18   Linguistics and Literature

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1   Introduction: Literary Linguistics

"Literary linguistics" is the application of linguistic theory to literature. In this chapter I consider ways in which two of the fundamental aims of linguistic theory relate to the special characteristics of literary texts. The first aim is to model the cognitive processes which shape verbal behavior. Literary linguistics adapts this aim to ask whether literature involves any specialized cognitive processes. The second aim is to explain how linguistic form can be used to communicate meaning. Literary linguistics adapts this aim by asking how the distinctive characteristics of literary communication can be understood in terms of a general theory of linguistic communication.[1]

1.1   Literary and linguistic cognition

Verbal behavior is regular: we can make generalizations and predictions about it. Regularities are "generated" by rules. Some rules are cognitive, in the sense that they represent the specialized cognitive systems which underlie behavior. Other rules are cultural or conventional in the sense that people acquire and use them as part of their general knowledge; these have no special cognitive status. In language, the rules of a generative grammar represent cognitive rules, while the rules of a traditional prescriptive grammar represent cultural or conventional rules.

   Literary texts have regularities which are shared with verbal behavior in general, but they also have special regularities, which can be described by literary rules such as the rules of meter, of parallelism, of narrative form, of rhyme and alliteration, and so on. The interesting question about these rules is whether they are cognitive rules or cultural / conventional rules (or both at the same time). For a literary linguistics concerned with cognition, the fundamental

question is whether any of the literary rules represent specialized cognitive processes. If this is the case, then we must ask what the relation is between these cognitive processes and general linguistic cognitive processes. On the one hand, are there general resemblances between the literary and linguistic rules; do metrical rules share cognitive subcomponents with phonological rules, for example? On the other hand, do the literary rules interact with the linguistic rules?

As an example of the issues involved, consider the ways in which Irish alliteration (a literary rule) operates, which suggest both that there is a specialized cognitive process in operation and that this process interacts with linguistic processes. The Irish words "white," "cow," and "great" have *bán*, *bó*, and *mór* as their respective forms at some underlying level but are pronounced as *mbán*, *βó*, and *mór* which are their forms at the surface level. (The underlying and surface forms are related by linguistic rules.) In Irish verse, alliteration is a relation between words which begin with the same consonant, and the first two words alliterate with one another while the third does not. This indicates that it is the underlying representations of the words which are taken into account by the alliteration rule, and not the surface representations (Malone 1988). The fact that alliteration governs a "hidden" aspect of linguistic form, apparently undoing the effect of phonological rules, suggests that the alliteration rules must themselves be cognitive rules since they are able to interact with cognitive rules.

1.2   *Literary and linguistic communication*

One of the fundamental problems for formal linguistics is to explain how form is related to meaning. Linguists recognize two distinct problems. The first problem is to relate phonological form to logical form. The logical form is the output of phonological and syntactic processing, and is a representation which is accessible to interpretive rules: thus, the logical form will identify the words which have been spoken, the phrases into which they fit, and their grammatical relationships (subject, predicate, object, etc.). The second problem is to explain how in communication a logical form is used to decide what the speaker's informative intentions are: that is, what does the speaker actually mean to tell us? The first problem is the domain of syntax (and a certain kind of semantics), and is almost certainly irrelevant in the study of literary texts, because literary texts are probably like any kind of text when it comes to the derivation of logical forms from phonological forms. The second problem is in the domain of pragmatics and is clearly relevant in the study of literary texts, because literary texts have unusual interpretive characteristics: in particular, they tend more than other kinds of texts to have interpretations which are indirect, multiple, and indeterminate. Thus metaphor and irony both involve quite indirect kinds of intepretation, and the ambiguity and unparaphrasability characteristic of many literary texts is an example of

the multiplicity and indeterminacy of interpretations. Hence literary linguistics must ask this question about the interpretation of literary texts: do the distinctive interpretive characteristics of literary texts involve cognitive mechanisms which are different from the cognitive mechanisms involved in the interpretation of non-literary texts?

2   From the Perspective of Linguistics, What Is Special about a "Literary Text"?

A literary text is a place where we find certain kinds of rules operating – rules of meter, parallelism, narrative structure, and so on. In this sense, the fact that the texts which typically have these rules belong to a kind called "literature" is irrelevant, since we are interested in the rules and not the types of text where those rules occur.

However, there are reasons to be interested in the possibility that in any culture there is a distinct class of "literary texts" (also called "verbal art"). In an influential article published in 1960, Jakobson (1987) argued that one of the things which distinguishes literary texts from other utterances is that the literary text "focuses on the message" (by which he means the utterance and not its content), which we can restate by saying that a literary text communicates a description of its own form. The literary text does this by making form prominent; in verse this is achieved for example by meter or parallelism, where form becomes prominent because it is repeated. Hence attention is drawn to form; in effect the form of the text is communicated to the audience. Jakobson saw his approach as a way of understanding how literary rules exploited something fundamental about verbal behavior, with ultimately cognitive aims. His work has been adapted by Richard Bauman so that it it is part of a theory of language in use. Bauman (1984) adapts Jakobson's decontextualized approach to literary form and puts it into the context in which literary texts are presented to an audience, which is the context of performance. (Bauman focusses primarily on oral performance, but literary publication can be seen also as performance.) Bauman suggests that the communication of form is necessary because performance requires the performer (the author) to demonstrate to an audience that she is adhering to a set of rules, and expects the audience to evaluate her on this basis. Thus the rules must be prominent, as is achieved when the literary text communicates a description of its own form.

Jakobson and Bauman explore the possibility that literature is a special kind of verbal behavior, and hence of interest to linguists. A second source of interest relates to the possibility that our experience of literature has an "aesthetic" quality which is different from our experience of other kinds of text, giving rise to aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience is a problem for psychology, with affective and physiological components as well as cognitive components. The key question for literary linguistics is whether the distinctive

modes of exploitation of linguistic form in literature contribute to esthetic experience.

3   Metrical Structure and Phonological Structure

3.1   Meter

A metrical text is a text whose phonological form is governed by a set of metrical rules. Two aspects of phonological form are involved: phonological constituency, and (in rhythmic meters) phonological strength.

The smallest metrically relevant phonological constituent is the mora. A mora is a unit of phonological "weight," such that a short vowel is typically one mora, a long vowel typically two morae, with post-vowel consonants potentially adding additional weight. The meter which regulates the Japanese verse genre of haiku requires the complete text to contain 17 morae, which can be realized as 17 short vowels, or 13 short vowels and 2 long vowels, etc. The text must be divisible into 3 constituents which we can call "metrical lines," with lines ending after the 5 and 12th morae; one consequence of this is that a word cannot include both the 5th and the 6th morae (as it would be illegitimately split between lines). The following haiku (written 1686) by Matsuo Bashō illustrates the meter; it has 17 short vowels and hence 17 morae, with divisions (marked with a slash) after the 5th and 12th.
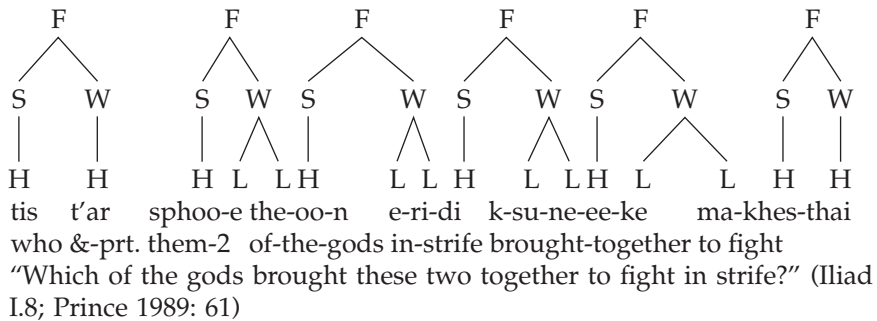
```
   1 2 3 4  5              6  7 8  9 10 11 12   13 14 15 16 17
   furu ike ya          /kawazu tobikomu   /mizu no oto
   An ancient pond –   A frog leaps in.      The sound of water.
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This haiku meter exemplifies two characteristics which all meters have: it divides the text into metrical lines, thus creating at least one basic level of metrical constituency, and it counts phonological constituents (here morae) into the metrical line. Meters can also count other kinds of phonological constituent; thus the French alexandrine is a meter which counts syllables (12 in the line), and it is possible that the Old English poem *Beowulf* is governed by a meter which counts phonological feet into the line (Russom 1987; a phonological foot is a group of syllables including one strongly stressed syllable).

These meters do not differentiate amongst the phonological constituents which they govern. However, meters are able to differentiate phonological constituents into two kinds, defined relative to one another as "strong" and "weak." Meters which have a pattern of strong and weak metrical constituents are experienced as "rhythmic." The notion of metrical strength correlates with some notion of phonological strength such that for example relatively stressed or relatively heavy syllables are more likely to be strong metrical constituents than are relatively unstressed or relatively light syllables, but there is not a perfect match between phonological and metrical strength – suggesting

incidentally that metrical rules are not simply a variant kind of phonological rule (a point I return to later). Meters which differentiate constituents are usually sensitive either to relative stress among syllables (accentual meter) or relative weight among syllables (quantitative meters).

Syllables contain morae, and can be distinguished into heavy syllables (two morae) and light syllables (one mora); this difference is exploited by quantitative meters. Some quantitative meters stipulate long and complex patterns of heavy and light syllables; the meters of Classical Sanskrit are of this type. Other quantitative meters are periodic, which means that a relatively simple pattern is repeated throughout the line. The meter (dactylic hexameter) of Homer's verse is periodic: it stipulates a sequence of six subconstituents (called "feet"), each of which has the same basic internal pattern. The pattern consists of a heavy syllable followed by two morae, realized either by a heavy syllable or two light syllables. Each foot can be formulated as a single strong metrical constituent followed by a single weak metrical constituent.

```
      F           F        F          F         F           F
     / \         / \      / \        / \       / \         / \
    S   W       S  W S    W  S      W  S      W  S         W   S   W
    |   |       |  /\ |    /\ |      /\ |      /\ |         |   |   |
    H   H       H L L H   L L H     L L H     L L H L       L   H   H
    tis t'ar    sphoo-e the-oo-n   e-ri-di   k-su-ne-ee-ke    ma-khes-thai
    who &-prt.  them-2  of-the-gods in-strife brought-together to fight
    "Which of the gods brought these two together to fight in strife?" (Iliad
    I.8; Prince 1989: 61)
```

The relative strength of the strong constituent is realized both by the fact that it contains a heavy syllable and is constrained in that it must contain this heavy syllable. In contrast the weak constituent is less constrained – one manifestation of its relative weakness – and can contain one heavy or two light syllables (see Prince 1989).

English iambic pentameter is an accentual meter, which is sensitive to stress. The basic metrical rules ensure that in each line there are ten syllables, and that stressed syllables in polysyllabic words are found only in even positions (positions 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10). While monosyllables are also constrained to some extent, the major constraint holds of polysyllables. Thus in the following line (from Shakespeare's sonnet 73), *ruined* is the only polysyllable and has its first-syllable stress in second position of the line (i.e. an even position); in contrast we might perform the verse with strong stress on the monosyllable *birds* but this is not in an even position even though it is stressed – and the meter does not require it to be because it is a monosyllable.

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    1    2 3      4        5   6    7    8  9    10
  Bare rui-ned choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
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Hanson and Kiparsky (1996) argue that this meter in fact governs stress indirectly, by actually controlling strong syllables. Stress is a source of strength, but strength is relative, which is why the meter controls only a stressed syllable in a polysyllable (where there are other less stressed syllables to compare it with). Because the meter does not control all the stresses in the line, but primarily the stresses in polysyllables, it is possible for a 14-line sonnet to have a different pattern of stresses in every line (so long as any polysyllables have their stresses in even positions).

A meter organizes phonological constituents into a metrical constituent, the line, and the line has interesting characteristics of its own. Metrical lines are the best examples of a phenomenon seen also in smaller metrical constituents, where the metrical rules constrain phonological form more strictly towards the end of the line (called the "cadence") than towards the beginning of the line (Hayes 1989). Thus for example the lines of the Sanskrit Rigveda are controlled by a quantitative meter, but this meter really only controls the second half of the line, with the first half of the line being strict in syllable-count but free in pattern of heavy and light syllables. Similarly, in iambic pentameter lines where the expectation is that stressed syllables in polysyllables will fill even positions, it is common to find an exception called "trochaic inversion" where a stressed syllable in a polysyllable is "misplaced" into the first position of the line, as in the following example from a sonnet by Shakespeare. Note that only the first polysyllable has its stress in an odd position; both *unseen* and *disgrace* have their stressed syllables in even positions as the meter predicts.

> 1 2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
> St*ea*ling uns*ee*n to West with this disgr*a*ce

The ends of metrical lines also have distinctive characteristics, as though they have a particular status for metrical cognition: extra syllables are common here (in iambic pentameter for example, or in the Italian endecasillabo where the eleventh syllable can be seen as an expected line-final extra); light syllables can count as heavy; and phonological material can even perhaps be "borrowed" from line-endings and put elsewhere, as Hale (1984) argues for (Australian) Warlpiri verse.

3.2   Word-boundary rules

Many meters involve a constraint on the placement of larger phonological constituent boundaries, involving phonological constituents such as the lexical word, the clitic group, and the utterance. Constraints on the boundaries of the utterance typically include a requirement that a large phonological constituent must end at the end of a metrical line (in literary critical terms, "enjambment" will be ruled out by such a constraint). Constraints on word and clitic group boundaries can be formulated as "caesura" and "bridge" rules. A caesura rule

forces a word boundary to appear at a certain place in the line, relative to the phonological constituent structure of the line; a bridge rule has the opposite effect, preventing a word boundary appearing at a certain place in the line. The "word boundary" involved can be a lexical word boundary or a clitic group boundary; in Greek drama, tragedies tend to constrain the former while comedies tend to constrain the latter (seen as a looser constraint); see Devine and Stephens (1984). In some meters, word-boundary rules take on a pervasive role in structuring the line. Thus in (Australian) Dyirbal "gama" songs, word boundaries are allowed at only three places within the 11-syllable line (and are obligatory in two of those three places); see Dixon and Koch (1996).

One of the interesting characteristics of caesura and bridge rules is that they sometimes seem "designed" to prevent a word boundary appearing at the boundary of a line-internal metrical constituent; thus in Homer's verse, a word boundary in the dactylic hexameter line may not fall exactly in the middle (between third and fourth feet) but usually falls within the third or fourth foot, as can be seen in the line cited above. It is not uncommon for different kinds of constituency (here metrical constituency and phonological word constituency) to mismatch in this manner, and it might potentially be a way of deriving an esthetic effect by causing complications for linguistic processing.

3.3   Methodological and conceptual problems for a metrical theory

Metrical theory faces a conceptual dilemma, relating to its object of study. Metrical verse is rarely fully regular, in the sense that it is impossible to formulate a rule system which correctly describes the relevant aspects of every line in a text or a genre. Two approaches can be taken to this problem. One, associated with generative metrics (Halle and Keyser 1971) is to say that lines which cannot be described are unmetrical (similar to ungrammatical sentences), and thus accidents of performance but not significant in the formulation of metrical rules. The second approach, associated with Russian theorists (Tarlinskaja 1989) is to treat the metrical rules as having some statistical relationship with actual metrical texts, such that we would expect a high degree of correlation.

There is also a significant methodological problem faced by metrical theory, particularly a metrical theory which looks for cross-linguistic validity. Because linguistic accounts take a sophisticated view of phonological form, they can offer reconsiderations of how some apparently well-understood meters actually work. This has proved true for most meters. Iambic pentameter appears to be a meter which controls stressed syllables, but Hanson and Kiparsky (1996) argue that it is actually a meter which controls phonological feet and only indirectly controls stressed syllables; the same arguments surround the meter of *Beowulf*. Even such apparently simple meters as the meter governing haiku may require reanalysis in other terms, as Poser (1990) suggests. In the case of

archaic Celtic meters, lines appear at first sight to involve syllable counting, but it is possible that in actual performance stress was also involved, so that the meter might have been an accentual meter (Klar et al. 1984). Similar questions arise about the remarkable Classical Sanskrit meters, where we might wonder whether some hidden principle governs the shape of the rigidly but apparently randomly ordered sequences of heavy and light syllables. Chinese appears to have archaic meters which are sensitive to lexical tone (Chen 1979) but here too there is some question as to whether there is an underlying pattern of syllable weight to which tone itself is sensitive. As we will see, these methodological problems spill over into the problem of understanding the relationship between music and meter in songs (since many kinds of metrical verse are or were once sung).

A third problem which metrical theory faces is the presence of explicit metrical rules. In some – though not all – metrical traditions, there are explicitly formulated rules which poets know, and which they apparently follow in composing metrical verse. It is possible that these metrical rules are either good descriptions of cognitive rules, or that they are internalized as cognitive rules. But it is also possible that there is nothing of any particular cognitive interest occurring, and metrical composition is just another kind of behavior conforming to randomly formulated cultural conventions. Linguists argue against this position, and have several routes of attack. The most fruitful approach is to show that the explicit metrical rules do not in fact correctly describe actual metrical practice (this is true for iambic pentameter). This can demonstrate that explicit metrical rules are rather like the rules of a prescriptive grammar in describing what people think their verbal behavior is or ought to be, and not what it actually is.

3.4   Meter and cognition

If any literary rules are cognitive rules, metrical rules are the best candidate because of their complexity, their interconnection with the cognitive rules of phonology, their relative exceptionlessness and their inaccessibility to introspection. Metrical rules have some characteristics in common with phonological rules, such as the construction of constituents with strong and weak members, which is found both in accentual / quantitative meters and in the rhythmic aspects of the phonology. However, they also have characteristics which are quite unlike phonological (or other linguistic) rules. For example, meters can count constituents. Phonological rules (and other linguistic rules) can organize constituents into groups of two, and are sensitive to whether a constituent is first or second in a series; it is just possible that phonological rules can also count up to three. However, no phonological rule organizes phonological material into a five-member sequence (like iambic pentameter or the haiku meter), or a 19-member sequence (like one of the Classical Sanskrit meters). These distinct characteristics suggest that if metrical rules are rules of cognition, they are not

some variety of phonological rule but involve some other capacity; it is possible for example that metrical cognition shares components with musical cognition.

If we think of metrical rules as cognitive rules, then two questions arise. First, is the cross-linguistic variation in meters a matter of parametric variation of basic cognitive principles (analogous to variation in language)? Hanson and Kiparsky (1996) present some relevant proposals. Second, might individual writers have their own idiosyncratic kinds of metrical rule (or their own variations on some common set of rules)? This has been a rich area for speculation, because it can often be demonstrated that different writers within the same tradition write metrical verse in different ways, which can be captured by slightly different rule systems.

If metrical rules are cognitive rules, what are the interconnections between metrical cognition and linguistic cognition? More specifically, do metrical rules have special access to underlying linguistic form (and similarly, are metrical rules blind to any aspects of surface linguistic form)? It seems, for example that when meters count syllables they are capable of counting syllables which exist in the underlying representations of words but are deleted in actual pronunciation; claims of this kind have been made by various linguists including Zeps (1963) for Latvian songs, and Kiparsky (1972) for the meters of Vedic Sanskrit. Thus the meter appears to have special access to phonological material which is not accessible to introspection; thus the metrical rules are interacting with (cognitive) linguistic rules.

4   Songs

It is common for literary texts to be set to music, which in many cases involves a relationship between phonological and musical form. When the text is metrical, a third kind of form exists, which requires us to consider the complex relations between musical, metrical, and phonological form. The work done in this area is primarily by ethnomusicologists (who are usually also linguists), but tends to focus on the specific problems of a specific tradition rather than considering the more general issues which arise. In this section I outline some of these more general issues (see also Fabb 1997: 98–106, Moyle 1986, Schuh 1989, Dixon and Koch 1996, Banti and Giannattasio 1996, for examples of linguistically sensitive musicological analysis).
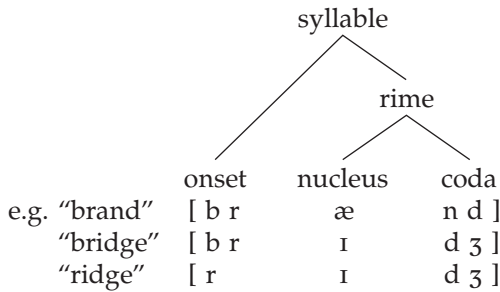
When text and music are combined, a pre-existing text can be set to newly composed music, a newly composed text can be set to pre-existing music, or both can be composed together. In all three cases, the same question arises about the relation between musical form and linguistic form, namely which aspects of linguistic form constrain or are constrained by which aspects of musical form. As one example, in songs from the Polynesian island of Tokelau

(Hoem et al. 1992) a pitch rise within the melody is sensitive to the number of morae at the end of the line, with underlying morae (deleted in pronunciation) also taken into account. As another example, in Luganda songs from Uganda (Katamba and Cooke 1987) the musical form includes a recurring 36-beat constituent to which the text is matched with one mora to each beat. This might suggest that the text should be thought of as organized by a mora-counting meter, which in turn might derive from a patterning meter, derived from the musical form. More generally, it may be that metricists have underestimated the distribution of metrical systems (once claimed just to exist in Indo-European, Islamic, and Buddhist-influenced traditions) because they have paid insufficient attention to music and musical form as a source of metrical form.

Metrical texts can be set to music. In this case, what is the role of the meter in constraining the relation between musical form and phonological form? Does the meter control the phonological form completely independently of the matching of musical and phonological form, or does the meter mediate the matching of musical and phonological form? As an illustrative example, consider the iambic pentameter text "Go christall tears . . . ," set to music by John Dowland (published 1597). Dowland's music for this song is organized in four-beat constituents, with first and third beats strong and second and fourth weak. The meter is organized in two-beat constituents (five to a line), with first beat weak and second beat strong, controlling just the placement of polysyllabic stresses. In the setting of text to music, are polysyllables treated distinctively, and are lexically prominent monosyllables treated in an undifferentiated manner? (i.e. does the musical setting of the text reproduce characteristics of iambic pentameter?). In this particular instance, the answer to both questions is yes, suggesting that the meter does indeed mediate the mapping of phonological to musical structure. Thus while there are variable numbers of syllables in each bar, the stressed syllables in polysyllables always fall in first or third beat position; and the important lexical monosyllables seem unconstrained in where they fall. Thus while the musical performance of the text no longer sounds at all like an iambic pentameter line, it nevertheless preserves exactly the same abstract characteristics as iambic pentameter, at least in this particular song.

5   Rhyme and Alliteration

Rhyme and alliteration are repetitions of parts of the syllable. A syllable is a grouping of phonological segments (sounds) around a nucleus which is typically a long or short vowel. Its structure is as follows, with the onset and rime typically filled with consonants preceding and following the vowel which is the syllable nucleus.

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                        syllable
                        /    \
                              rime
                             /    \
              onset      nucleus     coda
e.g. "brand"  [ b r        æ         n d ]
     "bridge" [ b r        ɪ         d ʒ ]
     "ridge"  [ r          ɪ         d ʒ ]
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Rhyme is full or partial identity between two times (partial identity involves just the vowels being the same, or just the consonants being the same, two variants of rhyme). Thus *bridge* and *ridge* rhyme because they have identical codas. Alliteration is full or partial identity between two onsets; thus *brand* and *bridge* alliterate because they have identical onsets.

Sound patterning can be systematic or unsystematic (appearing unpredictably in a text). Systematic patterning is of most interest to linguists, since it is more clearly rule bound. Systematic rhyme is very common, not only in metrical verse but also in other kinds of text. Systematic alliteration is relatively rare. Most linguistic work on sound patterning has looked at the fact that the segments or segment-sequences which are repeated are not necessarily identical in all features, with particular "equivalence sets" allowed in particular traditions (e.g. a vowel-consonant sequence may count as the same if the vowel is identical and the consonant is any voiceless plosive). The question then arises as to what extent the segments count as "the same." Various proposals have been made about the sense in which the segments are "the same": in some cases it has been argued that the "sameness" can only be captured by looking at underlying phonological representations before the operation of late phonological rules (Malone 1982, 1988, Kiparsky 1970); in other cases it seems that the "sameness" more simply involves the sharing of features, perhaps involving underspecified underlying phonemes. In some cases, it may be that the "sameness" of distinct segmental sequences can reveal or confirm underlying form: for example, the fact that [sp], [sk], [st], and [s] do not alliterate in Germanic verse, where usually initial consonantal identity is sufficient, confirms an analysis which has support also from the phonology whereby [sp], [st], and [sk] each count as a single segment in some sense. There is, however, a methodological problem which confronts a linguistic explanation of why certain sounds are "counted as" the same in a poetic tradition: poets often have explicit knowledge of permitted combinations (e.g. it might be a prescriptive rule), and furthermore the permitted combinations are always restricted in number (e.g. they need not be generated by a general rule or principle but could just be learned individually). This does not undermine the linguistic study of segmental equivalences, but it does sound a cautionary note (see also Árnason 1991), as in other cases where explicit rules might seem to offer a non-cognitive explanation of regular verbal behavior.

Sound patterning offers other problems which are of linguistic interest. One problem involves the constituency of the material which is patterned. In most kinds of rhyme the repeated material is a well-formed constituent (e.g. the rime of the syllable; however, there are plenty of examples of sound-patterning where the repeated material is not a single well-formed constituent. Thus rhymes may include the final part of one syllable and the whole of the next as in the rhyme *pleasure / leisure / treasure* (used by Byron). Similarly, alliteration in Finnish involves not just the onset of the syllable but also (part of) the nucleus, illustrated by the line *Kalevalan kankahilta* from the *Kalevala*, where the alliteration is in [ka], which includes both the onset and the nucleus. The fact that non-constituents can be manipulated by sound-patterning rules is puzzling, and deserves further study. A second problem offered by sound-patterning relates to a difference between alliteration and rhyme. Two words which rhyme can be quite far apart (in all traditions), with intersecting rhyme patterns (ABAB) being common. In contrast, two words which alliterate must be very close – in adjacent feet, half-lines, or lines – and there may not be any intersecting ABAB alliteration systems (Fabb 1997: 121). This difference between rhyme and alliteration (reflected also in the cross-linguistic common-ness of systematic rhyme and the rarity of systematic alliteration) requires linguistic explanation.

6   Communication and the Sources of Interpretive Difficulty in Literary Texts

Literary texts often present difficulties for interpretation, including ambiguities, indirectness, indeterminacy, and obscurity. There are often functional explanations for these deliberate difficulties. Thus the special sacredness of prayers may require their lack of full interpretability, the deep indeterminacies of Romantic lyrics may realize the philosophical aims of the poets, and so on. There is general agreement that these difficulties arise not by the exploitation of a specialized semantics (or pragmatics) for literature, but instead are exploitations of general linguistic semantics and pragmatics. If this is true, then problems of specifically literary meaning may have no distinctive interest for linguistic theory, except to the extent that literary texts sometimes give particularly good illustrations of certain characteristics of general semantics. However, linguistics is able to offer ways of understanding how meaning arises in literary texts. In this section I consider three characteristic interpretive problems presented by literary texts, and look at how linguistics might come to the aid of literary studies: (a) how metaphor works, (b) how irony works, (c) how "point of view" is communicated. All three problems have been discussed within relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1995), a theory of communication and interpretation, and it is the relevance theoretic approach which is the primary source for this section of the chapter. Most linguistic theories of interpretation would say

that the utterance (including the literary text) provides partial evidence for interpretation and does not determine interpretation. In relevance theory, the communicator uses the utterance to provide partial evidence (but in the context, sufficient evidence) to enable a hearer or reader to determine the communicator's informative intention. Importantly, that informative intention can itself be vague or ambiguous; thus the interpretive difficulties of literary texts are built into the informative intention itself (see also Sperber 1975).

An utterance can be processed into a logical form which is a proposition. This proposition can in principle be taken as the intended meaning of the utterance; this is its "literal meaning." A metaphor arises where the logical form of an utterance must be rejected in favor of another proposition, derived by the use of bridging inferences which link the two propositions. Sperber and Wilson argue that metaphors are just instances of the kind of "loose talk" which is characteristic of all communication: literalness is not necessarily the most communicatively efficient way of saying something. They suggest that metaphors are ways of enabling a single utterance to communicate many thoughts (the range of interpretations licensed by the metaphor), and thus are an instance of the highly productive nature of literary language. In this account, metaphor is not specific to a literature but is a possibility in every kind of communication. Nevertheless, it may be that literature uses general characteristics of communication for particular experiential ends; Sperber and Wilson propose that the size and vagueness of the range of interpretations generated by a literary metaphor is a cognitive state which is experienced as "esthetic" (a "poetic effect" in their terms).

A different aspect of metaphors – the fact that they often have stereotyped meanings – has been explored by linguists interested in the cognitive organization of concepts (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff and Turner 1989). Under this approach, the connections between logical forms and intended meanings are drawn from inventories of linkages, connecting concepts in the mental lexicon; thus for example there is a (possibly universal) link between life and a journey such that references to journeys, parts of journeys and so on can always be interpreted metaphorically as being about life. This approach takes the traditional literary study of topoi (conventionalized kinds of content), and makes it part of the study of cognition.

Irony arises where a speaker (or author) communicates a proposition while at the same time communicating her own lack of commitment to that proposition. As Sperber and Wilson show, irony is a possibility because it is not only propositions which are communicated, but propositional attitudes, consisting of propositions embedded under attitudes of belief, disbelief, doubt, certainty, and so on. Thus a communicated proposition is attributed to a source who has a particular attitude towards that proposition. The source is usually the communicator herself, and her communicated attitude is usually one of belief: however, it is equally possible that the proposition can be attached to another source; in this case, it is some third party's belief which is being reported and

the communicator can signal her own lack of commitment to the proposition. Where the communicator communicates that a proposition is attached to a third party, and that it should be held in an attitude of doubt or disbelief, then irony arises. This is not specific to literature but a possibility in every communicative act.

Sperber and Wilson's account of irony is part of a more general account of the communication of "point of view." A reader's or hearer's interpretation of point of view (or "focalization") is her interpretation of which character (or narrator) is to be understood as experiencing a particular thought or experience in a narrative. Sometimes this is made explicit by the utterance as in the direct or indirect representation of speech or thought in a novel, where the speaker or thinker is explicitly mentioned and her relation to the speech, thought, or experience is explicitly expressed by a verb such as "said," "knew," "felt," etc. The use of hearsay particles (also called evidentials, meaning something like "they say that" or "it is said that") works to express attitude fairly directly, by indicating that the representations expressed by the narrative are known or experienced by (usually unspecified) third parties. And more generally, the modality of a sentence contributes explicitly to our knowing what commitment we should assume towards them. More generally, the possibility of "fiction" is enabled by the complex combinations of representations and attitudes allowed by linguistic communication: we can simultaneously both believe and not believe a set of propositions. Perhaps these modal contradictions of fiction are another kind of complexity which could be a source of esthetic experience.

These are all explicit ways of using linguistic form to tell us who the person is who entertains a proposition, their relation to that proposition, and our relation to that proposition. However, these kinds of meaning can arise also without explicit coding by the use of verbs of speaking or thinking, or hearsay particles. Thus it is possible to recognize shifts in point of view without any explicit coding of these shifts. For example, in the first few paragraphs of Jane Austen's novel *Emma*, we recognize a shift in point of view from narrator to character marked only by the italicization of a word and a sentence which (in its context) is unusually short. Here the text provides evidence for a shift in a point of view in an innovative (and hence not explicitly coded) manner; this exploits the general characteristic of communication which is that the text of an utterance provides only partial evidence for its interpretation, and hence that it is not only the propositional content which may be underdetermined by linguistic form but aspects of the propositional attitude more generally, including whose attitude it is. It is possible that all instances of what is sometimes called "free indirect speech and thought" are actually cases where the text provides partial evidence for a shift in point of view, without fully coding it (see also Fludernik 1993).

In conclusion, it appears that the various kinds of interpretive difficulty presented by literary texts involve the exploitation of general communicative possibilities, for particular functional ends.

7   Linguistic Form and the Interpretation of Narrative

Narrative form is not restricted to linguistic texts; narratives in many different media all exploit the same basic elements of narrative form. Nevertheless, there are two basic reasons why linguists are interested in narrative form. The first is that narratives are one of the most common types of verbal behavior, existing not just as literary texts but also in everyday interaction. Thus discourse analysis and sociolinguistics must include a study of narratives as a type of verbal behavior. The second reason is that linguistic form is clearly exploited in narratives, and has some relation to narrative form.

Linguistic form and narrative form are usually related in one of two ways. One possibility is that the linguistic form is evidence for narrative form, and falls under a theory of communication such as that outlined in the previous section; in this account, narrative form is a meta-description of the narrative which is communicated by elements of the linguistic form of the narrative (see Contini-Morava 1991). The other possibility is that linguistic form is functionally adapted to the demands of the narrative at any particular time, in just the same way that the choice of form serves expressive functions in all verbal behavior.

The "communicative" role of linguistic form in establishing narrative form is clearest when we consider the division of a narrative into episodes (see Hymes 1981, Woodbury 1987). A narrative episode is basically a unit of content within the narrative, characterized by internal stability in participants, place, and time, with these internal components changing between episodes. However, some traditions of verbal narrative appear to make a distinctive use of specific kinds of linguistic form at episode boundaries, in a manner which emphasizes the presence of those boundaries. Thus a North American Ojibwe narrative analyzed by Ghezzi (1993) typically begins a new episode with the connective *ninguting* ("and then . . .'); a Malay narrative analyzed by Cumming (1995) has marked word order at an episode boundary; a South American Apalai story analyzed by Koehn (1976) uses the historic past with greater frequency at episode boundaries; a Central American Tojolabal narrative analyzed by Brody (1986) has clausal repetition at episode boundaries, and so on. These uses of linguistic form have two important features. First, different languages use different kinds of linguistic form for essentially the same function. This is a fundamental characteristic of linguistic form in literature, that the same kind of form can serve many different kinds of function, and a single function can be served by many kinds of form. Second, the use of a specific linguistic form at episode boundaries is rarely fully consistent within a narrative. The second feature suggests that this is not a matter of linguistic form being generated by rules; instead the intermittent use of the linguistic form suggests that it is being used as evidence (combined with other evidence, including narrative content) of an episode boundary, and the linguistic form thus does not actually

determine the division into episodes. This use of linguistic form communicates a description about the narrative (i.e. a meta-description), representing the narrative as divided into episodes. This possibly solves a problem about narrative form, which is its indeterminacy and inconsistency; if narrative form is not immanent in the narrative but instead is a self-description communicated by the narrative, we would expect narrative form to be like anything else which is communicated: that is, we would expect ambiguities of form, indeterminacies of form, etc. Here, by offering a theory of communication, linguistics can suggest a solution to one of the central puzzles of literary form. However, it is still necessary to consider the other striking feature of boundary-markers, which is that different languages exploit (apparently in a consistent manner) different formal strategies. To some extent this arises because different languages offer different kinds of linguistic form which can be used for this purpose, but to some extent it also means that there must be some systematic coding of certain strategies as communicating the presence of an episode boundary.

The second kind of relation between linguistic form and narrative form can be seen as a variant of something that we find in any utterance, which is that formal options can be adapted to functional demands. Linguists often use the term "stylistic" to describe a difference between two sentences which give rise to similar logical forms. Thus constituents can be moved within a sentence without significantly affecting its propositional meaning (including stylistic movements such as topicalization, dative shift, etc.), and constituents can be omitted by passivization or nominalization without affecting crucial aspects of propositional meaning. These are options presented by linguistic form; different languages offer different stylistic options, and they can be used in many kinds of verbal behavior (not just literature). The realization of syntactic valency (as active or passive, as verbal or nominal projection, etc.) communicates different perspectives on an eventuality, and it is sometimes argued that these perspectives conspire to produce particular interpretations for a text; this is the basis of Halliday's analysis of Golding's novel *The Inheritors*, where he suggests that there is a consistent use of certain linguistic forms expressing transitivity which correlate with the novel's (literally) prehistoric human consciousness (Halliday 1981). A somewhat different sense of the "stylistic" use of transitivity options can be seen in the fact that "storyline" sentences in a narrative which contribute to the progression of the story are often formally different from "non-storyline" sentences which provide contextual information. Storyline clauses tend to be more transitive than non-storyline clauses, in an extended sense of transitivity developed by Hopper and Thompson (1980); non-storyline clauses tend to be low in transitivity. It is less plausible here that the distinction communicates a meta-description of the narrative as consisting of storyline vs. non-storyline sentences; instead we should probably see the linguistic distinction as a reflex of the fact that we would expect storyline clauses to be high in transitivity because they typically describe actions with consequences, while the non-storyline clauses would be predictably low in transitivity because they typically describe states. An associated issue arises

when we consider the fact that in languages with an option of expressing a proposition either in verb-medial or verb-peripheral sentences, there is a tendency for verb-peripheral sentences to be the storyline sentences. Again, this may possibly arise for functional reasons relating to the importance of the verb (and hence its need to be informationally prominent) in storyline clauses. Thus again the linguistic form may be functionally adapted to narrative form. A third example comes when we consider the use of strategies such as noun-incorporation (Velázquez-Castillo 1995) which make noun phrases more or less salient in the clause; in languages which have these as formal options, we find that the formal choice reflects narrative demands relating to how prominent a particular participant should be at any point in the narrative.

The same aspect of linguistic form can in some cases be seen both as evidence for narrative form and also as the consequence of narrative function. This appears to be the case for linguistic form which realizes what Labov (1972, 1997) calls the "evaluation" in a narrative. Narrators at least in some narrative genres evaluate narrative events in terms of what they might mean to the narrator and audience. Evaluation is thus a function of some part of the narrative, but as Labov shows, it is realized by typical kinds of linguistic form – for example by the use of modals, negatives, and so on, or by stylistic effects like repetition. Thus linguistic form is present in part to serve a narrative function. But at the same time, linguistic form provides partial evidence of narrative form, because as Labov and Waletzky (1967) showed, there is a major evaluative moment just before the narrative complication is resolved. Thus the linguistic form provides evidence for the structure of the narrative. Hence linguistic form both reflects narrative function and also communicates narrative form.

8   Parallelism

Parallelism is a relationship of partial identity between two sections of a text. When the partial identity involves the language of the text, it falls within the domain of literary linguistics. There are three major types of linguistic parallelism: syntactic, phonological, and lexical. In syntactic parallelism, the two sections of text share some or all aspects of their syntactic structure. Thus in the following pair of lines by William Blake, the second line has the same syntactic structure as the first, consisting of a verbal participle followed by a preposition phrase containing a noun phrase.

> Struggling in my father's hands
> Striving against my swadling bands

Note that the parallelism is not perfect: the two noun phrases look at first as though they have the same structure, but this is an illusion because the first has *my father's* as a possessor, and the second has *my* as a possessor and *swadling* as a modifier. This imperfection of the parallelism is typical; exact

repetition appears to be often avoided, perhaps for reasons similar to the inherent variability within many meters, the use of equivalence sets in rhyme and alliteration, or the inconsistent coding of narrative structure; all may be designed to generate esthetic experience through complexity.

Lexical parallelism involves a pair of parallel words, one in each section of the text. "Struggling" and "striving" and "hands" and "bands" are instances of lexical parallelism in the above example, and it is common for syntactic parallelism to support lexical parallelism.

In phonological parallelism, the phonological structures of the two sections have some elements in common. For example, some eighteenth-century Gaelic songs are governed by a phonological parallelism such that all lines in a stanza have the same sequence of stressed vowels. Medieval Welsh poetry made extensive use of phonological parallelism, codified as specific patterns of possible *cynghanedd* (harmony). This is illustrated in the following line by the fifteenth-century poet Tudur Aled:

> serch a rois ar chwaer Esyllt
> s rch   r s r ch   r
> "he set his love to sister Isolde"

This is a type of parallelism called *cynghanedd groes o gysswllt* in which there is a parallel sequence of consonants within the line (i.e. s + r + ch + r). The line is divided by the meter into two halves, ending after *rois*, but in this kind of *cynghanedd* the division of the line by parallelism contradicts the division of the line by meter, thus generating the kind of complexity which I have suggested elsewhere might be a source of esthetic experience.

Parallelism is very widespread in the literatures of the world (see Fox 1977, 1988). In some literatures, genres of text can be found where parallelism is so pervasive in the text as to constitute a fundamental structuring principle (Jakobson called this "canonic parallelism"). In such texts, every second line might be parallel to the line which precedes it, a possibility realized for example in a funeral oration of the Indonesian Rindi (cited by Forth 1988). Where parallelism is a fundamental structuring principle it has some functional similarity to meter, and in fact meter superficially produces texts which have phonological parallelism. However, parallelism and meter are fundamentally different as structuring processes. In parallelism, the form of a line is directly influenced by the form of the preceding line; there need not be any overall consistency in form across the text as a whole. In meter, the form of a line is influenced by an external rule system, which ensures overall consistency; lines resemble each other only indirectly.

Parallelism in literature is of interest to linguists for two reasons. First, we might ask whether the processing of parallel texts involves some component of linguistic cognition which is specialized to deal with linguistic parallelism. Second, we might ask whether underlying linguistic form can ever be governed by parallelism, in a manner analogous to the metrical control of underlying form discussed earlier.

Jakobson, who pioneered the linguistic study of parallelism, believed that parallelism did indeed involve fundamental principles of linguistic cognition. He saw the flow of verbal behavior as a sequence of choices (at various levels of linguistic form). In ordinary verbal behavior, items which are equivalent (having some formal characteristic in common) belong together as a set of options which are presented at a point in the sequence: one option is chosen and the others are discarded. In verbal art, the set of equivalent items is retained and used again later in the text, with the result that equivalent items are put into sequence: hence, linguistic parallelism. Taking this perspective on verbal behavior, Jakobson argued that parallelism exploits the fundamental principles of verbal behavior to create verbal art (Jakobson 1987). While we may no longer see parallelism as involving a central aspect of linguistic cognition, we might, nevertheless, find parallelism operating as a principle in some part of linguistic cognition; thus Chomsky (1995: 125) refers to a "parallelism requirement" which holds at some level of linguistic cognition and gives rise to structures with partial parallelism (a process referred to by syntacticians as "gapping"). Another kind of example is presented by some cases of lexical parallelism. Traditions which have lexical parallelism sometimes group words into conventional sets, which then constitute an inventory for the production of verse, such that two words can be chosen from the same set to create a textual parallelism. For example, the Asmat of New Guinea have conventional sets of words which in their everyday meaning are somewhat related, and which are considered to be exact synonyms in poetry, and so used to produce parallel texts; the words *yow* "sun," *yesir* "morning star," and *piri* "moon" form such a set and in poetry are all interpreted as meaning specifically and only "sun" (Voorhoeve 1977). In some cases, the words in the set are independently close synonyms; in other cases, the words are clearly related but the grouping into the set reflects a fairly random convention. An interesting question to ask about conventional lexical sets is whether their construction involves access to the principles which organize the lexicon. For example, a linguistic mode of lexical organization is to put words into "classifier sets" of which linguistic gender is a relatively simple instance; words in classifier sets then correlate with particular morphologies (e.g. feminine and masculine nouns in French take different articles). It is worth asking whether the organization of words into sets for the purposes of parallelism draws on cognitive processes similar to the organization of words into classifier sets.

Do rules of parallelism have access to underlying linguistic form? A relevant example is presented by Efik tone riddles (Fabb 1997: 151, based on Simmons 1958). In these texts, the first and second lines have the same pattern of lexical tones, so that when they are spoken aloud the two lines have the same melody, the same sequence of rises and falls. However, while the shape of the melody is the same, its length is not; in one line there might be a sequence of a low vowel followed by three high vowels followed by a low vowel, which is parallel to a sequence of a low vowel followed by a single high vowel followed by a low vowel. Thus parallelism here is not between the tones on individual

vowels, but on the (suprasegmental) tonal contour which lies above the utterance as a whole; here, it is possible that an aspect of underlying linguistic form is being governed by parallelism.

9 Conclusion

I began this chapter by suggesting that a cognitively oriented literary linguistics must ask two questions: are literary rules cognitive rules? and how does literature exploit the possibilities of linguistic communication?

We do not yet know the answer to the first question. There is intermittent evidence from the study of meter, of sound patterning, of the relation between music and text, and possibly from parallelism and narrative analysis, that literary rules are sometimes cognitive rules. These rules are constrained in specific ways, are not accessible to introspection, and interact with the rules of linguistic cognition. However, the evidence is fragmentary and what is lacking is some more global attempt to formulate universal principles, and examine exactly which manipulations of linguistic form are possible and which are not possible.

Turning to the second question, there is evidence that the special characteristics of literary communication (including indeterminacy, ambiguity, indirectness, and so on) are present in all kinds of verbal communication; literature just makes particularly extensive use of them. It seems possible also that some kinds of literary form (e.g. certain kinds of narrative form) are best reinterpreted as meta-descriptions of the text which the text itself communicates; thus some kinds of literary form resemble literary content more than they resemble linguistic form.

Both questions in turn lead to the question of esthetic experience. Our experience of literary texts is qualitatively different from our experience of other kinds of text, and we must ask whether this qualitative difference can in part be systematically related to the ways in which literary and linguistic rules operate and interact.

NOTE

1   This chapter is largely based on research reported in Fabb (1997). Historical snapshots of literary linguistics are provided by various anthologies and conference collections: Sebeok (1960), Freeman (1970, 1981), Fabb et al. (1987), Kiparsky and Youmans (1989). Bever (1986), Hobbs (1990), and Rubin (1995) offer accounts of linguistic cognition in the processing of literary texts. Preminger and Brogan (1993) offer an encyclopedic introduction to poetics (and literary linguistics).