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Making Creative Use of Cognitive Stylistic Frameworks in the Revising Process.

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Abstract: This chapter will outline a number of important theoretical frameworks in cognitive stylistics and offer examples of how they may be used to develop poetic texts in the revision process. I discuss the relationship between figure and ground (see Evans & Green 2006: 65-75; Stockwell 2002:13-26), and trajectors and landmarks (Langacker 2013: 70-73), because these are the basic level cognitive aspects of how we tend to apprehend the world, and what is happening in it. I have also selected scripts and schema (Schank and Abelson 1977; Semino 2014: 119-192) as these operate an a more intermediate level in terms of the global state of affairs presented in the text, and the various states of affairs that may be evoked by the text in terms of previous experiences I make use of blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2002) as it deals particularly with how metaphors operate. As an example of a more macro-level approach I also discuss text world theory (Werth 1999; Gavins 2007) as this is a global framework of text structure that can offer insights into the relationships between different types of worlds portrayed in the text. The chapter illustrates how these frameworks can be useful to poets in the revision processes using examples of changes in poetic image or poem structure.

Keywords: Cognitive Stylistics, Cognitive Poetics, Revision, Poetry, Poetics.

This chapter applies a set of cognitive stylistic tools to the process of revision in poetry. Cognitive Stylistics is a branch of literary study that applies concepts drawn from cognitive science and cognitive linguistics to the analysis of texts in order to elucidate how basic cognitive operations are used to make meaning from linguistic structures. This approach has been used to analyse texts in all literary genres, but it is also used to analyse discourse more generally, including medical and political discourse. However, knowing how texts use cognitive operations to make meaning in the reader's mind can also be a powerful tool in the creation of texts, and is especially relevant to the process of revision. Here the writer's analytical and creative faculties are most keenly in balance, and what Oatley calls 'readingandwriting' (Oatley 2003: 161; Scott 2013: 9) has its parts most equally integrated. Understanding the cognitive processes the reader uses is worthwhile because the initial drafting process is often instinctive, done on what the writer feels is interesting and pleasing to them, and where their work with language is often dependent on an internalised system of expertise that is difficult to articulate, and which proceeds on the basis of an educated ear and facility with language. The revision process is different. Here there already exists a base text to work from, an initial draft which has usually been left for a period of time before being approached again, or has been rejected

from a first submission and a process of improvement is required. The writer must see the text again, and 're-envision' it in order to revise it. The set of analytical tools I will explore are just as applicable to any kind of text, but being a poet, I will mainly use poetic examples.

One of the most obvious places to begin when looking at a poem is to focus on the figure and ground relationships within the poem and where the reader's attention is being focused. Cognitively, figures tend to be self-contained, with clearly defined edges, and they are recognised as distinct entities from the cognitive background through movement or through being spatially foregrounded. This may relate to a physical entity, or can also be extrapolated to a figure of language which is viewed as standing out against the surrounding text. The figure is more prominent in attention, particularly where it is more intricately described, or where it is set against a more mundane or homogenous background. This is reflected linguistically even in very mundane descriptions such as 'That's my car in the field'. The car is prominent as a figure because it is the thing of interest, while the field is a homogenous background. Even where there are two figures as in the case 'I parked my car beside the river', the car is foregrounded because it is the thing of interest, while the river, which is also a figure, becomes a reference object which serves as the spatial background for the object of interest (for a more detailed discussion see Evans & Green 2006: 65-75 and Stockwell 2002: 13-26).

Figures can also be groups of things that are perceived as gestalt wholes; for example, a pride of lions can function as a figure. As an example we may use an image I have previously used in a poem which describes the flight of birds through the air. This group of birds form a moving figure across the background of air. In situations such as these the figure can be termed a trajector, a moving foregrounded figure, which is moving over, across or through a landmark, which tends to be a static or backgrounded element. The trajector tends to be the focus of attention because it is doing something, while the landmark is backgrounded in attention because, while it is present, it is usually inactive (Langacker, 2013: 70-73).

When we make revisions to poems, one of the things that we might wish to do is to make the images sharper and more surprising, in order to offer the reader a different perspective on the thing being described. So, if we want to liven up our 'flight of birds' image from earlier, one strategy we can use is to reverse the relationship between the trajector and landmark. We can make a foregrounded figure of the air by having 'the air move through the flight of birds'. In the final published poem I took this further and the final image became 'feel the sky rush through the flight of birds' (McLoughlin, 2009, 6). Such an image changes the focus by bringing forward in attention what would normally be considered background and elevating it to become a figure and in this case a trajector in the poem. Likewise the thing that was originally focused upon has been relegated to become the thing moved through, the background landmark. The second image is more surprising and unusual, and makes the reader visualise the movement in a different way.

One former final year undergraduate student noted that in developing her poem she deliberately used a series of processes to change the relationships between trajectors and landmarks as the poem progressed. She described using 'trajector erasing landmark', 'trajector replacing landmark', trajector engulfing landmark', and 'trajector revolving around landmark' to create a series of images across the poem. These images were strengthened by the series of actions and offered a sense of life to the imagery through the different types of movement described. Another student described using a sequential scan of the ground before zooming in to focus on the figure, as she tried to generate a filmic effect that combined a wide panning shot with a very quick close up.

By creating an image which is unusual or arresting we make a linguistic figure which sets itself apart from the surrounding language using similar cognitive principles, often through the creation of a set 'figure' of language such as metaphor, but sometimes through challenging conventional language use. It becomes an attentional attractor, through its aesthetic difference from the norm (see Stockwell 2009: 24-26). This approach can be used at a more macro-level also to create 'texture', which is defined by Stockwell (2009: 14-15) as 'the experiential quality

of textuality' or the creation of a sense of patterning through the act of reading. One way this may be achieved in a poem is through the counterpoint of unusual linguistic figures with more straightforward language structures and images. Part of the advice often given to poetry-writing students focuses on opening lines, which are often deemed especially important to capture the attention of the reader and make them want to read on. Closures of poems are also emphasised, because they can create a lasting 'resonance' (Stockwell 2009: 54) that stays with the reader after they have read the poem. However, I would add the need to be aware of the slack areas in the poem, where language often flags. Sometimes poems are like a washing line anchored strongly at both ends, but where the middle sags. It is important to keep the energy level of the language up, and maintain a series of surprising images across the poem. Using figure-ground or trajector landmark reversals is one way of creating strength and surprise in imagery, across the poem as a whole, and awareness of this can help the revision process by providing a starting strategy, because figure-ground relationships are among the most basic elements that occur in all texts.

Quite often, especially in student work, poems that require revision are those that 'tell rather than show' or 'tell too much'. Of course, more experienced writers are less prone to falling into this particular trap, but nevertheless, from time to time, we all do it. These can be difficult concepts for the student-poet to grasp at first. One way teachers can attack this problem is to discuss scripts and schemas (Schank and Ableson 1977; Semino 2014: 119-192). The idea behind these is that we have internalised in our long-term memories generic representations of various scenarios. For example, there is a motor script for tying one's shoelaces internalised through practice and executed as a unit when one needs to perform the action. Once the script is initiated it appears to run effortlessly, and in fact it can be very hard to verbalise the actions that are being executed in the exact order that they are being performed. Likewise we have scripts for what to do when we need to order food in a restaurant. We know the order in which things are expected to happen because we have abstracted the salient details from all of the

different times we have attended a restaurant, and our experiences of what tends to happen in the order in which it happens.

These scripts can be activated through various headers (Semino 2014: 136). Precondition headers refer to states of affairs that might activate a script through creating conditions where it might be a logical outcome. For example, 'my mouth was five-o'clock dry' offers a precondition header for a pub script, because some people may go for an after-work drink. Instrumental headers such as 'I drove towards the surgery' can activate a doctor's appointment script, because that is what people usually visit a surgery for, and driving is a common way to get there, also indicating a minor rather than major ailment, because one is able to drive oneself. Locale headers activate scripts by reference to spatial aspects or by referring to elements usually present where the script is set. For example, 'I booked the same corner table where we had our first date' activates a restaurant script because it is common to have corner tables in restaurants, and they are also common places to go on a first date, and you have to ask the staff when booking if you want a particular table on arrival. Finally, internal conceptualization headers refer to actions that might be carried out in a particular script such as 'I cupped the glass away from an elbow'. Here the reference is to an action that might be performed in a crowded pub, and is therefore suggestive of lack of space, so we don't need to be told the pub was busy.

In addition to scripts, other forms of schema might prove useful for students (or for teachers to use with). be usefully considered; for example at the very basic level of cognition there exists image schema that we all possess through our experience of the world (Johnson 1987; Lakoff 1987). These are highly abstracted and underpin the way we think about relationships in the world, and how these are reflected in language. Two of the most common may serve as examples. First, the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema underpins how we represent both physical and metaphorical journeys. We see a journey proceeding towards a goal along a path, but we can also see our lives that way, so we have a LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor that can be expressed or used in a variety of different forms. We might have the image of

someone young having 'their whole lives ahead of them' or 'just starting out'; we might speak of someone 'taking a wrong turn in life', or see death as a 'final destination'. A second more static example is a CONTAINER schema, which may manifest as 'he exploded with anger' (which is violently released having been contained, but also makes use of the conceptual metaphors ANGER IS HEAT, ANGER IS FORCE). Another example might be, 'there is a good poet in her if we can only bring it out.' This schema implies containment of internal latency or [add clarification for readers] but also the act of drawing the potential contained out of the human container. Learning to identify the underlying schema and the conceptual metaphors that underpin these manifestations in language can help to reformulate more elaborate and interesting instances of them. For example, poets can turn the cliché 'silence is broken' into something more conceptually attractive (that is functioning as a better attractor) like 'noise broke free from the egg of silence'. The process by which we get to the new image may involve thinking about things which we may schematically associate with breaking, such as an egg. This in turn may activate a CONTAINER schema, noise is being contained within silence. We may physicalize this as what is inside the egg before emerging from it, thereby using the schema to create a more arresting image.

Sometimes it is possible to use the imagery of a poem to activate one schema, and then quickly bring about a schema disruption, which must then be repaired, or refreshed. Normally as readers, progress with a narrative, if new information conforms to the expectations drawn from previous experience then this will lead to schema preservation. Even if the information is new but still within the reader's expectations this will reinforce the schematic representation of the state of affairs being described. Sometimes more surprising occurrences might happen and these can be added to the representation of the current schema, through a process of schema accretion. Schema disruption occurs when the new occurrence or information can't readily be integrated into the current schema, and this may mean that the schema needs to be refreshed (or revised), or there is a need to replace the current schema with a new one. By understanding how these processes operate the writer can manipulate the schemas that the

reader is likely to activate through reading the text in order to get particular desired effects. One of my recent final year undergraduate students revised a poem which illustrates this quite well. The original lines were

I weave a new weft and firmly comb it down
to make way for a new row of knots.

This changed to

I kiss it as I weave like I kissed my boy before laying him down
to arrange the cloth over his eternally-sleeping eyes.

The first image activates a 'weaving schema' and reinforces it over the two lines, so there is no disruption. In the revised lines while weaving is mentioned the schema activated towards the end of the first line is a 'putting an infant to sleep' schema; however this is disrupted and must be replaced by a 'funeral or burial' schema by the end of line two. So the first action of kissing the boy and laying him down is first understood in terms of putting a child to sleep, but by the time we reach the end of line 2, it must be revised as being understood as kissing the corpse before burial. The cloth then becomes a shroud in this schema. The effect of this change in schema is quite poignant. Such schema disruption is cognitively salient and will be marked by the reader, who must reanalyse for meaning, and change their perception of the actual state of affairs.

These schema can also operate at the macro-level of the text; for instance, if one has read widely in poetry, one has a more developed schema for the sonnet. This is because schema are abstracted from experience and the wider experience of encountering the sonnet broadens the schema to include the potential for variation within it. For example, early on, readers (and writers) may have a schema that is abstracted from formal Shakespearean or Petrarchan varieties. If we come across many sonnets that fit these basic types, our schema is reinforced. Then when we encounter Hopkins' sonnets based on proportion rather than set length we must revise our schema to include them. Depending on how narrowly constructed our sonnet

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schema is to begin with, we can either go through either be a process of schema repair or schema replacement. As we come across more experimental varieties, we may not immediately recognise them as sonnets, or have difficulty integrating them with the schema we have acquired. Classroom discussion of these variations too can encourage students to challenge the schema they may already have about a form or genre and, when revising, consider how the work may push at the boundaries of their own schema, or the schema of readers in more productive and innovative ways.

Metaphor and simile are staples of poetry and revising and sharpening these to make them more striking can often breathe new life into a poem. The classic way of looking at metaphor is through starting with the tenor and the vehicle, so that students can think about what qualities are being transferred through the ground of the metaphor and what are not transferred and constitute the tension of the metaphor (Richards 1936). To go back to our earlier example where silence is described as an egg, the physical vehicle (egg) transfers qualities of containment, fragility and brittleness to the more abstract tenor (silence). However, if we think of metaphor in terms of conceptual blending (see Fauconnier and Turner 2002), this offers a set of concepts that can develop how we think about metaphor and simile, and how these may be improved. In conceptual blending, the way metaphor works is visualised in terms of conceptual spaces. First, in the input spaces, of which there are usually two, we have the tenor and vehicle of the metaphor, a third space, the generic space is posited to represent the qualities that are held to be common between the tenor and the vehicle (in our case this may be containment, brittleness, fragility), and a fourth space or blend space offers a conceptual blend of the tenor and vehicle that represents our silence-egg with those qualities transferred. There is the potential for a further space, an emergent space that allows other qualities to emerge when the blend is 'run'. In our example an emergent property might be that we view silence as broken by something internal to it, which may allow the emergence of a further metaphor. So if silence is an egg, is what breaks the silence a chick? This is something that we may wish to further develop. What qualities of a new born chick do we want

to attach to the noise that breaks the silence? It may be that it is weak to start with and grows ever more demanding of attention. What does a chick do to demand attention? In which case our poem might develop the image to be something like: 'noise broke free from the egg of silence, / and gaped its raucous red mouth'.

Having worked through an emergence from our blend we can then apply processes of elaboration and scaling to further develop it. In this way we might elaborate our metaphor to include other qualities, giving a sense of life or struggle into life to the noise. The elaborative process is about adding features that increase detail, activity and agency, essentially making it more striking as a figure, and a better attentional attractor, This might give us: 'noise broke free from the egg of silence, / and gaped its raucous red mouth / dragging and struggling itself towards us'. At this point we may conceptualise the noise as small and weak, but if we add indications of greater scale, we can make it conceptually more imposing. For example we might turn it into: 'noise erupted out of the egg of silence/ and gaped its raucous red mouth / dragging and struggling the chains of its scales towards us'. By doing this we've conceptually moved the scale of the noise from something like a small bird to something more monstrous and threatening. This can also work in reverse, where an image had been over-written or requires more subtlety; elements can be scaled down and pared back to achieve the desired effect, while still being conscious as writers of the underlying blend, and maintaining consideration of what elements of the metaphor are most desired and those qualities we wish to emphasise.

If we decide, in light of the overall effect we are trying to emphasise, that the most important factors are those that focus the attention on the aural aspect of the noise being described, we may decide to cut the visual aspect of the gaping mouth from the image. We may also decide to remove explicit mention of the silence, thereby submerging the tenor of one of our metaphors. Our image may then end up as 'noise dragged its scales like chains across its broken egg'. Alternatively we may choose to create a synesthetic metaphor for the noise which focuses and develops the visual aspect in the hope that the brightness of the visual aspect

will mirror the sonic quality of the noise; for example, we might produce something like: 'noise thrust its beak through the shell of silence and gaped its ugly red mouth'. Or we might try and suggest movement through making the metaphoric figure of the noise a trajector, and depending on whether we want to suggest increasing or decreasing noise, this movement can be visualised as moving towards or away from the centre of view. For example, the 'ugly red mouth' above may be shown increasing in size (which can be used to indicate movement towards) so 'gaped its ugly red mouth that widened and darkened, eating the space between' gives a sense of implied threatening approach and by extension increasing noise. The more sonic example of 'noise dragged its scales towards me like chains across its broken egg' does the same but with more explicit use of direction. Likewise if we append 'and slunk away' we can create a sense of diminishing sound by suggesting a receding movement of the entity through the conceptual effect of movement away from the viewing centre.

Poems may also be revised using more global techniques. In this case we are interested in how the world is presented to the reader, and what worlds the reader is being invited to build by the text. One way of analysing this is through the use of Text World Theory (Werth 1999; Gavins 2007). In Text World Theory, the worlds that readers build from their experience of reading can be separated into three levels: at the discourse world level, one creates a representation of what is happening in the real world, so in our case, I as reader am reading a poem. The poem exists in the world, and has a subject. The subject of the poem is made manifest through the world as it is described in the poem. This may or may not bear some resemblance to the real world in which I read it. The world as described by the poem is the main text world. In this text world we usually find characters, objects, an indication of time, and an indication of place. The characters in this text world can also entertain wishes, desires, and beliefs, and have obligations that may be fulfilled, or may not. These projections are modal worlds (Gavins) or sub-worlds (Werth) that arise from the main text world, and contain conditions or states of affairs which are different from the main text world. This is because they contain views of the world as it could be, might be, should be, or is hoped to be etc.

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Similarly, reference to the past and future versions of the text world described in the poem, are seen as projections of the main text world, into deictic worlds that relate to the past or future experiences of characters, and are not necessarily related to the past we have experienced as readers, or any future that might be projected by us from our experiences.

The worlds that are created can be fleeting, or they may be returned to at regular intervals, which creates an attentional resonance, where text-worlds are maintained as backgrounds in attention even where the attatenion is currently focused on another text-world, and this can sometimes a metaphoric equivalence between worlds (see McLoughlin 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2018). The type of world that the text tends to use can have a significant effect on what is being communicated to the reader; for instance repeated movement into worlds of hopes or dreams, and the differences between those hopes and the reality that they inhabit may suggest a focus outside of the real world they inhabit, but also suggest inaction in their world to make those hopes real. A repeated use of deontic modal worlds suggest a focus on duty and obligation, what one should do, or is obliged to do. Repeated movement into epistemic worlds that are suggested by hypothetical constructions or what things 'seem' can create other underlying effects such as the character that entertains them is unsure of how the world actually is, or is constantly anticipating what might be. These worlds can be juxtaposed by repeated movement between them; for example, a poem might move between two worlds, one in the past and one in the present and the conditions shown in the past world may mirror in some way the conditions in the present. I have written previously about an excellent example of this in Eavan Boland's 'The Famine Road,' see McLoughlin 2013). This has the effect that the reader may conclude that nothing has changed in the conditions that produce these two effects, or it can draw a metaphoric equivalency. In the Boland example just cited, the anchoring equivalency made explicit in the final lines is between a famine road which leads nowhere, and therefore does not serve the normal purpose of a road, and how a woman feels about her body having received an infertility diagnosis. However, the interweaving narratives

also suggest an equivalency in terms of the uncaring nature of the paternalistic societies that underpin both.

When revising poems an analysis of the relationships between the different text worlds in a poem can prove useful in identifying new potential developments in terms of bringing worlds into metaphoric relation. If necessary one of the worlds may be developed in terms of its detail so that it becomes more prominent in attention, or is reactivated in attention at other points in the poem. This too can make the poem feel more 'textured'. Likewise looking at how worlds are projected in terms of their modality, or the deictic movements between past, present or future versions of the world described, between spatially separate worlds, or worlds filtered through a different viewpoint, can also lead to the creation or development of different worlds in juxtaposition. This juxtaposition can be used to draw reader's attention to similarities or differences through showing the differences in action, and avoiding merely telling.

For example, in a recent so far unpublished poem, I began with the idea of looking back at the number of childhood friends that I have lost touch with or who have passed away. I began writing the poem using a game we used to play when we were about 12 called 'truth, dare, double-dare, love, kiss or promise'. The initial poem took those concepts of truth, daring, love, and promise and played off them in various ways, projecting from the world of childhood to adulthood. In the end I felt the poem was quite flat, and needed something else to lift it out of the mundane. I put it away for some time. When I came to revise it, an idea hit me. The modern text world was the issue. I needed to develop that so that it had a stronger metaphoric quality, and serendipitously this occurred as a storm approached. It occurred to me that using the list of storm names might be an interesting way into the poem so I picked a few of these at random, made others up, and then developed the text-world so that it described the action of storms, but interspersed the images so that the storm images alternated with the world of the children's game. The effect worked much better and it gave the poem a much stronger close:

We have begun to name our storms:

Aileen, Brian, Clodagh, Dermott, Emma, Frank.
A year's worth line up like children, petulant with rain
blustering and sulking in the playground of the sky.
We count our losses in bridges we can't cross.

A far cry now the summer evenings we all lined up
played truth, dare, double-dare, love, kiss or promise.
The shy ones all took dares, the curious the kiss.
Some ventured double-dares, our funniest and best.

We made no promises that I recall, we balked at love,
and knew that truth was dangerous as middle age.
Fast forward half an average life and look back
at where the storms have hit the gaps in the line

like bridges out. Know every year by its new list
and feel again the missing on your lips.

In this chapter I have outlined a number of cognitive stylistic frameworks, and shown how they might be used in the revising process. There are a number of other frameworks not dealt with here, and Stockwell (2002) provides an excellent introduction to the wide variety available. I have introduced poetry students to them for a number of years, and while not all take to them with equal enthusiasm, many of those students have engaged with them productively and have referred to them in their discussions of drafting and revision processes. I feel they are most useful in showing students how readers make meaning from the texts that they encounter, and how we might learn to manipulate language and text structure better to achieve the effects we desire. It also helps to show how tropes we tend to take for granted, such as metaphor, actually might be built and work. Cognitive stylistics offers a language by which we can talk theoretically about the working parts of the poems and their desired effects. Approaching revision armed with this body of knowledge, both teachers and students can take a structured and creative approach to seeing the poem anew.

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