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Editorial

The aim of this two-part special issue of *The International Journal of Literary Linguistics* is to probe the implications of the cognitive turn in literary linguistics that has gone hand in hand with the field's growing appreciation of pragmatics at the end of the twentieth century (as illustrated e.g. by MacMahon, Mey, Verdonk and Weber). The view, increasingly shared by literary linguists, that literature is a communicative endeavour between text (author) and reader has resulted in a heightened interest in the cognitive abilities that ultimately make this communication possible. Yet the ease with which the buzzword 'cognition' sometimes is applied to explain these abilities and processes (which are often only assumed to exist rather than substantiated with empirical evidence) seems to be at odds not least with the fact that the cognitive sciences are far from a uniform field yielding fixed and finite results. Indeed, whether or not all language phenomena are underpinned by innate cognitive rules is an issue that remains a bone of contention amongst scholars, as does the nature of these cognitive rules themselves. Even a cognitive grammarian like Ronald Langacker warns against jumping to premature conclusions about the natural foundations of language (14) and avoids making such claims in his own work.

In the article that follows, which constitutes Part I of this special issue of *IJLL*, Nigel Fabb confronts one of the crucial assumptions of literary linguists inspired by the cognitive sciences, challenging an argument that has proved important to some of the research conducted within the framework of 'cognitive poetics'. This is Turner and Pöppel's influential contention that the length of metrical verse is psychologically grounded, corresponding to the temporal window of consciousness (the 'auditory present') within which humans remember heard information. Its upper limit, they claim, is three seconds. Carefully reviewing the premises of Turner and Pöppel's proposition, and extending them with the aid of existing auditory material (readings of poems), Fabb presents a persuasive challenge to this hypothesis about the cognitive basis of poetic form: In performance, he states, metrical lines tend not to comply with the three second rule, typically going *beyond* this temporal limit. He concludes that "we must

abandon the notion that spoken lines must be below a certain duration in order to meet some psychologically-determined aesthetic goal” (13) and suggests that we ought to consider other ways of accounting for the length of poetic lines.

Questioning one way of thinking about poetry in cognitive terms, Fabb curbs the enthusiasm with which the ‘cognitive revolution’ has been embraced in a variety of scholarly contexts outside of the cognitive sciences. In fact, at first glance his article might seem to go against the gist of this special issue, or the cognitive concerns that its title announces, presenting a challenge *to* cognition, rather than affirming the challenge *of* received ideas that ‘cognitively aware’ scholarship often is said to present. Nevertheless, Fabb’s conclusions still promise to take literary linguistic criticism inspired by the cognitive sciences, or interested in exploring the embodiment of verbal art further. Turner and Pöppel erroneously attempt to deduce abstract, formal properties of metrical lines from the temporal framework of their performance. Fabb does not doubt that such properties exist, but suggests that these features might have another, possibly linguistic, basis unconnected to a temporal dimension, let alone to some kind of psychological principle. Because in so arguing he questions also the ideological drift of Turner and Pöppel’s research, with which the authors sought to champion metrical over free verse in poetry, Fabb addresses an issue that is of intrinsic literary (and literary linguistic) interest. Warning against the creation of straightforward links between literary form and cognitive reality, his essay is a timely endorsement of clearly and carefully formulated methods and questions.

The second part of this special issue, with articles by Barbara MacMahon and Theresa Proto and Marc Oostendorp, will be published in Spring 2014.

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