face.'

(2) is an example of *anadiplosis*, where a word at the end of one sentence is repeated at the beginning of the next; (3) is an example of *epiphora*, where the same word is repeated finally in successive sentences; (4) is an example of *epanados*, the repetition of words in reverse order. Each of these rhetorical schemes are deliberately used to heighten a strong emotional effect. (See Wales (1992) for more detailed discussion of these and similar examples.)

The idea that poetry is primarily an expression of emotion (or feeling) was an important part of the Romantic theory of the period in which Smith was writing. All the leading Romantic poets and critics from Wordsworth to Byron expressed their own version of this idea. Wordsworth wrote in his <u>Preface to the Lyrical Ballads</u> that 'all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. Byron, in a letter to Tom Moore, wrote that 'poetry is the expression of excited passion.' The idea that poetry is best fitted to express emotion is at least as old as Longinus' <u>On the Sublime,</u> where Longinus wrote of the importance of the 'stimulus of powerful and inspired emotion' as a source of the sublime. It is an idea that has found its echo in the writings of many twentieth century poets. Larkin, for example, makes the following observation about the writing of a poem in his essay, <u>The Pleasure Principle</u>:

> 'It consists of three stages: the first is when a man becomes obsessed with an emotional concept to such a degree that he is compelled to do something about it. What he does is the second stage, namely, construct a verbal device that will reproduce his emotional concept in anyone who cares to read it, anywhere, any time. The third stage is the recurrent situation of people in different times and places setting off the device and re-creating in themselves what the poet felt when he wrote it.' (Larkin 1983: 80).

Given this strong connection between emotion and poetry in general, and, more particularly, between emotion and the use

of rhetorical devices in poetry (and other discourses such as political oratory), it becomes important to ask the questions: *what is an emotion?* and *how might an account of emotion be introduced into a pragmatic account of poetic effects, if at all?* In this chapter I will consider some recent accounts of emotion in philosophy and cognitive science. Then I will return to the questions raised above. In Chapter 7 I will discuss the question of how nonpropositional effects in general might be included in a theory of pragmatics.

6.2.   Properties of emotional states.

Rey (1980) characterises emotions as complex states possessing cognitive, physiological, behavioural and qualitative properties. Other types of properties have been attributed to emotional states, some of which are mentioned by Rey, but essentially they reduce to these four.

The cognitive properties of emotions may be characterised in terms of particular types of sets of beliefs and desires. They may be characterised, therefore, in terms of their intentionality: emotions are *about* something, they refer to states of affairs and events in the world. These properties are the ones that have particularly interested cognitive science and will be discussed in section 6.4.

The physiological properties of emotions seem the most clearly theorisable, falling within the domain of the natural sciences (biology and chemistry). The standard view is that the evolutionary function of such physiological effects was to prepare the body for appropriate action (for example to fight or for flight) in response to external phenomena, events or states of affairs in the world.

The behavioural properties of emotions include bodily movement and gesture. Emotional behaviour responds to the

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physiology of emotions but can be controlled and is subject to cultural variation. It is caused by a complex interaction of physiological factors and culturally determined belief/desire sets. Cultural constraints may influence the degree of freedom or restraint shown in the expression of behaviour either generally or with respect to certain emotions. They may also influence the manner in which such behaviour is expressed. Social groups recognise behavioural norms with regard to the expression of emotional behaviour, but there is room for variation and the norms are sometimes contravened. Such behaviour has to be measured in terms of broad generalisations and statistical correlations rather than in terms of causality.

It is possible to develop separate and combined theoretical accounts of the physiological and cognitive properties of emotions. Rey offers the following example of how the two might interact:

> '.... a specific cognition or constellation of cognitions, might be linked nomologically to specific qualitative and physiological states, and so forth; a given emotion might be regarded as some commonly occuring segment of just such a sequence. A crude but not impossible instance might be, say, depression over the collapse of one's career: this might be identified as the sequence beginning with the belief that one's career has indeed collapsed, the quite strong preference that it hadn't, a consequent depletion of norepinephrine, the effects of that depletion upon the nervous system, consequent further changes in cognition (e.g., the belief that nothing any longer is worthwhile, decreased preferences for doing anything at all), followed by still further depletions of norepinephrine, and further effects of this still greater depletion, various portions of this sequence being accompanied, perhaps, by that unmistakable qualitative feel.......' Rey (1980:188).

Qualitative properties (those unmistakable qualitative feels), however, are more problematic because they are subjective and elusive. Only I know what my anger and despair are like, and even then only approximately. These properties may relate

causally to the cognitive and physiological components of emotional states, but it is difficult to see how the nature of the causal relationships may be determined or characterised. It may be that the qualitative properties of emotions are really properties of physiological states, that when we talk of qualitative properties we are really talking about conscious awareness in relation to such physiological states, just as we talk about the sensation of an itch or a headache. At some level it may be that all emotions are complex physiological states triggering different types of conscious awareness. Some physiological states trigger conscious awareness in the form of 'thoughts', and some in the form of 'feelings'. I will return to these issues in Chapter 7.

If we assume that emotional states typically involve all these properties, it is also important to point out that it is possible to have states that combine some but not all of them. As Rey puts it:

> 'a typical emotional state is not analyzable as
> merely the cognitive component of the state, since
> one may have the beliefs and preferences without
> the emotions, and the emotions sometimes without
> the beliefs and preferences.' (Rey 1980:176).

Examples of the latter case (of what might be termed 'incomplete emotions'), where the cognitive component is absent, would be free-floating anxiety or elation.

Emotional states, then,

> 'are, typically, complex states involving
> nomological interactions between cognitions,
> qualitative states, and physiological processes
> (should qualitative states be eliminated in favour
> of physiological processes, the interaction would
> of course be only between the cognitive and the
> physiological).' (Rey 1980:188).

It is this complexity of emotional states that leads Rey to question the claim that machines can possess emotions. Emotions depend upon interactions between the cognitive and the physiological. (Certain cognitive states cause physiological

states, which, in turn, cause cognitive states, etc.). As machines do not have human physiology these interactions clearly cannot take place. Another consequence of not possessing human physiology is that machines cannot have the characteristic human qualitative experience of emotions.

6.3. The evolution and relevance of emotion.

Complex emotional states of the kind described could evolve only with a relatively advanced and flexible degree of intelligence. The circuits of the brain dealing with emotion were set up to motivate appropriate behaviour in major life-challenging circumstances. There are four systems located in the limbic system involving distinct neural pathways, parallelling four types of behaviour: (i) exploratory and appetitive; (ii) attack; (iii) flight; (iv) loss or grief. For primitive life forms specific reactions to specific stimuli were sufficient for survival. The appearance of a predator, for instance, would activate the appropriate autonomic/hormonal circuit which would send out the appropriate messages and prepare the body for flight. A simple representation of some state of affairs (maybe a visual image) would directly trigger a bodily reaction, a set of physiological responses.

For more complex systems, responses need to be adapted to important non-specific life-situations where flexibility is required. The flight response is no longer triggered by a fixed number of stimuli, but results from a more complex set of circumstances. It has developed into the emotion of fear. Emotions, then, have evolved as a way of interrupting the behaviour of the organism when a goal is frustrated by a novel or unexpected situation, causing it to rethink its plans. (See Oatley (1992) for one of the most recent accounts of this view.) As the ability to represent the external world has become more sophisticated, with the development of a rich array of concepts and a language of thought, emotions themselves have become more complex and sophisticated.

Whereas the fear response was activated by a narrow range of stimuli in some animals (e.g. the shape of a predator), for humans the emotion is now triggered by a complex pattern of beliefs and desires. (I leave aside the question of whether or to what extent animals are conscious of the emotions they undergo: whether, that is, their emotions have a qualitative component in the sense discussed. This issue is still hotly debated; but see Dawkins (1993) for arguments in support of animal consciousness.) The desires which are thwarted or violated become more complex as immediate desires are supplemented by time-indexed desires. (An immediate desire might be the desire to quench one's thirst; a time-indexed desire might be the desire to visit Paris next summer.)

Emotion provides a means of focussing attention. Certain environmental stimuli become super-relevant in the sense that survival depends on paying absolute attention to them. As de Souza argues:

> 'The role of emotion is to supply the insufficiency of reason by imitating the encapsulation of perceptual modes. For a variable but always limited time, an emotion limits the range of information that the organism will take into account, the inferences actually drawn from a potential infinity, and the set of live options among which it will choose.' (de Souza 1987:195).

This analysis of emotion is seen by deSouza (1987:195) as 'one of Nature's ways of dealing with the frame problem.' What the specialised circuits of the brain are designed to do is facilitate the process of fixing on one piece of information - the representation of an environmental stimulus or state of affairs - to the exclusion of all others. In relevance theory terms, these systems make sure that the crucial piece of information is less costly to process.

6.4. Analysing emotions as belief/desire sets.

It is clear that emotions play a crucial role in motivating

human behaviour and that they are extremely complex: that is what makes them so interesting. One way of characterising the complexity of human emotions is in terms of what Rey (1980) termed its cognitive properties. For Sloman (1986; 1987) these cognitive properties can be analysed in terms of belief/desire sets. The sophistication of our awareness of emotional states depends on the sophistication of the ways in which the cognitive properties of emotions can be represented.

Sloman (1987) illustrates the view that emotions may be partially characterised in such a way with an analysis of anger. The following is a simplified and abbreviated version of Sloman's analysis. (For a fuller analysis of 'anger' see Sloman 1987:224-226).

For it to be possible to make the claim in (5), Sloman argues, something like the conditions in (6) must hold:

(5)   X is angry with Y

(6a) X believes that Y did (or failed to do) something.
(6b) In doing (or failing to do) this something, one of
      X's desires was violated.

I will flesh this out with a simple example. When Gorbachev was released from his dacha in the Crimea in August 1991, after the abortive coup in what was then the Soviet Union, he was angry. One of the people he was particularly angry with was his former friend, Lukyanov. Why was Gorbachev angry? He believed that Lukyanov had helped to organise the coup (6a) and that this violated his desire to go on running the country, more immediately getting the 'All Union Treaty' signed, with lots of important etceteras (6b). But are this belief and frustrated desire enough to make Gorbachev angry? Sloman argues that the conditions in (6) are not sufficient for anger; a further condition expressed here in (7), the creation of a new motive (as Sloman calls it) or desire, is essential before one can justifiably make the claim in (5).

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(7)   X desires to hurt/harm Y.

For X to be angry with Y, then, a new desire must be created. As Sloman phrases it: 'Anger involves an insistent and intense non-derivative desire to do something to make Y suffer.' (Sloman 86:9). This is a characteristic of all emotional states, according to Sloman: a belief about some state of affairs or event in the world causes one desire to be frustrated, or violated, and a new desire to be created. In terms of the present example, for Gorbachev to be angry with Lukyanov, if Sloman's analysis is correct, he must also desire to hurt or harm Lukyanov. This is not to say that he (or any X) has to actually hurt or harm Lukyanov (or any Y); other desires or beliefs might interfere - fear of the consequences of such action, for example. The general rule, however, is that, if one desire is thwarted by some action of Y and a new desire to hurt or harm Y is created, then X may be said to be angry with Y.

Sloman's method, then, involves the conceptual analysis of key emotion terms (such as 'anger') and a formulation of the results of such analysis in terms of belief/desire sets that characterise the cognitive state of a mind experiencing the emotion. The analysis of 'anger' above is very schematic. Sloman's analysis, in fact, allows for much variety and sophistication, as he argues in the following passage:

> 'Emotions like anger can vary along different quantitative and qualitative dimensions, such as: how certain X is about what Y has done, how much X cares about it (i.e. how important and intense the violated motive is); how much harm X wishes to do to Y; how important this new desire is, how intense it is, how insistent it is, how long lasting it is; how much mental disturbance is produced in X; how much physiological disturbance there is; which aspects of the state X is aware of; how many secondary motives and actions are generated.....' (Sloman 86:9-10).

Anger without the desire to harm Y may be interpreted as

exasperation, dismay or annoyance. Emotions may be coloured by secondary emotions, by socially sanctioned emotions that respond to primary emotions. The emotion strengthens and holds the new desire in the mind. The strength of the anger and desire to harm can vary, depending on the strength of belief in (6a) and the strength of the thwarted desire in (6b). This great range of possibilities is what can make particular emotions and feelings so individual. The variations in belief/desire sets are reflected in the way the emotion is experienced, in the qualitative character of the emotion. The emotion becomes much more complex in a wider context, a complexity which has a corresponding qualitative feel. This is a crucial point in the consideration of poetic effects, where pragmatic processing encourages the accessing of a very wide context.

I will now suggest my own brief and sketchy analysis of 'sadness' along the same lines. In order to make the claim in (8), I would suggest that something like the conditions in (9) must hold.

(8) X is sad about not Y.

(9a) X believes the state of affairs Y to be good or valuable.

(9b) X desires to (continue to) experience the state of affairs Y.

(9c) The state of affairs Y is no longer accessible or available to X for t amount of time.

(9d) X's desire in (9b) is strengthened.

This example may be fleshed out in the following way. Gorbachev believes that being President is a good and valuable thing (for him) (9a). Gorbachev desires to go on being President (9b). Gorbachev believes he is unlikely ever to be President again (9c). As he entertains these beliefs and desires, his desire to be President is strengthened (9d). And so Gorbachev is sad about not being President any more.

Whereas in Sloman's analysis of 'anger' a new desire was created, focussed on the violator of an earlier desire, here there is no new desire, but a strengthening of an earlier violated desire (9b). It may be the case that this strengthening involves raising a hitherto unconscious desire to the level of conscious awareness.

This kind of analysis allows one to make many detailed distinctions between kinds and degrees of sadness. Different intensities of sadness are possible depending on the relative strength of the belief in (9a) and the relative strength of the desire in (9b). The state of affairs that one values and desires may be (and perhaps typically is) one in which a person, place, object or experience is considered valuable (in some sense), and in which one desires to be in contact (in some sense) with that person, place, object or experience. The extent to which one believes the person, place, object or experience to be valuable will affect the quality of the sadness. The quality of sadness will depend, as well, on whether it is a person who is gone, a place one is absent from, an object that is lost or an experience that is no longer available. Again, different intensities of sadness are possible depending on the length of time one is to be separated from the person/place/object/ experience (on how the t slot is completed in (9c)). If a loved person departs for a weekend that is mildly sad, if for a summer very sad, if forever extremely sad. Grief is the most extreme form of sadness: there is absolutely no hope of being with that person again. The belief in (9a) can be about a state of affairs believed to be good or valuable by X for some other person: one can feel sad on behalf of other people. Grief can, in this sense, be a mixture of personal loss and the sense of another's loss. There are many other dimensions to sadness, and many ways in which sadness can mix with or give way to other emotions.

It was suggested above that example (1), repeated here, evokes the emotion of sadness and that the verbal repetition in (1a) results in the expression or communication of a greater degree

of emotion than (1b).

(1a) My childhood days are gone, gone.

(1b) My childhood days are gone.

'My childhood days', like everyone else's childhood days, were good days because they were carefree and innocent. Those days have definitely gone, and gone for good, except for the memories I will always treasure. I am sick of my present careworn, and far from innocent, existence. I yearn to experience life as it used to be when it was less complex, when others did the worrying. I don't always feel like this, of course, but when I do remember my childhood the desire to experience those days of carefree innocence is strengthened and I feel sad. What this example does is set up the (belief/desire set) conditions for 'sadness'. Childhood is believed to be valuable. X's desire for the experience that 'childhood' offers - innocence, lack of worry, security, etc. - can no longer be fulfilled. Concentrating on these beliefs and desires strengthens the impossible desire to experience that kind of carefree innocence again.

Compare two other examples discussed in chapter 5 and repeated here as (10) and (11):

(10) The pubs are closed, closed.

(11) My teenage days are gone, gone.

In (10), pubs are not precious enough, for most people, to evoke the emotion of sadness. Also the time factor is important: the pubs will be open again tomorrow morning. Because a contextual search is initiated which has nowhere to go, the hearer has no other recourse than to distance himself from the proposition expressed, which is understood as ridiculous and possibly as having been ironically intended. In (11) 'teenage

days' do not have the same stereotypical set of positive attitudes associated with them as 'childhood'. It is sad that they have gone, but not as overwhelmingly sad as the fact that 'my childhood days' have gone.

Examples such as (1b) vaguely evoke the emotion and feeling of sadness because the right conditions apply: the desire for what childhood represents - security, innocence, lack of worry, and other good things - is strengthened, as it is recognised that the experience of childhood can never be attained again. The emotion and feeling are much stronger in (1a) because the concept CHILDHOOD is much more extensively explored in the search for an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance. Many more assumptions about childhood are activated and a greater variety of things that are good about childhood are made more highly salient: there are simply more reasons and stronger reasons for feeling sad.

6.5. Emotions and Attitudes.

Clarifying the different properties of emotional states and the role they play should help to avoid a certain amount of confusion in discussing the role of emotion in poetic effects. An analysis of the cognitive properties of emotions can be used to show how poetic effects create a wider range of, and stronger conditions for, evoking the feeling or qualitative properties of an emotion. But there must be more to say than this. When poets and literary critics claim that emotion is central to poetry and poetic effects, what exactly do they mean? Frustrated British Rail passengers often resort to the expression of 'emotional concepts', but they do not necessarily achieve poetic effects when they do so. In section 6.2 I discussed Rey's notion of emotion as a complex state involving four distinct properties. Often the term 'emotion' is used loosely to refer to just one, or several, of these properties. When Larkin refers to 'emotional concepts', then, perhaps he is using the term loosely in this way. I will go on to suggest that

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he is, in fact, really interested in the qualitative properties of emotions.

Before considering this question further, there are a number of other frequent terminological confusions that need to be clarified. Sloman (1986) illustrates the inconsistency in the ordinary usage of such terms as 'emotion'. He suggests that X might hold at one and the same time that:

(a) X loves her children deeply.

(b) Love is an emotion.

(c) X is not in an emotional state.

The apparent contradiction here can be resolved, Sloman argues, if we draw a distinction between *emotions* and *attitudes*. An emotion, such as fear or anger, is a temporary state, a response to some perceived event or state of affairs in the world. This causes a physiological response and, typically, also a behavioural and qualitative response. An attitude, such as love or hate, involves the storage of a belief and/or phenomenal state in long-term memory, attached to a conceptual address. In the example above, therefore, the statement in (b) is the weak link in the argument because love is an attitude, not an emotion. It is quite possible for the statements in (a) and (c) to be consistent.

This distinction between emotions and attitudes is useful for resolving many apparent confusions. It may happen, for example, that Jane does something that makes John very angry with her. His emotion, anger, has Jane (or whatever it was that Jane did) as its object. There may be no contradiction, however, in arguing that, at that moment, 'John was angry with Jane' and 'John loved Jane'. Part of the force of King David's feeling in the quotation from the Bible discussed by Alexander Smith, is the conflict between his emotion (of anger), directed at Absalom in the circumstances described in the Bible story,

and his underlying attitude (of love) towards Absalom that the emotion had helped to obscure. The force of poetic effects generally is to provide the wider context which may serve to clarify and disentangle what may be relatively complex attitudes.

Whereas an emotion is a temporary response to a situation involving the creation of a new desire or the strengthening of an existing desire, an attitude is focussed upon a particular object. Attitudes may be seen primarily in cognitive terms, as sets of beliefs. As Sloman argues: 'An attitude, such as love or admiration, is a collection of beliefs etc. focussed on some individual, object or idea.' (Sloman 1986:13). These beliefs would be stored as assumptions in encyclopaedic entries attached to conceptual addresses, for example, as 'John loves Jane', 'John hates Jean', or 'John admires Joan'.

It may be that attitudes also have qualitative properties, or that there is some distinct non-propositional phenomenal memory store for 'qualitative property memories', just as there are non-propositional memory stores for iconic or echoic memories, attached to conceptual addresses. It may be that both of these possibilities are true: that there are attitude-beliefs which loosely describe attitude-phenomenal states. If this is the case what is needed is either an extension of the notion of encyclopaedic entry, as so far explained, to include phenomenal memories, or a separate 'phenomenal' entry to include iconic and echoic (perceptual) memories as well as phenomenal state attitudes.

There is some support for this idea in Damasio (1989). In discussing what is activated at a conceptual address, Damasio includes what Sloman refers to as attitudes. He argues as follows:

> 'The presentation of a line drawing of a violin, or presentation of the word 'violin' (aurally or orthographically) generates a set of time-locked

activations of sensory and motor representations. The activations are generally pertinent to manipulable man-made objects, more specifically pertinent to musical instruments of the string variety, and even more narrowly so to the class of violins. In the visual realm the perceiver is likely to evoke representations of shape, motion, color and texture which will vary from individual to individual according to the experience of violins that each has enjoyed. For those who have held violins in their own hands, or even played a violin, numerous somatosensory representations will also be evoked relative to the pressure the instrument will have exerted in the perceiver's body. But that is hardly all. Auditory representations of the range of sounds produced by the instrument may also be generated; motor programs according to which the appropriate posture and motions applicable to a violin can be organised may also be evoked and readied for appropriate display; finally, a range of somatic states appropriate to one's experience of a violin, e.g. like or dislike, pleasurable or painful sensation, and so on, will also be activated. In short, a wide array of representations will be generated that together define the meaning of the entity momentarily.....' (Damasio 1989:26).

Damasio is offering an answer to the question *what is a concept?* His view is that a concept consists of whatever is triggered or activated in the mind/brain by some stimulus (a word, a drawing....). As he describes it in this quotation (and in further detail in Damasio (1989)), various types of information are triggered and activated in different parts of the brain. These types of information include what might be termed a logical entry, an encyclopaedic entry and 'phenomenal memories' relating to the senses (the look, the sound, the feel of a violin) and to what Sloman calls attitude ('like or dislike, pleasurable or painful sensation').

If a conceptual address does connect to phenomenal memories, as well as memories in propositional form, what form might these memories take? Just as Gorbachev's belief/desire set

for anger (directed at Lukyanov, in the example used to illustrate Sloman's analysis of anger in the previous section) had certain qualitative characteristics, so phenomenal memories may relate in the same way to sets of beliefs and desires stored in long-term memory. Indeed, attitudes may derive from remembered emotions. Gorbachev may have changed his previous attitude of trust to one of hate for Lukyanov, that hatred being a long-term memory version of the qualitative feel of his original anger. The attitude would consist of this belief plus the memory of the qualitative or phenomenal state that partially constituted his emotional experience. Such phenomenal memories may be more or less complex, depending on contextual factors. It may be that for Gorbachev the mention of Lukyanov's name evokes a characteristic phenomenal state, which is 'felt as' hatred. In a wider context - remembering their earlier long friendship - this phenomenal state may be qualified or become less intense. It is important to note that these phenomenal memories may be more or less strong. For some people the phenomenal state memory attached to the concept 'Stalin' may be stronger than the phenomenal state memory attached to the concept 'Lenin', although they may both be the same kind of phenomenal state memory.

Sloman makes several other basic distinctions, which are worth mentioning briefly. *Mood*, like emotion, is temporary, and can be affected by such things as alcohol, the weather, the seasons and proximity to the sea. For Sloman mood is characterised by: 'some kind of global disturbance of, or disposition to disturb, mental processes.' (Sloman 1986:13). If someone is in a particular mood they are disposed to act/react in certain ways. Moods may be considered as emotions without objects or without a cognitive cause. Moods may then affect the beliefs and desires that a person comes to hold. It may be possible to argue that whereas emotional states are initiated by cognitive states, moods are initiated by physiological states.

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Temperament is a more permanent feature of a person's character. A person may be temperamentally angry, fearful, sad, joyful (or, as it once was, choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic or sanguine) etc., in the sense that they have a low threshold for experiencing such emotions. Temperament may be seen as a wide-ranging collection of general dispositions to produce certain goals in specific situations. Some people are disposed to sadness and others to anger. The former will 'look for' situations to feel sad in, and this will affect their beliefs. They will have a tendency to overvalue and possibly sentimentalise certain situations. The latter will look for situations to feel angry in and will tend, for example, to judge the innocent actions of others to be (or to have been) intentionally designed to frustrate. Emotions as responses to actual states of affairs are rational and functional; temperament and mood can make emotions irrational and dysfunctional. They encourage misrepresentation, as beliefs are adjusted to conform to and justify pre-existing mood or temperament.

Returning to the question as to what poets and critics intend by the use of the term 'emotion', one possible answer is that they mean 'attitude' as defined here. It may be the case that it is, in particular, the qualitative or phenomenal memories that they are keen to evoke, and that it is a phenomenal state that they are intent on communicating. Larkin's 'emotional concept' and Heaney's 'feeling' could both be reinterpreted as phenomenal state attitudes.

As has been noted, language is regularly used to express standard emotional responses to situations. The expression 'Bloody trains!' communicates that there is some fact about some trains that the speaker is angry about. Forms of abuse like 'Fascist!' or 'Bastard!' are not used with the intention that the hearer should come to access a set of assumptions about fascists or bastards in order to apply them to the person referred to (perhaps the hearer himself). They are intended to evoke some standard or stereotypical phenomenal state

attitude stored at the conceptual address of FASCIST or BASTARD. This memory is used directly to convey a current emotional response. (It is interesting that in word-recognition tasks subjects typically respond significantly more slowly to such 'emotionally-charged' words.)

The kind of phenomenal states that poets wish to communicate are non-standard and non-stereotypical; they are not easily accessed directly from phenomenal memory, but are constructed within a context that uses phenomenal memories from a variety of sources. This point will be developed in Chapter 7, but I will give one example here. When he wrote his poem, On First Looking into Chapman's Homer, Keats was describing an actual (emotional) experience. He attempts to communicate the qualitative feel of his experience (the qualitative aspect of his emotion) by evoking analogous phenomenal memories. The reader has to imagine (create the phenomenal tone of) what it must have been like for Cortez and his men to suddenly catch sight of the Pacific Ocean for the first time. One way in which the reader is helped to do this is by Keats' use of metrical variation. In Chapter 5 I argued that the trochaic substitutions at the beginning of the final two lines allow extra time and effort to be spent on processing the concepts LOOK and SILENT. What I might now add to that analysis is the suggestion that the extra contextual exploration is partially, if not mainly, spent on evoking phenomenal memories which can be used to evoke the wider sense of rapture that Cortez must have felt. This feeling, or phenomenal state, is then transferred to the feeling of what it was like for Keats to discover Chapman's Homer. No doubt it is altered in some respects as it is transferred, mainly as a result of the reader drawing upon his own phenomenal memories relating to similar discoveries of works of literature. Rhetorical devices and verse features are used to encourage a more extensive exploration of context and an evocation of phenomenal state attitudes, which are then used to communicate a particular phenomenal state, relating to a particular experience.

It is a commonly noted feature of metaphor that it typically consists of a concrete vehicle and an abstract tenor or focus. For poetic metaphor it is often the case that a perceptual memory is used to evoke a phenomenal state attitude. In the lines from Shakespeare's Macbeth, discussed in Chapter 4, the unusual experience of Macbeth's sense of obsessive guilt for the murders he has committed is obtained via the familiar feeling of something sticking to one's hands. It is as though such metaphors (extremely common throughout Shakespeare) appeal to a kind of synaesthesia that connects perceptual memories to phenomenal state memories. Here there is something that having things sticking to one's hands feels like which is similar to what Macbeth's guilt felt like as Birnam Wood was about to approach.

I will consider one or two simpler, less creative, cases of metaphor here. Why is (12) (relatively) poetic and (13) not poetic?

(12) My love is like a red, red rose.

(13) My love is very beautiful.

According to the account developed in Chapter 4, we explore the encyclopaedic entry attached to the concept ROSE and derive assumptions of the kind that a rose is beautiful, delicate and fragrant. We then derive implicatures of the kind that 'my love' (the poet's love) is beautiful, delicate and fragrant. This analysis seems inadequate, however: although this may not be an extremely rich poetic metaphor, it is a lot richer than this implicature analysis would seem to suggest. One way of enriching it is to appeal to phenomenal state attitudes. The experience of a rose (the way it looks and smells, for instance) feels like something. The feeling evoked by 'my love' is created by analogy with this feeling.

Even conventional metaphors can be evocative, in a similar way, but to a much more modest degree. Consider again an example discussed earlier, repeated here as (14) and (15).

(14) He was burning with anger.

(15) He was extremely angry.

It is difficult to give a fully convincing account of (14) in terms of the implicatures communicated after activating contextual assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entry of the concept BURN. The marked stylistic difference between (14) and (15) can perhaps, at least partially, be explained in terms of the phenomenal quality attaching to anger in (14) that comes from the concept BURN. The feeling of burning is used to communicate the feeling of the anger. There is something that it is like to burn, which is similar to what it is like to be angry.

Returning to the previous example, there is, similarly, something that it is like to experience a rose - a red, red, rose - that is similar to what it is like to experience 'my love'. In working out what this is, of course, the reader has to use his experience (memories of the qualitative feel) of being in love: horticultural expertise would not be sufficient. These kind of comparisons force one to concentrate on what it is like to experience a red rose and to focus on how the experience of someone's love might be a similar kind of experience. The extension of experience encouraged here involves making more salient (and enriching) not thoughts (as propositional forms, or sets of propositional forms), but phenomenal state attitudes.

6.6. On Sentimentality.

I suggested in Chapter 5 that there was a problem with example (1), that because there is a stereotyped notion that childhood days are cosy, rosy and innocent, this prevents a true

exploration of the concept CHILDHOOD. In Chapter 4 I argued (following and adapting an argument in Sperber 1985) that certain sets of assumptions are stored not as factual assumptions but as metarepresented beliefs stored under some descriptive comment. For an ethologist 'gorillas are sensitive' would be a factual assumption, while 'gorillas are aggressive' would be stored differently, as a metarepresented assumption. Apparently contradictory assumptions can be stored in the same encyclopaedic entry if one is a factual assumption and the other is a metarepresented assumption. The concept CHILDHOOD clearly has a rich metarepresented entry, corresponding to a culturally endorsed view of childhood. (In fact, this concept probably has several metarepresented entries for many people.) It is the metarepresented chunk of assumptions ('childhood is a time of innocence', etc.) that enables the appropriate belief-desire set for sadness to be constructed in example (1). Because these assumptions are based upon a cultural stereotype they may not reflect individual experience. The emotion evoked by this stereotype is, therefore, a culturally endorsed emotion: it is the emotion that everyone is supposed to feel. The warm, cosy, affectionate feeling is one we may slip into and even enjoy on occasion, but it is otherwise recognised to be something false and sentimental. It only works if we accept beliefs about children and childhood that, personally, we are not wholly committed to. It is this falseness, I would argue, based on the recognition that the set of assumptions used is a metarepresented cultural stereotype, that 'feels like' sentimentality.

Richards (1929) concluded, after his experiment in practical criticism, that the word 'sentimental' was 'one of the most overworked words in the whole vocabulary of literary criticism' (Richards 1929:256), it being 'among the politer terms of abuse' (op. cit.:255). Richards' discussion of sentimentality included the idea that 'a person may be said to be sentimental when his emotions are too easily stirred, too light on the trigger' (op. cit.:258), and the idea that sentimentality is false and occurs when a response is too

great or inappropriate for the occasion.

If the metarepresented set of assumptions is easily accessed, then the attitude associated with them is also easily accessed. A sentimental response is 'too easily stirred', therefore, because it is associated with a metarepresented set of assumptions. The strength of the belief that childhood is 'good' and 'valuable' (based on the strength of the 'attitude' or phenomenal memory stored at the encyclopaedic entry for 'metarepresented' childhood) is greater than that we would allow it based on our experience of our own and others' childhoods. It is a much simpler view of childhood based on a narrowed-down context and, once generally accepted, it is easier to use in communication. Metarepresentation provides stability across contexts and ease of access for metarepresented thoughts and feelings. It may give rise to the communication of different kinds of stock, false, 'easily stirred' form of emotion.

The sentimentality can be indulged and enjoyed even if, in clearer and more honest moments, one recognises the falsity of the beliefs that give rise to it. Epiphanies can be lonely; sentimentality, on the other hand, is cosy and intimate. It is commonly recognised that knowing what one really feels is just as difficult, if not more so, as knowing what one really thinks. It is so much easier to think and feel what one is supposed to think and feel. It is also recognised that one of the aims of literary communication is precisely to clarify what it is one does feel, to sort out true from false feeling and seek to avoid sentimentality and other stock emotions. There is an alternative kind of pleasure in expressing and communicating a genuine contextually enriched feeling or attitude accurately.

The 'Absalom' example, like example (1), might appear to be sentimental out of context. In the context created by the section of the Bible where it occurs it is both emotional and poetic, or, as Alexander Smith claimed, poetic because full of emotion. For it to have its full force, one has to have access to

this wider context, a point made in the discussion of this example in Chapter 5. The feeling evoked here is one of grief, an extreme and intense form of sadness. It is also mixed with other emotions, such as self-directed anger. It was David himself, on an earlier occasion, who had violated one of his own desires. The context enables a particular father/son relationship to be explored in this instance; the emotion and feeling, in consequence, are complex and genuine.

6.7. Conclusion.

Any account of poetic effects or literariness must include an account of affective communication. The common claim is that there is a direct link between poetic effects and emotion, that poetic effects characteristically express or communicate emotional states. This claim may result in a great deal of confusion and imprecision. It is necessary to distinguish emotion from attitude, mood and temperament (as in Sloman 1986; 1987), and to distinguish the various properties of emotional states (as in Rey 1980). Having done this it is possible to engage in detailed analyses of emotional states, by concentrating on their cognitive properties, analysing them in terms of belief/desire sets.

Affective states are communicated by setting up the belief/ desire sets that correspond to the cognitive properties for a particular emotion. These states are heightened in the communication of poetic effects by contextual exploration which makes more of the appropriate conditions available and makes them more highly salient.

I also argued that attitudes as phenomenal state memories are triggered or evoked by rhetorical figures and verse features. The more thorough exploration of context that rhetorical devices and verse may encourage also activates a phenomenal memory store (containing memories of the qualitative aspects

of emotional states). It is the communication of such phenomenal states that is central to poetic effects. Poetic effects are not relevant insofar as they communicate new information, but insofar as they communicate phenomenal aspects of experience.

Just as it is possible to have metarepresented chunks of information that do not necessarily correspond to real states of affairs, and which are stored separately from factual assumptions, so it is possible to have metarepresented culturally endorsed stock attitudes. Metarepresented sets of assumptions and attitudes allow for ease of access (minimising processing costs) and a degree of stability. They rely on narrow contexts: if you sentimentalise a situation, you emphasise its good points and block out its bad points. Any honest acceptance of the latter might complicate your attitude. The feelings communicated by, say, sentimental, horror, gore or adventure films are strong but simple. Such films - and the same goes for any art-form - simplify things-as-they-really-are in order to gain quick access to stock attitudes which allow emotions to be communicated strongly and clearly. The point of poetic effects, and literariness more generally, on the other hand, is to broaden context, and make both thoughts and feelings more precise with regard to actual situations or states of affairs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

VARIETIES OF AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCE.

'It can be seen that Julien had no experience of life; he had not even read any novels.'

Stendahl. The Scarlet and the Black.

7.1. Introduction: What is communicated?.

The question *what is communicated?* is one of the first questions raised in Sperber and Wilson (1986a:1). It is an important question because there is always the danger in pragmatic theory of failing to notice, or conveniently ignoring, the fact that language is used to communicate more than propositional attitudes. Sperber and Wilson use a variety of terms, such as 'impressions', 'images' and 'affect', for what it is that may be communicated nonpropositionally. It may be difficult to be precise about the nature or different types of nonpropositional effects that are communicated, but a comprehensive theory of communication should not simply ignore them.

The importance of this question to the discussion of literary communication was emphasised in Chapter 6, where it was suggested that the communication of 'qualitative feels' or phenomenal states were central to poetic effects. The problem is: how can these non-propositional effects be handled by a theory of verbal communication? Theory-construction can only take place where discrete objects enter into causal relationships with other objects on the basis of clearly definable and distinguishable properties. Propositions are

suitable objects for pragmatic theory because they have structural and logical properties that allow them to interact with other propositions, and other objects with similar properties (such as logical forms), in predictable ways. An explanatory cognitive pragmatic theory produces hypotheses that make predictions about the relationship between semantic representations, nonlinguistic context and full propositional forms. These are all objects over which inference can operate. But, as Sperber and Wilson (1986: 57) argue: 'No one has any clear idea how inference might operate over non-propositional objects: say, over images, impressions or emotions.' Affect (or phenomenal state attitudes, or 'emotional qualia') does not consist of discrete objects (affective representations?) with clearly definable and distinguishable properties that enable them to enter into predictable relationships with other objects. Affect is vague, subjective, and possibly even epiphenomenal. The most convenient answer to the question 'what is communicated?' from the point of view of pragmatic theory is thus: 'propositions and propositional attitudes'. Nonpropositional effects would seem to be highly embarrassing phenomena for a pragmatic theory to handle.

This problem cannot be avoided because literary communication is centrally concerned with affect, with the communication of phenomenal experience. The poet's central problem, as Seamus Heaney (1980) phrased it in the title of one of his essays, is one of putting 'feelings into words'. By this Heaney clearly is not referring to the communication of thoughts about feelings. (For example, if I tell you that 'I feel angst-ridden', I communicate a thought about my feeling, rather than the feeling itself.) He is referring to the communication of feelings themselves: the reader experiences the feeling that the writer intends to communicate. But this is a problem for anyone who uses language poetically or rhetorically.

7.2. Mutual affect.

In chapters 4 and 5 the poetic effects communicated by poetic metaphor and poetic epizeuxis were characterised in terms of a wide array of assumptions which are simultaneously made marginally more salient, and which are communicated as weak implicatures or as assumptions contributing to the formation of new ad hoc concepts. The accessing of these assumptions can be explained in terms of the search for an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance. If, as has been claimed, affective communication is central to poetic effects, one possible conclusion is that the account of poetic effects developed in chapters 4 and 5 is incomplete, but necessarily so because pragmatic theory can only deal with the communication of propositional forms.

This problem is addressed in Sperber and Wilson (1986a) as part of their discussion of poetic effects. The proposal is that nonpropositional effects can be accounted for in terms of a certain kind of propositional effect:

> 'How do poetic effects affect the mutual cognitive environment of speaker and hearer? They do not add entirely new assumptions which are strongly manifest in this environment. Instead, they marginally increase the manifestness of a great many weakly manifest assumptions. In other words, poetic effects create common impressions rather than common knowledge. Utterances with poetic effects can be used precisely to create this sense of apparently affective rather than cognitive mutuality. What we are suggesting is that, if you look at these affective effects through the microscope of relevance theory, you see a wide array of minute cognitive effects.' (Sperber and Wilson 1986a:224).

This account of affective mutuality might form the basis of a more general account of aesthetic experience, as Fabb (1992) suggests. Using a distinction from Goodman (1968), Fabb argues that literary critics have either had recourse to clear and verifiable *articulate* schemas to describe aspects of

literary texts, or *dense* schemas. Articulate schemas would include rhyme schemes, metrical patterns and stanza organisation, as well as the patterns of linguistic and discourse features applied to texts by current work in stylistics. Critics and stylisticians are always looking for new articulate schemas that they can apply to texts, new ways of describing texts in clear and verifiable ways. Dense schemas, on the other hand, describe the experience of reading literary texts by means of metaphor and analogy (a poem as an organic body, for example) rather than direct description. (As a further illustration of the difference, 'time' might be described either in terms of articulate or dense schemas: it might be measured in days, hours, minutes, seconds and milliseconds; it might be described as 'flowing' like a current of water, or 'hurrying' like a winged chariot.)

Although articulate schemas can be used to describe aspects of literary texts, there remains a general sense that what is centrally, or intrinsically, literary about what these texts communicate gets left out of account. (To some extent this may always be a problem of imposing articulate schemas on 'dense' phenomena: guidelines for measuring teaching quality might serve as an example.) Fabb uses the term *Response* to cover phenomena such as emotional responses, evaluative attitudes, impressions of intensity, profundity, sublimity, awareness of epiphanies, poetic experience and aesthetic pleasure. These, he claims, are all 'real cognitive activities stimulated by a text', which cannot, it seems, be adequately described in terms of articulate schemas. Critics use articulate schemas to describe peripheral aspects of literary texts and dense schemas to allude to Response.

Fabb then argues that the relevance theory account of poetic *effects indicates a way of dealing with Response in cognitive* terms; it also shows why it can never be described in terms of articulate descriptive schemas. Response is to be explained in terms of the relevance theory account of poetic effects, i.e. in

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terms of a process whereby a wide array of assumptions are made marginally more salient. Marginal variations in salience are a matter of degree rather than something that can be precisely measured and captured in terms of an articulate schema.

In this account Response as aesthetic experience is a term that may be used to describe the monitoring of characteristic electrochemical activity in the brain: the wide-ranging contextual exploration that characterises poetic effects produces a particular kind of brain activity which simply has 'the feel' of aesthetic experience.

I would like to consider one other recent discussion of the communication of nonpropositional effects here (such discussions being somewhat rare). Gibbs (1989) is interested in what he terms 'intimacy effects'. One of his main examples is the exchange in (1):

(1) Rob: Does Gladys have a good memory?
     Denise: Gladys is just like an elephant.

Gibbs comments:

> 'Why does Denise respond to Rob's question with a metaphorical assertion, and not a simple, literal statement? We assume that Denise wants Rob to use his encyclopaedic knowledge of elephants, including, let's suppose, the folklore that elephants are reputed to have excellent memories. With this information, Rob could infer that 'Gladys has a very good memory'. Although Denise expects Rob to recover the implicature that 'Gladys has a very good memory', and all the implications from it that Rob might be interested in (i.e. regarding Gladys's phenomenal memory powers), it would be unusual if this implicature is all Denise expected Rob to infer. After all, Denise could have explicitly stated, Gladys has a very good memory, in response to Rob's question.' (Gibbs 1989:249-250).

The answer, Gibbs suggests, is that metaphor 'often

presupposes and reinforces an intimacy between speaker and listener, the cultivation of which is, perhaps, the primary function of such language.' Maybe, he suggests, Denise and Rob share assumptions about Gladys's size, these reinforcing Denise's intention 'to achieve a mutuality, a sense of intimacy or complicity.' In conclusion, 'it is the recovery of these nonpropositional, sometimes poetic effects that makes metaphor seem so different from so-called literal language.' (Gibbs 1989:250).

Other kinds of non-literal language, Gibbs claims, seem special in a similar way - sarcasm, for example, and metonymy. He argues that the metonymic utterance in (2) 'creates similar affective import':

(2) The ham sandwich is getting impatient for his check.

Gibbs finds support for this idea in Cohen (1979). It is odd that Gibbs should appeal to Cohen's article for support given Cohen's argument that 'an appreciator of a metaphor must do two things: he must realize that the expression is a metaphor, and he must figure out the point of the expression.' (Cohen 1979:6). Gibbs has elsewhere argued against the view that the trope-type must be identified before the trope-token can be interpreted. This point aside, Cohen's general argument is that interlocutors can share a sense of intimacy through the use of figurative language that depends for its interpretation on a shared range of background assumptions. Cohen adds jokes to the list of language uses that, like metaphor, can 'acknowledge a community' and 'establish intimacy'. The creator and appreciator of a metaphor or a joke, in this view, are drawn closer together by the recognition that they belong to a group (maybe only of two) that shares an exclusive set of common background assumptions.

It is interesting that Gibbs should raise this issue and try to account for stylistic intuitions about the expressive power of metaphor which have generally been ignored. The claim that

intimacy effects are a distinguishing characteristic of metaphor or other types of non-literal language use, however, is somewhat dubious, as is the idea that 'various nonpropositional aesthetic meanings' are typical of non-literal language use.

It is strange to relate the term 'aesthetic meanings' to non-literal language use. The point about non-literal language is that it can be used to communicate a wide range of stylistic effects. Some metaphors communicate poetic (or 'aesthetic') effects; many do not.

The argument about intimacy is essentially an argument about one general aspect of style that marks the relationship between communicator and addressee. Intimacy as an appeal to shared background assumptions is an extremely important contributor to style that affects decisions about what should be made explicit and what should be left implicit. (For discussion of this point see Sperber and Wilson, 1986a: Chapter 4.6; Blakemore, 1989). This aspect of style is, however, neither peculiar to metaphorical use (or non-literal use generally), nor is it necessarily typical of it.

Whatever the problems with Gibbs' argument as it applies to non-literal language use, it does suggest a way in which nonpropositional effects may be explained in propositional terms. The feeling of intimacy, which is nonpropositional, derives from the wider use of mutually manifest contextual information to construct the proposition expressed and to extend the effects of that proposition in context. (Gibbs would not use the term 'mutual manifestness', but his notion of intimacy is based on contextual assumptions being mutual in some sense.) Having a wide mutual context makes it easier for communicator and addressee to communicate and to be confident that the communication will be successful. The ready accessibility of contextual assumptions means that the communicator need not be so explicit (need not encode so

much) and that the addressee is able to rely more on inferencing (and not so much on decoding). The reduction in effort (however minimal) and the reliance on a wide range of mutually manifest contextual assumptions (for use in inference to create a potentially wider range of contextual effects in the time available) will be accompanied by characteristic brain activity which may be monitored and 'experienced' or 'felt' as intimacy. (I am not arguing that there *is* a characteristic brain activity for intimacy effects, which may be monitored: only that the intuitions that Gibbs is trying to account for could be explained in this way. In any case, intimacy effects are distinct from aesthetic effects, so if there is a characteristic brain activity for intimacy effects it will be a different kind of brain activity than that for aesthetic effects.)

A similar point may be made for what happens in the case of humour. The interpretation of jokes, for example, typically involves a contextual garden-pathing: jokes encourage the addressee to access a range of contextual assumptions, only to finally reject them in favour of a new set of assumptions. The re-interpretation, involving a sudden burst of processing activity as new context is accessed, produces a special kind of brain activity, which may be monitored and 'experienced' or 'felt' as humour. A further more dramatic physical reaction may sometimes ensue - laughter.

Bringing together the points made in this section, poetic effects result from a special kind of mental processing - a wide-ranging activation and accessing of contextual assumptions, triggered by the search for an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance. This pragmatic processing - which can be at least as dramatic as the different, but equally special, pragmatic processing that occurs in the interpretation of jokes - produces a special kind of brain activity which is experienced as aesthetic response. In more extreme cases aesthetic response can be accompanied by a marked physiological reaction such as a shiver down the

spine, a constriction of the throat or a bristling of the hair.

This account of poetic effects, in terms of pragmatic processing leaves a number of important questions unanswered. What is the nature of the 'feeling' that accompanies such cognitive activity/ brain activity? What does it mean to talk of 'feeling'? Can a more precise account be given of this rather vague, but seemingly necessary, word? What 'qualitative feel' is common to all poetic effects and what distinguishes the 'feel' of different poetic effects? How do poetic effects relate to aesthetic effects in general? (We cannot talk of wide arrays of implicatures, for example, in the cases of paintings or music). I will address these questions in the rest of this chapter and in Chapter 8.

7.3 Qualia and Consciousness.

'We will never understand what philosophers call 'qualia'.'
    Francis Crick. Quoted in The Independent, 23rd May, 1994.

The main concern of literary art, as of all art, is the accurate expression and communication of the qualitative or phenomenal aspects of experience. Rey (1980) used the term 'emotional qualia' to refer to the qualitative aspects of emotional states. I will extend the notion of qualia in the direction suggested by Rey and use the term *'aesthetic qualia'* to refer to the qualitative aspects of aesthetic experience and of poetic effects more specifically. Before developing the notion of aesthetic qualia in the next section, it is first necessary to consider the more fundamental notion of 'qualia' as it is discussed and debated in the philosophy of mind literature.

There are many phrases used to paraphrase or define the term 'qualia': it refers to the phenomenal or qualitative aspects of experiences, to the 'raw feel' of experience, or to 'what it is like' to have particular experiences. The phrase 'what it is like

to....' was popularised by Nagel's article What is it like to be a bat? (Nagel 1974). Much of the discussion of qualia concentrates on perceptions and sensations, on what it is like to see the colour red, for example, or what it is like to have a headache. Other issues are raised by considering the broader issue of what it is like to be a member of another species, a bat for example. What that something is is impossible for a human being to imagine, however much it is possible to know about bat physiology, bat behaviour or bat brains.

The debate that the notion of qualia gives rise to can be briefly illustrated by looking at the following two frequently cited problems. One is known as 'the inverted qualia problem'. We might agree on using the term 'red' to describe object A, and the term 'green' to describe object B, but we could never be sure, given the purely subjective nature of such experience, whether my experience of what it is like to see red, is not your experience of what it is like to see green, and vice versa. There is no third person perspective we can take on 'redness' or 'greenness' as phenomenal experiences. Another way of putting this is that there is no is/seems distinction. There is no way of knowing whether a particular quale of yours in response to a simple stimulus is identical to a quale of mine in response to that same stimulus. The problem here is that, given the subjective nature of qualia, can anything interesting ever be known or said about them?

Another problem is known as 'the absent qualia problem'. A machine may process information in an apparently rational way. Though there is a sense in which the machine thinks, it is not aware of having thoughts. A chess computer, for instance, manages to play a game of chess, but it does not experience the game of chess as its human opponent does. It follows that rational thought, even rational behaviour, is not evidence that a thinking creature experiences qualia. Qualia seem to be; but are they? The problem here is that, given that machines (including brains) can process information perfectly well without qualia, do we need to bother about them in explaining

how minds work? Aren't they just an epiphenomenal extra?

Many people think that qualia are important and cannot be ignored. They often cite the following story (originally told in Jackson (1982)) to support this view. Jackson's point is to show that knowing 'what it is like' to have an experience is distinct from the position of knowing everything there is to know objectively about the nature of that experience. The story goes as follows. Mary is a brilliant scientist who has spent her life shut up in a strictly controlled room displaying only various shades of black, white and grey. She has become the world's greatest expert on the physics, chemistry and biology of the visual experience of colour. She knows, for example, about retinas and the interplay of retinal cones, that each experience of a particular type of colour or shade is produced by unique ratios of activity in the cones. Were Mary to be released from the room, however, she would discover something about the visual experience of colour that she did not already know: she would discover 'what it is like' to see red, blue and green. It follows that there are some facts about colour experience which cannot be known by the natural sciences.

The qualia issue is hotly debated by philosophers of mind. The main problem is one of how qualia can fit into a functionalist and materialist view of mind (which is a version of the problem of how nonpropositional effects can be accounted for within pragmatic theory.) There are three basic positions adopted by philosophers of mind with regard to qualia: (i) a compatibilist position, combining the belief that there are qualia with an adherence to a functionalist and materialist view of mind; (ii) an incompatibilist position that accepts qualia and sees this acceptance as a challenge to or rejection of functionalist/materialist positions; (iii) an incompatibilist view that rejects qualia in the defence of functionalist and materialist positions. (See Shoemaker (1991) for a succinct summary of these various positions.)

The main worry about qualia is how they fit into a broader picture of the mind. I will take one step back at this point to raise some other general philosophy of mind issues in order to provide some perspective on the qualia issue. Dualism and panpsychism aside, philosophy of mind is chiefly concerned with the problem of describing the properties of minds and trying to explain how it is that material brains can come to have these nonphysical properties. According to Fodor, taking the view that thinking creatures are 'material through and through' raises three major questions: '1. How could anything material be conscious? 2. How could anything material be *about* anything? 3. How could anything material be rational?' (Fodor 1992:5).

The third of these questions is the one that (following Turing) it is now widely believed can be answered within a theoretical cognitive science framework. Material states of machines (of whatever kind) may correspond to symbols having semantic content. Changes of states can be driven purely by the material properties of symbols. A certain material state of the machine, corresponding to one set of symbols, will cause another material state of the machine, corresponding to a different set of symbols. As these symbols have a semantic content, the machine by changing state and manipulating symbols also manipulates semantic content and can be designed to do this in a rational way. Just as an appropriately programmed computer is a machine that displays rationality, so the human mind is a similar kind of machine, where electrochemical changes in brain states, rather than, say, electrical conductivity, display rationality. Rationality, in other words, can be a property of material entities.

It is generally assumed that for physical states of matter to have these kinds of mental property, the mental must supervene on the physical. According to the supervenience thesis mental properties cannot vary while physical properties remain constant. In other words, identical brain states entail

identical mental states, but not vice versa. As supervenience is one-way dependence, no identity of mental-type properties and physical-type properties is implied.

The mental and material are linked by causal role. A given brain state determines a mental property if and only if the brain state has the causal role definitive of the supervening mental property. While this explains how brains can process information, it does not explain how this information is *about* things in this or some other possible world. Nor does it explain how we can be aware of this information. Mental states not only interact rationally with other mental states, they refer outwards to states of affairs in the world. They may also have qualitative properties. Functionalist accounts of mind may offer an explanation of rational information processing, but they cannot, it seems, account for other important mental properties. In particular, as I shall argue, they cannot account for those mental properties that are central to aesthetic experience.

What does it mean to say that symbols have semantic content? This question is a version of Fodor's second question - the question of aboutness or intentionality, otherwise known as Brentano's problem. How could a set of symbols, or a brain state, be about states of affairs out there in the world? Brentano, in fact, pointed out that things are much more complicated than that last question would suggest. Beliefs (and desires) can be about things that do not even exist. We can have beliefs about ghosts, or about Madame Bovary. Beliefs can also be about other beliefs or desires. The property of intentionality is one that is peculiar to minds. Clearly Brentano's thesis, that mind facts are not reducible to brain facts (how can matter be *about* things?) represents the strongest possible challenge to the strong materialist position that holds that facts about mental states are identical to facts about brain states. Philosophers are, however, beginning to suggest ways in which this second question may be answered by developing theories of content (for example, Fodor himself

in Fodor (1990)).

Fodor's first question is, in his own view, the most problematic. As Fodor himself puts it:

> 'Nobody has the slightest idea how anything material could be conscious. Nobody even knows what it would be like to have the slightest idea about how anything material could be conscious. So much for the theory of consciousness.' (Fodor 1992:5)

Consciousness is a property of mind that is clearly humanly interesting; it is not, perhaps, Fodor suggests, a property that is scientifically interesting. To put this another way: consciousness matters to us as human beings - it probably matters more than anything else; it may, however, because of its subjective nature, be something that we cannot ever get to have interesting theories about.

It should be noted that this is becoming a contentious point. There are not only philosophers, but also psychologists who think that, while it may be the case that nobody knows what it is like for something material to be conscious, there are aspects of consciousness that can be fruitfully researched. Marcel (1988:121), for example, argues that:

> 'reference to consciousness in psychological science is demanded, legitimate, and necessary. It is demanded since consciousness is a central (if not *the* central) aspect of mental life. It is legitimate since there are as reasonable grounds for identifying consciousness as there are for identifying other psychological constructs. It is necessary since it has explanatory value, and since there are grounds for positing that it has causal status.' (Marcel 1988:121).

Assuming the qualia issue to be part of the problem of consciousness, I will simply point out that reference to qualia is *demanded* since it is a central (if not *the* central) aspect of poetic effects and aesthetic experience.

Current discussions of consciousness do not usually treat

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consciousness as a unitary phenomenon. We can have access to and be conscious of certain of our thoughts. We can also be conscious of qualitative states, of itches, tickles, the redness of red and what it is like to be sad. The qualia problem is a part of the problem of consciousness: how mere matter can have qualitative properties is part of the broader problem as to how mere matter can be conscious at all.

Nagel (1974) regards qualia as important and would like to have a theory of them, but concludes that such a theory is impossible. He argues that qualitative or phenomenal properties of mind, by their very nature, elude a treatment in physicalist or materialist terms:

> 'If physicalism is to be defended, the phenomenological features must themselves be given a physical account. But when we examine their subjective character it seems that such a result is impossible. The reason is that every subjective phenomenon is essentially connected with a single point of view, and it seems inevitable that an objective, physical theory will abandon that point of view.' (Nagel 1974:176).

He goes on to argue that there is a 'dialectically relevant difference between phenomenological facts and physical or neurophysiological facts.' The latter can be studied as objective facts open to third-person perspective; the phenomenological character of experience cannot be studied in the same way, as it is only available to a first-person perspective.

The argument that phenomenal awareness, and consciousness more generally, are beyond our comprehension, and hence beyond the bounds of theory, may make use of the notion of epistemic boundedness. Everyone would agree that there is just so much that a frog can understand about the world, however much it tries. A frog certainly cannot understand the world as a human does. Its input systems limit what the frog actually sees and hears; it has no language with which to develop and communicate thoughts; it lacks the rich array of concepts that humans are able to employ in thought; it is unable to

metarepresent beliefs and desires. The sad thing (for the frog) is that there is nothing it can do about this situation: the mind/brain of the frog is epistemically bounded in a variety of ways which makes its understanding of the world fall short of human understanding.

Humans are also likely to be epistemically bounded. The epistemic boundedness thesis involves the idea that there are, as Fodor puts it: 'endogenously determined constraints on our mental capacity........on the beliefs that we can entertain'. (Fodor 1983:120). Certain concepts, certain thoughts may simply be beyond the capabilities of our mind/brains. It may even be that phenomenal consciousness, like free will, is something we will just never get a grasp of. In the evocative phrase used by Nagel 'the world extends beyond the reach of our minds.' (Nagel 1986:90). (For further discussions of epistemic boundedness see Chomsky 1988:147-151; Fodor 1983:120-126).

Those who hold the view that consciousness remains an insurmountable problem for a science of the mind take the view (known as the emergence thesis) that consciousness must have emerged from matter when matter reached a certain level and type of organisation. (See, for example, McGinn's account of his dialogue with extraterrestrial philosophers in McGinn (1993).) In the beginning there were just lumps of matter, obeying the laws of physics. Then in (at least) one odd corner of the universe some of these lumps developed into living organisms. Later, some of these living lumps developed consciousness: they got to know what it was like to be the kind of lumps of matter that they were. Later still, when what it was like to be the kinds of lumps of matter that they were became a lot more complex, art was invented to explore this complexity.

The question for philosophy is why did some lumps of matter get to be conscious and not others? Also, what was it about

the former lumps that allowed them to get to be conscious? Some philosophers seek to demystify the problem by treating qualia and consciousness as epiphenomenal (for example, Dennett 1993). Such 'demystifiers' believe it is possible to get on with cognitive science without bothering too much about qualia. 'Mysterians', on the other hand, believe that the failure to explain qualia and consciousness, including the failure to explain how mere matter got to be conscious, presents a serious obstacle. Whether it will always remain an obstacle is debatable. Nagel makes the following suggestion:

> 'The strange truth seems to be that certain complex, biologically generated physical systems, of which each of us is an example, have rich nonphysical properties. An integrated theory of reality must account for this, and I believe that if and when it arrives, probably not for centuries, it will alter our conception of the universe as radically as anything has to date.' (Nagel 1986:51).

If it is possible to conduct research into aspects of qualia/consciousness then one interesting question to pursue must be the issue of what mental representations and processes need to be conscious. The point of the absent qualia problem is that consciousness is not generally necessary for intelligent behaviour. In fact most of the information processing that goes on in our minds is unconscious. The mental representations and mental processing taking place in our input modules are clearly inaccessible to consciousness. Much of our thinking to do with acquired skills does not need to be conscious, though a lot of it that isn't could be (e.g. driving, playing tennis). The interesting thing about such activities is that if we do stop to think about the mechanics of what we are doing then we start to make mistakes. The other interesting thing is that we only need to be conscious when things go wrong, when we are faced by a problem.

The phenomenon of blindsight (which has been fairly extensively researched) provides a clear example of how the mind can process and represent information of which it is not conscious. Experiments have been conducted during which

people whose field of vision is limited consistently make correct 'guesses' about the presence of objects in that part of their field of vision in which they claim to be blind. Mental representations are constructed despite the fact that the blindsighted person has no conscious visual awareness of them.

Consciousness is clearly, then, not essential to all mental life. It might be suggested, as it has been by demystifiers, that it is not essential at all, that it is epiphenomenal, an evolutionary by-product, an accompanying event outside the chain of causation. Of course, one might turn this argument around and ask, if consciousness is merely a collateral product of mental processing why it is not a collateral product of *all* mental processing? Minds might not need consciousness for much of what they do, but perhaps they need it for some of what they do.

The qualia debate (like the broader consciousness debate, of which it is a part) is a lively one. Whether qualia are considered to be a mystery, a problem, or simply a collateral product of the mind, they cannot be ignored. One thing, however, is sure: minds certainly need qualia if they are going to have aesthetic experiences.

7.4 Aesthetic Qualia.

Despite the many debates concerning the status of qualia, any attempt to characterise aesthetic experience - or, more narrowly, literariness or poetic effects - has to take the notion of qualia seriously. In Marcel's terms, reference to it is 'demanded' because of its centrality. Rey (1980) uses the notion of 'emotional qualia' to describe what he calls 'just plain "feelings of", for example, fear, embarrassment, affection, hope, joy.' (Rey 1980:177). I shall use the term *'aesthetic qualia'* to refer to a special kind of emotional qualia, involving an intense, precise and focussed phenomenal

state. Aesthetic qualia as phenomenal states should play a central role in a pragmatic account of literary style. As Fabb (1992) argues, the relevance theory account of poetic effects suggests a way in which that might be done.

First I would like to develop the notion of aesthetic qualia in relation to Rey's notion of emotional qualia. Emotional qualia may be more or less intensely felt, more or less subtly discriminated. Rey suggests that many of us, most of the time, may be rather poor at discriminating our inner life, that 'as reading Proust can often remind us, we are all probably much poorer at introspection (knowing what we feel and discriminating among our feelings) than we ordinarily suppose.' (Rey 1980:178). Poetic or literary writing encourages us to exercise and develop 'introspective acuity'. The aesthetic qualitative experience it communicates is 'intense' and 'discriminating'.

The achievement of poetic effects requires a wide exploration of context that reorganises encyclopaedic memory and establishes and rearranges links between concepts. Developing introspective acuity is partly a question of encouraging such reorganisation and making the links and wide-ranging contextual effects more salient. It is also, perhaps, partly a question of distinguishing factual assumptions from metarepresented sets of assumptions. But the kind of introspective acuity to which Rey refers crucially involves the evocation and creation of phenomenal states. Emotional qualia may refer to the phenomenal aspects of all emotional states or attitudes, including the stock emotions and stock attitudes associated with narrow contexts. In the latter case, standard and simplified sets of circumstances are exploited by second-rate art to provide an easy trigger for horror, anger, disgust, sadness or joy. Aesthetic qualia refer, more specifically, to the phenomenal aspects of more complex experience, associated with the exploration of extended contexts. They require more effort to achieve, but offer more in return.

Aesthetic qualia differ from emotional qualia in general, then, in two crucial ways: they are more intense; they are more discriminative and complex. This intensity and subtle discrimination between feelings or phenomenal experiences relates not just to the qualitative feel of emotion/attitude, but also to perceptual states. Aldous Huxley pointed out in The Doors of Perception that the quality of our perceptual-phenomenal experience - what it is like to have certain familiar visual experiences for example - may be affected by chemical change in the body as a result of taking drugs like mescalin. As Huxley wrote:

> 'Mescalin raises all colours to a higher power and makes the percipient aware of innumerable fine shades of differences, to which, at ordinary times, he is completely blind.' (Huxley 1954: 25).

Huxley is making the same point here about the intensity ('raises......to a higher power') and discrimination ('innumerable fine shades of difference') of phenomenal experience. He goes on to suggest that mescalin allows us the kind of visual experiences that are more familiar to artists and which artists attempt to express and communicate.

The same intensities and powers of subtle discrimination are available to the other senses and are put to use, for example, in wine-tasting and perfumery. The point here is that a diverse group of people may receive the same perceptual information - they may be looking at the same landscape or the same pair of trousers (to use one of Huxley's examples), they may be sniffing the same perfumes or tasting the same wines - but the qualitative or phenomenal aspect of such experiences will be different. Some will have more intense experiences than others; some will have experiences that allow for more subtle discriminations to be made. The inverted qualia problem has raised the possibility that our qualitative experiences are different in kind. Here I am suggesting that they are likely to be different in degree. Aesthetic qualia refer to phenomenal experiences that are 'raised to a higher power' and that may be expressed in terms of 'innumerable fine shades of differences.'

7.5 Precision and indeterminacy.

Because the phenomenal character of our experiences is capable of subtle discrimination, it has often been argued that the precise and accurate expression and communication of such experiences are essential. John Middleton Murry, for example, in The Problem of Style, argues that expressing a feeling or emotion precisely is the central problem of style. In particular, as has already been noted, he values metaphor as a device for achieving such precision: 'metaphor is essential to the precision of language......try to be precise and you are bound to be metaphorical.' (Middleton Murry 1922:75). When Middleton Murry uses the words 'feeling' and 'emotion' in this context I understand him to intend phenomenal state 'attitude', or what I have otherwise been referring to as phenomenal or qualitative (aspects of) experience.

The pragmatic account of metaphor discussed in Chapter 4 emphasised the indeterminacy of what is communicated by poetic metaphor. This, it is argued, is due to the lack of a clear boundary between implicatures and implications, between those assumptions clearly intended by the communicator and those accessed on the responsibility of the addressee alone. The question arises: how is this *indeterminacy* about what is communicated by a poetic metaphor consistent with Middleton Murry's claim about the *precision* of metaphor?

Before answering this question I will consider Middleton Murray's argument about precision in a little more detail. To illustrate one of his central points about style he sets himself the task of attempting to put his own feelings into words as he sat preparing his lectures on style:

> 'At the moment I am writing these words, I am distinctly depressed. I have left the composition of these lectures too long, and I am pressed for time; I am very doubtful whether I shall be able to systematize my emotions. The place where I am

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> living is supposed to be in perpetual sunshine. That is the only reason for living there. The wind is howling; the sky is overcast; and there has not been a really fine day for a fortnight...' (Middleton Murry 1922:68).

Such a description, Middleton Murry claims, does not really communicate his feeling at all clearly or precisely. The reader, he writes, now 'knows some of the circumstances; by exercising his imagination he can evoke in himself an emotional condition that may be similar to mine; but there is no telling. I have not communicated my emotions to him.' (Middleton Murry 1922:68).

What Middleton Murry has done in this passage is provide a generalised statement or thought about his feelings: 'I am depressed'. All such thoughts are interpretations of feelings or phenomenal states. In saying 'I am depressed' he communicates a thought about his feeling and not the feeling itself. He also describes the weather - 'howling wind', 'overcast sky' - as a way of indirectly communicating his own feeling. 'Howling wind' and 'overcast sky' activate phenomenal memories of a fairly standard kind, memories which support each other and serve to make the feeling of depression marginally more precise.

The problem, as Middleton Murry sees it, is for the writer to 'find some symbol which will evoke in [the reader] an emotional reaction as nearly as possible identical with the emotion [the writer] is feeling.' (Middleton Murry, 1922:68). This point is similar to the one Larkin makes, in <u>The Pleasure Principle</u>, that, in seeking to communicate what he calls 'an emotional concept', a poet seeks to 'construct a verbal device that will reproduce this emotional concept in anyone who cares to read it, anywhere, any time.' (Larkin 1983: 80).

Middleton Murry makes a second attempt at finding some symbol to express his feelings:

> 'I am depressed; depressed by the prospect of crowding the work of a year into three weeks; by

living sunless in a house and town that were built only for sunshine. A cold wind prowls around the windows. The peach-tree in the garden came into flower too soon; the cold and the wind have stripped it. I too have been premature.' (Middleton Murry 1922:74).

He insists that this passage is not presented as a great achievement of style. It is, however, presented as stylistically superior to the first passage. He considers it to be more compact, more forceful, more focussed and clearer. The images used to express his feeling are slightly more original. In the second passage the wind 'prowls' rather than 'howls'. Both are metaphors, of course, though he argues that 'howl' is so conventional that it no longer merits its metaphorical status. Although conventional metaphors can be brought back to life in an appropriate context, it is generally the case that, given no encouragement to do otherwise, the same small set of relatively strongly communicated implicatures are communicated. Alternatively, the word 'howl' may simply refer to a range of sounds of a certain kind, including the sounds that strong winds make. The encyclopaedic entries attached to the concepts WIND and PROWL are less commonly activated and accessed at the same time. The reader is encouraged to seek out properties of 'prowl' that may also be properties of 'wind'. The reader's ability to construct the relevant contextual assumptions on the basis of assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entries attached to these concepts depends, in other words, on the reader's previous experience and ability to empathise and extend experience. Literary communication generally depends upon knowing what it is like to have certain experiences (in terms of rich phenomenal tone, rather than simply sets of beliefs) and extends the range and depth of these experiences; creative metaphor works in the same way on a smaller scale. Middleton Murr .y argues that the concept PROWL gives a better idea of 'the particular beastliness of the wind with which I was inflicted.' Implicatures to do with the wind being beast-like, threatening, frightening, dangerous, and with the writer being encircled and trapped may be said to be

communicated here. Alternatively, these assumptions may be seen as making a contribution to the communication of a new ad hoc concept related to the concept PROWL.

In a more original metaphor of this kind, the sense of accuracy may derive, in part, from the greater salience of the particular assumptions used either as implicatures or as contributing to new concepts. The encyclopaedic entries of concepts remain 'open' until external context encourages a narrow range of assumptions to become particularly salient for use in inferential interpretation. As seen in an example from Chapter 3, the concept STUDENT contains a relatively rich encyclopaedic entry. The presence of context from the encyclopaedic entries of other concepts, such as THEATRE TICKET or LIBRARY BOOK, makes certain entries in the encyclopaedia attached to the concept for STUDENT particularly salient. These might be assumptions to do, say, with students paying half-price or students being able to borrow books for one month. These are readily accessible assumptions stored at the encyclopaedic entry for 'student'. The thought communicated in this example is a simple one and requires a determinate and easily accessible context. The thought communicated by a poetic or creative metaphor needs a more elaborate context. New concepts and assumptions have to be constructed. Setting the context up in such a way that it communicates the thought accurately is difficult. Because the thought is elusive, metaphors and other figures are required in order to bring together those encyclopaedic entries needed to narrow down or contain the range of assumptions that form the interpretation and to set up the process (outlined in Chapters 4 and 5) by which they do this. Middleton Murry makes the point that his attempt to be more precise about his feelings led automatically to the use of (creative) metaphors in order to achieve this aim. He did not deliberately set out to invent metaphors. A certain kind of thinking finds its natural expression through metaphor.

Middleton Murry is not primarily trying to communicate

information in this brief passage; he is trying to communicate his experience of what it is like to be in the particular situation in which he finds himself - late with his lectures, and lousy weather outside. My suggestion has been that the more extensive exploration of the concepts PROWL and WIND trigger the evocation of phenomenal memories. It may be the case that phenomenal memories are evoked whenever the construction of contextual assumptions requires a significantly greater amount of effort and energy. The wide-ranging search for contextual assumptions, multiple inferencing and increased salience of a wide array of assumptions require a special kind of brain activity which, perhaps, activates the store of phenomenal memories and causes them to become more salient. I have been using the term 'evocation' loosely to refer to the accessing of phenomenal memories. It might be used to refer to this particular process.

Middleton Murry also uses the premature peach-tree as symbol/metaphor of his own condition - 'I too have been premature'. Again this is a marginally more creative image than that of the 'overcast sky'. But this is arguably not a particularly successful symbol. The peach-tree would have been more poetic without this final sentence which makes unnecessarily explicit an assumption that the reader should have been able to work out for himself. It is the reader's own contribution to the inferential processes of constructing, strengthening and drawing together the contextual assumptions needed to achieve an interpretation that triggers the evocation and communication of phenomenal memories.

The indeterminacy on the level of implicatures - which assumptions does the writer intend to communicate? - is a consequence of the intention to be as precise as possible about the phenomenal tone of the experience. The activation of a wide-range of assumptions (so wide that it clearly becomes impossible to say which ones actually are communicated) helps

to sharpen (make more accurate or precise) the phenomenal tone of the experience communicated. The creative thought (consisting of new concepts and the new simultaneously accessed set of assumptions) is causally connected to the intense, subtly discriminated phenomenal tone. Aesthetic qualia derive from creative thoughts, so conceived.

7.6 Conclusion: phenomenality, memoire involontaire and aesthetic pleasure.

One can accept Middleton Murry's argument without considering his example to be a particularly successful use of a creative metaphor to evoke precise feeling. I will return here to an analysis of the poetic metaphors that I have already discussed. First I will consider Sperber and Wilson's example of a poetic metaphor, repeated here as (1):

(1)   Son encre est pale. (His ink is pale.)
       (said of Leconte de Lisle by Flaubert)

Leconte de Lisle's poetry evokes a feeling in Flaubert which he attempts to communicate by bringing the concepts INK and PALE together. The implicatures suggested in the analysis of this example in Chapter 4 are not entirely satisfactory. One problem is that there is a considerable degree of overlap between the meanings they express. The other problem is that they appear to be incomplete; although the list of implicatures is indeterminate, it still seems that, whatever additions are made to the list, they would not combine to fully express the full force of what is intuitively communicated by the utterance.

With regard to the first problem, it could be argued that the metaphor contributes a new concept to the proposition expressed by the utterance, rather than communicates a range of weak implicatures. What Flaubert is communicating, according to this idea, is that Leconte de Lisle's poetry is 'X'

where '*X*' is a new ad hoc concept close in some respects to the concept PALE. In what respects might '*X*' be close to PALE? It may be that they share assumptions in their encyclopaedic entries, though it is more likely that assumptions have to be specially constructed for the occasion. The construction of these new assumptions would have to take into account assumptions in the encyclopaedic entry of INK, and perhaps WRITING and POETRY: the assumptions constructed would have to be able to be true of Leconte de Lisle's writing.

Alternatively (or additionally), it may be that the concept '*X*' is close to the concept PALE in terms of the phenomenal memories it potentially evokes. If this is the case then it might provide an answer to the second problem with the implicature account mentioned above. There is something that it is like to experience 'paleness' which corresponds to something that it is like to experience Leconte de Lisle's poetry. In order to understand and fully appreciate this metaphor the reader needs a rich 'phenomenal entry' for the concept POETRY. The attempt to understand and appreciate this metaphor may, on the other hand, also lead to an enrichment of this phenomenal entry: it may be that the phenomenal tone has to be created, that what is being expressed is a feeling about a kind of poetry that one had not considered before. Any set of assumptions that one might use to describe what is communicated would actually be thoughts about a phenomenal memory or phenomenal tone (just as, on a much more trivial level, 'I feel depressed' is a thought about a phenomenal tone).

In the Macbeth example, the reader, or spectator in the theatre, uses what he knows about stickiness, and things sticking to his hands, to understand how Macbeth feels about his murders. What he knows may be in the form of assumptions which can be used in an inferential process to yield implicatures. Such implicatures as were discussed in Chapter 4, however, do not seem to convey the force and expressive power of the metaphor. It is likely that the metaphor is also used to evoke the feeling (phenomenal memory) of what it is like to have

something sticking to one's hands. Something of that feeling can be used to communicate the particular feeling (phenomenal tone) of Macbeth's obsessive and difficult-to-conceal guilt. This is a highly creative process in that the reader must metarepresent the sets of beliefs Macbeth was likely to have had in order to see what feelings or phenomenal memories they evoke.

This evocation of phenomenal memories also applies to poetic epizeuxis and the poetic use of verse effects. There are many ways in which language can be used to trigger such evocation by encouraging more effort to be put into conceptual exploration. The techniques of art, Shklovsky (1917) claimed, work to slow down perception so that objects and experiences can be perceived afresh. Art 'exists to make us feel things; to make the stone *stony*.' Shklovsky's essay, discussed in Chapter 2, may be interpreted as making a point about the evocation of phenomenal memory.

Such evocations may also occur in the case of conventional metaphors (a point made in Chapter 6 and repeated here). In Chapters 4 and 6 I compared the following utterances, repeated here as (2):

(2a) He was burning with anger.
(2b) He was very angry.

It is possible to argue that (2a) differs from (2b) not just in terms of the assumptions made available by the concept BURN (whatever they are) which enter into the final interpretation, but also in terms of the phenomenal memories activated by the concept BURN. There is something that burning is like that being angry is also like.

The connection between phenomenal memories and propositional memories is no doubt a complex one. I am assuming that affective phenomenal memories can be activated by rhetorical figures and schemes used poetically, in such a

way that one can come to have the feeling as a result of reading the words. This is not necessarily the case with perceptual phenomenal memories, however. Sperber (1975) suggests that smells and certain visual phenomena such as colours are stored differently in memory. In Sperber (1975:115-123), he claims that smells belong to the field of symbolism: they are evocative in the sense that symbols in general are evocative. The human sense of smell can distinguish hundreds of thousands of smells, even though smells are not lexicalised and stored independently in memory. As in the case of tastes we are only able to talk about them metonymically, in terms of their causes or effects: the smell or taste of garlic or kumquats, the smell of a rose, or freshly fallen snow. Sperber notes that: 'Our knowledge about different smells figures in the encyclopaedia not in an autonomous domain, but scattered among all the categories whose referents have olfactive qualities.' (Sperber 1975:116). Colours, on the other hand, have lost their metonymic character - they may be fully lexicalised and hierarchically organised. But visual phenomena also have a phenomenal aspect stored in memory which can be highly activated in certain circumstances (for example, after taking mescalin, as Aldous Huxley pointed out).

Sperber makes the further point that smells cannot normally be retrieved from memory through *recall* (at least, by most people); they can only be retrieved from memory through *recognition*. To compensate this fact, Sperber argues, such kinds of perceptual memories are powerful in the way they evoke associated memories. He compares the effect of a smell to 'a magician who plucks a long multi-coloured string of handkerchiefs out of a top hat that seemed empty.' (Sperber 1975:117).

This account of perceptual phenomenal memory is suggestive with regard to poetic effects and aesthetic experience in general. In particular it recalls Proust's aesthetics, which is also based on there being two distinct types of memory. In

'*Swann* Explained by Proust', Proust (1988:234-236) explains that his work 'is dominated by the distinction between involuntary and voluntary memory'. The one type of memory can be willed; the other comes spontaneously and unannounced. Voluntary memory is 'a memory of the intellect and of the eyes', whereas involuntary memory may be awoken by smell or taste. Voluntary memory usually falsifies the past; involuntary memory, on the other hand, is more trustworthy. This distinction between kinds of memory corresponds to Sperber's distinction between memory retrieval as recognition and memory retrieval as recall. Recall is voluntary in Proust's terms; recognition is involuntary. But recognition may or may not evoke a large remembrance of times past. Where the long multi-coloured string of coloured handkerchiefs *is* pulled out of the hat this evokes an aesthetic experience, as it did in the case of Proust/Marcel's exquisite pleasure upon experiencing the 'perfume' of a petite madeleine dipped into tea. Of the memories brought back by the madeleine, Proust observed that 'he could have remembered them no doubt, but without their colour or their charm' - without, he might have added, the vivid sensation of phenomenal memory and the awareness of innumerable fine shades of differences. For Proust it is only to involuntary memories (and phenomenal memories) that the artist should go for the raw material of his work.

Proust notes that the workings of involuntary memory may be intensely pleasurable and that this pleasure is equivalent to aesthetic pleasure. Works of art, insofar as they yield aesthetic effects, trigger involuntary memory. It might be said that the physiological reaction to the special kind of processing that leads to poetic effects is, or often can be, experienced as a pleasurable one. This raises the question (among others) as to whether there is any evolutionary sense to aesthetic experience and aesthetic pleasure. Appreciating landscapes, making sculptures or singing songs are hardly likely to confer any evolutionary advantage in themselves.

Roger Fry posed the question from the point of view of someone interested in pictorial art: 'Biologically speaking, art is blasphemy. We were given our eyes to see things, not to look at them' (Fry 1920; 1981:33). The senses developed as a means of providing accurate information about the world as quickly and economically as possible. As Fodor (1983) argues, the evolutionary advantage of encapsulated input modules was to decode domain specific representations quickly and reliably into a common language of thought. Given the evolutionary background, Fry argues, it remains puzzling that we should take pleasure from the process of looking at things, that we should find objects, groups of objects, shapes and colours, beautiful in themselves. The same holds for the other senses. The sense of smell does not simply provide information, it is enjoyed in perfumes. The tastes of foods and drinks also are indulged and enjoyed for the sheer qualitative feel of the experience. There is no doubt that qualia, intensely felt, are pleasurable, as even the demystifiers are happy to admit. In a section of Dennett (1993) entitled 'Enjoying Our Experiences', Dennett has a heading where he quotes Wilfred Sellars, 'over a fine bottle of Chambertin, Cincinnati, 1971', as saying: 'But Dan, qualia are what make life worth living!' Qualia are worth indulging for qualia's sake. Again, Dennett (1993:383) quotes Shoemaker (from the Tufts Colloquium 1988) as saying: 'If what I want when I drink fine wine is information about its chemical properties, why don't I just read the label?' It is possible to learn to become more sensitive to, and to discriminate between, subtly differing tastes and smells, and to obtain more pleasure from them as a result. In the same way it is possible to become more sensitive to the stylistic effects of language and, thereby, obtain more pleasure from its skilful use.

The aesthetic sense, I would argue, is crucially tied to intuitions about relevance. It reflects a sensitivity to the costs and benefits of processing. At a basic level, certain visual phenomena - shapes, textures, colours, mixtures of colours - may simply be easier or less costly in visual

most aware had better survival chances. Humphrey (1992) argues that consciousness conferred a biological advantage through allowing those who possessed it to 'understand, respond to and manipulate the behaviour of other human beings.' (Humphrey 1992:36).) The more intense phenomenal awareness associated with aesthetic qualia, while not in itself biologically advantageous, reflects the basic advantage of being accurately aware of one's surroundings.

While the aesthetic sense is not in itself a biological necessity, then, it has developed out of the biological need to represent qualitative phenomena accurately and economically. We go on wanting more intense and subtly discriminated qualitative experiences, just as we go on wanting to find out the truth about language or the laws of physics. We no longer need such accurate representations, but the motivation and enjoyment of seeking them out remains. It is in this sense that the aesthetic sense is crucially tied to intuitions about relevance.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

In the Introduction I raised the following related questions: how should literariness - what is essentially literary about the experience offered by literary artworks - be defined?; what gives a literary work of art its aesthetic value?; what kind of a thought is a 'poetic thought'? From the standpoints of literary criticism and aesthetics the answers would involve an interpretation and evaluation of a particular reading experience or of a type of reading experience. From the standpoint of a literary theory grounded in pragmatic theory the answer would be in the form of characteristic mental representations and mental processes. I have switched freely between the terms 'poetic thought'/ 'poetic effects' and the more general 'aesthetic experience'. This invites the further question: if it is possible to define a 'poetic representation', what relationship would this have to a more general aesthetic representation? In other words, what do poetic effects have in common with other kinds of aesthetic effects?

I.A.Richards (1924) asked much the same set of questions, but without the benefit of current theories of cognition and communication. What has made these big questions manageable here is first, the development of a theory of style (including poetic style) in relevance theory, and secondly, the fact that I have mainly concentrated on small-scale poetic effects (namely, the effects achieved by poetic metaphor, poetic epizeuxis and metrical variation).

I would argue, however, that the account of these small-scale effects makes a significant contribution to the study of

literariness. I have tried to show (in the case of the central metaphor from Seamus Heaney's poem Digging) how (potentially creative) metaphors are not necessarily particularly poetic in single utterances. They become richer when contextual assumptions made salient through the processing of other utterances give direction to the exploration of the encyclopaedic entries of concepts made available by the metaphorical utterance itself. The wider context causes certain assumptions within the encyclopaedic entries that are explored to become more highly activated and, hence, makes them easier to process and use in the construction of further assumptions. As a general point, it is always artificial (and misleading to some degree) to analyse a single utterance independently of the wider context in which it occurs. If metaphor, epizeuxis or metrical variation (or any other rhetorical device) occur within a poem, then the poetic effects they may achieve are generally greatly enhanced by the context provided by the rest of the poem.

I began in Chapter 1 by distinguishing intrinsic from extrinsic approaches to literary studies (a distinction that could equally be made within linguistics). I argued that of the two main 'intrinsic' questions, the question *what is a literary artwork?* is philosophically, but not theoretically, interesting. This is because 'artwork' is an interpretive term and an answer to the question depends on a wide variety of historical, cultural and other factors. The other question - *what is aesthetic experience?* - is theoretically interesting if it can be answered in terms of characteristic patterns of mental representations and processes, triggered as involuntary responses to certain sensory or linguistic stimuli.

Alternative theoretical approaches were criticised in Chapter 2, on the grounds that they fail to account for literariness and aesthetic value. Literariness cannot be defined in terms of the linguistic properties of texts, because linguistic properties by themselves do not provide sufficient conditions for poetic effects/ aesthetic experience. Neither can literariness be defined in terms of social conventions, whether they be semiotic

principles, special purpose maxims (involving suspension of the standard conversational maxims) or special purpose sets of literary discourse reading strategies. No approach based solely on social conventions can explain how stylistic effects are achieved on-line. Treating the aesthetic as socially constructed rather than as a genuine psychological phenomenon trivialises aesthetic experience and leads to an impoverished sense of what it is that literary artworks communicate. Literary artworks qua artworks do not simply, or centrally, communicate sets of propositional meanings.

Most popularised versions of current Literary Theory hold that the linguistic sign is inherently unstable, and that language is a system of differences that can be analysed or discussed independently of human minds. The meanings given to texts are provided by other social or ideological 'texts'. In this view there is nothing cognitive worth studying. Given the prevalence of such views, I will sum up some of the main points of disagreement between this 'neo-Kantian relativist' approach and the approach to language and communication assumed in this thesis. I have argued that the notion of 'linguistic sign' that Literary Theorists work with is too simple: meaning is not a unitary phenomenon and a concept does not consist of one entry. The meanings that concepts, and language generally, communicate are clearly not fixed, but this instability is not due to the nature of the linguistic sign - it can be explained in terms of principle-governed sensitivity to context. The argument that language is metaphorical through-and-through and can have no direct reference to states of affairs in the world may be countered by the argument that it is not utterances but thoughts that relate to states of affairs in the world. An utterance may be metaphorical: the thoughts that it communicates are not. I also argued that the view of context as a set of separate ideas imposed upon texts from outside is misguided. Context is accessed via encyclopaedic entries. Communicators, therefore, have a large measure of control over what contextual assumptions will be used by addressees. The contextual exploration triggered by the text, which happens in milliseconds, is the aspect of processing which

yields poetic effects. One can go on to place what is communicated within a broader context (within the framework of a religious, political, philosophical set of ideas, for example), but this broader context cannot explain what is communicated or the stylistic effects achieved.

It is important to stress again that it has been impossible to do full justice here to the complex range of ideas expressed by Literary Theory (or by the other literary theories referred to in Chapter 2). The main purpose has been to consider a range of possible positions on the question of literariness. It is probably fair to say, however, that there is a general opposition in Literary Theory both to literary criticism (which vainly strives to expound non-existent stable meanings) and to linguistic theory, pragmatic theory, and, by extension, literary theory of the kind proposed here (which are essentialist and realist with regard to theories). The effect of such views has been to attempt to curtail the range of question-types which it is considered legitimate to ask within literary studies. Here I have argued for a more liberal approach. The intrinsic approach depends on the existence of a theoretically unencumbered literary criticism to provide the intuitions about literary style which theory has to account for. Many of the theoretical and anti-theoretical views referred to in Chapter 2, like many of the ideas and models currently discussed within literary stylistics, fail to offer any account of literary style, or of the varieties of literary style. I have argued that the only theoretical approach likely to provide an adequate theory of style is one that is grounded in cognitive pragmatic theory.

In Chapter 3 I provided an outline account of relevance theory, before introducing a more detailed cognitive pragmatic analysis of metaphor (Chapter 4) and epizeuxis (Chapter 5). In Chapter 4 I attempted to show how metaphors could vary in their stylistic effects, using the relevance theory notion of weak implicature. Metaphors could be more or less rich or poetic depending on the range and strength of implicatures. I then suggested an alternative account of metaphors as new ad hoc concepts, again

within a relevance theory framework.

After arguing that the varied stylistic effects achieved by metaphorical utterances depend on the relative accessibility and range of contextual assumptions, I discussed the organisation of assumptions in encyclopaedic entries. I suggested that contradictory assumptions might co-exist in encyclopaedic memory if some assumptions are stored directly as factual assumptions, and others stored indirectly. In the latter case they would be metarepresentations of beliefs, perhaps true in some other possible world (e.g. that of a novel) or perhaps accepted as true by some cultural or social group. This would explain the standard effects achieved by certain conventional metaphors: beliefs metarepresented as belonging to a social group would be readily accessible to interlocutors who are manifestly members of that group. Otherwise, I argued, there is no need for a hierarchical ordering of assumptions in encyclopaedic memory: assumptions are entirely context-sensitive.

In Chapter 5 I showed how the mere fact of repetition cannot be directly linked to a specific kind of effect. A pragmatic account is therefore required to explain the variety of effects achieved. In the case of poetic epizeuxis the repetition encourages wide-ranging contextual exploration and the communication of a wide array of weak implicatures. This can only happen when there are appropriately rich encyclopaedic entries to explore and when easily accessed metarepresented sets of assumptions do not short-circuit a more wide-ranging contextual search.

I also argued that it should be possible to explain verse effects in cognitive pragmatic terms. To explain the poetic use of metrical variation, for instance, I suggested that unexpected strong stress within a metrical line allows for speedier and lengthier conceptual access. More processing effort and time goes into conceptual access and, as a consequence, a wider array of contextual assumptions are used to achieve contextual effects.

The general conclusion of Chapters 4 and 5 was that poetic effects can be explained pragmatically in terms of processing demands leading to an extensive exploration of encyclopaedic entries, extensive inferencing, and the making marginally more salient of a wide range of assumptions in the search for an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance. The poetic effects are richer, or have more aesthetic value, when a greater number of assumptions are accessed or when more assumptions are constructed rather than directly accessed from memory. These assumptions may be communicated as weakly manifest implicatures. They may - at least in the case of poetic metaphors - contribute to the construction of new ad hoc concepts. In the light of these conclusions a 'poetic thought' or 'poetic representation' might be characterised as a highly complex thought involving the simultaneous accessing of a large number of assumptions.

But this account of poetic effects is, I have argued, incomplete. It leaves out the affective dimension widely recognised to be central to literary communication. Poets and literary critics loosely use the terms 'emotion' or 'feeling' to refer to this affective dimension: the poet's task is to express her feelings as precisely as possible, to 'put her feelings into words'.

Using ideas from cognitive science and philosophy, I distinguished emotion as a temporary state from attitude as a long-term affective state, attached to a conceptual address. Emotions as temporary states have physiological, behavioural, cognitive and qualitative properties. I have suggested that attitudes are, in part at least, phenomenal memories or memories of the qualitative aspects of emotional states. When poets and literary critics talk of 'emotion' or 'feeling' they are really referring to attitudes or phenomenal memories, as discussed in Chapter 6. In the case of poetic effects encouragement is given not simply to explore encyclopaedic entries, but also to evoke phenomenal memories. Phenomenal memories from a variety of conceptual sources are used to create new phenomenal states. The communication of these new phenomenal states typically

involves adjustments to long-term attitudes.

In Chapter 7 I discussed the notion of qualia and suggested that, whatever the philosophical position adopted to this highly problematic concept, it is central to the characterisation of aesthetic experience. I used the term 'aesthetic qualia' to refer to the phenomenal aspects of poetic effects and aesthetic experience. Aesthetic qualia are qualia which are intensely experienced and which, because of the wide-ranging context in which they occur, are subtly discriminated. The aesthetic effects achieved by the evocation of these precise phenomenal states are caused by a special kind of pragmatic processing, involving a wide-ranging search through context, as described above. This pragmatic processing can be explained in terms of the standard search for an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance: no special interpretive machinery is required. (This view contrasts, for example, with the standard 'Empirical Study of Literature' view, which takes it for granted that there are special principles to guide the 'literary reading process'.) The special cognitive processing and effects are accompanied by a special kind of brain activity which evokes the precise and intense phenomenal state and which is experienced as 'aesthetic'. In other words, a certain kind of electrochemical activity in the brain 'feels' aesthetic.

It is useful to compare aesthetic effects with humour. In the case of jokes the pragmatic garden-pathing which encourages the rapid construction of an alternative context is accompanied by particular physiological effects, which may include laughter. In the case of aesthetic effects, the rapid activation and construction of context, involving an evocation of phenomenal states, is accompanied by particular physiological effects, that are quite different in kind and, for the most part, of a more subtle nature than in the case of humour.

A poetic representation, then, involves the simultaneous activation and accessing of a wide range of assumptions, which are made marginally more salient, together with the evocation of

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intense subtly discriminated phenomenal states. The sense of aesthetic value and pleasure derive from the intensity and precision of phenomenal tone.

Aesthetic experience can be achieved by a variety of art forms: for example, by painting, sculpture, and music. What is common to all these ways of achieving an aesthetic experience is the intensity and precision of the affective phenomenal state that is evoked. What varies is the means of achieving this state. In the case of paintings, for example, the representations triggered in the mind consist of visual representations and the affective phenomenal states evoked in the process of forming these visual representations. An 'aesthetic representation', as what painting, music and literature have in common, is the kind of intense, precise phenomenal state that has been described. Such a state can only be achieved by means of sensory representations and processing, or by means of conceptual representations and processing. A poetic representation or thought is, therefore, simply a means of achieving an intense and precise phenomenal state. Pragmatic theory, and relevance theory in particular, provides the account of how poetic representations are achieved in terms of conceptual representations and processing and, hence, the basis for an account of how aesthetic representations may be achieved.

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